

Non-state actors in global governance: sources of power and learning

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Non-State Actors in Global Governance: Sources of Power and Learning

Workshop

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- FIRST DRAFT -

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I. Introduction

Non-state actors have expanded transnational activities and become relevant agents in global governance. A growing body of evidence indicates that they are agents who do exercise power over and with others in international relations. They are producing change and not only responding to it. However, we are only beginning to understand how they do it and for which purposes. While global governance approaches recognize the existence (and relevance) of non-state actors, they frequently have failed to explore unequal power relations and divergent interests.¹ The aim of this paper is to elaborate on existing analytical frameworks in order to assess the specific exercise of power by different types of non-state actors across various levels of governance and in different policy fields.

We define power as “the ability of actors to pursue successfully a desired political objective” (Fuchs 2005a, 774). Our power concept is agency-oriented/actor-centered, as non-state *actors* are at the core of our interest. Yet, we recognize that social agents are always embedded in historically and socially constructed structures and norm systems shaping the options for the exercise of power. Moreover, the political objectives of social agents are not fixed but might change as we assume perpetual social learning. Accordingly, we employ a multi-dimensional power theoretic approach, which takes into account actor-specific and structural facets of power as well as dynamics of power change associated with learning.

We concentrate on three types of non-state actors: transnational corporations, non-governmental organizations, and social entrepreneurs. These are very different types of players. Transnational corporations (TNCs) are complex, corporative actors, which own or control production or provide services in more than one nation-state (Beisheim et al. 1999, 305). They typically aim at maximizing their profit, or rather shareholder value. TNCs tend to be organized hierarchically, i.e. there is top down leadership. Corporations are hence able to act independently from the interests and preferences of the majority of the individuals of whom they are composed. This allows them a high degree of efficiency and effectiveness – also in political negotiations (Scharpf 2000, 105-106). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are commonly used as a synonym for civil society organizations (Hummel 2001, 22;

¹ For a more elaborate discussion of the inadequacies of global governance approaches to pay sufficient attention to questions of power see Barnett and Duvall 2005, Brand et al. 2000, Braunmühl and Winterfeld 2003, and Okereke et al. 2009.

Karns and Mingst 2004, 212). They can have either an aggregated (bottom up) or corporate (top down) structure. In contrast to NGOs, social entrepreneurs (SEs) are individuals. While some of them finance their activities through donations like NGOs, some pursue profit-making activities (Drayton 2006; Ziegler 2009). Both NGOs and SE aim at maximizing their political and social impact.

Among non-state actors, TNCs are usually considered to be most powerful in global governance because of their material resources and the structural dependence of governments on them in striving for taxes and jobs (Arts 2003, 7). TNC's turnovers are frequently compared to the gross national products of states to indicate the size of TNCs: The world biggest corporation Wal-Mart, for instance, had a turn-over of 218 billion US dollar in 2002, while the gross national product (GDP) of the 50 least developed countries was all together 207 billion US dollar in the same year (Sachs and Santarius 2005, 222). Even large NGOs such as Greenpeace International with an annual budget of 47 million Euros are comparatively small players in terms of material sources (Greenpeace 2009). But the ideational capital of NGOs and their abilities to promote certain norms and values within international discourse is a different story (Holzscheiter 2005): "In the face of a scandal, (...) not only the political but also the economic base of a TNC's political power may decline or even disappear" (Fuchs 2005a, 773). The power of NGOs vis-à-vis TNCs became most obvious when Greenpeace held Shell (and Exxon) off dumping the oil platform Brent Spar in the North Sea in 1995 with an energetic media campaign.² While NGOs apply such confrontational as well as more cooperative approaches, SEs and their support organizations tend to only search for direct dialogical interaction and cooperation with TNCs for achieving their goals. SEs are often described as very integrative actors who bring together actors with divergent interests to address pressing problems (Ashoka 2006, Drayton 2006). For instance, the SE organization Ashoka³ launches competitions in cooperation with large TNCs such as Exxon (Ashoka 2010b). This way, single SEs appear to be able to promote change with virtually no means but their innovative ideas (Ashoka 2006; Drayton 2006).

