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Explaining Institutional Fragmentation

Bringing Regime Theory Back In

Workshop on Fragmentation, Wassenaar, 17 May 2013

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Objectives

- Looking back: special issue of *Global Environmental Politics* (fall 2013)
- Looking ahead: extended theory-driven research agenda



Outline

1. Conceptual and Theoretical State of the Art
2. Themes for Theory-driven Research
3. Sketching Theoretical Approaches: *Institutionalism*
Revisited



1. STATE OF THE ART:

One research programme...



... many concepts

- *Institutional interlinkages*
-

- *Institutional fragmentation*
 - *Regime complexes*
 - *Polycentric governance*
-

- *Orchestration*
- *Bandwagoning*
- *Experimentation*
- *Institutional diffusion*



Institutional Interlinkages

	Institutional Interlinkages	Institutional Complexity
Thematic Focus / Issue Areas under Scrutiny	One or more (specific) issue areas	One overarching issue area
Level of Analysis	Dyadic: two or more individual institutions	Overarching institutional complex



... many concepts

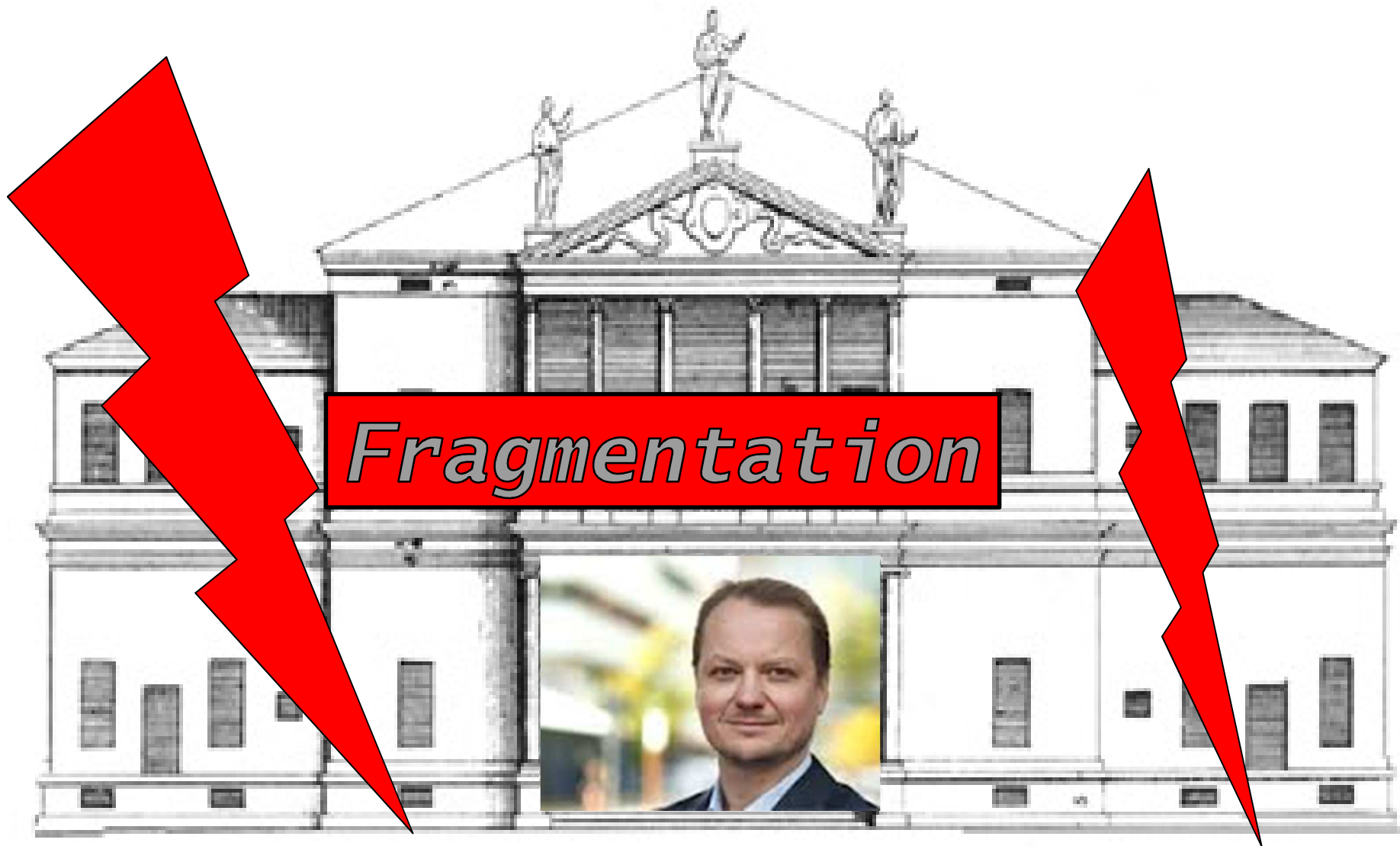
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Normative divide...?





