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Abstract

This paper seeks to understand what happens to politics in the era of globalization, both on a theoretical and on a practical level. The concept of “governance”, and its current uses, is critically examined as to whether it addresses the issues raised by the various dimensions of the globalization processes. The paper argues that a more comprehensive approach to governance is needed, in particular an approach which is respectful of the regional, the cultural, and the ecological dimensions of managing public affairs.

Résumé en français

Ce papier cherche à comprendre ce qui arrive à la politique à l'âge de la globalisation, et ceci à la fois au niveau théorique et au niveau pratique. Le concept de “gouvernance”, et ses usages actuels, sont examinés de manière critique afin de voir dans quelle mesure ce concept répond aux différents enjeux soulevés par les processus de globalisation. Ce papier argumente qu'une approche plus compréhensive est indispensable, en particulier une approche qui respecte les dimensions régionales, culturelles et écologiques du management des affaires publiques.

Zusammenfassung auf Deutsch

Dieser Text versucht herauszukristallisieren, was mit der Politik im Zeitalter der Globalisierung geschieht, and dies sowohl auf theoretischer wie auch auf praktischer Ebene. Das Konzept der “Gouvernance”, sowie dessen Gebrauch heute, wird kritisch dahingehend untersucht, ob und inwieweit es auf die verschiedenen Herausforderungen der Globalisierung antwortet. Der Text argumentiert, dass eine gesamtheitlichere Angehensweise, insbesondere eine Angehensweise, die die regionalen, kulturellen, und ökologischen Dimensionen des öffentlichen Managements in Betracht zieht, zunehmend notwendig wird.

Concept paper

Globalization and Governance

Matthias Finger & Ludivine Tamiotti

Introduction

This paper is part of a larger project on “*comprehensive water governance*”, conducted by the Working Group on Governance of IUCN’s Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP). Its purpose is to outline a comprehensive conceptual framework within which governance on water can be approached. We place governance within the larger context of globalization. In doing so, we try to make an intellectual synthesis drawing on knowledge and experience in the areas of environmental politics, social movements, post-modern culture, deregulation and economic globalization, and politics. Indeed, we do believe that globalization in the largest sense – i.e., scientific and technological, cultural, financial, economic, military, and ecological globalizations – already has and increasingly will profoundly alter politics as we know it. In this respect we go further than most scholars in political science who are starting to admit that globalization somewhat weakens nation-states. We think that globalization substantially transforms their status and their functions, and with it the whole gamut of political actions and behavior at all levels, i.e., from the local up to the global. We recognize the term “governance” as an attempt to re-conceptualize this changing role and functioning of politics (and not just of the nation-state). However, we also examine this concept very critically, and show that the current uses of “governance” is still very far from offering an adequate picture of what happens to politics in the era of globalization.

Unlike most political scientists and most other scholars writing (or complaining) about *globalization*, we try to grasp globalization as a comprehensive phenomenon. Even more so, we see globalization as a complex dynamics, which has its very roots in a solid Western tradition of expansion, exploitation and apparent rationalization. As such, globalization is just the latest stage in a long-term process. In this process, as we see it, traditional or nation-state-centric politics has played a significant role, yet today runs into problems as the globalization process gives rise to new actors increasingly located above the nation-state. In other words, our look at globalization is both anthropological and epistemological.

However, our approach in this paper is not a philosophical one. Rather, we are interested in the actors, the organizations, and the institutions, which shape the process of globalization, try to adapt to it and cope with it, and seek to develop political alternatives to it. Intellectually, our thinking is thus deeply rooted in organizational behavior and institutional studies. More generally, we are interested in the overall phenomenon of “*institutionalization*”, which again we see with Max Weber and Ivan Illich as an anthropological trend of Western civilization. As such, we are looking at how actors behave and strategize, how they relate to each other both in cooperative and conflictual manners, and how they adapt or not adapt. And all this strategic behavior of actors increasingly also happens at a global level. Of course, many authors have tried to show

that globalization is essentially identical to the domination of the neo-liberal world-view, and we are not disputing the fact that neo-liberalism is a powerful force pushing towards mainly economic globalization. However, we are more interested in studying how such neo-liberal and other values and ideologies are embodied in organizations and their behavior, how these organization use such values in order to further their interests or how they fight them when they no longer suit their needs. Globalization, as we see it, is therefore also a new step in a historical and anthropological process of institutionalization and organizational development, with all that ensues in terms of actors' relations, power struggles, strategies, and interests (e.g., March & Olsen, 1989; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991).

The special importance of both the concept and the practice of *governance* stems from the fact that globalization has, in our view, profoundly altered the premises of and the ground-rules for traditional, i.e., nation-state based politics. It has challenged the roles and functions of the traditional political actors (e.g., nation-states and related actors and institutions at local, national, and inter-national levels) regulating public affairs and promoting industrial development. Governance indeed emerges as a new concept – and to a certain extent as a set of new practices –, as it becomes clear that traditional local, national, and inter-national political institutions are no longer adequate in order to meet the challenges created by the industrial development process itself. Considering that past decades were characterized by a significant development in international institutions, this concept of governance has mostly become prominent in the study of international public affairs. There, the idea of governance seems to be in a good position to meet the multiple and interrelated challenges of the 21st century, as it indicates new, more cooperative ways of managing public affairs (but still mainly among nation-states), capable of coping with the emergence of new actors and the evolution of traditional actors' roles, while capturing growing interdependencies (Young, 1994: 4). While subscribing to the general line of this argument, this paper will nevertheless examine the concept of governance critically, while seeing it in the context of changing politics at all and not just at the inter-national level. In other words, we will use the term governance in a much more radical acceptation, using it essentially as a form of post-traditional politics.

The *structure of this paper* is therefore as follows. In a first section we will discuss the various dimensions of the process of globalization. In doing so, we will each time show the consequences of such globalization in terms of actors, actors' interests and institutional arrangements and conflicts. In a second section we will then highlight the consequences of such globalization on the nation-state, i.e., what we call “traditional politics”. In section three, we will discuss the various uses of the term “governance”, which will allow me to show that the concept has been used until today not only quite uncritically, but also very conservatively. In sections four and five, we will then offer our own conceptualization of the future of politics at the local, the national, and the global levels. Section four will discuss three distinct levels of politics – i.e., global, national, and local – where new forms of governance are currently emerging. Section five will place these levels into a power relationship with one another, showing that, in the era of globalization, they are not all on an equal footing. Section six, finally, will put all three levels of governance into a comprehensive perspective and show that governance as an alternative will have to be defined at yet another level i.e., the level of regional – both supra - and sub-national – governance, involving much more than this is the case today. This is what we will call “comprehensive governance”.