² At the same time, the power of NGOs should not be overestimated on the basis of this case. Shaming campaigns can only successfully target a limited number of corporations in a given time span and will succeed only under certain conditions. The mere fact that everybody refers to Brent Spar to prove the potential power of NGOs indicates the exceptional nature of this case.

³ Ashoka, an US-based non-profit foundation, is the largest international organization which selects social entrepreneurs, offers them fellowships and network support. By 2009, Ashoka has elected and supported more than 2000 social entrepreneurs in more than 60 countries (Ashoka 2010a; Bornstein 2004).

This paper lays out an analytical framework, which recognizes different material as well ideational sources of power and their interaction as important determinants of the ability of the different types of non-state actors to influence processes of governance across various levels and policy fields. The aim is to trace the different sources of power, which these non-state actors have at hand and dynamics of learning which they provoke, while also recognizing the power of structures, in which they are embedded.

II. Analytical Framework

An analytical framework for analyzing power relations and the role of different types of non-state actors in the global system is faced by the problem that the existing theoretical approaches in international relations either have tended to focus on the exercise of power by actors or the power of structures. Numerous scholars have criticized the theoretical limitations inherent in this agent-structure differentiation and called for an integrative framework that looks at the interaction and relation of different types of power. In this respect, Barnett and Duvall (2006) remind us of the frequently made distinction between the two possible ways power can be exercised: ‘Power over’ refers to actions, where actors are able to exercise control over others, while ‘power to’ points to social relations of constitution that define actors as well as their capacities and resources.⁴ This conceptual distinction is especially useful in situations, where a sole focus on actors’ power hides the structural forces that influence an actor’s role and choice set. Simultaneously, a focus on the influences of structures would neglect the agency exercised by actors in shaping the system and its structures.

While both these approaches of “power over” and “power to” may be understood as seeing power as a finite resource, “power with” as a third approach emphasizes the synergy that can emerge through partnerships and collaboration with others, or through processes of collective action and alliance building (Gaventa 2006). Importantly, “power with” exists as a form of power next to “power over” and “power to.” Arendt (1970) defines power in the formation of a common will in communication directed to reaching agreement. This process of finding

⁴ Pitkin (1972) originally distinguishes relational power of “one man’s having *power over* another” (Pitkin 1976, 276, emphasis added) from one actor’s explicitly non-relational *power to* accomplish something all by him- or herself. The capabilities and resources of individuals to accomplish something are, however, ultimately linked to social relations of constitution: “The *power ‘to’* is important for the capacity to act; to exercise agency and to realize the potential of rights, citizenship or voice” (Gaventa 2006, 24).

common ground and exercising power with others is ultimately linked to processes of learning, i.e. actors changing their thought as a result of social interaction, new knowledge and experiences (Bennett and Howlett 1992, Freeman 2006). Clearly, the lines between “power over,” “power to,” and “power with” tend to be blurred in practice. Yet the distinction is useful for analytical purposes. It is also important to keep in mind that social learning does not only take presence in the case of “power with”. In fact, social learning constantly takes place and therefore also in face of exercises of all forms of power (see also below). However, social learning plays a particularly crucial role in the case of “power with”, as actors here intentionally and more openly engage in dialogue for the purpose of reciprocal rapprochement. The mutual constitution of social structures and actors in the global governance system, then, points to the benefits of a framework that distinguishes and integrates different dimensions of power. Such a perspective enables the analysis to include the relevant plethora of (in)visible forces and their interactions, as well as their sources of power, and opportunities for social learning. Accordingly, we develop a framework that emphasizes the impact of material and ideational, actor-specific and structural sources of power and their interaction on the ability of actors to influence global governance.

Material Sources of Power

According to some scholars, material dimensions of power are considered to be the foundation of most political activities. When we consider state and non-state actors, we find material power to be made up of capabilities grounded in the economic realm such as finance, information, and technology. These material capabilities, then, influence actors’ strategic options both on the input and output side of political processes (Fuchs 2007).

