

1 *Global Policymaking*

From Public Goods to Bricolage

In recent years, a fruitful dialogue has started between the fields of policy studies and global governance. Among the manifold results of this dialogue, the most important one is undoubtedly the broad recognition that “global policy studies and new scholarship on transnational administration are becoming key elements towards understanding the diversity of global governance.”¹ Drawing analytical traction from this observation, we argue that investigating global policymaking is the most fruitful way of gaining access to the black box of global governance. After all, argues historian Mazower, “Today there is more global policymaking, in more varied forms, than ever before.”²

This chapter explores the concept of global policymaking from a variety of angles. We begin by reviewing the development of global policymaking as a distinct field of research. We then define the concept of global policy and posit its methodological and epistemological implications. The third part contrasts two approaches to global policymaking – that of global public goods, inherited from economics, and that of bricolage, which takes its cue from sociology and anthropology. We side in favor of the latter, as we believe that it better captures the roles played by politics, contingency, and process in global governance. Overall, the chapter seeks to flesh out Hurrell’s key insight that “global governance cannot be reduced to the provision of international public goods or the resolution of well-understood collective action problems.”³

1 Global Policymaking: An Overview

Policy science, as it was termed by Harold Lasswell, was born as a state-centric field of knowledge.⁴ The actors, processes, and issues that

¹ Stone and Moloney 2019, 3. ² Mazower 2012, xvii. ³ Hurrell 2007, 10.
⁴ Lasswell 1968.

it examines are traditionally defined within the framework of the sovereign nation-state. With the exception of a few scholars who identified themselves with the subfield of comparative policy studies, little attention was initially paid to the international environment of policymaking. In short, “methodological nationalism” has long been a basic characteristic of policy studies.⁵

The state-centric attitude of policy studies began to change with the rise of interdependence and globalization. Exploring the impact of these two megatrends on states’ policy preferences, several researchers describe and explain the processes of public policy diffusion, policy convergence, and policy transfer.⁶ Taken together, this stream of research helps us understand the “internationalization” of public policies.⁷ According to Doern, Pal, and Tomlin, public policy internationalizes “when at least one aspect of domestic policy begins to depend on or be affected by forces beyond the borders of the state.”⁸ While acknowledging that the literature on the internationalization of policies grants an unprecedented role to external variables, the primary objective remains accounting for national policies.

In parallel with the proliferation of analyses of the internationalization of public policies, a distinct current of research draws attention to the “globalization” of such policies. This current developed in order to make sense of two systemic transformations in world politics that accelerated at the end of the twentieth century. First, a growing number of policies now cover multiple national territories. Second, far from being limited to states, policymaking is an activity in which IGOs, NGOs, transnational corporations, and experts play an increasing role. While admitting that there may be some overlap between the internationalization and globalization of public policies (think of the IMF’s structural adjustment programs, for instance), many scholars underline the need to differentiate the two processes.⁹ These historical developments, which correspond with the mutations of modernity, suggest that global policies appeared long before the terms

⁵ Stone 2020, 6.

⁶ Bennett 1991; Dobbin, Simmons, and Garrett 2007; Marsh and Sharman 2009; Nay 2012; Evans 2019; Gilardi and Wasserfallen 2019.

⁷ Unger and van Waarden 1995; Keohane and Milner 1996; Coleman and Perl 1999; Howlett and Ramesh 2002.

⁸ Doern, Pal, and Tomlin 1996, 3–4. ⁹ Porto de Oliveira 2022.

“globalization” and “global governance” became fashionable.¹⁰ Old policies such as the establishment of an international date line (1884), the creation of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (1899), or the codification of international rules for fighting epidemics (1903), to mention just a few examples, share many characteristics with today’s global policies.

Soroos was probably the first author to rigorously examine the notion of global policy in his pathbreaking 1986 book *Beyond Sovereignty: The Challenge of Global Policy*.¹¹ Conceiving of global policies as “the product of the international community as a whole,”¹² Soroos demonstrated “the applicability of the policy approach to the study of world politics.”¹³ Building on this insight, other authors have highlighted the rise of global policy networks and transnational policy communities.¹⁴ The overarching intuition informing these pioneering writings is that changes in the fields of trade, security, communications, and the environment have given birth to new forms of “global management.”¹⁵ In the process, policies became less and less applicable to “territorially delineated national communities governed by ... states.”¹⁶

Still “at its very early stages,”¹⁷ global policy studies have quickly spread thanks to the creation of new journals such as *Global Governance* (founded in 1995), *Global Social Policy* (2001), *Global Policy* (2010), *Global Summitry* (2015), the *International Review of Public Policy* (2019), and *Global Public Policy and Governance* (2021), as well as the publication of handbooks on the subject.¹⁸ Many issue-specific works have also illustrated the analytical potential of the global policy approach by exploring themes such as global trade policy,¹⁹ global refugee policy,²⁰ global education policy,²¹ global environmental policy,²² global social policy,²³ global development policy,²⁴ and global health policy.²⁵ Finally, the creation of courses and graduate programs devoted to the study of global policies has

¹⁰ Murphy 1994; Pouliot and Thérien 2015; Yates and Murphy 2019.

¹¹ Soroos 1986. See also Jacobson 1979; Nagel 1991. ¹² Soroos 1986, 19.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 374. ¹⁴ Reinicke 1998; Slaughter 2004; Stone 2008; Gaus 2019.

¹⁵ Reinicke 1998; Reinicke et al. 2000. ¹⁶ Coleman 2012, 673.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 685. ¹⁸ Klassen, Cepiku, and Lah 2017; Stone and Moloney 2019.

