



A Brief Thought Piece:
An evolutionary perspective
on Sustainable Development
Governance

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ABOUT SDG2012

Sdg2012 is Stakeholder Forum's Programme on Sustainable Development Governance towards the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 (UNCSD), also known as 'Rio+20' and 'Earth Summit 2012'. The programme consists of the following activities:

- **Thought Leadership** – writing and commissioning think pieces on issues relating to sustainable development governance, to stimulate and inform discussion on this issue towards Rio+20
- **Sustainable Development Governance 2012 Network (SDG2012 Network)** – co-ordinating a multi-stakeholder network of experts to produce and peer review think pieces, discuss and exchange on issues relating to the institutional framework for sustainable development, and align with policy positions where appropriate
- **Information and Resources** – publishing informative guides and briefings and hosting an online clearing-house of information and updates on international environmental and sustainable development governance – 'SDG dossier'
- **Submissions** – making official submissions to the Rio+20 process based on think pieces and dialogue.

ABOUT STAKEHOLDER FORUM

Stakeholder Forum is an international organisation working to advance sustainable development and promote stakeholder democracy at a global level. Our work aims to enhance open, accountable and participatory international decision-making on sustainable development.

Stakeholder Forum works across four key areas: Global Policy and Advocacy; Stakeholder Engagement; Media and Communications; and Capacity Building. Our SDG2012 programme sits within our work on Global Policy and Advocacy.

MORE INFORMATION

If you would like to provide feedback on this paper, get involved in Stakeholder Forum's SDG2012 programme, or put yourself forward to write a paper, please contact Hannah Stoddart, Head of Policy and Advocacy at Stakeholder Forum – hstoddart@stakeholderforum.org

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TRANSITION AND GOVERNANCE

We are in the midst of a civilizational transition. We are moving from an era in which environment and sustainability were concepts yet to be born in public consciousness, to an era in which they will be deeply ingrained as global ethical imperatives that will guide countless actors, much as social morays and economic relationships have for the past century. This will come to be. The current dialogue about “Green Economy” and “International Environmental Governance” (IEG) will not determine whether this will occur. That tide is already sweeping the Earth. But our decisions about green economy and, particularly IEG, will dictate the pace of that transition and the character of the world it will create.

This paper makes the case that the traditional model of environmental governance is one dominated by regulatory control at the level of the nation state. The increasingly complex nature and global breadth of today’s environmental challenges, however, exposes logical limits of that traditional model. The frontier of engagement with these challenges must be both broadened and deepened well beyond the capacity of that traditional governmental focus. What will be needed, ironically, is to re-frame the roles and expectations of industry and the larger civil society within environmental governance – to effectively harness their extra-national character and capabilities and to enlist and lead them in driving toward sustainability across the broad range of societal actors globally.

Such a transition is already evolving, but will take vision and leadership at this crucial time to leverage and extend it. A preemptory focus on traditional government regulatory control will fail to harness these hugely important forces and in so doing will effectively stifle necessary efforts to extend environmental protection and sustainability deeper into the technical, economic and consumer decision-making that is shaping our future around the Globe.

NEW CONCEPTUAL MODELS

The discussion around “Green Economy” that has emerged over the past several years has strongly suggested that the moment upon us is a revolution in how we think about “economy.” This dawning awareness is often joined with discussions of government policy, and seem to carry an implicit assumption that governments are the key agents of change in this context. The linkage to green economy of “International Environmental Governance” thus implicitly takes on a more crucial import: at stake in the structure, orientation and direction of international governance reform is the fate of the green economy.

The thesis of this analysis was suggested by a comment from UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner, when he noted in a discussion with the UNEP Stakeholder Forum in Nairobi, that “Green Economy is really an attempt to ‘catch-up with reality.’” He was suggesting that in many respects, the evolution to a green (or at least “greener” economy) is already under way. By implication, he was also suggesting that the revolution in Green economy is really a revolution in the way we think about “economy” – that the nature of the economy is already undergoing a transformation that is gently moving us in the direction of sustainability, but if we can better understand that change, we can stimulate and harness it to deliver more.

The argument of this paper is simply that exactly the same reality is at work on the “governance” side of sustainability. There has been in contemporary society, crucial but largely unappreciated evolutionary change in basic elements of “governance.” What we need to truly harness the power of the emerging “green economy” and accelerate its global penetration is not only a revolution in the way we think about economy, but also in the way we think about “governance.”

