
Managers of Global Change

The Influence of International Environmental
Bureaucracies

edited by Frank Biermann and Bernd Siebenhüner

Institutional Dimensions of Global Environmental Change
A Core Research Project of the International Human Dimensions
Programme on Global Environmental Change (IHDP)

The MIT Press
Cambridge, Massachusetts
London, England

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This book was set in Sabon by SNP Best-set Typesetter Ltd., Hong Kong.
Printed and bound in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Managers of global change : the influence of international environmental
bureaucracies / edited by Frank Biermann and Bernd Siebenhüner.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-262-01274-4 (hardcover : alk. paper)—ISBN 978-0-262-51236-7
(pbk. : alk. paper)

1. International officials and employees. 2. Environmental agencies—
Officials and employees. 3. Environmental policy. I. Biermann, Frank.

II. Siebenhüner, Bernd.

JZ4850.M35 2009

341.4—dc22

2008042142

Printed on Recycled Paper.

Preface

This book is the result of a journey that brought together more than a dozen researchers with a shared interest in the role of international organizations and, more specifically, of international bureaucracies in world politics.

The first idea for this project was developed in 2000 by a group of three researchers at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany. It was a combination of three academic concerns: Frank Biermann had a long-standing interest in the reform of the United Nations, in particular, in the field of the environment. In 1997, he published a proposal on the establishment of a world environment organization that would replace the United Nations Environment Programme, and has since participated in several policy networks on this issue. Whatever the benefits of a new agency, it became obvious that the theory of international relations lacked detailed understanding of the role of international bureaucracies in world politics. Bernd Siebenhüner had developed at the same time an interest in social learning and the role of knowledge in organizational change. Much research in this area focused on private organizations or national bureaucracies, and it appeared interesting to apply these theories and hypotheses to international bureaucracies. Combining international relations theory with management theory to study the behavior of international bureaucracies became thus a fruitful avenue for a joint research project.

Gerhard Petschel-Held was the third colleague involved in developing this research idea. Gerhard at the time specialized in computer-based modeling of social processes. His first research projects in this field focused on local questions, such as land degradation or fisheries. This project on international bureaucracies provided a unique opportunity to pioneer new analytical methods at a higher scale of social organization, and in a

different context. Gerhard was a great source of inspiration in the early stages of this project, and his analytical rigor as a physicist, combined with a deep interest in social issues and in environmental policy and social justice, had a major impact on the final product of this research. Gerhard passed away in September 2005. We miss his ideas, his brilliance, his enthusiasm, and his humor. We dedicate this volume to his memory.

The project—which became known as the “MANUS (Managers of Global Change)” Project—has subsequently involved a large number of researchers, most of whom participated in this book as authors of the conceptual or empirical chapters. In addition, the project has drawn on the support and constructive criticism of Philipp H. Pattberg, Kunihiko Shimada, and Hans-Dieter Sohn. In particular, we wish to thank the student researchers and interns associated with this project: Romy Dudek, Johannes Ebeling, Anna Schreyögg, Mathijs Seegers, Bonne van der Veen, David Wabnitz, and Carolin Zerger. Many thanks also to Marc Heinitz, who compiled the index.

The book builds on interviews and surveys of almost three hundred international civil servants and experts involved with international bureaucracies. We wish to thank all of them for their time and insights, without which this book would not have been possible. All case studies have been reviewed by a number of experts in the respective fields, whom the case authors acknowledge in their chapters. In addition, we thank those colleagues who provided comments, suggestions, empirical data, and encouragement for the overall project during the last years: our thanks to Steinar Andresen, Richard E. Benedick, William C. Clark, Daniel Compagnon, Tom Dedeurwaerdere, Bharat Desai, Hansjörg Elshorst, Aarti Gupta, Peter M. Haas, Klaus Jacob, Martin Jänicke, Sheila Jasanoff, Norichika Kanie, Marc A. Levy, Ronald B. Mitchell, Udo E. Simonis, Klaus Töpfer, and Michael Zürn.

A special thank to John Schellnhuber, the director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, who not only provided intellectual stimulation for this project but also enabled a stimulating environment at the Potsdam Institute that made work on this project a pleasant experience. In addition, we wish to thank the other institutions that have hosted and supported researchers involved in this project: the Environmental Policy Research Centre at the Freie Universität Berlin, the Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg, and the Institute for Environmental Studies at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Throughout its duration, the project has enjoyed the endorsement and moral and material support of the core project “Institutional Dimensions of Global Environmental Change” of the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change. We wish to thank in particular Oran R. Young, chair of these programs, for his continuous support and encouragement.

Funding for this project was ensured through a four-year grant from the Volkswagen Foundation of Germany, which supported this research from January 2002 through December 2005. We owe our gratitude in particular to Professor Hagen Hof of the Volkswagen Foundation, who was responsible for this project throughout its duration and at several times went the extra mile to increase flexibility in project management and finances. Additional funding was provided by Caixa d’Estalvis i Pensions de Barcelona Foundation, Spain (Mireia Tarradell); Caja Madrid Foundation, Spain (Mireia Tarradell); Carlo Schmid Foundation, Germany (Robert Marschinski); German Academic Exchange Service (Mireia Tarradell); and the German National Merit Foundation (Klaus Dingwerth).

Finally, we are grateful to the MIT Press for a speedy and professional process in turning this manuscript into a book. We thank in particular our editor at the press, Clay Morgan, for instant valuable feedback, and three anonymous reviewers, who provided us, in addition to their generally positive assessment, with nine pages of detailed comments and much “food for thought.” Last but not least, we are grateful to manuscript editor Kathleen A. Caruso and copyeditor Nancy Kotary for help copyediting this lengthy manuscript that was written exclusively by non-native speakers.

This book has been an intense learning process for all involved. As such, it has been both inspiring and enjoyable. Whatever the detailed results of this project, as laid out in the thirteen chapters of this book, nothing has changed the generally optimistic and normatively positive attitude that all project researchers shared. There are pathologies and problems in the work of many international bureaucracies. Yet without these bureaucracies and their dedicated staff, global policies for environmental protection and sustainable development would likely be less effective, efficient, and equitable.

On behalf of all project team members:

Frank Biermann and Bernd Siebenhüner
Amsterdam and Oldenburg, May 2008