¹⁹ Klasen 2020. ²⁰ Miller 2014. ²¹ Ball 1998; Mundy 2010.

²² Eccleston and March 2014.

²³ Deacon 2007; Yeates and Holden 2009; Yeates 2014. ²⁴ Sondarjee 2021b.

²⁵ Brown, Yamey, and Wamala 2014.

helped strengthen the status of global policy as an important subject of academic interest.²⁶

Reflection on global policies has also been nourished by the development of several adjacent concepts, in particular those of “transnational administration” and “global administrative law.” Transnational administration scholarship has expanded on long-standing concerns for the role of international public bureaucracies in policymaking.²⁷ Transnational administration consists of “the regulation, management, and implementation of global policies of a public nature by both private and public actors operating beyond the boundaries and jurisdictions of the state.”²⁸ As such, transnational administration looks at how policy networks, public–private partnerships (PPPs), and private regimes operate at the global level.²⁹ For its part, global administrative law seeks to understand how globalization is impacting transgovernmental regulation and administration.³⁰ Its proponents attend to “the mechanisms, principles, practices, and supporting social understandings that promote or otherwise affect the accountability of global administrative bodies.”³¹ A major contribution of global administrative law is to offer a legal perspective on the normative dimension of global governance.³²

Overall, there exists a broad consensus that, even in the absence of any form of world government, global policies already cover a large set of areas.³³ These policies have addressed a wide range of synchronous, transboundary, and/or collective property issues. Moreover, although there are many similarities between public policymaking at the domestic and global levels, critical differences are well recognized. Besides their fluidity and fragmentation, global policies are characterized most notably by their lack of implementation capacity.³⁴ In addition, it is increasingly agreed that states are often no more than *primus inter*

²⁶ Moloney and Stone 2019.

²⁷ Reinalda and Verbeek 2004; Knill and Bauer 2017; Lundgren, Squatrito, and Tallberg 2018; Christensen and Yesilkagit 2019.

²⁸ Stone and Ladi 2015, 840. See also Tao 2019.

²⁹ Moloney and Stone 2019; Ronit 2019; Wessal and Wescott 2019.

³⁰ Shapiro 2001; Kingsbury, Krisch, and Stewart 2005, 16; Anthony et al. 2011; Kuo 2019.

³¹ Kingsbury, Krisch, and Stewart 2005, 17. ³² *Ibid.*, 61; Kuo 2019, 341.

³³ Stone and Moloney 2019. ³⁴ Soroos 1986; Stone 2008; Zürn 2012.

pares among global policymakers.³⁵ By shedding light on different channels of global authority and communication – whether public, private, or a mix of both – global policy studies have broadened the scope of the global public sphere.³⁶

As an emerging research program, global policy studies is facing a number of theoretical and methodological debates, starting with the very definition of global policy. One issue has to do with the spatial scope of global policies. For some authors, global policies can be restricted to “a few countries.”³⁷ For others, a policy can be considered global only when “representatives of each of the principal types of states and geographical regions [are] involved.”³⁸ Between these two positions, we might imagine several political configurations. This divergence of views is not trivial because, in addition to having an impact on the number of policies that could be considered global, it also raises the question of whether and to what extent “the globe” is an appropriate unit of analysis in political science. Another issue, arguably more fundamental, is that the dominant definition of global policy, which refers to the delivery of global public goods, involves implicit normative choices.³⁹ In fact, no one can say exactly what public goods consist of, for the simple reason that public goods are political constructs rather than natural categories (more on this in Section 3.1). Revealingly, beyond such abstract formulations as the promotion of world peace or the strengthening of international law, global politics provide a daily reminder that negotiating the production of public goods rarely arouses unanimity. For better or worse, the quest for legitimacy in the effort to determine what is “good” for the entire world can hardly escape the vicissitudes of politics.

At the methodological level, the study of global policies continues to confront a fundamental ambiguity. Of course, most observers agree that global policymaking is a messy process; according to Diane Stone, for instance, “there is no consistent pattern in global policy processes” – rather, “disorder and unpredictability are the norm.”⁴⁰ And

³⁵ Gordenker and Weiss 1995; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Martens 2005; Pattberg 2007; Weiss, Carayannis, and Jolly 2009; Bexell and Mörth 2010; Ougaard and Leander 2010; Willetts 2011; Green 2014.

³⁶ Ruggie 2004; Steffek, Kissling, and Nanz 2008; Volkmer 2014.

³⁷ Stone 2020, 13. ³⁸ Soroos 1986, 20.

³⁹ Stone and Ladi 2015, 840; Kaul 2019; Moloney and Stone 2019, 107.

⁴⁰ Stone 2008, 29.

yet we also lack recourse to some analytical instrument specifically designed to account for the role of continuous improvisation in global policymaking. In fact, scholars of global policy studies find it difficult to break away from the rationalist framework archetypically embodied in the policy cycle model.⁴¹ Granted, most scholars agree that, far from being a mirror of reality, the policy cycle is nothing more than a heuristic tool by which to better understand global policies. Nevertheless, the problem-solving assumptions of the policy cycle model – starting with the misleading belief that “global problems” and “global solutions” could be identified in a neutral and objective way that sidesteps politics – are rarely questioned.

In our view, these theoretical and methodological challenges are neither surprising nor insurmountable. After all, global policy studies remain a young and evolving field of study. Choosing to see the glass as half full, we contend that the global policymaking lens offers an innovative complement to traditional approaches based on rules, interests, norms, actors, and ideas, and can therefore help us to better understand the politics of global governance. Without succumbing to the illusion that global policy studies will give rise to a form of normal science organized around a unified paradigm, we argue that, by giving more importance to conflicts, debates, and power relations, global policymaking scholarship has the potential to become increasingly relevant and useful, both analytically and socially.