That change needs to recognize that critical dimensions of “governance” are already evolving outside of governmental and intergovernmental forums. Just as our conceptualization of economy must catch-up with the reality of its current “greening,” governments deciding the fate of International Environmental Governance, need to catch-up to the reality that significant “gaps” in regulatory control are emerging in our traditional approaches, but that a number of these are already being at least partially “filled” by non-governmental actors. Governments need to see this, recognize it for what it is – governance – and understand the crucial role it can play in extending their own capabilities more deeply into the technical, economic and consumer decision-making that are, as a practical matter, effectively beyond their regulatory reach.

EVOLUTIONARY PRESSURES

To appreciate the significance of this subtle shift in the character of governance, it is necessary to first examine the evolutionary pressures that are converging to drive both the economic change that Steiner was noting, and the changes in the challenge of governance that have largely gone unnoticed. At the core of this is a fundamental notion that human institutions are subject to changing pressures, and they adapt accordingly. This change is often subtle in its short-term manifestations, but over time can be significant to the point of dramatic. The institutions that adapt advantageously to these pressures are competitively advantaged. Those that don’t, risk fading into the background of history.

Importantly, the roots of the evolutionary change that is moving the economy in the direction of “green” are much the same that have been at work in governance. Those pressures are challenging traditional models of governance to adapt. If reform of governance is truly to support, stimulate and accelerate the greening of the economy, these pressures, and particularly the transformations they are driving, need to be seen, understood, and adapted to. The result of such a revolution of awareness is likely to be a dramatically different conceptualization of the elements of governance – elements that will be needed to truly harness the evolving economic transformation and accelerate our progress toward sustainability. The primary drivers of these evolutionary pressures are two: globalization, and the evolution of norms of environmental and social responsibility that has accompanied that globalization.

“Globalization”: For purposes of this analysis, consider “globalization” in its macro-sense – not narrowly the emergence of global markets, but rather the underlying forces that contributed to the dramatic emergence of truly global markets over the past 30 years. Among the forces shaping contemporary governance challenges and opportunities are global transportation and information linkages; dissolution of communist economic ideology, the related emergence of that truly global marketplace; and the emergence of a global environmental ethic.

The directional impact of all of these is toward weakening of the direct control of sovereign states over their interests. They are subjected to the impact of information technology and transportation-enabled movement of ideas, goods and “experience” at an unparalleled level –

an accelerating interconnectedness of peoples and institutions that is driving change in every nation. With this erosion of sovereign boundaries, nation states are struggling to re-assert control over forces impacting their economic and social fabric – struggling to “catch-up.”

Environment: There is an emergent environmental ethic - a systemic force that is largely the product of our lifetimes and which has become global. At its root is the dawning of awareness that human institutions are operating on such a scale that our actions are changing – and threatening – our environment and the ecosystems upon which we depend. Compared with the fundamental forces of the economic and social dimensions of civilization, the emergence of this awareness as a global force is thus recent.

This is not so for the other “pillars” of sustainability. Trade has been evolving in a civilizational context for thousands of years, with trade relations among states evolving since the nation state emerged. In contrast to the economic and social institutions at the heart of every nation, we are only just now creating the structure and institutions aimed at dealing with environmental affairs at both the national and global levels.

It is extremely important to understand, though, that this environmental awareness has not been static. It, too, has been evolving. From the standpoint of institutional adaptation, the adaptation of contemporary “governance” to these environmental pressures took initial form around point-source waste and emissions. State after state institutionalized regulatory structures and “environment ministries,” the aim of which was to control these specific sources of environmental insult. This was done primarily through processes of establishing permitted levels of discharge, along with permitting and direct enforcement at the facility level. The facilities targeted were initially limited in number and character.

To a lesser extent, mobile sources in the form of vehicle movements were also addressed in the initial formative stages of contemporary environmental governance. This was different in character than the facility-specific permitting but was still dealing with a limited number of actors and with a single, technology-specific focus.