Institutional complexity is...

... a structural characteristic of today's global governance architectures

➤ ... a matter of degree.



Degrees of Fragmentation (Biermann et al. 2009)

	Synergistic	Cooperative	Conflictive
Institutional nesting (number, centrality)	One core institution, with other institutions being closely integrated	Core institutions with other institutions that are loosely integrated	Different, largely unrelated institutions
Norm coherence	Core norms of institutions are integrated	Core norms are not conflicting	Core norms conflict
Actor constellations	All relevant actors support the same institutions	Some actors remain outside main institutions, but maintain cooperation	Major actors support different institutions



No need for artificial borders

- Communities under different headings need to build more on each other in their
 - Theoretical approaches
 - Research questions
 - Empirical findings



2. RESEARCH THEMES

- Taking stock
- Causes
- Consequences
- Responses / Management



Theme I: Taking stock

- *Definitions*: elements and implications (coherence, centrality, etc.)
- *Typologies*: multi-criteria sets → comparative approaches
- *Methods*: legal analysis, network analysis, etc.
- *Framing*: issue area, static vs. dynamic, legal vs. behavioral, etc.



Theme II: Causes

- Theory-based explanations / interpretations
 - *Power-based*
 - *Interest-based*
 - *Knowledge- and norms-based*
 - *Discourse-based*



Theme III: Consequences

- *For effectiveness: output, outcome, impact*
- *For equity and legitimacy*
- *For actors: Who wins? Who loses?*
- *Across scales*



Theme IV: Responses

- *Need?*
- *Types*: Unilateral, joint, overarching
- *Limits*: New equilibrium? Costs?
- *Consequences*: Who wins? Who loses?



3. SKETCHING THEORETICAL APPROACHES

3.1 Institutional Fragmentation as a **Dependent Variable**



POWER-based hypothesis

- **Instrumental multilateralism / hegemonic stability theory**
 - An issue area of global governance is more likely to exhibit a high degree of institutional fragmentation...
 - *... if a powerful coalition of countries does not find its interests sufficiently realized by an incumbent set of institutions.*



INTEREST-based hypotheses

- **Situation structure**

- An issue area of global governance is more likely to exhibit a high degree of institutional fragmentation...
- *... the more asymmetric the constellation of interests is among key actors on the respective issue.*



INTEREST-based hypotheses

- **Problem structure / Institutional fit**
 - *Depending on their problem structure, certain problems are more amenable to (or better served by) a high degree of institutional fragmentation than others.*



KNOWLEDGE-based hypothesis

- **Cognitivism, role of epistemic communities**
 - An issue area of global governance is more likely to exhibit a high degree of institutional fragmentation...
 - *... if core questions in this issue area imply high degrees of uncertainty and competing knowledge bases.*



