

1. Introduction

Discourses [are] practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak.

(Foucault 1972: 49)

1.1 PARTNERSHIPS IN ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

The objects this book speaks of, and thereby contributes to the formation of, are called *partnerships*. In social science and policy studies literature, partnerships are often sectorally specified, such as *public–private* partnerships, *private–private* partnerships, *United Nations (UN)–business* partnerships, *business–science* partnerships and most recently *public–social–private* partnerships. In other contexts, the area on which the partnership operates is emphasized. Then, they may be called *development* partnerships, *health* partnerships, or *water* partnerships. Sometimes they are named on the basis of their organizational structure. Then, a partnership may be called a network, an alliance, a commission or initiative. These categories are not mutually exclusive, therefore researchers refer to them under either of these previous terms, or as a general category: *governance networks*.

This book investigates a specific subgroup of partnerships working on sustainable development and operating at a transnational level, called *sustainability partnerships* or *Type-II outcomes*. This last name is a reference to the story of their origin, how they came to be regarded as the (secondary but only) outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), held in Johannesburg in 2002. International agreements (Type-I outcomes) over the negotiated sustainability issues have not been reached in the Preparatory Commission Meetings (PrepComs) of the WSSD. The lack of legally binding agreements put the limelight on Type-II outcomes, making them critical for global environmental governance. The partnerships that were endorsed in the Johannesburg Summit and its follow-up are the specific sample this book uses to investigate global environmental governance networks.

Secondly, this book is mainly concerned with transnational and global

governance, wherein the interactions of non-state actors across national boundaries are the focus (Dingwerth 2007: 2–3). For this study, it is critical to make the differentiation between transnational and other levels of governance since partnerships are assumed to operate differently at these different levels. When a government or a municipal authority decides to provide public services through outsourcing service provision and choose for building partnerships, they make a decision from among the various policy options they have. The execution of these projects remains in the realm of various actors, often the private sector. Nevertheless,

- from the perspective of the public authority in question, partnerships are political decisions;
- from the perspective of the private sector (service provider), partnerships are a promise and contract (Andersen 2008);
- from the perspective of the public, the partnership's success or failure is linked to the accountability of the *public* authority while the legally binding contract protects the public from suffering losses.

The accountability of the public authority is not, however, guaranteed at the transnational level. Where there is no shadow of hierarchy, partnerships could remain as mere promises. Moreover, there is no legal authority to petition in case there are undesired consequences for the communities involved. Hence, it is necessary to study their practices at the transnational level, without regard to the generally positive assumptions made at other levels of operation.

In sum, this book is about transnational partnerships that work on sustainable development, their introduction into global environmental governance, their negotiation into a partnerships regime by nation states, their endorsement by the United Nations in 2002 as a legitimate governance mechanism, and their mainstreaming by the hundreds of partnerships initiated since then. Accordingly, special attention is paid to the UN processes which have been instrumental in the expansion of partnerships as a governance mechanism.

1.2 BACKGROUND: GOVERNANCE 'AT THE END OF HISTORY'

While the UN institutions have provided *the fora* for the transformation of partnerships to a transnational regime, *the timing* of this transformation coincided with conceptual changes in environmental governance.

At the global level, this was a time when the intrinsic value of nature was seldom evoked as a reason for its protection. It has become increasingly difficult to comprehend nature without reference to humanity's influence on it, and *the environment* (as opposed to nature) has become a function of developmental goals in governance platforms. This new and mediated understanding of nature had its impacts: if nature was to be protected from the economic activities of human societies, the logics of cooperation and competition in and among public and private sectors had to be resolved. Partnerships emerged as a tool of environmental policy at this point when both sides of the political spectrum had to respond to this new outlook. Various philosophers reflected on the death of nature (Merchant 1998), post nature (Curry 2008) and *after Nature* (Strathern 1992; Escobar 1999). The term refers not only to our species' inability to maintain natural cycles, it also reflects the difficulty of understanding and representing nature in an age of such unprecedented intervention in nature. An ontology addressing this situation is the subject of Chapter 3 on 'discourses and institutions *after Nature*'.