It is crucial to understand, however, that these for the most part are environmental insults or threats that are amendable to response by sovereign states within the context of their traditional sovereign authorities. They are largely contained or “containable” within sovereign bounds. So, to, do these often have the character of being the product of discrete, identifiable actors, with a consistency in the character of the threatening actions that lend themselves to standardized fixes (e.g. emission controls, workplace safety standards, standardized remediation procedures, etc.). These are the roots of the regulatory model of environmental governance – heavily focused upon “command and control” of certain actions and actors known to be existing or potential problems, and with a limited, prescriptive governmental response. This was the “regulatory control model” that has largely survived to this day, and is still in the dominant “mindset” of many of those in today’s International Environmental Governance dialogues.

Evolution of “Environment”: As our science has advanced and our awareness and sophistication with “environmental concerns” has deepened and become more mature, however, we have become more conscious of dimensions of environmental impact and threat beyond those early points of attention. This “frontier” of the environmental consciousness has become far more sophisticated in its underlying science. Our concerns are no longer limited to the now-obvious point sources or the emissions

contributing to the “smog” that everyone notices. We have become conscious of far more subtle effects – some acting only decades after exposure – that come from a seeming myriad of sources across a broad and expanding range of human activities and products. Similarly, as we have come to be conscious of environmental threats and responsibilities in a life-cycle context, the frontier of active interest for regulators has expanded even further. The range of environmental “threats” against which we expect the government to defend is seemingly in exponential expansion.

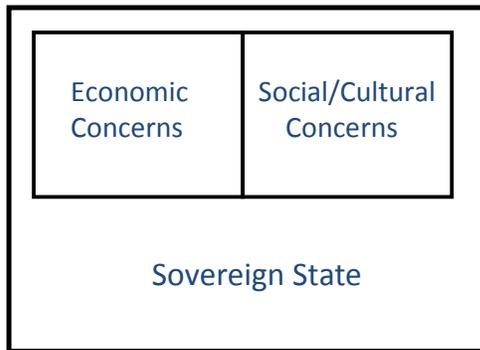
Governments have thus had the challenge of responding to this far more varied character of environmental “threats.” Importantly, with this expanding awareness, the regulatory frontier in environment has migrated away from those “self-contained” points of focus with a limited number of identifiable actors. Active environmental concern and regulatory attention has migrated up the value chain to natural resource extraction and down the value chain toward products.

But in this era of globalization, this expanding horizon of regulatory interest runs up against the reality of commodities and products that are now routinely sourced globally and that routinely move through global markets in vast quantities through a myriad of connections. With complex articles such as advanced electronics, or aircraft, for example, the number, sources and constituents of such products can be staggering, to say nothing of their multiple points of origin around the globe. The challenge of environmental governance thus becomes far more formidable, with only a limited and shrinking portion of that regulatory frontier subject to the traditional direct regulatory control of any given nation state.

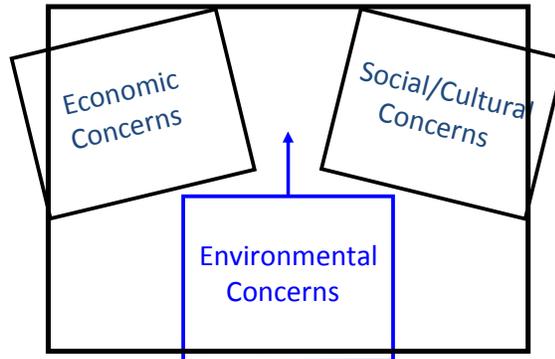
The traditional “control model” of governance is therefore being taxed. It depends upon government regulators having foreknowledge of limited, specific known actions and actors that can cause specific known and avoidable environmental impacts, along with knowledge of what specific fixes will remedy or avoid those impacts. They must also, of course, have the regulatory authority to mandate that the appropriate actions be taken. The realities of today’s increasingly complex environmental challenges and the global markets in which they are imbedded renders every one of these premises questionable.

Convergence: It is this convergence that is the challenge of international environmental governance today. We are no longer dealing with a discrete and readily manageable range of actors around a range of well-understood environmental challenges that are within the capacity of sovereign states to contain and regulate. We are dealing with often-subtle impacts of an ever-expanding range of concerns. These involve resources and products that are sourced and moved broadly and routinely in global markets. They can involve a myriad of “actors” beyond the sovereign control of any given state. But we are applying to this global landscape a model of “governance” borne in response to dramatically different challenges, and ill-equipped to adapt.