Globalizations

The underlying idea of this paper is that the emergence of the concept and the various practices of governance are directly related to the process of globalization. Globalization, in turn, is seen as the logical continuation, and so far last step, of a deeply rooted historical process leading up to today's global industrial civilization. In this section, we will first present the main stages of this process, identify its five key dimensions, and define today's key characteristic outcomes.

The process – anthropological and epistemological considerations

The most significant *stages* of the process which today leads to what one can call “globalization” are Judeo-Christianism, colonialism, the Scientific Revolution, the emergence of the nation-state, the Industrial Revolution, and most recently the Wars (two World Wars plus the Cold War). Judeo-Christianism, to recall, can be seen as responsible for a certain attitude of domination vis-à-vis nature, which then gave the impetus and the justification for its subservience to human desires (e.g., White, 1967). Colonialism marks the geographical extension of this Judeo-Christian worldview onto the rest of the planet (e.g., Landes, 1969, 1998), while the Scientific Revolution puts the idea of conquest and expansion onto rational grounds by replacing God by man-made science (e.g., Grinevald, 1975). With the French Revolution arises the modern nation-state, which from then on plays a key role for the expansion of the West, contributing, among others, to the systematic rationalisation of society with the individual as its centrepiece (e.g., Giddens, 1984; Janicaud, 1985). The Industrial Revolution, then, translates the meanwhile achieved scientific progress, especially in mechanics, into physical power, and thus adds a new power dimension to the conquest of the West, while at the same time opening up a new and unprecedented dimension of ecological destruction (e.g., Cottrell, 1955). This process of industrial development is finally significantly accelerated thanks to the two World Wars, but also thanks to the Cold War. Moreover, as a result of the army and its force, this model of development has by now spread worldwide (e.g., Clarke, 1972; Galbraith, 1969; McNeill, 1982).

The five key dimensions of globalization

By globalization we thus define the latest stage of a process of anthropological significance and epistemological nature, where *technological, economic, ecological, cultural, and military trends, traditionally observable on a geographically limited scale and scope, are extended to the entire globe*. First separately, but increasingly in a synergistic manner – and therefore ever accelerating –, these trends lead to new actors and new actor arrangements, with new and different (power) relationships among them. Let us briefly comment here on each of these five trends separately.

Technological globalization – which is itself the result of equally global scientific development – is certainly most fundamental, as this is the process which underlies most if not all other processes, in particular the ones of economic and cultural globalization. A lot has been written about universal technological rationality, which is without doubt a key factor of today's globalization. Yet, in our view, the most important aspect here is the fact that technological developments accelerate all other (global) changes. Indeed, technological globalization, especially in the communications sector has substantially fueled financial globalization, thus leading to speculations, economic concentration, and many others more. The underlying actors of technological

globalization are techno-scientific institutions, whose aim it increasingly is to make scientific progress useful for commercial and political interests. As almost all of these institutions work with the same scientific rationality, the outcomes of technological globalization are not astonishingly quite homogeneous.

This field of communication actually perfectly illustrates how technological globalization substantially influences *cultural globalization*. Indeed, be it because of the media, because of communication or because of tourism, more and more inhabitants of this planet share the same cultural references and define themselves in respect to the same dreams, mostly American ones, which also change increasingly rapidly. This of course leads to a certain uniformization, as well as a loss of cultural diversity (e.g., Ritzer, 1998). However, this process of cultural globalization is not necessarily synonymous with cultural homogenization, since this new 'global culture' is often fragmented and incoherent, victim as it is of the rapidly changing fads and fashions (e.g., Featherstone, 1990; Robertson, 1992). One must also mention that parallel to the uniformization of culture one can observe a localization and so-called "ethno-ization" as a reaction to it. The main actors here are media and entertainment conglomerates, which by the way are in fewer and fewer hands.

It is in the area of *economy and business* that the phenomenon of globalization has probably been best studied (e.g., Barnett & Cavanagh, 1994; Dunning, 1993), and often equated to globalization *per se*. However, one must distinguish here between the globalization of the financial networks (which are by now almost totally integrated), the globalization of production, and the globalization of the markets, i.e., of consumption. It is well known that the financial networks have become global, and that these networks have, for the most part, nothing to do anymore with economic production, and not even with commerce. The traffic of money, which now takes place almost instantaneously on a global scale, has indeed become a goal in itself. In other words, financial globalization has given rise to an "economy" based on short-term profits, where speculators gamble with the money they do not own. Production, also, becomes global: as the economy globalizes, production delocalizes, and factors of production (labor, money, and natural resources) must increasingly compete on a planetary scale, i.e., are played against each other in order to cut costs. As a consequence, the least mobile lose out, i.e., natural resources lose out against workers, and workers lose out against capital. Among the workers, it is again the least mobile, i.e., the least qualified that lose out in this "overall race to the bottom" driven by economic and technological globalization. Consumption, of course, also goes global, as culture becomes more uniform, and as production spreads worldwide. Consequently, the companies, which produce these new global goods and services increasingly merge, and turn the planet into one big supermarket. Such concentration can now be found in all sectors, some of which are already now highly cartelized as a result of economic globalization.

Ecology, also, has become globalized parallel to the technological, cultural and economic globalization. As a matter of fact, since the beginning of the 1980s, favored by a new scientific approach called 'Global Change' (Malone & Roederer, 1985) a new global look emerges which leads to seeing the planet increasingly as one single global system (Sachs, 1993). As a consequence, many ecological issues and problems are increasingly seen as a threat to the entire Biosphere. This is now the case of nuclear pollution, of climate change, of ozone depletion, of biodiversity destruction, and of many other resource or pollution related issues. And this perception is of course not unrelated to the fact that thanks to economic, technological, and cultural globalization the industrial development process has not only spread but significantly accelerated. With it, ecological problems of truly planetary dimensions have emerged. The corresponding global actors

of this new global ecological awareness can be found in the scientific community, but also among international environmental NGOs, as well as indigenous peoples' organizations (Tamiotti & Finger, forthcoming).