Material sources of power can be of an actor-specific or of a structural nature. They entail the financial means actors have at their disposal, as well as the structural power they can exercise by foreclosing certain political options of other actors. The actor specific dimension of material power can be approached via an assessment of resources, which may be transformed into influence, mostly conceived in distributional terms – “who gets what when and how” (Lasswell 1936). This way, we may easily assess relational “power over” in terms of what an actor stands to lose or gain relative to what others stand to lose or gain, “power to” in terms of what an actor got before and after, and “power with” in terms of material synergies. Financial means are frequently considered an important material source of power, as they are highly

fungible and can be easily converted into political activities. Financial means not only can allow political influence via direct campaign or party donations, but also allow actors to hire professional lobbyists and PR consultants or to be present at multiple sites and levels of governance simultaneously, for instance. The increasing dependence of political decision makers on funding as well as external expertise has improved interest groups' access to politicians and bureaucrats and enhanced the prominence of this aspect of actors' material power (Fuchs 2007). There is a huge gap between different non-state actors with regard to the financial means, on which these political activities rely, however. While many corporate business actors have been able to draw on large financial resources in pursuit of their political interests, most civil society actors tend not to have the same capacities at disposal. Social entrepreneurs (SE) often start with nothing but an idea.

Taking the structural material sources of power into account means to pay attention to the influence of production and consumption processes on the power of actors. Specifically, market power is an important source of structural material power. In the narrow sense, such market control reflects economic power. This economic power is translated into political power, however, as soon as market control is paired with agenda-setting activities affecting the wider public. Thus, structural material power of transnational corporations (TNCs), in particular, is reflected in the ability to shape political agendas, due to the dependence of political elites on the provision of jobs and investments by the private sector. It shows up in the corporate ability to predetermine the behavioral options of political decision makers by excluding certain issues from the political agenda (Cox 1981; Fuchs 2007, 58).

At the same time, consumers have structural material power in the form of market power as well. After all, consumer demand (especially from industrialized countries) can shape global economic flows and the associated allocation of value in supply chains. Consumer initiatives such as world shops, fair trade certification or the German Verbraucherzentralen have at least punctual impact on the ground. This structural power of consumers should not be overestimated, however, as it only exists to a notable degree on occasions, in which a very large number of consumers share preferences and/or act in a coordinated manner. Only under such conditions may consumers challenge the market power of business actors. Moreover, information asymmetries in a global economy based on the distancing of production and consumption, as pointed out above, constrain consumer power dramatically.

Among NGOs, those organizations which are based in industrialized countries usually claim to work on a people-to-people basis, linking civil societies in the North and South (Macdonald 1994, 268). NGOs in the South (and East) are often financially and organizationally dependent on Northern NGOs, however, and those Northern NGOs in turn are accountable to their members and donors in the North, not to the people in the South. Hence, NGOs from industrialized countries, which come with financial resources, may also be able to exercise structural power in developing countries. The same holds true for SEs who generate financial means (either from the state, non-profit organizations or business) to implement their ideas. In difference to TNCs, however, NGOs do not pursue profit-making activities and SEs are usually socially rooted in their target communities (Partzsch and Ziegler, forthcoming).

Importantly, material structures do not only provide actors with agenda-setting power (i.e., the ability to bring about or prevent decisions by others), they may also place them in the position to make decisions themselves (i.e. replace those holding the formal decision making power). In today's globalized world, economic and institutional structures, processes, and interdependencies mean that actors in control of pivotal networks and resources have the capacity to adopt, implement, and enforce rules with an obligatory quality and distributional consequences for other actors as well. Thus, the traditional notion of structural power needs to be extended. Rather than merely providing indirect agenda-setting power, structural contexts may also endow actors with direct “regulatory power” (Arts 2003).⁵ This acquisition of rule-setting power by non-state actors, in particular corporations, is reflected in private governance initiatives, especially if de jure voluntary standards set by TNCs become de facto mandatory for suppliers due to the corporations’ market control (Fuchs 2007). While some NGOs such as Attac oppose any form of private rule making and demand (inter-) state regulation instead, others such as the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) are actively contributing to private rule making. SEs (also on behalf of NGOs such as the WWF), similarly, are often crucial members of roundtables elaborating labeling and certification schemes.