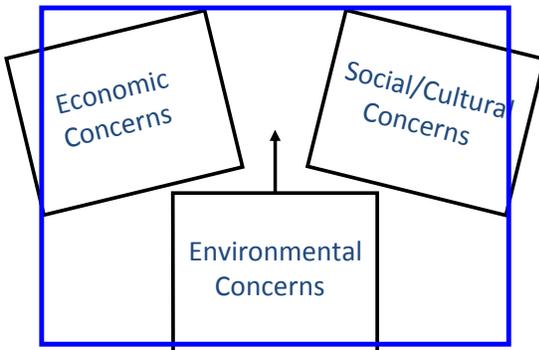
Western Civilization - Historic Model



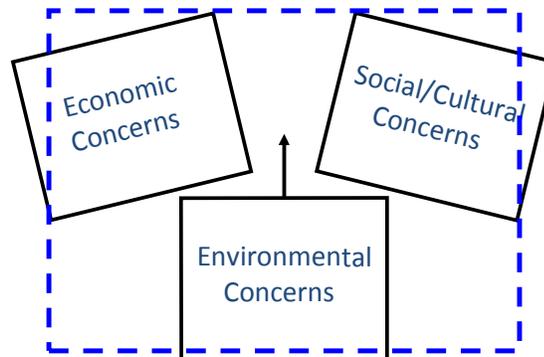
Western Civilization - Emerging Model?



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Western Civilization - Emerging Model?



Conceptually, the traditional nation state of the first half of the last century can be viewed as a box. Contained within its “sovereign bounds” are boxes for the two major dimensions of traditional civilization and its core institutions: social and economic order. Both are generally well-contained within those sovereign bounds. Over the latter half of the last century we have seen a new “box” forcing its way into civilizational consciousness – environment. It is, in a sense, competing for attention in the ethical fabric of civilization and its institutions, particularly its governments. Over the same time, however, we are also seeing those sovereign boundaries eroding across all dimensions of civilization and its institutions. Just as the “environmental box” is forcing its way into social consciousness and framing demands for governmental response, the ability of governments to directly control the forces shaping it – to regulate in the traditional sense - is finding serious limitations. Ultimately all three dimensions – social, economic and environmental – must interrelate in a world in which they are not fully bounded by the sovereign powers of the nation state

INSTITUTIONAL ADAPTATION

Nation State and Globalization: Globalization is therefore testing in fundamental ways the traditional regulatory model of the nation state. It remains the dominant organizing institution

of contemporary civilization, but it is constrained by sovereign bounds in dealing with the mounting global forces. Every state wants to assert extra-territorial control over the forces impinging on it, but none want such extra-territorial control asserted on them.

This dynamic tension has given rise to a number of experiments in adaptation via shared-sovereignty. Some of these are quite obvious. The United Nations, for example, gives the states a common forum in which to deliberate and in some instances act on common challenges. This has spawned a number of multilateral agreements aimed at framing “extra-territorial standards” addressing a limited range of discrete common problems.

There are other examples as well. In some cases, the grants of shared sovereignty have been quite significant. Trade is such a vital dimension of contemporary civilization that states have given a rather dramatic grant of extra-territorial sovereignty to the World Trade Organization in subscribing to its dispute resolution mechanism. In essence, this creates a quasi-judicial process and allows the global institution a grant of being able to reach into its internal economic affairs and extract a retribution price in the event of transgression of commonly agreed standards of trade conduct.

Among the most extreme grants of extra-territorial sovereignty is the European Union. This is an experiment in shared sovereignty aimed at enhancing global competitiveness and economic security among the Member States. They have all agreed to a discrete range of shared regulatory and other obligations. Origins of the EU were rooted in pressures of global economic competition, but its reach has gone well beyond that of shared economic structure. Significantly, it has also extended to address other common problems. Of particularly interest here, are the common challenges posed by our expanding understanding of environmental impacts of our contemporary existence.

Nation State and Environment: The challenge of adapting shared-sovereignty to the increasingly complex challenges in environment adds a very significant complication. Conventional mechanisms are limited in scope and focus. The expanding arenas of concern in environment are not readily amenable to traditional multilateral environmental agreements. The MEAs are best suited to very specific challenges rather than the generalized frontier of contemporary environmental concern. Similarly, those frontiers challenge even the most sophisticated scientific and regulatory capacity, and can be well beyond the reach of many developing nations. And finally, the differing contributions of nations to the global markets can end up being divisive on critical aspects of negotiated agreements.