And even the *military*, traditionally very much tied to the nation-state, has also become globalized, parallel to planetary security concerns, some of which are now of non-military nature (see also section four). Let us mention here the fact that all kind of problems, as they become urgent, are increasingly framed in terms of security issues, calling for global military action (e.g., Homer-Dixon, 1999; Kaplan, 1996). On the other hand, the arms trade globalizes parallel to all other processes of economic globalization. Not to mention the fact that geo-political considerations are global ones since the two World Wars, and especially since the Cold War. In this respect, the military is probably the first globally oriented actor. However, in parallel and as a reaction to the globalization of the militaristic mindframe, one can observe increasingly local fights and even wars for (local) identity (e.g., Kaldor, 1999).

Outcomes of globalization

On an organizational and institutional level, there are numerous outcomes of these processes of globalization: the most striking outcome certainly is that in each of these five dimensions there are new actors emerging, i.e., actors for whom the playing field now is the entire globe. Until recently, *transnational corporations* (TNCs) were considered to be the most typical of such new global actors (e.g., Barnett & Cavanagh, 1994; Korten, 1995). Some of them – with their strategic vision, their mobility, and their economic and sometimes even political power – have already today become more powerful than many governments. But one often forgets that this same phenomenon of globalization can also be found in the not-for-profit sector (Princen & Finger, 1994). Thus, one also has increasingly to deal with 'multinational' *non-governmental organizations* (NGOs). In addition, new global agencies have emerged which are no longer directly controlled by governments, as this is still the case of most UN agencies (see also section four). We are thinking here in particular of the Bretton Woods institutions, such as the GATT and the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), or the World Bank (e.g., Chossoudovsky). All these actors not only have a global strategic vision, but today are among the most active promoters of globalization.

Promoters of globalization of course have an interest to do so, as they will profit from the continuation of the process. Yet, on a *societal* level there are also many victims of the same globalization process. Indeed, this process produces both winner and losers. The winners are generally the ones who are most mobile, while the losers are the ones who are tied to place, i.e., the least mobile ones. Of course, at an ecological level, the first victims of globalization are the species and these persons who directly depend on the natural resources for survival, whereas on an economic level the first victims of globalization are the ones that are least mobile, socially, geographically, and professionally. But on a cultural level, it seems to us, we are all victims of globalization: indeed, for most of us our identity remains often linked to a geographical place, and therefore depends mostly on a given culture and language. Consequently, globalization, for many of us, becomes synonymous with a loss of roots, loss of meaning and identity. A certain reaction of the local vis-à-vis the global, often in cultural terms, becomes therefore understandable. On the other hand, the new global reality now logically calls for global actions, something the new actors of globalization seem to have understood particularly well.

In short, while globalization builds previous historical trends of rationalization, institutionalization, expansion, and further socio-cultural and ecological degradation and exploitation, it now seems to have reached a new stage in the form of new and institutionalized global organizations (TNCs, NGOs, multilateral organizations). This new global institutional reality is however paralleled by a corresponding process of localization, characterized mainly by its defensiveness and reactivity. This evolution is of course quite logical: if the global is mainly characterized by what is mobile and profitable, the local, in turn, is mainly characterized by what is not mobile and not profitable. The new actor arrangements resulting from globalization are also as many new power relationships.

What future for “old politics”?

The question therefore now is what role traditional political actors – e.g., national and local governments, international institutions, public administrations, public enterprises, political parties, and many others more – play and still can play in these new actor arrangements resulting from globalization. In this section, we will first recall the general trend as well as the dominant opinion in this matter, then analyze more in depth what the consequences of globalization on the nation-state are, and finally outline some future perspectives.

Indeed, for the *nation-state*, the historical unit within which collective problems traditionally have been addressed, this is a particularly paradoxical evolution and situation. To recall, the nation-state was, and to a certain extent still is, a significant player in all five processes of globalization: the nation-state was and still is particularly active in the processes of cultural homogenization, of ecological destruction, of techno-scientific advancements (often tied to the military), of military conquest, and of economic growth and industrial development more generally. Today, it seems, the same nation-state, after having loyally served industrial development and its promoters, is being put into question by the very process it has actively promoted. And in some cases, if one reads neo-liberal literature, the nation-state is now the key obstacle to further growth and economic expansion. But if the winners of globalization want to do away with the nation-state, the losers, instead, seem to put all their hopes in it. Indeed, many peoples, especially in the developing countries, seem to think that the same nation-state, which at least in part has caused their hardships, will now protect them from the negative effects of globalization.

In any case, the majority of the authors writing today about this topic seem to agree that, in the era of globalization, the nation-state has come under *pressure*. Such pressure is rather easy to explain as it results from the fact everything has the potential to globalize, except the nation-state which remains tied to geography and place. Indeed, in many domains such as international commerce, global ecology, culture or even communication, traditional politics is more and more under the pressure of global actors. These, in a certain sense, bypass, avoid, or seek to instrumentalize nation-states. On the other hand, local and regional reactions emerge against globalization, which in turn put pressure onto the nation-state so-to-speak “from below”. Let us also recall that in many areas the nation-state simply has problems of addressing the issues, as many of today’s societal problems – such as ecological degradation, socio-cultural erosion, unemployment, and others more – can no longer be solved by the means traditional politics used to apply (at the nation-state level). Nevertheless, there are quite different appreciation when it comes to outlining what concretely happens to the nation-state in the era of globalization. If some believe that it simply declines (e.g., Ohmae, 1995), others

think, for example, that it adapts to globalization and as a result increasingly behaves like a firm (e.g., Prakash & Hart, 1999). We would rather tend to think that it is still premature to say exactly where the nation-state is heading as a result of the numerous attempts to adapt to and cope with globalization.

Without being able to go into details here, one can nevertheless dig a little bit deeper when it comes to analyzing the different pressures the new stage of globalization puts onto the nation-state. In particular, we would like to distinguish here *four types of pressures*. There are first the financial pressures: indeed, as profits increasingly globalize and social and environmental costs increasingly localize, the nation-state runs into a structural financial problem, out of which there is no miracle solution. The nation-state thus inevitably has to do more with less, also because it will otherwise run into a legitimation problem. The growing legitimation crisis is indeed the second pressure globalization and corresponding localization put on the nation-state. If global actors increasingly dictate what nation-states should do (either by bypassing or by instrumentalizing them), and if on the other hand peoples increasingly have reactive, defensive, and therefore temporary demands, the nation-state more and more runs into a legitimation deficit, which diminishes its credibility as a legitimate collective actor. This growing legitimation problem, along with the structural financial problems, will thirdly lead to a problem in terms of political coherence and (fourthly) collective problem-solving capacity. In short, in the era of globalization, the nation-state, along with all other actors and means of traditional politics, now is pressured. Indeed, tied as it is to place and geographical boundaries, the nation-state has serious problems with globalization's key requirement: mobility. More precisely, it is now pressured both from above and from below. Pressuring from above, the new global actors seek to bring the nation-state in line with all kind of requirements that either make sense from a global perspective (regulations) or they seek to instrumentalize the nation-state for purposes of further globalization. Pressuring from below, the peoples, often in a reactive and defensive approach, want the nation-state to protect them from all the negative consequences globalization precisely entails.