2 Defining Global Policy

To take full advantage of the global policy framework, we should first define what a global policy is. In this regard, it should be remembered that the literature on public policies is notoriously reluctant to define its key concept in an overly strict fashion. According to a widely used conception, “public policy is whatever governments choose to do or not to do.”⁴² As flexible and heuristic as this approach may be, it is clearly underspecified. For our part, we define global policies as world-spanning courses of action over issues of common concern.⁴³ Let us tease out the three conceptual components of this definition in turn.

⁴¹ Soroos 1986, 87; also Stone 2008, 26–8.

⁴² Dye 1998, 2. See also Klassen, Cepiku, and Lah 2017, 1.

⁴³ For alternative definitions, see Stone and Ladi 2015, 840; Thakur and Weiss 2009, 19.

First, we deem a policy to be global when its sphere of applicability spans national and regional borders and extends to a significant portion of the world.⁴⁴ This is in contrast to domestic policy – however internationalized – and regional policy, whose bearings are limited to a given state or region. To be sure, the implementation of global policies hinges on country-level action, in the same way that national policies are often set in motion by subnational actors such as municipalities. Moreover, global policies are not enacted uniformly by all national jurisdictions involved. Global policymakers are, indeed, “deeply interconnected with, and frequently controlled by, political actors and administrative agents working within national contexts and across levels of governance.”⁴⁵ However, both the formulation of and decision-making processes around global policies involve actors whose authority claims are not limited to a particular state, but emerge out of a new “global public domain”⁴⁶ supported by “international public administrations.”⁴⁷

Second, global policies need to be “recognized by the community in which they are carried out as being of common concern.”⁴⁸ Contrary to conventional policy studies, we do not limit our definition of public action to that undertaken by state actors. States are involved in many facets of global governance, but certainly not in all of them and as such governments have no monopoly over the management of world affairs. Using the politically contingent criterion of “common concern” allows for the possibility that policymaking can be undertaken even in the absence of widely recognized public actors such as states or their delegated agents (namely, IOs). By all accounts, international credit rating or Internet regulation are issues of common concern even though their functioning largely depends on nonstate actors. As Deborah Stone explains, what matters most is that what may be called “the public interest” is itself an object of struggle: “There is virtually never full agreement on the public interest Let it be an empty box, but no matter; in the polis, people expend a lot of energy trying to fill up that box.”⁴⁹

⁴⁴ In a related vein, Coleman writes that “policy becomes *global* when it draws input, advice and participants from *anywhere* in the world in its formulation. Similarly, once policy is agreed upon, that policy has the *potential* to be *implemented* in any place or all places in the planet” (Coleman 2019, 223–4, emphasis original).

⁴⁵ Stone and Moloney 2019, 7. ⁴⁶ Ruggie 2004; also Zürn 2018.

⁴⁷ Knill and Bauer 2017. ⁴⁸ Best and Gheciu 2014a, 32.

⁴⁹ Stone 2012, 13. On the “public interest” see also Steffek 2015.

Finally, a policy describes a declared program of action designed to achieve certain political goals.⁵⁰ As was discussed earlier, policies are not limited to the activities of governments. In line with our conception of what is public, we consider that IOs, NGOs, and transnational corporations formulate and implement policies on a daily basis. In addition, it is not necessary for a policy to be fully agreed-upon, or even implemented, for it to count as such. Inconclusive or shelved programs of action often present as much analytical interest as those that are completed. What is crucial, though, is that policies, global or otherwise, are by essence both practical and normative. For this reason, we propose to analyze global policies in terms of the practices and the value debates that give them structure. As will be explained below, a focus on the diversity of practices and values that inform global policies ultimately helps us to better highlight the patchwork nature as well as the political character of global governance.

It is important to note that our approach to global policy is more restrictive than the common view, according to which global policy is merely policy “beyond the nation-state.”⁵¹ For some authors, internationalization, regionalization, and diffusion are all markers of the globalization of public policies. We favor a stricter definition, acknowledging that it is probably impossible to determine where the universe of global policies begins and ends in any categorical sense. How many countries must be involved for a policy to be considered “global”? Do all joint responses of the global (international) community to common problems count as global policies? Can a declaration of principles be considered a comprehensive policy?⁵² It is difficult if not impossible to offer definitive answers to such questions, and it is probably best to leave them open.

Furthermore, in keeping with established scholarship in policy studies, the level of aggregation at which scholars should approach global policies should match the research question at hand. For instance, in a macrohistorical study, it would make sense to conceive of the UN’s PPPs as one single policy. For their part, students of international development might prefer to focus on the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) – a specific PPP involving the

⁵⁰ In an application to the UN, Thakur and Weiss define policy as “the statement of principles and actions that an organization is likely to pursue in the event of particular contingencies” (Thakur and Weiss 2009, 19).

⁵¹ See Petiteville and Smith 2006. ⁵² Donnelly 1990, 221–2.

UN – as their unit of analysis. For health policy analysts, meanwhile, GAVI's vaccine-delivery program in West Africa may be the appropriate level of study. In brief, global public policies may be empirically identified at different scales, depending on the analytical problem one wants to examine.