The traditional regulatory model that drives intergovernmental forums and agreements, however, is not the only force of “environmental governance” shaping our path toward sustainability. To appreciate that, though, you need to look beyond the governments to the other major institutional players in the ongoing drama of globalization: global industry and the public interest community.

THE OTHER PLAYERS

Governments are not the only institutions adapting to globalization and the increasing complexity of environmental concerns. Significantly, governments may actually be the least-able to adapt to forces of globalization. Governments, after all, are the institutions most constrained by sovereign bounds. In contrast, the private sector and the public interest sector have in common particular aptitudes not just for adjusting to globalization but thriving on it.

The adaptive advantage global industry has always enjoyed is the capacity to mobilize resources across sovereign bounds – to organize where and how it needs to in order to secure inputs, transport them, manufacture and distribute them wherever there are markets (and of course, with the dissolution of communist economic ideology, “markets” have become much more truly global). The public interest community has the extraordinary capacity to mobilize ideas and propagate them globally, particularly via the internet.

Both institutional elements of civil society – industry and the public interest community -- are therefore advantaged versus governments at adjusting to and even leveraging the forces of globalization. Significantly, both have also been extensively cultivating adaptive responses to the global pressures of environment and sustainability. Indeed the public interest community has been in significant part responsible for the globalization of those forces, and much of that global mobilization has been aimed at creating the very pressures to which industry is adjusting.

What the traditional “control model” of governance fails to do is to systematically leverage these institutional capabilities that exist outside the direct governmental control realm. But doing just that – tapping into and leveraging the increasingly sophisticated and far-reaching adaptive responses of industry and the public interest community – contemporary “civil society” broadly writ -- may ultimately be a key to delivering globally systemic movement toward sustainability.

Industry: The corporate enterprise evolved as an enabler of “mass society.” The capacity to mobilize and orchestrate resources across sovereign boundaries proved to be particularly important in meeting needs and wants during the last century, which featured the emergence of mass society. The institutional role was simple: “The business of business is business.” Industry delivered, and in so doing, it was meeting the expectation of the western societies – playing a “responsible role” in society. Societal notions of responsible corporate citizenship were framed accordingly.

The capacity of industry to organize efficiently and tackle global challenges is a key to its adaptive success. In the context of tackling global environmental and sustainability challenges, it is important to note that this adaptive capacity features a vital element both within individual institutions and among them – efficient development and application of global harmonization and standards, even when there is not harmonization at the level of the nation-states across which the companies and markets operate. Efficient and effective global coordination within an institution and between institutions within markets is essential, as are common metrics and standards for such systemic considerations as quality, performance, etc. Global markets cannot function without addressing such challenges in a very systematic way. In fact, the development and application of management systems may well be the key strength of industry.

Also important is the fact that this institutional capacity to organize and harmonize in tackling common problems effectively reaches into every corner of the earth – wherever markets feed into or are fed by

the “global marketplace” they are touched by and shaped by these organizing and harmonizing impulses, no matter how distant and diverse, no matter how basic or how complex. Markets must speak in common terms and must deliver against common expectations, all of which must transcend sovereign bounds, no matter how diverse. In a very real sense, this may be among the most highly developed capacities of “governance” ever to evolve, but it exists almost entirely independently of our contemporary governmental structures.

Industry, Environment and Sustainability: Development and applications of global approaches to complex standard-setting and harmonization problems is also coming to be seen as an integral element of addressing emerging environmental and sustainability challenges, particularly those that can have product- or market-specific aspects and those at the frontiers of science. Global governance in environment and sustainability must be able to deliver this across a range of markets and a range of challenges. Governments struggle to accomplish this via a handful of MEAs. Industry has whole institutions organized specifically to do just this, and those have already become active on the environment and sustainability frontier.

Perhaps the leading example of this is the Organization for International Standardization (ISO). ISO is well-known for development of its standards for manufacturing quality, for example (ISO 9000), which frames common standards for organizing and measuring approaches to quality control. Such programs are not mandatory in the sense of government regulatory controls, for example, but they can be used to help ensure delivery against common desires for assuring quality among suppliers. Global companies will often set ISO 9000 as a compliance standard that must be met by anyone seeking to qualify as a supplier to them. A *di-facto* result of this is global propagation of ISO 9000 Management System as, effectively, a global quality standard, but without the direct involvement of government.