This, however, does not mean that the nation-state, as a set of organizations and as an institution, is not capable of adapting to this new situation. As a matter of fact, it most certainly will adapt. However, the real question is whether, in the era of globalization, the nation-state and corresponding politics still is and can be an actor of collective problem-solving. In other words, will it still have the means and the intention to do so? And how will it approach such collective problems. It is indeed obvious that over that past say ten years many new collective problem-solving mechanisms, along with corresponding institutions, have emerged. And the concept of "*governance*" seems to describe precisely this phenomenon: new attempts of collective problem-solving. Not astonishingly, such attempts were first made at the international level, where the nation-state had proven to be particularly ineffective. But increasingly similar attempts can be found at the local, and now increasingly even at the national levels.

Governance in the literature

In this section, and after having outlined how we got there, we will now analyze the different uses of the concept of governance. We will however not discuss these uses of the term governance which are basically synonymous with international cooperation among nation-states. Historically, "Governance" indeed belongs to the decade of the 90's. Moreover, mainly in the literature of political science, the idea of governance involves a broad range of concepts and schools of thought. Nevertheless, four different schools of

thought can be identified, i.e., namely the idea of structural or good governance, regime theory, common property resources management theory, and the idea of so-called "global governance". We will discuss each of them separately.

Structural or "Good Governance"

Structural governance is a tendency that involves mainly the democratic structures of a State at a national level only. In this acceptation, the term of governance has been mainly used by the *World Bank* since the early 1990s. Today, it is rare to find a World Bank or an UN publication dealing with development issues, which does not refer to the concept of governance. However, the idea of governance in the framework of the World Bank entails a very specific content and definition.

Indeed, World Bank working papers usually refer to the more eloquent concept of "*good governance*". To recall, the concept of "good governance" has been introduced in order to address politically sensitive questions pertaining to State reform in developing countries. Such reform efforts, and thus the concept of good governance, were mainly promoted by international financial institutions. Considering that the statutes of organizations, such as the World Bank and the IMF, expressly forbid them to take up political issues, the use of the concept of governance allowed these institutions to interfere into political and social questions without directly confronting the governments concerned. Indeed, the World Bank has used the concept of good governance in a didactic manner, mainly in Africa, in order to designate the institutions and political practices that would be necessary for the (industrial) development of a given country (Senarclens, 1998 : 92), i.e., in other words in order to obtain structural adjustment loans.

Moreover, the concept of Good Governance has also been used, in the same perspective, within the *UNCED* (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development) process. Here, the aim of the Good Governance approach is to create a political climate suitable for so-called sustainable development. Indeed, the need for a political system which provides for effective citizen participation in decision-making and more generally for good governance conditions (see above paragraph) is inherent to the concept of sustainable development (Hossain, 1995: 20). As emphasized by Ginther, sustainable development requires a close interaction between government and peoples, and a lack of social structures entails crucial shortcomings of control and public accountability necessary to secure good governance (Ginther, 1995: 155). More precisely, in the UNCED context, governance basically came to be defined as three things, i.e., (1) the participation of States in international law-making, (2) the evolution of the decision-making mechanisms of international institutions, and (3) the participation of non-governmental entities in national and international decision-making and implementation processes (Sands, 1994: 355-356).

Therefore, in both the World Bank and the UNCED context the notion of (good) governance appears to be very close to the notion of *government*, albeit at times with some additional participation by selected non-governmental organizations (both business and not-for-profit). Moreover, structural or good governance basically refers to broadly accepted structures of government, whose aim it is to promote the development of Western type "democracy". Governance then becomes a model able to provide non-democratic or stateless countries with appropriate democratic institutions. Such governance does not address for example the interdependency and complexity of governance situations as we defined them above, i.e., in terms of collective problem-

solving. Its only purpose is to picture a certain way of operating State institutions, generally a way modeled after Western democracies.

Regime Theory

Because of an increase in the number of international institutions, the growing interdependency and complexity of local and global issues, and the emergence of new actors on the international scene, it became necessary, during the 1990s, to redefine international public action. It is in this context that the concept of governance has been re-introduced again, mainly in order to define *area specific forms of governance*. Here, the term governance intends to analytically describe interdependencies and complexities involved in the operation of a given community or institution, generally limited to a geographical area and even to a specific issue (such as for example Polar Bears) or resource (e.g., water). The idea is not any more to focus on the operation of structures, but rather to understand the forces and powers involved in the overall process "governing" an issue. In the context of international relations theory, the concept of area-specific governance has thus been used at two levels, one above and one below the state level, i.e., respectively regime theory (above) and common property resources management theory (below).

Since the creation of the United Nations system, many efforts have been made to explain the concrete functioning of "International Society". To this purpose, international relations' specialists have used several concepts so as to reflect as completely as possible the complexity of this functioning. Among the analytical tools used by specialists for the study of such international relations, international regimes are particularly relevant if one seeks to understand international governance. International relations' specialists have broadly focused their attention on Regime Theory as well as on related subjects such as institution effectiveness, implementation and compliance mechanisms. Hereafter, we will briefly enumerate the relevant characteristics of these tools which all belong to the general thinking on area-specific governance.

Regime thinking has indeed initiated a new trend in the reflection on international institutions. During the 80s, many studies have been carried out on international regimes, which are fully part of governance thinking. As says Oran Young "*international regimes, (...), are (...) specialized arrangements that pertain to well-defined activities, resources, or geographical areas and often involve only some subset of the members of international society. Thus we speak of the international regimes for whaling, the conservation of polar bears (...)*" (Young, 1989: 13). The classic definition of an international regime is indeed that of a set of "*principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given issue area*" (Krasner, 1983). Almost always, international regimes have at their core an international law agreement which established specific rules, commitments and decision-making mechanisms to improve the process of governance (Victor, Raustiala, and Skolnikoff, 1998: 8). Consequently, regimes are basically centered around nation-states, even though they can and often do involve other actors when it comes to regime formulation, implementation, and evaluation.

