



The Transformation of IR: Global Governance as a ‘Theory in the Making’?

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SENSE PhD Summer School on Earth
System Governance, 25– 31 August 2008



Outline

- Theoretical Requirements in an Era of Earth System Governance
- A 'Theory of Global Governance' in the making
- What is Global Governance?
- Conceptual Clarity
- Blindspots of Global Governance



Theoretical Requirements

- A theory of change/transformation is needed rather than a theory of stability;
- The theory should focus on the co-construction of structure and agency rather than on these elements in isolation;
- The theory should take a middle-ground between the rationalist and constructivist camps.



A 'Theory of GG' in the making?

- GG can be considered a theory 'in statu nascendi' as it potentially transforms existing ontologies of world politics;
- However, it is in the state of conceptualization rather than theorization;
- It is plagued by ambiguities and misunderstandings.



What is Global Governance?

- ‘Global’ refers to either the top-level scale of human activity or to the sum of all scales of activity.
- ‘Governance’ refers to all forms of collective regulation of social affairs, including horizontal and vertical steering processes.



Three Uses of GG

- Global governance as an analytical perspective;
- Global governance as a political programme;
- Global governance as a critical discourse.



GG as an Analytical Perspective

- GG is an analytical perspective on the transformation of world politics. It describes a number of phenomena including
 - Global social movements
 - International organisations
 - Public-private partnerships
 - Private regimes



IR vs. GG



- States as central actors
- Independent levels of interaction
- Limited number of modes of interaction



- Plurality of actors
- Interdependent levels of interaction
- Plurality of steering mechanisms



Global Governance includes...



- (i) “systems of rules
- (ii) at all levels of the political system
- (iii) in which the pursuit of goals through the exercise of control
- (iv) has transnational repercussions.”



Global Governance is...