As for world politics in general, this was a time of increasing involvement of non-state actors (particularly business actors) in decision-making and policy implementation at all levels. At the national level, since the 1980s many public services have been outsourced to the private sector in the rich countries. This trend was also growing in the so-called developing countries, and its global application required the formation of institutions that could carry out the same idea. It is in this sense that transnational partnerships comprise a *regime*: they have become a globally accepted norm, translated into legitimate institutional arrangements across the world and at various levels. As is documented in Chapter 4 of this book, negotiations of sustainability partnerships have included criteria to transform these loosely organized arrangements into a more specialized set of activities. It is therefore reasonable to understand sustainability partnerships as a *partnerships regime*, in line with Stephen Krasner's (1983: 1) definition of the term as 'implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations'.

The UN's endorsement of sustainability partnerships took place at a time global regulatory arrangements were losing their popularity, firstly because they were proven to be ineffective in many areas of environmental governance during the previous decades. Implementation of international treaties has been limited without the consent and contribution of business actors. Secondly, after the Cold War, environment was no longer the obvious area for collaboration between otherwise antagonistic political systems. The 'end of history' narrative that emerged just before the end

of the Cold War was the background wherein the positive bias towards partnerships emerged.

The political atmosphere towards (and after) the end of the Cold War allowed for such extreme announcements as ‘the end of history’, with liberal democracy the victorious ideology. It was the approaching fall of the Soviet Union that inspired Francis Fukuyama’s famous phrase as early as 1989. Five years later, one of the greatest proponents of the partnership concept, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (1997) put forth a clear vision of governance in a unipolar world: ‘Today, market capitalism has no rival. [. . .] In today’s world, the private sector is the dominant engine of growth; the principal creator of wealth. [. . .] This is why I call for a new partnership among governments, the private sector, and the international community’.

In the following years, various forms of cooperation among countries or between state and non-state actors were called ‘partnership’. What Ann Zammit (2003) calls the ‘proliferation of partnerships’ or what Jens Martens (2007: 4) termed ‘the new mantra shaping the UN discourse on global politics’ was this spread in the use of the term ‘partnership’ to represent any arrangement from development projects to international security agreements. Within ten years of Annan’s speech, the UN had already ‘facilitated grants for 365 projects implemented by 39 UN agencies [. . .] for the benefit of 123 countries’ under the heading of partnerships (UNFIP 2006).

Apart from their unpopularity due to their perceived ineffectiveness, international environmental agreements were also suffering from a general turn towards neo-liberal globalization. The *partnerships regime* was a part of the transformation from predominantly regulation-oriented solutions towards predominantly voluntary, market-based solutions. The emergence of partnerships thus coincided with the decline in the number and scope of the global environmental agreements (Mitchell 2010; Quental et al. 2011).

This transformation has not been without contestation. Various groups within the UN system such as The South Centre, the affiliated civil society groups, as well as workers and trade unions disagreed with and resisted it. These contestations are important sources of information for a political scientific inquiry into the partnerships regime because they reveal the changes in the power distribution by the shift towards market-based governance. Secondly, they indicate conflicts that still exist: while some of the issues regarding new governance mechanisms have been resolved, others, the later chapters argue, have sedimented into the logics of these new practices called partnerships. Understanding these conflicts could reveal the structural limitations of such institutions or solve some of the

underlying challenges. This study aims to achieve the former through a number of methods, detailed in Chapter 2.