Of course, the concept of global policy entails certain epistemological assumptions. Quite naturally, the basic debates that divide policy studies analysts reverberate in the study of global policymaking. As such, it should be remembered that the field of policy studies opposes conventional and critical approaches, depending on the vision of knowledge adopted by any given scholar.⁵³ The conventional approach defends a positivist conception of knowledge according to which rationality and the common good can be defined in an objective manner. In other words, by grounding itself in evidence and ostensibly neutral information, effective policymaking could transcend politics. Driven by a bias in favor of science and expertise, the conventional policy approach minimizes the importance of the historical and cultural context in the search for universal solutions. This quest for universalism emerges most notably from the belief that there is a rational path to development, or that the market provides the optimal form of division of labor.

In a different way, the critical approach of policy studies “adopts an interpretive, culturally and historically constructivist understanding of knowledge and its creation.”⁵⁴ Contesting the positivism of the conventional approach, scholars looking at the subject through a critical lens therefore reject the separation of facts and values and admit the existence of a plurality of rationalities. In addition, the critical approach is particularly sensitive to the fact that the production of the knowledge on which policies are based is inseparable from power structures. In this regard, Deborah Stone points out that policymaking is “a constant struggle over the criteria for classification, the boundaries of categories, and the definition of ideals that guide the way people behave.”⁵⁵ The critical approach is therefore particularly concerned with the dynamics of social exclusion and inequality that characterize policymaking. Mistrustful of technocracy and its managerial

⁵³ Fischer 2003; Hajer 2003; Jessop 2010; Shore, Wright, and Però 2011; Stone 2012; Fischer et al. 2015b.

⁵⁴ Fischer et al. 2015a, 2. ⁵⁵ Stone 2012, 13.

approach, it values public deliberation with respect to the ends as well as the means of governance. Critical scholars are also skeptical of one-size-fits-all policies based on universalist principles. This skepticism is particularly evident in the highlighting of the diversity of development trajectories and in the systematic search for alternative modes of social organization.

While recognizing that the dialogue between the conventional and critical approaches to public policies is necessary and useful, this book intends to show that the critical perspective has much to offer in the analysis of global policymaking. Among other things, a critical approach could play a central role in the development of a “global politics paradigm” that stresses hierarchy over anarchy in global governance.⁵⁶ Focusing on the conflictual and political nature of policymaking, the notion of global policy advanced in these pages has the potential to shed new light on the practical and ideological foundations of global governance.

3 From Global Public Goods to Bricolage

Global policymaking is most often associated with the provision of global public goods, such as clean water, poverty reduction, basic education and health care, or peace and security. As Weiss put it a generation ago, “the logical link between the patterns of governance at the national and global levels lies in solving the collective action puzzle to provide public goods.”⁵⁷ Widespread as it is, though, this approach tends to analytically assume away both the objective of global policymaking (the production of public goods) and the method through which it is achieved (voluntary cooperation through institutional incentives). Alternatively, we emphasize the “making of” global policy and global governance in order to answer a fundamental question: How are world-spanning collective courses of action over issues of common concern actually generated? By paying closer attention to process, we show that the key challenges of global governance do not primarily consist in the search for more efficient solutions to technical problems. Global policymaking is instead best viewed as a bricolage of value conflicts and social practices. Such an approach helps capture the political and patchwork nature of global governance.

⁵⁶ Zürn 2018, 21. ⁵⁷ Weiss 2000, 807.

3.1 *Global Public Goods*

A majority of scholars and practitioners consider “the delivery of public goods”⁵⁸ the main objective of global policies. For instance, one renowned expert writes that any “fitting global policy” should first and foremost put the provision of global public goods “at the centre of policy analysis and policymaking.”⁵⁹ Coined in the 1950s by economist Paul Samuelson, the concept of public goods stands in contrast to private goods, which are excludable (it is mine, not yours) and marked by rivalry (your consumption affects mine). Samuelson argued that the market cannot adequately produce public goods because in such cases, the usual rational incentives do not operate properly. Samuelson’s thesis proved to be convincing enough that the notion of public goods soon became a theoretical pillar of political economy.

In 1999, a trio of UNDP economists first put the global public goods concept on the map.⁶⁰ The term was soon picked up by the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the UN, and several foreign ministries and national aid agencies, including those of Sweden and France. In a 2006 report, the International Task Force on Global Public Goods, cochaired by former Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo and former Ivorian Minister of Planning and Development Tidjane Thiam, argued that “global public goods affect almost all states, and many or all states must be involved in their provision.”⁶¹ Today, the notion of global public goods is a standard reference among global actors – public but also private ones, including the Gates, Rockefeller, and Soros Foundations.⁶² According to an increasingly shared rhetoric, the creation and funding of public goods finds its ultimate justification in the need “to regulate the adverse effects of global public bads.”⁶³

Scholars and analysts have quickly jumped aboard the global public goods bandwagon. For Ruggie, the new “global public domain” is “concerned with the production of public goods.”⁶⁴ Weiss concurs, positing that “in many ways global governance is about the challenge of providing global public goods whose benefits are ‘non-excludable’

⁵⁸ Stone and Ladi 2015, 840. ⁵⁹ Kaul 2019, 264.

⁶⁰ Kaul, Grunberg, and Stern 1999.

⁶¹ International Task Force on Global Public Goods (ITFGPG) 2006, 15.

⁶² Carbone 2007, 179. ⁶³ Stone 2019, 378. ⁶⁴ Ruggie 2004, 500.

and ‘non-rival.’”⁶⁵ As these two authoritative endorsements suggest, the notion has become a kind of buzzword in academic circles, especially among economists,⁶⁶ but also political scientists⁶⁷ and legal scholars.⁶⁸ Overall, it seems fair to say that in the early decades of the twenty-first century, the concept of global public goods pervades the making as well as the analysis of global governance and global policymaking.