Furthermore, a number of scholars have focused their studies on the *effectiveness* of international regimes. The purpose of such an analysis is to enhance the appropriateness of rules to facts. Effectiveness can be defined as the degree to which international environmental accords and organizations lead to changes in behavior that help solve collective problems (Victor, Raustiala, and Skolnikoff, 1998: 1). However, one

should notice that the effectiveness approach is a rather tricky one, as the assessment of the effectiveness of an international accord or regime is generally rather vague and difficult to establish. The effectiveness of regimes is here very similar to the effectiveness and corresponding evaluation of public policies at the national level.

In the same context, the study of *compliance* and *implementation* processes as part of international regimes are of increasingly great concern to the operation of international institutions. Indeed, the nature and extent of international environmental commitments have been transformed in recent years since States take on more responsibilities under treaties and agreements which are increasingly stringent and with which they must comply (Sands, 1996: 49). Such a study on compliance and implementation issues is in direct relation with the issue of effectiveness. Implementation and compliance are the processes by which the effectiveness of an accord, a policy, or a regime can be assessed.

In other words, regime theory pertains to a specific issue generally located at the supra-national level, often involving the solution of a specific collective problem by means of nation-states' and other actors' cooperation. To recall, such a regime is generally grounded in a legal framework, i.e., most often an international convention.

The Common Property Resources Management Theory

Common Property Resources Management Theory (CPRMT) looks at the effects of institutions on behaviors and outcomes in the area of (natural) resources. It is based on these common property resources that can be broadly defined as the resources in which a group of people have co-equal rights, specifically rights which exclude the use of these resources by other people (World Bank, 1992: 2). The purpose of CPRMT is to conceptualize how it is possible that individuals and groups can organize themselves to govern and manage common property resources. Furthermore, it seeks to contribute to the elaboration of a theory of self-organization and self-governance in a specific area, generally related to specific resources (e.g., forests, water, fisheries, etc.) (Ostrom, 1990: 27).

While the CPRMT is generally limited to local levels and specific areas, it nevertheless more generally considers cases where individuals are dependent on a given resource as a basis of their economic activity. In other words, every stakeholder is directly affected by what the others do, which means that each individual or group has to take into account the choices of the others when assessing personal choices (Ostrom, 1990: 38). CPRMT as well as studies of community-based organizations are highly relevant in order to understand this level and mechanism of (self-)governance. Nevertheless, CPRMT is basically a resources management approach to governance, conceptualized mostly at the local and at times at the sub-regional level. It does operate with a stakeholder approach, yet makes very specific assumptions about the nature of the stakes, i.e., economic ones. While theoretically and conceptually very solid, it is difficult to extrapolate CPRMT beyond the local level, beyond the area of natural resources, and beyond some basic assumptions on stakeholders' economic (and strategic) interests.

Global Governance

“Global governance” is certainly the most prominent, but also the most vague use of the term governance. As a matter of fact, and since the early 90s, it is the notion of Global Governance which came to be most popular in the field of international relations and institutional analysis (e.g., Paolini, Jarvis, and Reus-Smith, 1998). Global governance is clearly rooted in the idea that economic and financial globalization have profoundly redistributed economic and political power, thus challenging State authority. Also, since the 90s, the development of humanitarian interventions has altered the previous basis of interstate order, allowing for supra-state actors to increasingly interfere into national and local matters. Such and other changes were conceptualized, albeit not systematically, by an international commission, which met on a regular basis in Geneva since 1992, the so-called Commission on Global Governance. In 1995 this commission published a report entitled *Our Global Neighborhood*, in which the Commission submits a wide range of proposals in various fields such as environmental governance, economic interdependence or United Nations reform. In the framework of this report, the Commission defined the concept of governance as follows:

“Governance is the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and co-operative action may be taken. It includes formal institutions and regimes empowered to enforce compliance, as well as informal arrangements that people and institutions either have agreed to or perceive to be in their interest”
(Commission on Global Governance, 1995: 2).

With such a definition of governance it is indeed possible to capture about everything, from individuals working together to cooperation among nation-states. Furthermore, it must be highlighted that this conceptualization of governance mixes together institutions and individuals, and does not account for their relative power, nor their different strategic interests. As such, this is a conceptualization that is quite typical of UN and in particular UNCED jargon. No astonishingly, it is also a particularly non-conflictual conceptualization of co-operation, inspired as it is by humanistic and New Age philosophies. As we will show in the next section, the reality of “global governance” however looks significantly differently, and makes such conceptualization look like wishful thinking.

Some authors have furthermore tried to enlarge the concept of global governance, so that it can also include grassroots actors, as well as the role played by local peoples. In doing so, they elevate civil society actors to global players, thus not only confusing levels, but moreover ignoring the status and role of institutions. Again, such fuzzy thinking is quite typical of an intellectual tradition, which seeks to transform locally rooted peoples into a global civil society. What we see, says Lipschutz, is “*the emergence of a multilevel and very diffuse system of governance, within which «local» management, knowledge, and rule are of growing importance to coordination within domestic and international political «hierarchies» as well as among regions and countries*” (Lipschutz, 1997: 83). This, however, is not to say that local levels and actions are not relevant when it comes to dealing with concrete issues and day-to-day concerns. Indeed, many international institutions and organizations now increasingly transfer their capacity to implement, as well as their ability to control the compliance, to local actors (Tamiotti and Finger, forthcoming). However, in our opinion this has less to do with an emerging global civil society, than rather with yet another instrumentalization of the local by the global, furthermore bypassing nation-states in the process. In no way can such civil society activities be conceptualized as an organized counter-force to newly emerging global actors.

Conclusion

The four conceptualizations of governance we have mentioned here all have their shortcomings, good governance theory being particularly non-original, as it confuses governance with (American style) government. Also, global governance theory is closer to wishful thinking than to actual reality: civil society and corresponding civil society NGOs cannot be seen as being on an equal footing with other newly emerging global actors, such as TNCs and multilateral organizations. Moreover, global governance is particularly a-political, and in this respect a typical outcome of the UNCED public relations exercise (Chatterjee & Finger, 1994). Common Property Resources Management Theory, in turn, is conceptually very sound, but mainly deals with natural resources management at a sub-national level. As such, it does not really address the issue of institutions and organized actors and their interests. Regime Theory, finally, is, in our view, certainly the most interesting and promising approach to governance, as it identifies the supra-national level and explicitly addresses the issue of organizations and institutions. However, Regime Theory refers to sectoral issues, and does not really constitute a comprehensive approach, influenced as it still is by the concern of how to implement public policies, albeit at an international level. Furthermore, Regime Theory still very much remains state-centric. Finally, all four governance theories focus on one policy level without relating it to all other levels (see section six), Regime Theory however being most original here, as it defines another, i.e., a regional level of collective problem-solving.