The 348 partnerships registered by the UNCSD make a sizeable and well-documented sample to study the partnerships regime as they comprise an interesting and opportune set for researchers. As a body of partnerships their official establishment took place at the last global summit on environment and development; the negotiations were official and public, and the contestations can still be traced. They have become the main implementation mechanisms of sustainable development policies (particularly that of the Millennium Development Goals, MDGs), but they are registered with a commission with very limited power. The Commission on Sustainable Development has the functions of information gathering, advising member nations and making recommendations as a part of Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Its decision-making power is limited to the recommendations it makes to the General Assembly through the ECOSOC. And yet, the CSD embodies the largest number of partnerships focusing on sustainable development. The narrations and counter-narrations, the mainstreaming and normalizing effects of partnerships through sheer numbers, the discourses employed and abated can all be studied through this large and diverse sample.

To determine such variability, one should keep in mind that various partnership groups are clustered on the basis of different premises, despite their numerous similarities. This is important because of the generally positive bias towards partnerships in policy science and international relations (IR) literatures. Some of the earlier studies on partnerships in general (cf. Visseren-Hamakers and Glasbergen 2007) and the partnerships regime in the UN system in particular (cf. Witte et al. 2002) display a highly positive outlook on the future of these projects as well as their influence on environmental governance. Partnerships are generally expected to have a desirable effect on achieving sustainable development, although this optimism is often linked to certain conditions (such as screening and oversight). Noticing this tendency, Andersen (2008: 1) suggests that partnerships unite the political centre and the political left by overcoming 'the dilemma between public shared responsibility and independent social criticism' (including the critical potential of civil society). Moreover they solve the dilemma between the logics of cooperation and competition in and among public and private sectors, which became the major uniting principle for more conservative groups and business actors. He concludes that this positive bias is undeserved: '[E]ven though partnerships are defined in almost completely positive terms, they often fail. Social partnerships collapse into indifference, or become dissolved in conflicts' (ibid.: 1).

This study does not take the existing belief in partnerships and the

partnerships regime for granted. It focuses as much attention on their origins as on their results. Rather than evaluating their problem-solving capabilities, it examines their discursive influences and ideological effects within and outside the UN system. It thus takes a step back and puts partnerships into focus rather than taking the assumptions already made by the system that produced the partnerships regime. For this reason, although *the results of the partnerships regime* are interesting for this study, they are not understood as a test of their success or failure: existing literature reveals that some studies find the same results successful, while others interpret them as failure.

The success of partnerships as a form of governance is not determined by outcomes: partnerships are fast expanding to most environmental issue areas; they are already successful in this mimetic sense. But the recognition that there is no consensus on the success or failure of the *partnerships regime* should not be understood as an attempt to relativize such endeavours away. Rather, it is an attempt to understand the role and capabilities of social science differently, as the following section aims to establish. After all, as Jacques Derrida (2002) warns us, although deconstruction does not produce general rules or methods, it is constantly aware of contexts; and our methods must be adjusted to each case without resorting either to relativism or empiricism. Hence, it is necessary to ask what kind of transformations the replication of this form of governance foreshadows.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS: AN INQUIRY INTO MEDIATING DISCOURSES

Concepts social scientists use to describe processes and phenomena are abstractions, indicating the common element in these singular events and phenomena. Inversely, we know about singular events and phenomena through filters of theory and imaginary that contextualize them to our pre-existing mental categories. In this sense, abstraction and narration are deeply related. Concepts such as democracy, globalization or environmentalism are *narrations*, made up of various storylines, as much as abstractions.

In their study of globalization, Cameron and Palan (2004: 3) argue that when abstract concepts are articulated, we often react to these storylines, which they call *mediating discourses*:

Policy-makers, CEOs, NGOs, anti-capitalist protesters and new social movements do not react to 'globalization' as such [but] to a mediating discourse which tells them what globalization is, how it affects their lives and, most

crucially, how it will affect them in the future. The aggregate reaction and response to the mediating discourse, in turn, is an important component shaping the 'reality' of globalization itself.