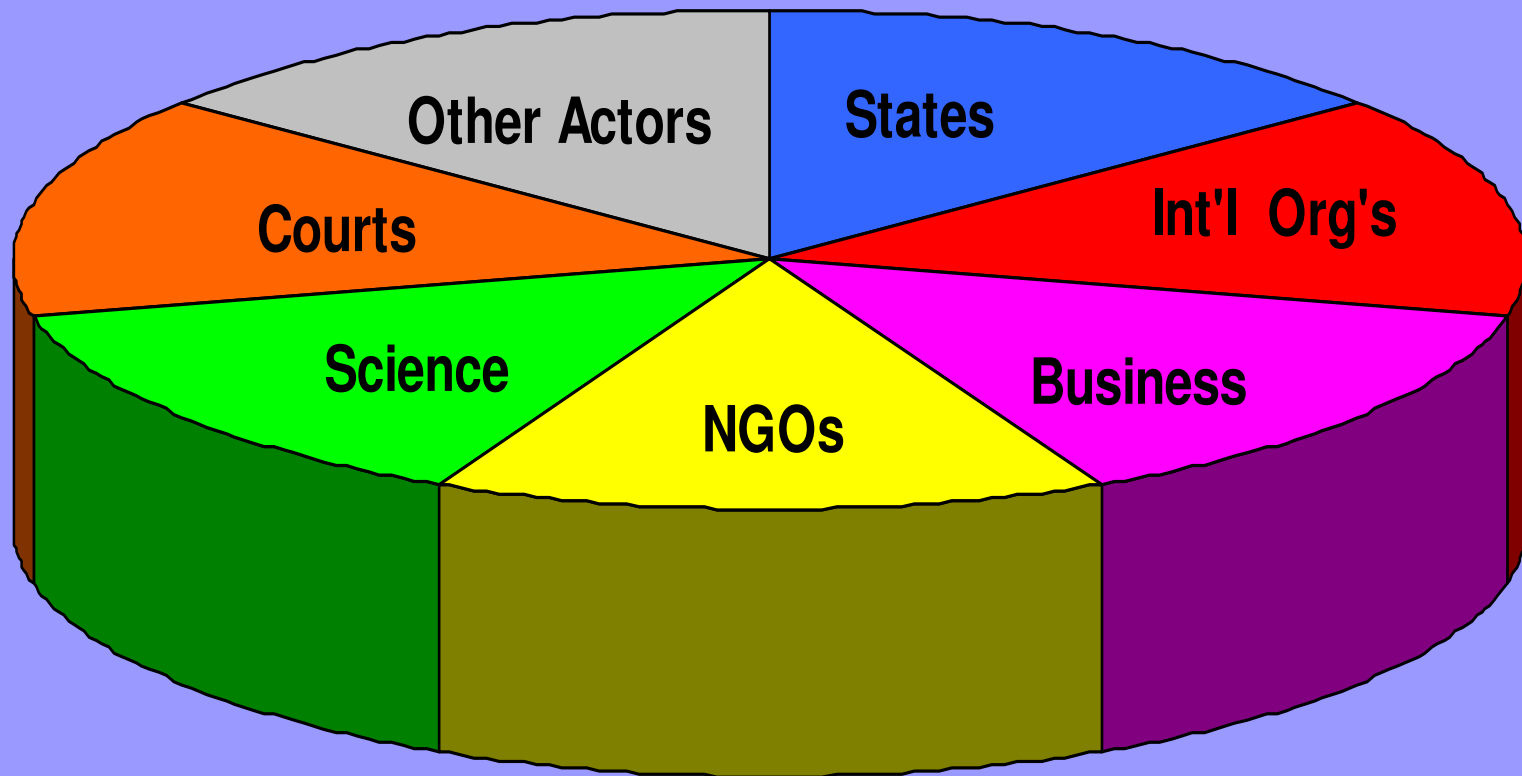


... an analytical concept that is used to denote a transformation of world politics with regard to three dimensions:

- (i) a qualitatively new role for non-state actors
- (ii) an increasing interdependence of policy levels, and
- (iii) the emergence of new steering mechanisms.