Three levels of “governance”, or how to solve collective problems

If the previous section has discussed the concept of governance from a theoretical or conceptual point of view, thus identifying four different types of governance theories, this section refers to the practice of collective problem-solving. Traditionally, i.e., since the French Revolution, the nation-state so-to-speak had a monopoly over collective problem solving, even though it did not always manage to solve them. With globalization, however, this monopoly, along with many other state monopolies, erodes. Collective problems now also arise at the global level, and at times nation-states now even agree to solve them at this global level. Simultaneously, nation-states increasingly also push problem-solving downwards to the local level, and often peoples themselves take the initiative to do so without being explicitly authorized by the state. In this section we will discuss the main trends in the practice of collective problem-solving at the three levels, i.e., global, national, and local. However, before doing that we briefly have to explain this definition of governance as collective problem-solving, as well as the stakeholder approach it entails.

At the practical level, governance indeed refers to a mode of coordination of interdependent activities (Jessop, 1998: 29). Governance thus can be understood as the establishment and operation of a set of rules of conduct that define practices, assign roles and guide interaction so as to get to grips with collective problems (Young, 1994: 3, 15). Moreover, governance encompasses the various ways institutions, actors (public, private, and not-for-profit), resources, regulations, mechanisms interact through a continuous process, in order to find cooperative solutions to vital societal functions. To quote Ernst-Otto Czempiel, governance means “*the capacity to get things done without the legal competence to command that they be done*” (Czempiel, 1992: 250). This is what makes the difference between governance and government. Both of them are concerned

with rules and collective action but with a difference in the processes used (Stoker, 1998: 17). Governance is thus particularly appropriate to a situation where the nation-state loses its monopoly of legitimate power.

Governance therefore induces a stakeholder approach, considering the different interested partners to be legitimate parties to an agreement. Such a stakeholder approach in public affairs probably for the first time became accepted at a global level and within the context of UNCED. Ever since, mechanisms for stakeholder participation become more prominent. For example, the 1992 United Nations Convention on Desertification has requested the private sector from under-developed countries to pay directly for national plans of action against desertification (Article 6). Another example can be found in the process of the inspection panel of the World Bank. Under strict conditions NGOs are allowed to suit an action before an organ composed of independent experts, the Inspection Panel, in order to assert their rights infringed by misconduct of the World Bank or of the Borrower State. In other words, stakeholders have increasingly recognized ways of participating that go far beyond lobbying, which was the traditional approach to influencing state-centric politics.

But if, in practical reality one thinks primarily of the international level when talking about governance, the fact of the matter is that similar "governance-type" arrangements can no also be found at local level and even at national levels. Let us now briefly present what the main governance trends are at each of these three levels.

Global governance

The main actors involved in collective problem-solving at the global level are governments, international and multilateral institutions, TNCs, and some NGOs. Problems of relevance to them pertain to issues of development, trade (liberalization and re-regulation), and security.

The past fifty years have indeed been characterised by the expansion of international institutions and public actors, carrying out international policies, some of which are self-attributed. To recall, there is since the Second World War the United Nations system with its various agencies, paralleled by the Bretton Woods Institutions, i.e., the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and with yet another parallel process of trade deregulation, i.e., the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs, leading in 1995 to the creation of the World Trade Organisation, the WTO. All three types of institutions developed in parallel over the past 50 years, sometimes with overlapping missions and activities, a process which can probably best be understood in institutional development terms. For example, the United Nations, with its multiple agencies, became more and more fragmented and spread increasingly thin, which appeared particularly problematic when funds got scarce. On the other hand, the Bretton Woods Institutions, especially the World Bank, increasingly invaded UN development territory by subsuming social development and sustainability into its economic development agenda. The GATT, finally, developed a powerful dynamics of trade liberalisation, and, by doing so, somewhat undermined the agendas of both the UN and the Bretton Woods Institutions.

Today, in the era of economic, ecological, cultural, and technological globalizations, with emerging corresponding problems, paralleled by the growing importance of TNCs and NGOs, these international public actors need to reposition and to a certain extent even to redefine themselves. Such repositioning is made necessary by new challenges resulting from globalization, but also in light of pressures from public

opinion, especially in the case of the World Bank (e.g., Cavanagh, et al., 1994). Moreover, such repositioning is also made necessary in light of lobbying by TNCs, but also because of serious financial pressures in the case of the UN (e.g., Alger, 1998). Today, one can observe an institutional rearrangement, which makes international public institutions regroup around three key issues, all of which are crucial for the management of international public affairs in the years to come. These issues are security, sustainable development, and trade regulation. Simultaneously, we suggest, this is how the governance issues will be defined and approached in the years to come.

Indeed, one can clearly see how the UN, under heavy financial pressure, is currently refocusing on issues of security, i.e., basically on peace and war, the safeguard of international boundaries, human rights protection, and humanitarian intervention. In doing so, one of UN's core mandate, i.e., development, is thus being abandoned and taken over by the Bretton Woods Institutions, especially, the World Bank. Indeed, the World Bank, UNDP (the UN Development Programme), and UNEP (the UN Environment Programme), already linked through the GEF (Global Environmental Facility), seem to be regrouping around the issue of sustainable development, which might well lead up to a new "Earth Bank". Finally, there is the issue of trade and trade regulation. After having actively promoted trade liberalisation, the GATT and the WTO now increasingly come under pressure by public opinion, developing countries, and TNCs, asking for the reintroduction of some sort of trade regulation. In order to do so, however, the WTO will have to cooperate with organisations such as ISO (the International Standardisation Organisation), and other private actors.

The environment, as a cross-cutting issue, relates to all three dimensions. Indeed, environmental degradation has become over the past an issue of security, thus the by now famous term of "environmental security" (e.g., Finger 1991). Examples are found in the potential conflicts arising from scarcity of natural resources (such as water), or from transnational environmental damages (such as nuclear disasters). Secondly, since UNCED (the UN Conference on Environment and Development), environmental protection has also been reframed in terms of "sustainable development". Since then, UN bodies such as the UNDP, but especially the World Bank, have been keen to promote corresponding (sustainable) development projects. But thirdly the environment also pertains to trade: indeed, while environmental protection was and still is considered to be an impediment to trade, it is also becoming, as we will show below, an argument, or perhaps an excuse, for re-regulating trade.