Ideational Sources of Power

Material resources only have limited explanatory power as long as the political process and the translation of these resources into political influence are not considered. It is important to

⁵ Note, however, that an overlap between agenda-setting power and rule-setting power exists in so far as agendas are about rules.

keep in mind that it is not the mere size of material resources, but the ability to successfully convert them into advocacy tools, which determine actor-specific material power (Fuchs 2007, 82). Thus, actors with relatively less material resources, NGOs and SEs in particular, may be able to exert more power due to the pairing of material and ideational power, for instance. Ideational sources of power may be transferred into processes of learning. In analogy to Lasswell, we can ask: “Who learns what when and how?” We can assess “power over” then in terms of who made someone else “learn”, i.e. change the thoughts of the latter in favor of the first. “Power to” refers to new capabilities and resources of individuals to accomplish something as a result of learning. “Power with” usually requires processes of social learning which are a precondition for mutual rapprochement and finding common ground.

Next to material sources, then, ideational sources of power need to be investigated. Looking at ideational sources of power highlights that actors can draw on the symbolic meaning of social practices and institutions in their exercise of power, thereby enabling and constraining behavior and action. A focus on ideational sources of power stresses the normative dimension as a nonmaterial power resource and identifies an actor’s ability to influence the framing of political issues as a crucial asset. This “third face of power” (Lukes 2005) points to the discursive power an actor can exercise on the definition of policies, actors, and norms and procedures. This perspective highlights that via the exercise of discursive power, actors can organize “some definitions of issues [...] into politics while other definitions are organized out” (Hajer 1995, 42).

It is difficult to assess the characteristics of this subtle form of power, however. Koller traces its exercise through norms, ideas and societal institutions and maps it in culture, discourse, and communicative practices (Koller 1991). But since any communication includes both intentional and unintentional messages, the recognition and assessment of intent and agency becomes particularly difficult. After all, actors are objects as well as subjects in discourse (Fuchs 2005b). Thus, while (some) norms can be manipulated by actors, others structure social relations so deeply that they may shape actors’ identities, perceptions, and behavioral options more than the actors are able to shape them.

When analyzing ideational power, one of the crucial aspects to consider is authority. Following Arendt, we define authority as legitimate force.⁶ The ability of actors to influence discourses is closely linked to perceptions of their legitimacy, as it requires trust in the potential validity of messages. Public actors obtain political legitimacy through formal electoral processes, while non-state actors' legitimacy tends to derive from public trust in actor's expertise and/or willingness to represent the public interest (Fuchs and Kalfagianni 2010). The authority and legitimacy of NGOs, in particular, originates in ideal-type assumptions on their non-profit-oriented and non-violent aims (Holzscheiter 2005, 726). Similarly, SEs are described as driven by values such as “non-egoistic, kind determination and commitment” (Drayton 2006, 3). But even business actors' political authority has benefited from a public change in attitudes toward market actors and increasing public confidence in their problem-solving ability since the rise of neoliberalism (Fuchs 2007). In addition, business has also actively tried to improve on its moral sources of legitimacy with ‘corporate social responsibility’ (CSR) activities. At the same time, non-state actors such as NGOs use discursive strategies in the form of ‘naming’, ‘framing’, and ‘shaming’ to create pressure and negative publicity in order to delegitimize business or public authority (Arts 2003; Holzscheiter 2005).

SEs, in turn, tend to use their individual strategies of ‘convincing’ and ‘persuading’. Drayton (2006) describes the success story of social entrepreneur Rodrigo Baggio, an Ashoka fellow from Brazil, who founded a chain of hundreds of computer training schools in low-income communities across Latin America and Asia in order to challenge the digital divide:

“I got a sense of Rodrigo's power when he came to Washington shortly after being elected an Ashoka Fellow. Somehow he convinced the Inter-American Development Bank to give him its used (but highly valuable) computers. Somehow he convinced the Brazilian Air Force first to warehouse and then to fly these computers home. And then he somehow managed to persuade the Brazilian customs authority to allow all these computers in at a time when Brazil was trying to block computer imports.” (Drayton 2006, 1-2).