NORMS-based hypothesis

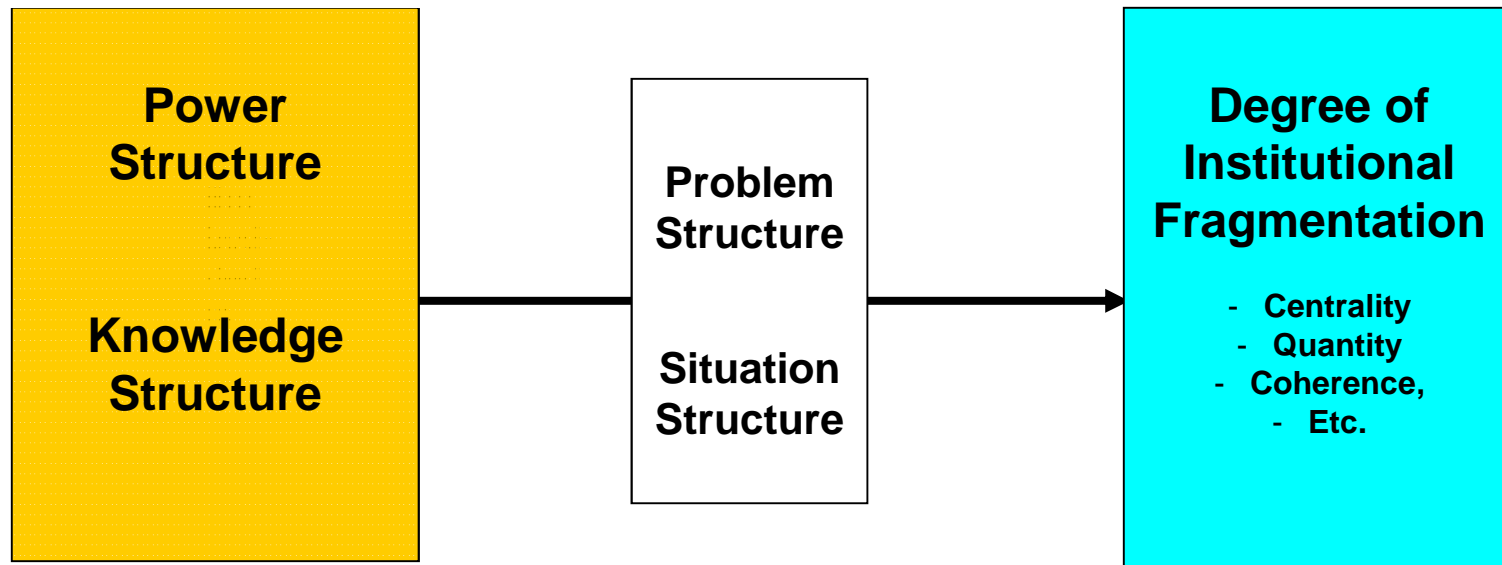
- **Sociological Institutionalism / norm dynamics / discursive institutionalism**
 - An issue area of global governance is more likely to exhibit a high degree of institutional fragmentation...
 - *... if core questions in this issue area imply high competing normative claims (or a high level of discourse contestation).*



Complexity as a Dependent Variable

Independent Variables

Dependent Variable



3. SKETCHING THEORETICAL APPROACHES

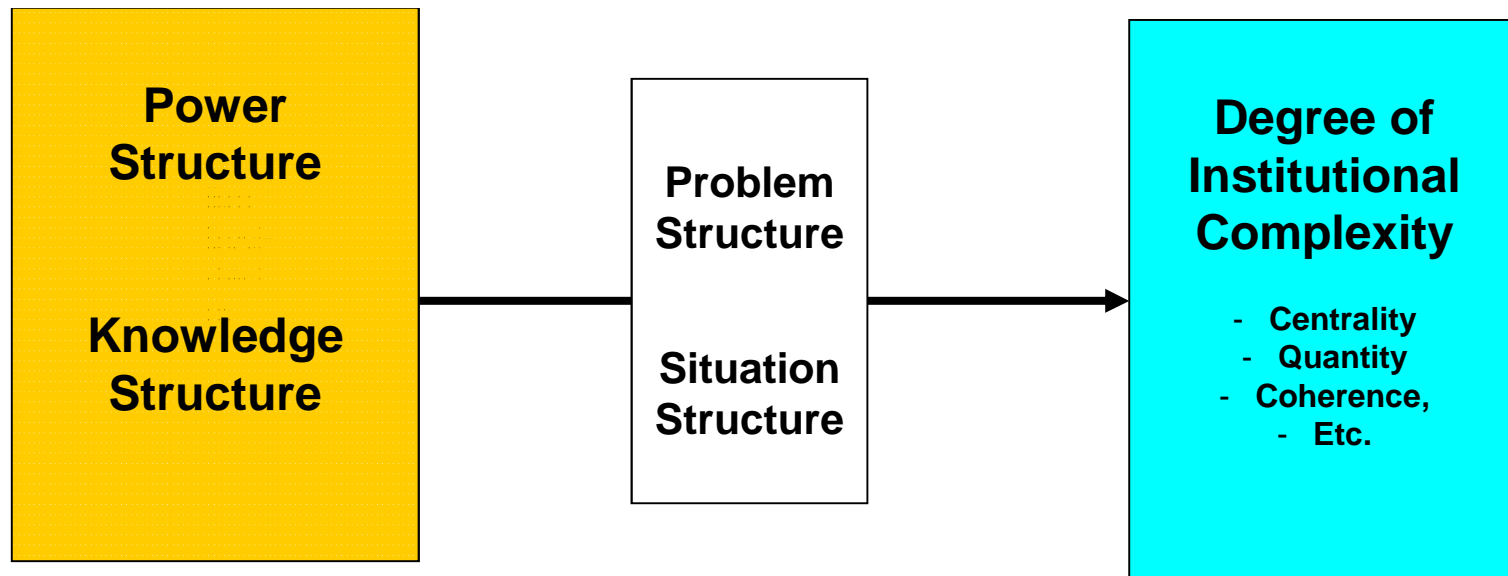
3.1 Institutional Fragmentation as an **Intervening Variable**