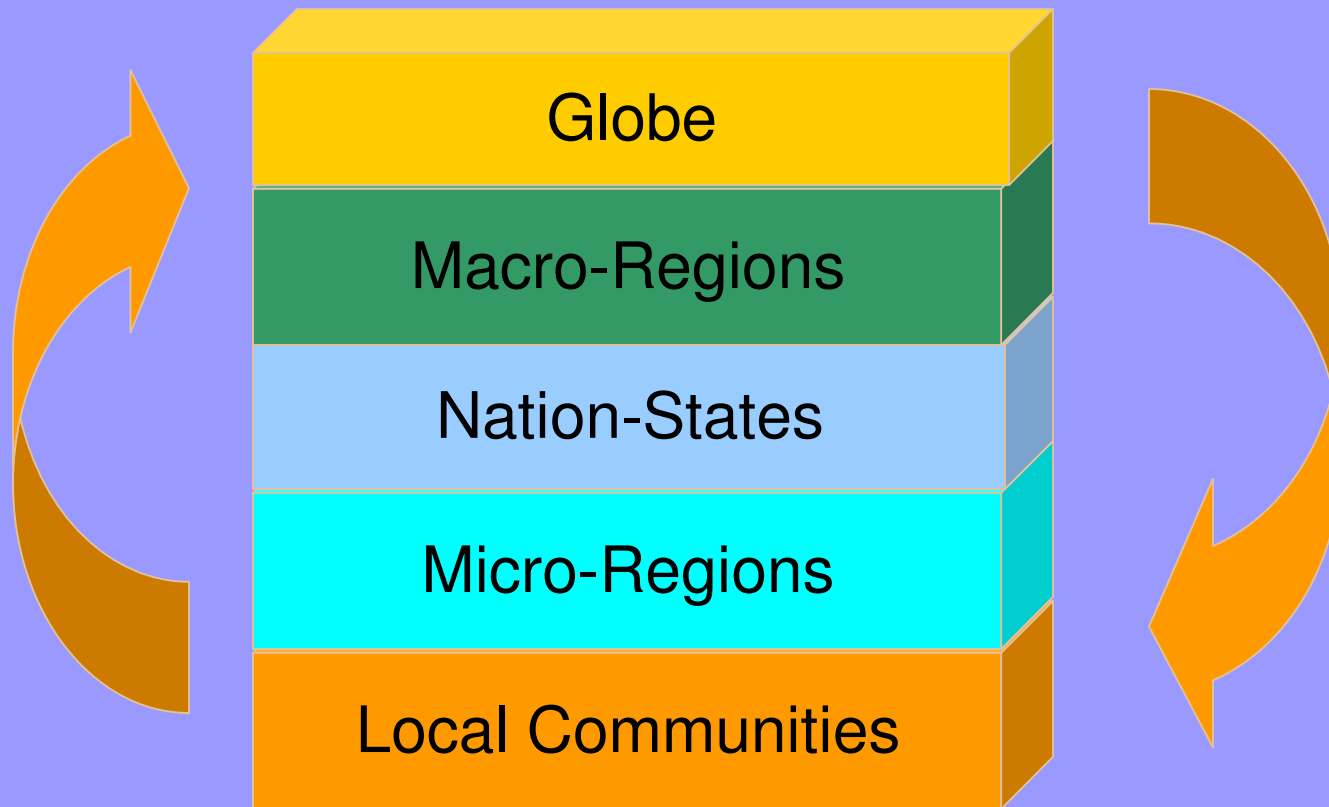


Multiple Actors



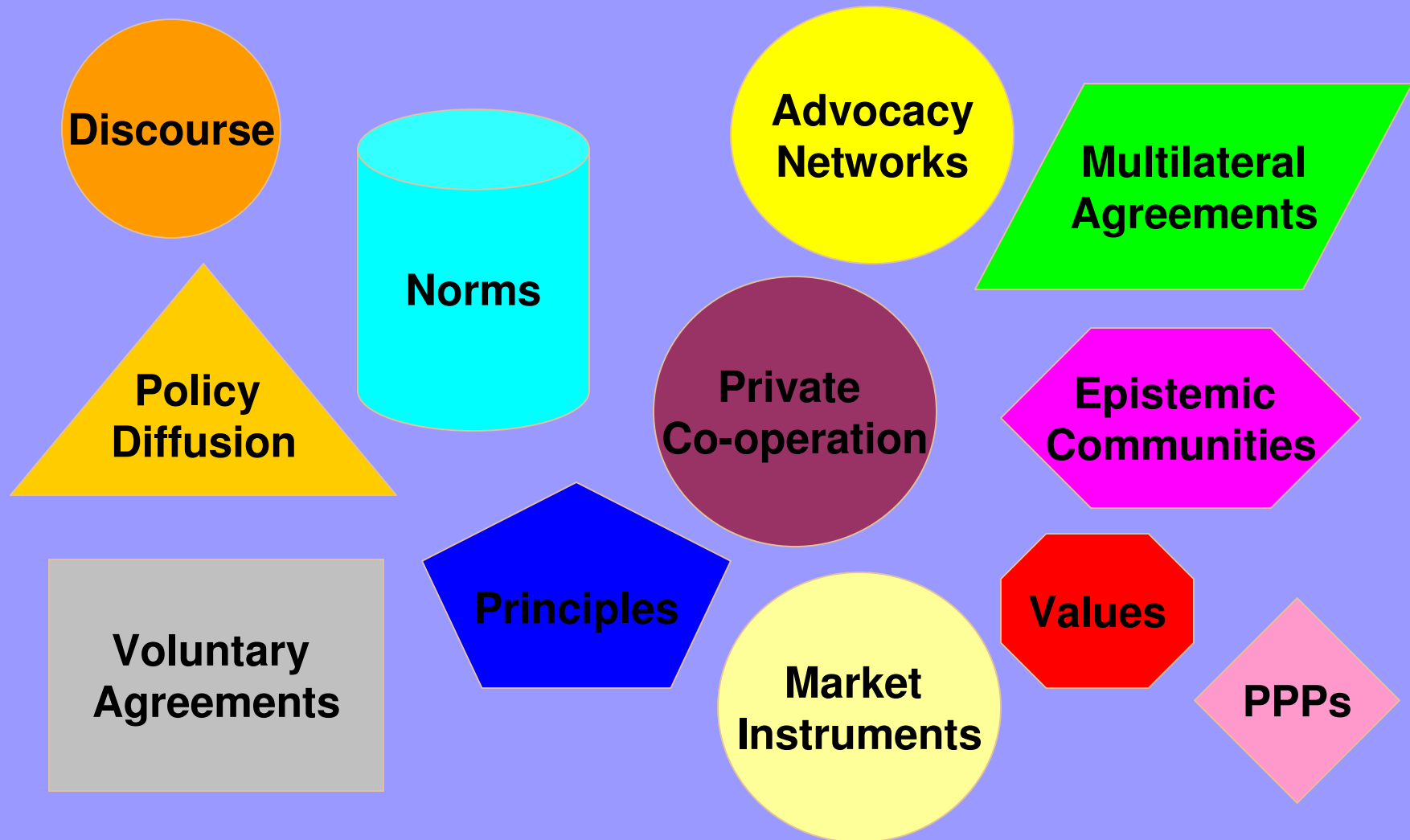


Multiple Levels of Interaction





Multiple Mechanisms





GG as a Political Programme

- Global governance as a concept of political responses to the process of globalisation;
- GG as a long-term project of global integration (with the EU as its prime model);
- “Efforts to bring more orderly and reliable responses to social and political issues that go beyond capacities of states to address individually.”



GG as a Political Programme





GG as a Discourse

- Global governance as a hegemonic discourse about the negative consequences of neo-liberal transformation.



GG as a Discourse

- Sustainable development itself has become an empty signifier that serves the purposes of opposing interests by offering specific understandings for different stakeholder groups (the three pillars of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental spheres).



GG as a Discourse

“Business used to be depicted as a primary source of the world’s environmental problems. To-day it is increasingly viewed as a vital contributor to solving those problems and securing a sustainable future for the planet” (World Business Council for Sustainable Development in 1997).



Towards Conceptual Clarity

- GG as a specific perspective on world politics that is based on a ontological difference to inter-national relations;
- Concept to study transformation of world politics.



Blindspots of GG

- Non-global governance
- Global non-governance
- Governance vs. Politics



Non-global Governance

- Governance that is global: bias towards homogeneity of regulation; OECD experience is often blindly generalised.



Global Non-governance

- Bias towards rules and regulations, difficulties in analysing non-governance or governance failures;
- Problem-solving bias makes concept blind for disfunctionalities.



Governance vs. Politics

- Danger of covering the fundamentally conflictual nature of politics by emphasising “steering” and “management” aspects;
- Bias towards impacts and not procedures (e.g. the democratic quality of the governance process).

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Thank you!