ISO has over 18,500 separate standards that have been developed to help meet this need for industries and markets to harmonize and standardize in order to link globally, and another 1,100 are developed annually. It is not surprising that as environment and sustainability have become global expectations of responsible corporate citizenship, industries have looked to ISO to help them respond in an appropriate, systemic way. Two examples of this are ISO 14000 series for Environmental Management and the recently adopted ISO 26000 series on Social Responsibility. These are both evidence not only of the global pressures industry is feeling to more systematically address environment and sustainability challenges, but also of the fact that these emerging expectations of responsible corporate citizenship are motivating real action quite independent of government regulatory control.

There are other industry-specific examples. One of the most important in terms of environment may be the global chemical industry’s Responsible Care Program. This was a response of the industry to the tragedy of Bhopal. The reverberations of that were deep in the industry, and prompted a significant program to systematically advance chemical safety throughout the industry: Responsible Care. This program developed a broad range of performance standards in environment and safety, and was aimed at continuous improvement. It has now been taken up as an industry standard in by 54 chemical industry associations in 60 countries, in many of which it is significantly ahead of any regulatory programs. In that sense it is systematically upgrading environmental responsibility and performance independent of direct government regulation.

In recognizing that the frontier of environmental concern has migrated downstream to products, the global chemicals industry in 2002 added to this its Global Product Strategy – a similar metric-drive global

push to ensure upgraded systems-approaches to performance in health and safety aspects of product stewardship. Again, this is reaching well beyond contemporary government regulatory programs and is being propagated globally.

To be sure, these global standards are not always warmly received in all corners of the globe. Some of the most volatile confrontations in the WTO Trade & Environment Committee, for example, have involved push-back from some developing countries to the effect that propagation of global standards such as ISO 9000 are a veiled attempt at erecting non-tariff barriers to trade, because they differentially favor large, well-organized global corporations – often of the north. The reality, however, is that to the extent health and safety are to be addressed globally, the business enterprises of the developing world must be brought up to speed and these challenges would be no less so if the attempts at propagating global standards were the product of direct government intervention via an MEA.

In a very real sense, the global business enterprise is adjusting to a new reality. That reality is de-emphasizing the “mass” in mass-society. Under the emerging paradigm, the transition has already begun to that new reality. The global corporation is becoming an enabler of long-term sustainable well-being. The business of business is no longer just business. The challenge in today’s consideration of International Environmental Governance is whether a global structure can be devised that will work with industry and help ensure that this evolutionary change and the institutions enabling its adaptive responses are advancing systematically toward common visions of sustainable development.

In looking ahead to a global governance approach that may seek to capitalize on industries strengths, there is a particularly good example that has evolved in the realm of nanotechnology. There a number of governments have come together to discuss common challenges they all perceive in adapting their existing chemicals laws and approaches to deal with emerging capabilities and applications in the field of nanomaterials. The governments have convened via the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Paris, and formed the Working Party on Advanced Nanomaterials. The significance is that, unlike traditional OECD programs, this Working Party includes experts in nanomaterials from industry and the public interest community. The Working Party has organized into seven different groups, each one focusing on a different aspect of emerging concerns over health and safety relating to development and use of nanomaterials. These range from nomenclature to setting research agendas, developing common workplace standards, etc., and represent a merging in an intergovernmental forum of industry and public interest expertise and organizing ability, with governmental regulatory expertise.

Public Interest Community: The public interest side of Civil Society is no less adept at mobilizing and propagating ideas that transcend sovereign bounds. It has always been present in various manifestations in societies around the globe, but the rise in prominence in specialized interests groups has paralleled the emergence of global environmental concern (arguably been integral to that concern). Indeed many groups are organized around specific environmental or sustainability challenges. They can be differentiated in approach, with many focusing narrowly on particular problems and raising public awareness and concern, while others are organizing around solutions to particular challenges. Some are confrontational in approaching policy issues, some are oriented toward exploiting strategic alliances.