Complexity as a Dependent Variable

Independent Variables

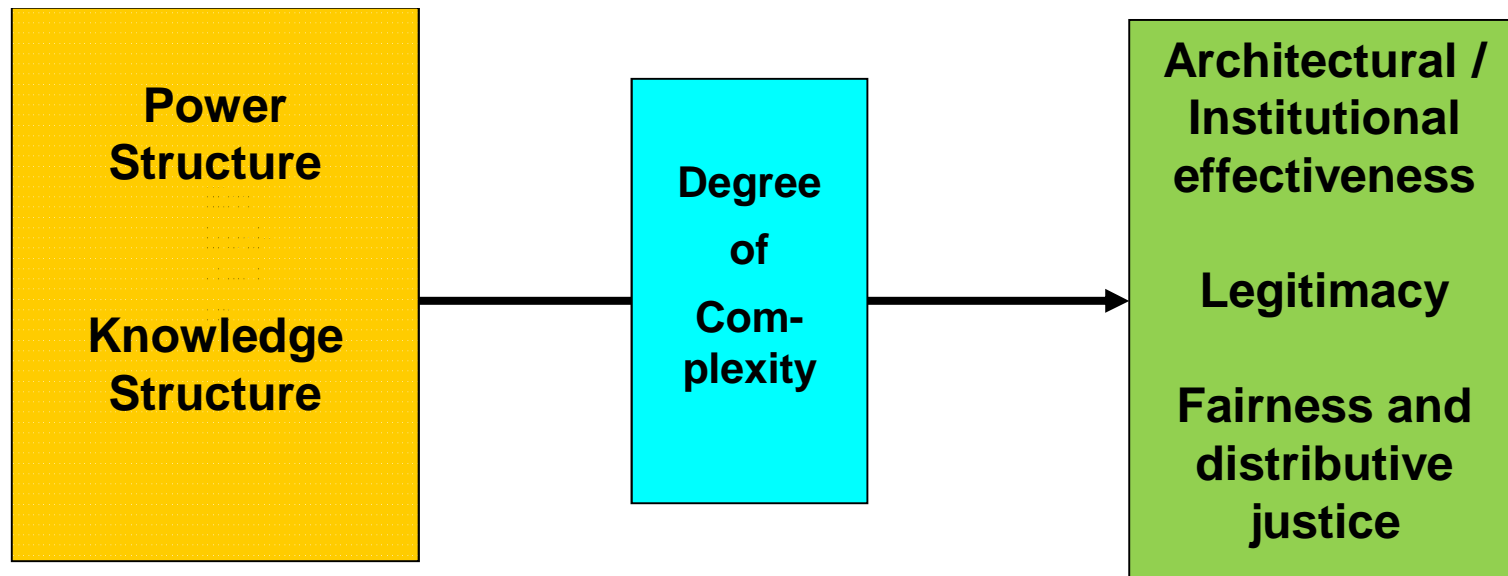
Dependent Variable



Complexity as an Intervening Variable

Independent Variables

Dependent Variables



Conclusions

- There is a lot of theoretical ground to cover.
- We should work together more.
- Theory-driven insights will strengthen our policy recommendations.



Thank you for your attention!

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