

Coping with Fragmentation: Assessing and Reforming the Current Architecture of Global Environmental Governance

Questions on how to organize the co-evolution of societies and their surrounding environment, and develop effective and equitable governance solutions for today's global problems is a key concern for scholars and policy-makers. Yet most studies of global governance either focus on intensive single case studies or on the theoretical accounts of the overall phenomena, whereas the overall architecture of global environmental governance remains poorly understood.

The CONNECT project focuses on one aspect of global environmental governance architectures that is increasingly moving to the center of the debates, namely the **fragmentation** of governance in issue areas of world politics. Today many policy domains are marked by a **patchwork** of **international** and **transnational** institutions that are different in their character, constituencies, spatial scope, subject matter, actor-networks and their underlying discursive formations. Such emerging phenomena can be understood as fragmented global governance architectures. The issue of fragmentation of global environmental architecture focuses on the overall institutional setting in which distinct institutions exist and interact instead of merely exploring the interlinkages between different institutions. CONNECT zooms in on three issue areas of climate change, biodiversity and marine governance.

CONNECT is hosted by the Department of Environmental Policy Analysis (EPA), Institute for Environmental Studies (IVM), VU University Amsterdam (<http://www.ivm.vu.nl/en/Organisation/departments/environmental-policy-analysis/index.asp>). The project is also part of Amsterdam Global Change Institute (AGCI), <http://www.agci.vu.nl/en/index.asp>. CONNECT will establish an international research network on fragmentation and regime complexes over the next years. CONNECT is endorsed by the IHDP Earth System Governance Project (www.earthsystemgovernance.org).

Our approach:

Considering that there is a clear lack of consensus in the academic literature on the causes and consequences of fragmentation, as well as on explaining different degrees of fragmentation across policy domains, this project aims to address these analytical themes in four research stages:

1. Mapping and Measuring the Degree of Fragmentation

In a first step this project will take stock of the existing level of fragmentation across three issue-areas in global environmental politics - climate change, biodiversity and marine governance. Moreover, it will measure the different degrees of fragmentation (the dependent variable) in global governance architecture according to four criteria: 1) degree of institutional interaction; 2) existence and degree of norms overlaps; 3) level of density and degree of centralization among actor-networks, and 4) structure of key discourses. Based on these criteria, the degrees of fragmentation will be inductively weighted and placed on the continuum.

2. Explaining Fragmentation

Based on the mapping of the three issue areas (climate change, biodiversity and marine governance) and the measurement of variations in the degree of fragmentation, this project will provide distinct explanations of degree of fragmentation across issue areas and detailed variables will be developed. Various explanations and explanatory variables will be mainly derived from

International Relations theories and the studies of world politics such as power, constellation of interest, path dependency, norms, discourses, and preference formations.

3. Implications of Fragmentation

In terms of the implications of fragmented governance architectures, this project will assess the impacts of fragmentation on the performance of governance architecture as a whole in problem-solving within the three policy domains of climate change, biodiversity and marine ecosystems. It will assess the advantages and drawbacks of institutional fragmentation on negotiation dynamics and decision-making procedures at the global level, implications on national environmental policy processes, as well as the impacts on developing countries among others.

4. Managing Fragmentation

Finally, the project will provide a set of policy responses to manage fragmentation based on the careful evaluation of options and limits to the management of fragmentation, opportunity costs, etc.

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