That variety in areas of focus and approaches to the tasks stands somewhat in contrast to the systems approaches of industry, but still represents a rich diversity that can be crucial to extending awareness

globally, as well as become integral to delivering systemic solutions. A particularly interesting case in point regarding the latter is another example from the realm of nanomaterials. Here the industry was concerned that the absence of any regulatory process relating to nanomaterials may leave it vulnerable should lagging government engagement evolve in unexpected directions. As a partial hedge against that, The DuPont Company worked in partnership with the Environmental Defense Fund over the course of several years to develop a Nano Risk Framework. This seminal project was published in June of 2007, and presents a decision framework for businesses to follow in making business decisions involving development and possible applications of nanomaterials. It has been followed and used as the starting point for similar decision systems (again a systems approach) in many companies and industries, and evolved independent of any government initiative.

That kind of partnership is unusual, but not unique. Other more prominent examples of industry and the public interest community developing joint approaches to commonly perceived concerns include the pioneering work of the World Resources Institute and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development in the development and publication of their joint Greenhouse Gas Accounting Protocol, which formed a basis of a systems approach to fundamental questions about accounting for greenhouse gas emissions. The standard has become a foundation of contemporary climate change policy, but again, evolved independent of direct governmental involvement.

These initiatives in the policy development realm are significant examples of quasi-regulatory roles being played by industry and the public interest community. Another aspect of public interest community involvement in domains more traditionally governmental include the widespread contribution of the public interest community as “watchdog” over both industry and government practices that may not sufficiently respect evolving norms of environmental and sustainability practices. This role is seldom formally sanctioned.

Another role important to long term sustainability that many public interest organizations are evolving to is one of purveying knowledge and understanding, especially relating to public or community challenges like water protection and the like. As with the watchdog role, this often is taken on a self-appointed basis, and unlike the initiatives of industry, is seldom founded in systems approaches that can be readily amenable to evaluation and accountability. It is an important role nevertheless, and deserves to be cultivated by governments, perhaps by addressing some of its accountability questions. But the advantage such public interest initiatives can have is in extending knowledge and awareness beyond the capacities of governments – often to corners of the earth lagging or bypassed altogether in the evolution of such awareness.

CHALLENGE GOING FORWARD

This then is the landscape of key players in environmental and sustainability policy which International Environmental Governance must mobilize and harness, if it is to significantly accelerate our progress toward an era of sustainability. It poses different challenges for each of these key agents going forward. And for the governments collectively that are seeking to shape the future of International Environmental Governance, it poses the overall challenge of strategic integration. What combination of institutions and programs will best capitalize on the strengths of each of the key actors globally, harnessing those strengths systematically and applying them to develop, advance and reinforce common visions of

responsible environmental and sustainable development policy and practice?

For Governments: The reality of global challenges at the frontiers of science underscores the reality that the nation state is no longer in control of its own fate in an absolute sense. Accommodation to shared-sovereignty is essential, and that may have to extend across broad frontiers in some manner. To a significant degree, the “regulatory decision maker” of the traditional “control model” is becoming an “enabler” of shared responsibilities, oriented to working with and leveraging the capacity of civil society to mobilize ideas globally, and to leverage the knowledge and capacity of industry to mobilize resources globally.

For The Private Sector: Industry must continue to adjust to the reality of its added responsibility for environmental and social/cultural dimensions of sustainability. “The business of business is no longer just business.” So too must it adjust to the reality that it must work more cooperatively with governments and the public interest community, especially at the frontiers of global policy. And it must adjust to the reality of global accountability for the social and environmental dimensions of its decisions, as well as the economic accountability it has always had.

For The Public Interest Community: Civil society is demanding a role in discipline and accountability in international environmental and sustainability policy, in addition to whatever roles it may play at the national level. If it is to take on more of a role as an agent of global accountability, however, it must show itself to be more disciplined and accountable as well – with authority comes responsibility. That implies some common codes of conduct and transparency that have been largely resisted in the *laze-faire* world of civil society. And it implies more general willingness to partner in pursuit of solutions, not just holler in pursuit of awareness.

There is a new world evolving around environment and sustainable development. Governments are not the key agents of change. Change is already taking shape and the key actors are already adapting their roles. Decisions by governments on International Environmental Governance must recognize this, and design a strategy and structure that will nurture and cultivate those roles, not subordinate them. That is the key to a future that will bring the era of sustainability into reality sooner and with a more stable foundation.



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