The strategy of the SEs at the beginning of their campaigns consists mainly of dialogical involvement with affected people and of convincing others to support their ideas. Drayton (2006, 1) speaks of “the great entrepreneur's tenacity of observation”, i.e. he sees SEs as

⁶ Along the same lines, Cutler, Hafler and Porter conceptualize private authority as “decision-making power over an issue area that is generally regarded as legitimate by participants” (Cutler et al. 1999, 362).

actors, who tend to be able to listen and learn. They bring together people with conflicting interests in order to build up coalitions and solve common problems (Ashoka 2006; Partzsch and Ziegler, forthcoming). Nicole Deitelhoff (2007, see also Risse 2004) speaks of “islands of persuasion” in international relations, in which social learning is possible and which result in the ability to act in concert.

The legitimacy of actors and ideas is embedded in social structures, in turn. As pointed out above, the political legitimacy of private actors has varied with changes in the *Zeitgeist* as well as efforts by actors to shape their public image. Likewise, the legitimacy of particular policy options is linked to their fit with dominant societal norms and may be enhanced or reduced through the framing of a given policy option in terms of such norms.⁷ Norms are always contested, then. Yet, the activation of attractive norms can provide an important source of power to actors in pursuit of their political strategies

Another important dimension of ideational power is knowledge, which refers to the processing of information. Paying attention to the social construction of knowledge means recognizing that what is perceived as objective knowledge, as fact and truth, is actually formed and shaped by different actors’ communications and the strategic issuance of information. Today, the complexity of political decisions increasingly requires highly specialized knowledge, “and those who control this knowledge have considerable power” (Nelkin 1975, 37). Policymakers increasingly rely on non-state actors’ specialized knowledge and information, which gives them an incentive to involve business actors, NGOs and SEs in the policy making process.

Next to economic and technological information, scientifically based knowledge seems to have a strong power of interpretation in the public debate, which results from a generally positive perception of scientific expertise and objectivity. The role of ‘epistemic communities’ (Haas 1993) in international policymaking and institution-building can hardly

⁷ In this vein, Deitelhoff (2007) analyzes the two framings of “political reality” and “public interest” in the formation process of the International Criminal Court. Here, the frame “political reality” built on the existing power asymmetries in the international system, while the “public interest” one emphasized equal rights and duties for everyone. While the first drafts for International Criminal Court were based on the “political reality” frame promoted by the US, among others, the trend changed to the “public interest” frame during the negotiations, due to learning processes provoked by ‘convincing’ different-minded states and not driven by social pressures, according to Deitelhoff. She argues that especially NGOs provided supportive conditions for learning dynamics as they documented the negotiation process and made positions public.

be overstressed (Arts 2003, 6; Holzscheiter 2005, 743). The readiness to accept expert knowledge and award scientific knowledge extensive authority is comparatively high among public and private actors. However, one may well want to question whether matters concerning science and technology in the decision-making process can, in fact, be apolitical and simply rely on an ‘objective’ specialized knowledge of experts, of course. Still, it is an important source of power, on which actors can draw.

Legitimacy and knowledge can provide crucial sources of ideational power allowing an actor’s power to increase over or in relation to others. They also provide the basis for learning dynamics and finding common ground in order to exercise power with others, i.e. in finding win-win situations which may lead to the empowerment of those otherwise subordinated. This process might be either conscious or unconscious, and there might be different motivations for learning (Bennett and Howlett 1992). Increasingly, business involves with stakeholders (NGOs, media, consumers), and such involvement is not to be misunderstood as merely informing the stakeholders about the firm’s activities. Instead, there is dialogical interaction and reflexivity of business (Beschoner and Müller 2007). In the literature, we find examples of learning provoked by social pressures, such as, in particular, confrontational strategies of ‘naming’ and ‘shaming’ by NGOs which pressure TNCs to learn, illustrated by the Brent Spar campaign. A representative of the German Shell corporation explained later in 1995: “We have learnt that the public could not understand our arguments. But more than that. We also realized that we need to listen to (...) our customers more intensively. (...) Although learning is sometimes painful – only those who learn have a future.”⁸ However, there are considerable doubts whether Shell really learned, i.e. changed its attitude about how to do business and improved its social and environmental performance as a result of the Brent Spar experience, or whether Shell only “learnt” how to improve its PR (“green washing”).