Following a widely shared narrative, globalization has seen a “growing number of national public goods . . . [go] global.”⁶⁹ Various observers note that the domestic economic logic also applies to global public goods: the market cannot supply these in sufficient amounts because of the absence of rational incentives. The problem of market failure is compounded at the global level because of so-called anarchy – that is, the absence of a central, formal authority with state-like capacities. “If the power of compulsion were given to an international authority,” argues Barrett, “if a world government were established, then global public goods could be supplied by the same means employed domestically.”⁷⁰ Yet, insofar as there is no superseding world executive, global governance essentially means building the proper institutional incentives so as to organize “voluntary” cooperation.⁷¹

According to the advocates of this approach, the most effective way to supply global public goods is to build multistakeholder partnerships that help close the gap between jurisdiction, participation, and resources.⁷² In contrast to top-down, formal legal authority, partnerships are based on the economic rationale of comparative advantage. These voluntary associations tend to be issue-driven and focused on the resolution of a set of common problems. As such, consensus building, inclusive participation, and the open sourcing of knowledge are privileged management techniques “specifically designed for experimentation, inclusiveness, and peer review.”⁷³ The Montreal Protocol to Protect the Ozone Layer and the Global Fund to Fight

⁶⁵ Weiss 2013, 40.

⁶⁶ E.g. Gerrard, Ferroni, and Mody 2001; Ferroni and Mody 2002; Kaul et al. 2003c; Barrett 2007.

⁶⁷ Constantin 2002; Bjola and Kornprobst 2013; Stone 2020.

⁶⁸ Maskus and Reichman 2005; Bodansky 2012; Nollkaemper 2012.

⁶⁹ Kaul and Mendoza 2003, 96; also Ferroni and Mody 2002, 2.

⁷⁰ Barrett 2007, 17.

⁷¹ International Task Force on Global Public Goods (ITFGPG) 2006, 21.

⁷² Kaul, Grunberg, and Stern 1999. ⁷³ Avant 2016, 332.

AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria are often cited as successful examples of multistakeholder partnerships.

The concept of global public goods has two important advantages. First, it highlights the fact that in a globalizing world, the issues that confront humanity have fundamentally changed. Second, the concept captures commonalities across contemporary problems, such as the tendency toward free riding. This notion of “transitivity”⁷⁴ may favor knowledge accumulation – for instance, through the exchange of so-called best practices when it comes to incentivizing cooperation. Both advantages explain why the idea of global public goods has become so popular in the last couple of decades.

For global actors in search of legitimacy, the public goods concept thus provides a convenient argument for their existence and their growing scope of action. IOs, for example, position themselves as key “convenors”⁷⁵ in the provision of global public goods. Politically speaking, the concept also justifies public intervention in the absence of reliable market mechanisms. This helps explain why a development agency such as the UNDP has become a champion for the provision of public goods. Facing stiff competition from the World Bank and other emulators of the dominant neoliberal discourse, who have long blamed state (in)action for underdevelopment, the UNDP and other organizations find in the concept “a rhetorical means of convincing orthodox representatives to extend to the level of the international economy that which has long been accepted at a national level.”⁷⁶ In other words, construing global governance as the production of global public goods carves a kind of “third way” – “a soft alternative to neoliberal development”⁷⁷ that connects certain social-democratic sensitivities with the neoliberal orthodoxy of our time. This convergence helps explain why political actors of all stripes – from the governments of rich countries to development agencies and a number of NGOs – now embrace the global public goods concept in their discourse.⁷⁸

Yet, conceiving of global governance as the supply of global public goods also entails a number of blind spots. In fact, the notion of global public goods, which has rightfully been qualified as “abstract,”⁷⁹ tends to obscure the politics behind global governance processes. More

⁷⁴ Barrett 2007, 2. ⁷⁵ Ferroni and Mody 2002, 4. ⁷⁶ Coussy 2005, 185.

⁷⁷ Carbone 2007, 185. ⁷⁸ See also Long and Woolley 2009.

⁷⁹ Stone 2019, 378.

specifically, it depoliticizes debates over two fundamental questions: What does the human collective want? And how do we get there?

First, by focusing on technical problem-solving, the focus on global public goods downplays the widespread contestation over the objectives and solutions that should be pursued at the global level.⁸⁰ As Bodansky explains, people can disagree “about whether something is a global public good or a global public bad – and, hence, whether international law should seek to promote it or prohibit it.”⁸¹ For this reason, the very act of naming global public goods is far from politically innocent. Consider, for example, the “priorities” for action identified by the International Task Force on Global Public Goods: preventing the emergence and spread of infectious disease, tackling climate change, enhancing international financial stability, strengthening the international trading system, achieving peace and security, and generating knowledge.⁸² These ostensible goods, for all their apparent universality, are arguably quite contestable. Some, such as “enhancing international financial stability” or “strengthening the international trading system,” are inherently conservative and ideologically biased.⁸³ At the very least, they express a certain perspective that should not obscure the many alternative courses of political action that some actors may prefer. Other “priority global public goods” listed by the Task Force, such as “tackling climate change” or “achieving peace and security,” are banal and trite to the point of wishful thinking. As Long and Wooley put it, “the analysis provided in the public goods literature can at best identify a collective action problem; it does not supply a solution.”⁸⁴

Some advocates do recognize that global public goods are “social constructs.”⁸⁵ Yet, they typically add that “lack of consensus on process issues often holds back policy consensus and action.”⁸⁶ They further argue that “many such differences occur for conceptual and technical reasons, not political ones.”⁸⁷ The bottom line, simply put, is that if only people could agree, then we could resolve our problems. As the Task Force explained, the notion of global public goods is meant to show that “the global interest and the national interest can not only be reconciled

⁸⁰ Moon, Röttingen, and Frenk 2017. ⁸¹ Bodansky 2012, 656.