Thus, mediated concepts and mediating discourses mutually constitute one another, in an ongoing, circular process. The argument, for instance, that globalization is a 'myth' would make no difference to Cameron and Palan's (ibid.) understanding:

The issue here is not simply whether or not a given theory is true in the conventional sense – that is, an empirically testable proposition – but whether the stories contained within [the narration] are believed by sufficient numbers of people prepared to invest serious time and money in them. If enough such people exist, and if they command sufficient economic, political, social and cultural resources, then any myth, however outrageous or outlandish, to some extent becomes a 'reality'.

Similarly, there are narrations about partnerships (how they came to be, what they are, how they affect our lives and how they will do so in the future) that mediate our understanding of them. Andersen (2008: 1) recognizes this aspect when he suggests

Partnerships are much praised, but often without great accuracy regarding their actual content. Most of us know partnerships as a loose metaphor, which we can inscribe any meaning to. We nod our heads and smile at each other in mutual affirmation of the fact that partnerships represent the way forward. But no one sees that we may in fact be speaking from entirely different perspectives and about entirely different concepts, or at least not until the project fails and the partnership does not turn out as desired.

Studying the mediating discourses is significant as they influence what is understood by partnerships and influence the reactions of policy-makers, experts, civil society groups, or corporations. In turn, the aggregate reaction to these mediating discourses is an important component that shapes partnerships. As the increasing number of partnerships indicates, the amount of temporal, financial and human resources invested in partnerships certainly assure their continued presence. They command various types of resources, and many careers depend on their perceived success. For the foreseeable future, partnerships are likely to be central to environmental governance.

To demonstrate the idea of this cyclical co-constitution between narratives and phenomena, imagine the establishment of a partnership. Various audiences perceive this event through the mediation of discourses operating like filters: from a legal perspective a contract is signed; from a

political perspective an institution is initiated; from an economic perspective a transaction process is started; from a sociological perspective an event is performed and so forth. Receiving all these different narrations from a variety of communicative subsystems allows audiences of policy-makers, experts, civil society groups or corporate executives to interpret factual information (for example when and where the partnership was established, who the partners were, what the aim of the partnership was for those partners) such that they

construct a picture of its significance, place it in an historical context, and frame it in a more or less coherent narrative of social development. [. . .] Out of this welter of observations, performances, interpretations, and predictions certain collective stories then emerge [which in turn inform the society] about itself, and prepare [its members] for future action. (Ibid.: 5)

This book aims to reveal different narrations about partnerships and examine whether they are necessary or desirable institutions. Their influence is more relevant to their desirability than their effectiveness. The platforms wherein they emerged and the political language they transform are analytical components to understand their influence. The research questions therefore can be listed as:

1. How and why did partnerships become the designated governance mechanism to solve environmental problems?
2. How and why did this process prescribe the resulting manifestations of partnerships as opposed to others?
3. Do partnerships normalize or legitimize certain rationales, symbolic orders, or modes of organization, over others?
4. Which discourses mediate our understanding of partnerships? Are there any conflicts between them? If so, is it possible to reveal some of the paradoxes that sedimented into the logics of the partnerships regime through a historical study of these discourses?
5. Inversely, what kinds of shifts do partnerships reflect about the changes taking place in global politics and ideologies, environmental governance and democracy?
6. In what aspects are these shifts able to transform the existing practices, power structures and orders of meaning in global governance?

The first two questions are about the emergence of partnerships, the history and contestations around their negotiation as global environmental governance mechanisms, whereas the third one concerns the existing and possible implications of the partnerships regime. These are addressed in the first empirical chapter (Chapter 4). The fourth and fifth questions

comprise the body of this research, analyzed in Chapters 5 to 7, which focus on the discourses of private governance, sustainable development and participatory democracy respectively. The final question frames the conclusive chapter.