The Brent Spar case mostly serves as an illustration of the victory of a David (Greenpeace) *over* a Goliath (Shell/Exxon). Learning processes are relational here, the important thing is what an actor stands to lose or gain relative to what others stand to lose or gain. In order to accept the pressure-groups’ intentions in a sense of ‘power with’ Shell or responsible individuals within the corporation would need to see their own material or ideational benefit

⁸ „Wir haben gelernt, daß die Öffentlichkeit unsere Argumente nicht nachvollziehen konnte. Aber nicht nur das. Uns ist auch bewußt geworden, daß wir auf (...) unsere Kunden, mehr und genauer hören müssen. (...) Auch wenn das Lernen manchmal schmerzt - nur wer lernt, hat Zukunft.“ (Friedenspädagogik 1995).

in acting in concert with the NGOs, for instance, the benefit of being able to apply their personal social values to their business work. Likewise, NGOs or SEs need to be open to business interests and concerns in order to identify win-win situations.

The Interaction between Material and Ideational Sources of Power

Material and ideational power do not exist independent of each other, but reveal a high grade of interaction. Two pivotal modes of interaction exist: access and reconstitution. Access as a mode of interaction manifests itself firstly in organizational terms and highlights the ability to gain access to political decision-making bodies. The extent, to which actors gain access to material structures of governance, depends on their resources as well as the perceived political legitimacy of these actors and their resources. Secondly, access to knowledge emphasizes that material sources allow actors to fund research, or pay for conferences and publications. Thereby, they greatly facilitate (or deny) both the gathering and the communication of knowledge. As knowledge is not an objective item, as pointed out above, the ability to determine which questions are being asked and which results are being communicated (and how), certainly adds to an actor's power in today's world. Ashoka, for instance, applies the concept of 'collaborative competition' to generate new knowledge on questions considered relevant. Sponsors of such a global competition, which costs a minimum of 300.000 euros to be hosted on the Ashoka's Changemakers website,⁹ choose a social problem for which the volunteer competitors suggest innovative solutions. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation partnered with Ashoka's Changemakers for four collaborative competitions to further the Foundation's mission to improve the health and health care of Americans (Ashoka 2010c). ExxonMobil, in partnership with Ashoka's Changemakers, launched a competition to promote women's economic advancement in developing countries. Such an activity allows Exxon to direct public attention and knowledge generation into a direction of the corporation's interest (and, perhaps even more importantly, away from other issues).

As a related matter, the issue of reconstitution also stresses that the success of narratives and storylines can be influenced by the repetitiveness, with which corresponding messages are sent. In the era of mediatised politics, then, financial resources and structural positions can be used to strengthen one's preferred ideas and norms or weaken competing ones. Costly PR strategies and media campaigns advantage actors with large financial resources relative to

⁹ Source: Personal communication with Michael Vollmann from Ashoka Germany, November 2009.

those without (Fuchs 2005b). Noelle-Neumann (1996) speaks of the existence of a *Schweigespriale* in the presence of communicative asymmetry and studies show that even the new telecommunication technologies and channels worldwide are used primarily for private economic interests (Reljić 2001). While an Ashoka competition on women's business activities in developing countries catches our attention, we do not care about other issues equally or even more important, such as ecological crisis resulting from Exxon oil spill-over or safety standards of drilling platforms. Klein (2000, 176-178) describes how Wal-Mart uses its structural position in the retail market to "censure" print and music publications. Those publications, which are not considered "family friendly," are not offered in the stores. Many magazines therefore submit their pre-prints to the retail chains before delivery and sometimes change contents according to their demand. In this context, one has to ask how public the public really is.

In turn, NGOs and SEs are sometimes able to mobilize impressive material sources, because of their ideational sources of power (legitimacy and knowledge). NGOs and SEs have proven to be able to organize some millions US dollars every year to advance their social aims. Due to Ashoka, for instance, Exxon has invested over 30 million dollar in women's economic empowerment in the last five years. NGOs such as Greenpeace activate incredible amounts of money through donor support. In the case of the Brent Spar, Greenpeace was able to mobilize a consumer boycott (some German service stations had a 50 percent decrease in sales) which allowed the NGO to combine ideational sources of power with material sources of market power to make Shell "learn".