⁸² International Task Force on Global Public Goods (ITFGPG) 2006.

⁸³ Long and Woolley 2009, 118. ⁸⁴ *Ibid.* ⁸⁵ Kaul and Mendoza 2003, 80.

⁸⁶ Kaul et al. 2003b, 4. ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

but are mutually reinforcing.”⁸⁸ As a result, disagreement and contention are often portrayed as the key obstacles to global governance.

While it is true that global actors are often divided, from a political perspective, this should come as no surprise. Furthermore, from a pluralistic point of view, calling for the submergence of difference in order to deliver public goods makes for a questionable proposition. The notion that the whole world should agree on a single solution to shared problems certainly betrays a certain detachment from reality. Even in rich countries, rampant undersupply of particular public goods such as health care or education serves as a reminder of the collective political choices involved.

The second major difficulty posed by the global public goods framework has to do with how we get there – that is, with the process by which global public goods may be properly supplied. Remember that for proponents of this approach, “[t]he market cannot price these goods efficiently.”⁸⁹ They further stress that the domestic solution to such market failure, enforcement, does not apply at the global level because of anarchy. We are left instead with voluntary cooperation, which operates on the basis of self-interest and incentives. Admittedly, though, between a world government on the one hand and strictly incentive-based, voluntary cooperation on the other lies a vast span of political action that is barely scratched by the literature on global public goods. And while some authors emphasize the importance of “political decision making” and its “limited publicness,”⁹⁰ the primary focus of this literature is generally on the output of global governance rather than on its input. Little attention is paid to how and by whom resource allocation should be decided.⁹¹ Downplaying such political issues, the International Task Force, to take one example, left the follow-up to its proposals for a vaguely defined “informal forum” made up of the states “that are the most responsible, capable and representative.”⁹²

Assuming that discontent mostly stems from “the ways that global public goods are – or are not – provided,”⁹³ proponents of the public goods approach prefer to emphasize evidence-based solutions over

⁸⁸ International Task Force on Global Public Goods (ITFGPG) 2006, 17.

⁸⁹ Kaul and Mendoza 2003, 80. ⁹⁰ Kaul et al. 2003a, 21–4.

⁹¹ Bodansky 2012.

⁹² International Task Force on Global Public Goods (ITFGPG) 2006, 74.

⁹³ Kaul et al. 2003b, 4.

legitimacy, and substance over process. In other words, the notion of global public goods risks glossing over the power relations and inequalities that pervade the rules and practices structuring global governance. Because it emphasizes voluntary cooperation through institutional incentives, one has to presume a straightforward, efficiency-driven decision-making and production process. Upon closer scrutiny, though, global policymaking seems much messier than that. “Partnerships,” “multistakeholder initiatives,” and “best practices,” which figure among the primary tools championed by the advocates of global public goods, hinge on a dialectics of inclusion and exclusion that creates a deeply uneven playing field. As a result, concludes Viola, “IOs are better understood as providing club goods rather than public goods.”⁹⁴

Of course, no one is against virtue. As political objectives, reducing poverty, protecting the environment, and providing education for all can hardly be treated as negative outcomes. But the global public goods story, to the extent that it unfurls a narrative in which social conflict is largely kept from view, sounds too good to be true. We argue instead that these processes should be interrogated for the way they reveal the presence of politics. Put differently, construing global policymaking as the mere production of global public goods obscures the depth of political choices and the social dynamics involved in the process. What is more, the primary solution proposed to undersupply – generating private incentives toward voluntary cooperation – is based on a set of ideological priors that are far from self-evident, *pace* neoliberal economics.

By emphasizing the technical side of problem-solving and the need for cost-effective solutions, the global public goods perspective ends up depoliticizing global governance. It systematically neglects the substantive disagreements, value struggles, and power dynamics that actually characterize global decision making. In Mazower’s colorful words, “There is no fighting here, no blood, not even any really sharp clashes of opinion. In short, this is a rosy picture of a world governed [by management].”⁹⁵ Seeking to explore issues that have been neglected by the global public goods perspective, this book foregrounds the political debates that accompany the choosing of certain courses of action over others (value debates), as well as the patterned ways in which problems

⁹⁴ Viola 2020, 167. ⁹⁵ Mazower 2012, 416.

are posed, decisions are made, and collective action is set in motion on the global stage (governance practices). Both of these processes are central components of the alternative analytical framework that we propose in the following pages.

3.2 *Global Bricolage*

By contrast with proponents of the public goods perspective, a number of scholars emphasize the patchwork nature of global governance and global policymaking. Several authors stress the fragmentation of international authority and the cacophony of would-be global governors in order to point out how global governance departs from the idea of “a coherent whole.”⁹⁶ In International Political Economy, for instance, proponents of the “new interdependence approach,”⁹⁷ as well as a variety of historical and discursive institutionalists,⁹⁸ directly confront the assumptions of rational design and its public goods version.