At the global level, one therefore can identify three types of governance issues and governance mechanisms, namely one around security, (sustainable) development, and re-regulation. Different actors have different interests and stakes in these issues. Nation-states remain most concerned by issues of security, both national and common, and it is unlikely that TNCs and NGOs will play an active role in governance around security issues, except probably in the humanitarian area. They are probably more interested already in the governance of development, as there is more money to be made. But it is around re-regulation that the stakes are certainly highest. Participating in the governance of regulation certainly is of the highest priority to TNCs. Not astonishingly, one can observe here a process of "privatisation of international environmental governance" (Clapp, 1998). This only illustrates that, at the global level, the definition of future governance mechanisms is basically driven by financial and economic interests as well as corresponding power, mainly of TNCs. As a result, we predict, privately defined standards will become perfectly acceptable tools for global trade regulation.

Standards are just an example of how “governance” at the global level is basically shaped by commercial and power interests. At best, nation-states remain one among many shaping the outcome. In other words, at the global level, the underlying forces are commercial interests and power relationships among the actors, public and private. In this light, Global Governance Theory appears to be particularly out of touch with reality.

National Governance: managing networks

It is of course at the national level where governments still have the strongest hold on public affairs. Nevertheless, even there one can observe the erosion of traditional politics, both in terms of the policy process (policy-formulation, policy implementation, and compliance) and in terms of public management. In the case of the policy process, it appears that more and more actors are being included in policy formulation, in the implementation, as well as in monitoring and compliance. In parallel, one can observe how new types of policies – i.e., facilitating, enabling, incentive-based, etc. – are made necessary since traditional “command and control” policies are no longer effective. As a result, various stakeholders – e.g. businesses and NGOs – are being included both in the definition of the (environmental) policies and their implementation. Indeed, national authorities are increasingly using private actors to implement and monitor their own national policies. For instance, in the field of wild bird protection, national authorities have established a strong partnership with scientific organizations to obtain accurate information on the implementation of their policies.

This evolution at the policy-level is paralleled by a similar evolution at the public management level: indeed, and thanks to privatization and other forms of outsourcing, many non-governmental actors are now contributing to the implementation of public service objectives, thus necessitating all kinds of “governance-type” mechanisms in order to coordinate the various actors.

This situation, however, is not (yet) comparable to the situation at the global level, where governments are clearly only one among many actors involved in managing public affairs. In this respect, the term governance at the national level is therefore not entirely appropriate. Indeed, governments retain their ultimate power, i.e., sovereignty over their territory, as well as control over legitimate power. Nevertheless, the capacity to get things done is increasingly dependent upon a government’s ability to mobilize the various actors involved.

None of the above governance theories addresses this issue at the national level, and one has to look at theories of public management in order to find a conceptualization of this evolution. We cannot go into details here, but would like to note the new conceptual developments in this area basically point to two different directions, depending on the importance of the market involved. If the public services in question can be delivered in its majority by the market, there is a clear trend from public service provision to regulation, where government regulates the players in the market. But where this is not the case, i.e., when public service is mainly the result of public provision, one can identify new theoretical conceptualization such as “network management”. Here the role of government mainly becomes to mobilize, entertain, and facilitate a complex network of public, private, and not-for-profit actors. Unfortunately, such conceptualizations are never put into the larger framework of governance, nor are they put into relationship with the developments occurring above and below the nation-state level.

Local Governance

At the local level, governance is again a totally different matter. In order to understand this type of governance, we must recall the developments in section one, where we have shown that the local, in the era of globalization, becomes synonymous with exploitation and domination. In other words, the local is used by the global in order to further the process of globalization. Furthermore, the local is where the problems become first visible – even if they are only symptoms of global problems --, and where the resources and means to address these problems are smallest. In other words, in the era of globalization, the local is where problems need to be solved as they arise. If these problems become too overwhelming, national and especially global actors intervene (see above on global governance).

In non-crisis situations, national politics generally conceptualizes the local as a level or a problem of *implementation*: indeed, the local is the final level of the implementation chain, i.e. the level at which all global, regional and national policies will ultimately (have to) be implemented. This is also the level, which ultimately provides the legitimation for the entire public policy chain. Interestingly, and parallel to the erosion of traditional politics, the role of the local is increasingly being recognized by both the national and global political actors, as being vital for their own effectiveness and legitimation. To quote the Commission on Global Governance, examples of governance at the local level may be the following: a town council operating a waste recycling scheme, a multi-urban body developing an integrated transport plan together with user groups, or a local initiative of States agencies, industrial groups and residents to control deforestation (The Commission on Global Governance, 1995: 2). Many collective issues may indeed be handled more efficiently on the local level. Local populations often have intimate knowledge and experience of local ecosystems, as well as a sense of roots and continuity with a given place (Mische, 1991: 111).

To recall, this level of governance has only been recognized in the context of larger global problems, i.e., in the late 1980s after the publication of the Brundtand Report in 1987. The need for and the role of local actions has moreover been enhanced by Agenda 21 agreed upon during the UNCED Conference in Rio in 1992, which in turn encourages local actors to develop their own local Agendas 21. As a consequence, numerous initiatives all over the World were launched. Most of these initiatives are educational in nature and not really problem-solving. In any case, such local actions are rarely self-contained local governance mechanisms, as they are part of a larger concept of implementing a “global public policy” (see the next section on the instrumentalization of the local by the global and the national).

However, what we would see as truly local governance is something else, namely *community-based local problem-solving* within the larger framework of globalization and localization as outlined above, and of “Learning Our Way Out” out of the dead end of industrial civilization (e.g., Finger and Asún, forthcoming). Without doubt, such collective problem-solving efforts will become increasingly necessary parallel to the process of globalization and the destructive effects it has on local communities and their livelihoods. Such collective problem-solving approaches are also quite different from the efforts as conceptualized by common property resources management theory. Indeed, the weakness of that theory pertains to the fact that it does not contextualize common property resources management, especially within the larger framework of globalization. Community-based collective problem-solving is thus, in our mind, not adequately

covered by common property resources management theory. However, this is where currently the most innovative governance efforts take place.

