

The Legitimation and Delegitimation of Global Governance Organizations

Academic Conference at the Universität Bremen

11-13 September 2013

- Call for papers -

When international organizations present themselves to their various audiences, they engage in a whole range of activities aimed at *legitimizing what the institution is or does*. This becomes evident, for instance, in the names given to organizational programmes (e.g. the WHO's *Health for All*, UNESCO's *Education for All*, the IAEA's *Atoms for Peace* or the WWF's *Market Transformation Initiative*) and committees (e.g. the United Nation's *Office for Partnerships* or FIFA's *Ethics Committee*). It also resonates in the public speeches of organizational leaders who recognize a need 'to improve representation, voice and accountability' (G20), call for organizational policies that provide 'growth that lifts all boats' (IMF), or describe their own organization as 'open', 'rules-based' and 'built on democratic values' (WTO).¹

Elsewhere, we observe a broad range of efforts geared at *delegitimizing international institutions* in the eyes of the general public or particular segments of the latter. Some of these efforts originate from governments; others are driven by business actors, social movements or religious communities. Yet processes of legitimation and delegitimation do not only address the concrete practices and policies of global governance organizations, but also sustain or challenge global power structures (e.g. class, gender or economic structures) and are themselves driven by those structures. Seen in this way, studying legitimation is therefore one way of studying the contested politics of global governance more generally.

Moving beyond the academic preoccupation with legitimacy as a property of actors and institutions, the conference puts the *dynamics of legitimation* of global governance at the centre stage. Legitimation has a strategic, a normative and a performative dimension. It is instrumental in the sense that a major purpose of legitimation activities is to seek the recognition of those whose support an organization deems important to achieve its goals. It is normative in the sense that a core element of all legitimation activities is the appeal to norms and values shared by the audiences to whom legitimacy claims are voiced. And it has a performative dimension when practices of legitimation change or reproduce norms and strategies of legitimation.

¹ Citations are taken from Steven Bernstein, 'Legitimacy in Intergovernment and Non-State Global Governance', *Review of International Political Economy* 18 (2011), p. 18; Christine Lagarde, 'Shared Prosperity in a Globalized World', Public Speech at Universität Zürich, 7 May 2012; and Michael Strange, 'Discursivity of Global Governance: Vestiges of "Democracy" in the World Trade Organization', *Alternatives* 36 (2011), p. 247.

Building on these broad ideas, the conference revolves around the following key themes and questions:

- *Legitimation norms:* Which norms and values (e.g. legality, justice, democracy, peace, growth) do various actors refer to in order to legitimize the identities and/or activities of global governance organizations? How does the content of such norms and values vary over time, across (types of) global governance organizations and across world regions? How do changes in the international system (e.g. rising powers) affect the set of norms and values against which global governance organizations are conventionally evaluated? And how is the contestation between different norms and values played out?
- *The structure of legitimation discourses:* Where does (de-)legitimation take place? How are legitimation discourses structured? Whose contributions count and on what terms? How do organization-specific discourses relate to each other? How are they connected to the broader social discourses in which they are embedded? And to what extent do the worldwide expansion of education (referred to by some as a 'skill revolution'), the revolution in communication technologies and the mediation/mediatization of societies alter the nature, content and processes of legitimacy communication as well as the conditions under which legitimation discourses take place?
- *Drivers and effects of (de-)legitimation:* When and how do efforts at legitimizing global governance organizations succeed? Under which conditions can legitimacy claims be successfully challenged from the inside (e.g. diplomats, recalcitrant bureaucrats or NGO observers) or the outside (e.g. social movements, the business community or states that are not members of an international organizations)? With which repertoires and resources? And what are the major short-term and long-term effects of successful (de-)legitimation efforts for an international organization?
- *Institutionalization of legitimacy management:* How do global governance organizations internally organize and institutionalize their legitimacy management and how has this changed over time? How are particular legitimation strategies developed internally? How has the emergence and spread of social media changed the ways in which international organizations (seek to) manage their legitimacies?
- *Opening up as a legitimation strategy:* When and why do global governance organizations pick the specific legitimation strategy of opening up, i.e. increasing their transparency towards the public and opening their governance processes to non-state actors? How are organizations in different policy fields opening up? How is opening up presented as a legitimacy building measure to the organizations' audiences? What are the micro-processes of opening up? How do changes in transparency and access interact with each other? Which actors are marginalized, which favoured through increasing participation and transparency?

Using a broad definition of global governance organizations, we are primarily interested in papers that deal with the dynamics of legitimation in relation to intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and their private transnational counterparts (e.g. IASB, ICANN, credit rating agencies, social and environmental certification schemes or transnational sports organizations). In addition, papers that focus on traditional international NGOs (e.g. Oxfam, Amnesty International or Greenpeace), on social movement organizations (e.g. Occupy) or on multinational corporations (e.g. WalMart) are also welcome. Contributions may come from a broad range of social science disciplines.

The conference will be organized by the research project *Changing Norms of Global Governance* (www.globalnorms.uni-bremen.de) and hosted by the Institute for Intercultural and International Studies (InIIS) at the Universität Bremen. We aim at a size of around 30 papers, with a combination of intense and workshop-style panel sessions and plenary sessions with invited speakers. Funds to cover travel reimbursement and accommodation will be available for a small number of participants, with preference given to young scholars and scholars from developing countries.

We invite abstracts of proposed papers (up to 500 words) to be submitted to globalnorms@iniis.uni-bremen.de until Friday, 15 February 2013. Notification of acceptance will be sent out by 31 March 2013, with full conference papers to be submitted three weeks in advance of the workshop (23 August 2013).

Workshop organizers:

Klaus Dingwerth, Ina Lehmann, Ellen Reichel, Tobias Weise and Antonia Witt