Following a similar line of reasoning, we start from the observation that the politics of global public policymaking rarely resemble the long march toward Pareto-optimality described by public goods theorists.⁹⁹ Instead, trial and error, the search for working compromises, the creative combination of old and new practices, and the prevalence of normative ambiguity point to a political dynamic that comes very close to Lévi-Strauss’s notion of bricolage. This French word refers to the activity of a handyman – a bricoleur – who builds new artifacts from a variety of at-hand materials. Lévi-Strauss famously illustrated two modes of thinking by contrasting the engineer and the bricoleur. Whereas the engineer works with a blueprint, the distinctive feature of the bricoleur is “always to make do with ‘whatever is at hand.’”¹⁰⁰ Her toolkit and set of materials are not only “heterogeneous” but also inherently finite – “the contingent result of all the occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock or to maintain it with the remains of

⁹⁶ Hoffmann and Ba 2005, 9. See also Rosenau 1999, 293; Devin 2013, 10; Weiss and Wilkinson 2014, 208; Zürn 2018, 79.

⁹⁷ Farrell and Newman 2014; Farrell and Newman 2016.

⁹⁸ E.g. McNamara 1998; Blyth 2002; Best 2005; Jabko 2006; Seabrooke 2006; Schmidt 2008; Eagleton-Pierce 2013; Widmaier 2016.

⁹⁹ According to Voeten, “Rational functionalist theories posit that institutional design reflects an optimal response to the functional and strategic problems that an institution seeks to solve” (Voeten 2019, 149).

¹⁰⁰ Lévi-Strauss 1966 [1962], 17.

previous constructions or destructions.”¹⁰¹ Methodologically, the concept of bricolage echoes the insights of practice theory regarding the importance of know-how, craft, experience, and knack in making sense of agency and political action.¹⁰²

Influential in a number of social science disciplines ranging from management to media studies, the concept of bricolage was introduced in political science and sociology by historical institutionalists.¹⁰³ For instance, Campbell argues that “actors often craft new institutional solutions by recombining elements in their repertoire through an innovative process of bricolage whereby new institutions differ from but resemble old ones.”¹⁰⁴ The notion was brought into IR by practice theorists to describe the nature of political agency.¹⁰⁵ Mérand, for example, uses the concept to contrast the actual making of a European defense policy with the typical story of institutional design that scholars like to tell: “To build something, [diplomats] try materials that work and discard other materials that do not work, using their know-how to change the shape of the object incrementally.”¹⁰⁶ Inspired by historical institutionalism and practice theory, Kalyanpur and Newman speak of “design by bricolage” to explain the evolution of the international financial architecture: “Change typically occurs through the grafting of modular components rather than the *de nova* invention of individual institutional features.”¹⁰⁷ Applying the notion of bricolage to the field of development, Cleaver concludes that this is essentially how “actors innovate.”¹⁰⁸

In a nutshell, the concept of bricolage seeks to capture the improvisatory, haphazard, and combinatorial nature of global policymaking.¹⁰⁹ Of course, there is variation in the specific balance between improvisation and design from one policy area to the next. Bricolage is arguably more apparent in new global problems than in highly legalized policy domains. However, we contend that the basic logic of bricolage pervades global policymaking across time and issues. This book thus contributes to the burgeoning literature on bricolage by elaborating a framework for the study of a wide range of global policies.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. ¹⁰² Pouliot 2008. See also Lindblom 1959.

¹⁰³ Kincheloe 2001; Baker and Nelson 2005; Carstensen 2011.

¹⁰⁴ Campbell 2004, 69. ¹⁰⁵ Pouliot 2008, 281. ¹⁰⁶ Mérand 2008, 134.

¹⁰⁷ Kalyanpur and Newman 2017, 364. ¹⁰⁸ Cleaver 2012, 46.

¹⁰⁹ Pouliot 2020; Pouliot 2021.

What particular materials or resources do global actors actually combine when devising collective courses of action? While a variety of answers could be given to this question, we analyze global public policymaking in terms of the practices and the value debates that structure the process. Our approach builds on an old tradition inaugurated by Lasswell and Kaplan, who defined a policy as “a projected program of goal values and practices.”¹¹⁰ In other words, we seek to emphasize that policies – global or otherwise – are simultaneously practical and normative. This dual nature, by which action and norms coalesce, has been aptly captured by Goodin, Rein, and Moran, who call policy studies “a ‘persuasion’ that aspires to normatively committed intervention in the world of action.”¹¹¹ In short, policies constitute joint undertakings based on certain social purposes. In order to unpack the Janus-faced character of public policy, we find inspiration in both the “practice turn” and the “discursive turn,” each of which has marked the field of policy studies in recent years.¹¹² As conceptual tools, practices and value debates provide a parsimonious heuristic that can bring us further into the political bricolage of global governance.

Grasping global policymaking as a bricolage of practices and values advances our understanding of the patchwork nature of global governance in three key ways. First, the concept of bricolage reminds us that a significant chunk of global policymaking emerges from the bottom up, via a never-ending flow of evolving practices.¹¹³ Indeed, global public policies consist of practical assemblages achieved through a complex mix of replication and experimentation.¹¹⁴ Written rules may abound on the international stage, but they generally contain many gaps and ambiguities, forcing actors to be creative as they move forward. Through informal modes of governance,¹¹⁵ global actors are often left to build on established ways of doing things by way of improvisation. As they operationalize and sometimes even contradict codified procedures, such practices provide a baseline for debating, negotiating, and deciding on global public policies. Crucially, global governance practices structure the policymaking process in ways that are far from

¹¹⁰ Lasswell and Kaplan 1950. ¹¹¹ Goodin, Rein, and Moran 2008, 6.

¹¹² Fischer 2003; Freeman, Griggs, and Boaz 2011; Stone 2012; Adler-Nissen 2016.