Conclusion

One must conclude that governance efforts as we have defined them above – i.e., as attempts to collectively solve (public) problems by associating the relevant stakeholders – can now be identified at global, national, and local levels. However, we would like to caution, as the issues, the stakes, the actors involved and therefore the governance mechanisms are quite different at each of the levels. At the global level, what really is at stake are issues of common security, of further development, and of trade regulation. At the national level, the main issue at stake is the survival of a public service, which still deserves the name, i.e., a public service which is respectful of equity and justice. As such, it is really the survival of the democratic state that is at stake. At the local level what is at stake is yet different, namely the ability to collectively solve problems, many of which created by globalization, i.e., the inconsiderate pursuit of industrial development.

But even though the stakes and often the actors involved are different at each of the three levels of governance, the levels however are not independent one from another: what happens at one level of governance has an influence on the other. Moreover, and as we have tried to show in section one, there is a power relationship between the three levels. Let us thus now turn to this inequality among governance levels.

All levels are *not* equal

In this section we would like to confront the various theories of governance with the process of globalization and the implications it has on global, national and local governance. We will first criticize the various theories, to then show that and how the different levels of governance – global, national, and local – now are in a power relationship with one another.

Indeed, let us first note that governance at the three different levels (global, national, and local) means three totally different things. At the global level, governance is essentially a mechanism to balance out differences in strategic interest and power between the various actors involved, i.e., mainly TNCs and to a certain extent also some geo-strategically interested governments (basically the G8). At the national level, governance means the continued ability to formulate and implement public policies worth of that name, now by involving many other non-governmental actors. At the local level, instead, governance, now means and increasingly will mean the ability to collectively solve problems, often against the will of the governments and the global actors (TNCs).

This is also to say that the three governance levels are not at all coordinated, and probably cannot be coordinated given the fact that the stakes and the interests among the actors involved are each time different. This is particularly problematic in the case of the four theories discussed above, which all focus on their specific levels. Global governance theory, in particular, maintains the illusion that governance can be an encompassing concept linking the local, the national, and the global into one coherent (and non-conflictual) governance framework. As such, global governance theory – along with common property resources management theory – makes one believe that all actors

involved in a given governance mechanism are equal partners, commonly deciding about their fate and/or the use of their resources. In this respect, all four governance theories are particularly pernicious: they hide power relationships and the actors' strategic interests. This is particularly problematic at the global level, as we have tried to show.

It is moreover problematic when it comes to the relationship between the different governance levels: especially global governance theory maintains that all levels are partners in an overall encompassing governance approach. The local is said to complement the global and vice versa, whereas the national is considered to mediate between both. However, in light of our developments in section one, this is far from being the case.

Indeed, the three levels are not equal at all: in the era of globalization, global actors now have a significant advantage over local and even over national actors, as they are more mobile, and often richer. As a result, global actors exploit the local, especially the local resources and manpower, by playing them against each other. Increasingly, the global actors, i.e., mainly the TNCs, also exploit nation-states, or nation-states are simply instrumentalized in order to better exploit the local. If the national cannot be instrumentalized by the global actors – say for example by the multilateral institutions –, it is simply bypassed, as in the case of the World Bank contracting directly with Northern and Southern NGOs when it comes to implementing some of its objectives.

In any case, the process of globalization clearly favors global actors over local and even national ones, as global actors, thanks to globalization, have more and more means to use and exploit the local, often by instrumentalizing the national in the process. It seems to me that any theory of governance – even if it is only limited to one level – needs to take this fact into account. And this is what we would like to do in our conclusive section, where we will look at governance in a more comprehensive way.

A comprehensive approach to governance

A comprehensive approach to governance in the era of globalization thus needs to take its point of departure in a solid understanding of the underlying dynamics, leading both to further globalization, corresponding localization, and subsequent erosion of traditional political actors. It is against the understanding of this dynamic that one can see the inadequacies of current governance theories. In particular, one understands that “global governance” has less to do with collective problem-solving than with strategic interests and power relationships among private and to a certain extent also public actors. If there are governance mechanisms involved at the local level, they pertain to collectively solving problems, which were mostly created by globalization. However, most of these local efforts will be defensive and reactive, and most of these actions will be small in scale, thus running the danger of being instrumentalized if successful. As for the national level, it is itself struggling to maintain some sort of credible and legitimate (in the eyes of the citizens) public service, by involving more and more actors. This, again, is mainly a defensive and reactive approach. And simultaneously, the nation-states have to watch out not become instrumentalized by increasingly powerful global actors.

In any case, it is doubtful whether any of these three levels is the appropriate one when it comes to dealing with globalization and its negative consequences: indeed the global level is too interested and involved in pursuing the process for it to be an appropriate level to address it. The nation-state, in turn, is either already too

instrumentalized by the global actors or simply not the appropriate level when it comes to addressing the main problems caused by globalization, such as in particular the cultural and the ecological consequences of globalization, but probably also the economic ones. The local level, in turn, even though the most innovative one, is probably too small and too vulnerable to national and global forces.

One therefore has to think of *other levels* of governance than the global, the national, and the local ones when it comes to addressing the negative consequences of the globalization process. Key requirements for such levels to be relevant pertain to some sort of ecological integrity or coherence (e.g., bio-regionalism, eco-regions, watersheds, etc.), but also to some sort of cultural dimension. Indeed, the cultural dimension, it appears, is an important factor in the reaction against globalization, and as such cannot be neglected. As a matter of fact, the main stake, as we see it in the age of globalization, pertains to ecological *and* cultural survival. Both the ecological and the cultural dimensions point to a regional approach to governance, which, depending on the country and the region, can either be of supra- or of sub-national nature. The original strategy of the “new politics” thus would precisely be in the design of such new regional governance mechanism.

In the design of such regional governance mechanisms, one could certainly be inspired by Regime Theory, as well as by Common Property Resources Management Theory. Yet, this conceptualization would have to occur within the larger context of the globalization-localization dynamics, being also mindful of the respective powers and strategic interests of the various global and national actors. Finally, such a conceptualization would have to locate itself within the overall framework of collective problem-solving or, in a “Learning Our Way Out” approach (Finger and Asún, forthcoming), the main issue being the level at which such collective problem-solving makes most sense and has most autonomy.

This background paper serves as a conceptual foundation for approaching the issue of “comprehensive water governance” within a context of globalization. As such, it has to allow for two things (and should be judged accordingly), namely (1) to position water within a larger framework of governance and globalization, and (2) to help conceptualize comprehensive governance as a means to address issues of water management at all interlinked levels. Throughout the progress of this project, this background paper should therefore improve so as to accommodate the de findings of the different case studies.

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