Importantly, however, the opportunities for such an acquisition of material resources are determined by donor interests. TNCs, for instance, are unlikely to sponsor any kind of knowledge generation and subsequent learning dynamics that contradict their interests. We would not expect Johnson to sponsor knowledge generation or diffusion on how residues of hygienic products interfere with the health of freshwater ecosystems, for instance. Exxon is unlikely to finance knowledge generation on oil substitution. Similarly, however, NGOs and SEs are not completely free in their choice of social problems to be addressed as they are depending on support and, to that end, media attention. For instance, Greenpeace continues to run relatively large campaigns for whale protection because of public interests in these giants of the ocean, while other, scientifically more relevant themes sometimes gain less attention.

The ability of ideas to mobilize material resources thus is limited to certain conditions and windows of opportunity.

In sum, neither the material nor the ideational sources of power should be considered just by themselves. There is always an interaction between them. At the same time, processes of “power over”, “power to” and “power with” coincident with each other. Power can never only be considered an either finite or infinite resource. Social learning constantly takes place and allows actors to increase their power over or in relation to others as well as to find common ground in order to exercise power with others. These interaction processes may be particularly difficult to analyze. Nevertheless, the reinforcement and reconstitution of the different sources of power are too important for the shaping of power relations to ignore them. Consequently, this framework proposes to analyze power relations according to the material and ideational dimensions of actors’ power and their interaction at various levels of governance and in diverse policy fields (see table 1).

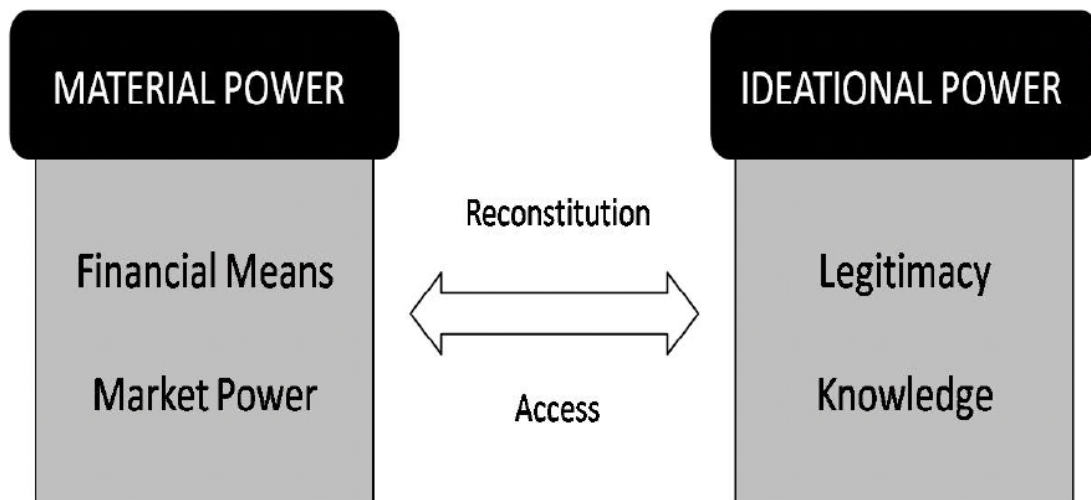


Table 1: Material and ideational determinants of power

III. Outlook

Previous studies have tended to emphasize either the material or the ideational sources of power of non-state actors, material sources in the case of TNCs or ideational sources in the case of NGOs and SEs. They have tended to implicitly apply relational power concepts (victory of a David *over* a Goliath). This paper aims to integrate material and ideational sources of power in one framework, stressing the important interaction between the two

dimensions while recognizing the mutual constitution of social structures and actors in the global governance system as well as dynamics of social learning. In this juncture, we have argued for widening the view to “power with” concepts. Empirical research has indicated that non-state actors rely on a power mix. However, we need more context specific, detailed and systematic empirical assessments of actors’ strategies and of the shifting balances of forces in different policy fields in order to further understand the interplay between different dimensions and sources of power.

This framework has been developed on the basis of existing approaches and literature. Before we apply it in empirical research, the framework should be discussed. It might need to be expanded to cover additional aspects. It might be reduced in complexity to allow a parsimonious approach. It might need to be adapted to specific research contexts. Thus, we invite comments and feedback.

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