¹¹³ Lipsky 1980. See also Hanrieder 2014; and Búzás and Graham 2020.

¹¹⁴ Pouliot and Thérien 2018a; Pouliot 2020; Pouliot 2021. ¹¹⁵ Stone 2020.

politically neutral. The much-celebrated multistakeholder partnerships, for example, come with power dynamics that combine inclusionary and exclusionary tendencies in complex ways.

Second, the notion of bricolage draws attention to the fact that public policy is a “purposeful course of action”¹¹⁶ of which political choices are an inherent feature. Fundamentally, not everyone on the world stage aspires to the same thing. Most often, global policies consist of normative patchworks that are equivocal, resting as they do on conflicting interpretations of the common good.¹¹⁷ Throughout the policymaking process, actors debate and struggle as they use different repertoires of universal values. Our focus on these struggles sheds light on global power relations, by making it possible to define the contours of certain dominant worldviews and their alternatives. As it highlights the ideological clashes that characterize global policymaking, our analysis ultimately seeks to trade the management approach of global public goods for one centered on the notion of political struggle. In so doing, we aim to show that for every course of global policymaking actually taken, several alternatives are not.

Third, the bricolage perspective stresses the fact that the amalgam of practices and value struggles through which global public policies are shaped is rarely programmed beforehand. By envisioning global policymaking as an open-ended bricolage of practices and norms, our approach helps make sense of its complexity and contingency. Murphy suggests a useful metaphor to account for the improvised nature of global policymaking: “Like most gothic cathedrals,” he writes, “the institutions of each of the successive world orders have been built sporadically over many dozens of years as the interest of the community to be served waxed and waned and as different sponsors and benefactors were found to realize one or another part of the originally imagined project.”¹¹⁸ This architectural metaphor is perfectly in line with our own approach. Above all, it suggests that while some historical forces may be irrepressible, there is no “inherent teleology” in the evolution of global governance.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Soroos 1986, 19–20.

¹¹⁷ Pouliot and Thérien 2018b.

¹¹⁸ Murphy 1994, 33.

¹¹⁹ Hofferberth and Lambach 2020, 568.

Conclusion

Critics may ask: Why should we care? Why should we draw such a complex picture of global governance and global policymaking when the global public goods approach seems so much simpler and straightforward? While theoretical simplicity and parsimony are of course virtues to be cultivated, we argue that the three conceptual tools that inform our analytical framework – bricolage, practices, and value debates – capture the politics of global governance in a more exhaustive and penetrating way than their alternatives. First, the bricolage lens is a useful reminder that the “how” is as politically significant as the “what” when it comes to understanding collective decision making. Politics, after all, is primarily about process. Second, attention to practices allows us to emphasize the power relations involved in global policymaking. Politics is also a matter of inclusion and exclusion. And third, by focusing on value debates, we provide a broader understanding of historical trajectories and paths not taken. Politics is a struggle over steering the collective ship.

A basic insight of our analysis is that global policymaking is far more intricate than the mere supply of global public goods. It is also “more fluid and fragmented than might be found in [the] stable political systems of most OECD nations.”¹²⁰ Stone and Moloney usefully delineate the complexities of global policymaking along three axes.¹²¹ Horizontally, it involves a range of policy networks with unclear lines of authority. Vertically, global policymaking requires coordination across multiple levels, especially (though not only) when it comes to implementation. And diagonally, it spans the public–private divide, even to the point of resting on unilateral private initiatives. Taken together, these three dimensions describe “a global public sector or a discernible transnational administrative space”¹²² whose policymaking processes are akin to a “maze.”¹²³ We argue that trying to make sense of such a maze from the rationalist public goods perspective amounts to a major oversimplification of global governance.

Indeed, if the literature on global public goods were right, one should observe much more convergence on the objectives and means

¹²⁰ Stone 2020, 29.

¹²¹ Stone and Moloney 2019, 13.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ Stone 2020.

of global governance than what we see in the world today. While proponents of the concept acknowledge the politics involved in defining and prioritizing public goods, they also propose ready-made solutions and methods centered on the institutional incentivization of voluntary cooperation. Yet, a quick survey of everyday global governance suggests that actors often disagree not only on the nature of the problems that they are confronting but also on the destination they want to reach and the path they must take to get there. This flurry of politics cannot be properly captured by a concept that emphasizes technical problem-solving and rational decision making.

Similarly, the global public goods perspective would suggest a far more streamlined production process than what is actually on offer. It is true that advocates emphasize the distributional politics involved and the recurrent mismatch between decision makers and “consumers.” But they also reduce the politics of participation and inclusion to the notion of “stakeholders,” a contemporary buzzword that tends to brush aside some tough political questions: Who determines the stakes here? What are the boundaries of jurisdiction? Which actors should be involved in the process, and how?¹²⁴

In a programmatic piece, Weiss and Wilkinson write that “[t]he crucial challenge in the near term is to push the study of global governance beyond the notion ‘add actors and processes into the international organization mix and stir.’”¹²⁵ We believe that the concept of global policymaking provides the perfect intellectual device with which to do this. For one thing, it helps capture recent global trends (e.g., orchestration, fragmentation, experimentation, legitimization) in a longer historical perspective. As a heuristic, it also helps capture the extent to which global governance is a process of political struggle. As Chapter 2 develops, we operationalize these insights in the form of value analysis (which sheds light on struggle and alternatives) and practice analysis (illuminating power dynamics and exclusion).

¹²⁴ See Steffek 2010. ¹²⁵ Weiss and Wilkinson 2014, 213.