1.4 MAIN ASSUMPTIONS: CO-CONSTITUTION AND CIRCULARITY

This book provides a circular narration of partnerships and global governance. My aim is to reconstruct debates and symbolic contexts related to partnerships as private governance institutions, as environmental projects and as tools of participation in global governance. Through investigating partnerships certain transitions in the global order are also explained. One side of this circle reveals the influence and sedimentation of certain discourses into sustainability partnerships. The other side of the circle reveals how partnerships in turn contribute to, exemplify and/or transform the existing discourses and power structures. On the one hand, partnerships often exacerbate these discursive shifts. On the other hand, partnerships themselves change and adapt to these newly constructed realities, too. As Bäckstrand and Lövbrand (2006: 50–51) aptly put it, sustainability partnerships represent a ‘microcosm of competing and overlapping discourses’ that reflect debates in international relations and environmental governance. Accordingly the main assumptions of this study are that partnerships can be used as analytical mirrors that reflect certain transformations in the discourses of global governance; and that through a study of discourses that mediate our understanding of partnerships, these different symbolic orders can be linked for a fuller analysis and understanding of partnerships.

The circular relationship between partnerships and governance discourses parallels the ‘retroductive’ method used in this book which is detailed in Chapter 2. It understands social inquiry as a constant cycle between evidence, its interpretation, theorizing, reflection and reappropriation of all these in the light of ontological presuppositions of the particular analysis (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 33–34). The focus of the next section is an initial problematization based on the research questions.

1.5 INITIAL PROBLEMATIZATION: DISCOURSES AND INSTITUTIONS

Partnerships bring certain unlikely principles together. This is reflected in their official definition by the UNCSD (2007), which refers to them as

‘voluntary multi-stakeholder initiatives which contribute to the implementation of inter-governmental commitments in *Agenda 21*, the Programme for the Further Implementation of *Agenda 21* and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation’. This official definition fixes and delimits the nature and the sphere of partnerships.

Regarding their nature, it is emphasized that

- they are voluntary agreements (as opposed to more traditional regulatory mechanisms);
- they are multi-stakeholder initiatives (as opposed to initiatives only among/by state actors).

Regarding the sphere of partnerships, it is stated that

- their goal is to implement intergovernmental commitments (as opposed to participation in the decision-making of these commitments);
- they work on sustainable development issues (as opposed to other issues that might be immediately relevant to the well-being of the environment and people, such as war and peace, or human rights, governance of technologies and so on);
- they act to implement intergovernmentally agreed sustainability goals (as opposed to sustainable development goals that governments cannot agree on or so far have not agreed on, or setting more ambitious or new goals for conservation).

This definition reflects the internal conflicts of the partnerships regime. Firstly, the emphasis on multi-stakeholder participation is balanced by the claim that partnerships are implementation mechanisms. Non-state actors are invited to participate but their participation is restricted to carry out decisions already made by governments. Without non-state participation in decision-making, the partnerships regime appears to depend on a list of principles, the realization of which the governments could not agree on.

Secondly, the most conventional mechanism in the UN system to tackle environmental and social problems is international regulation (that is internationally binding agreements that rest on state regulation and enforcement). Partnerships are operationalized on a different principle, which emphasizes voluntariness. Yet, the issues on which they can work are restricted to existing intergovernmental agreement. It is possible to argue that this is a precaution against unilateral corporate action on issue areas where national interests are divergent. But even then, it represents a greater dilemma: global environmental regulation aims to limit the

harmful effects of human activity on the ecosystems of the planet, most often caused by industrial activity. To assume that harmful industries will voluntarily agree to reduce or transform their activities (with no governmental enforcement) is to leave regulation to the irregular influence of environmental activism on the operations of these sectors. A similar argument could be made regarding the global developmental focus of partnerships: if developmental inequalities were the cause of problems partnerships are expected to remedy, then the corporations that (at least to some degree) have caused these inequalities are given a major role, and assumed to be neutral if not benevolent actors.

Finally, the goal determined by the official definition of partnerships rests on an earlier dilemma: 'achieving sustainable development would require broad-based participation and partnerships with non-governmental actors' (UN 1992b: para. 23.1). Why, then, would governments agree to targets that they could neither reach on their own (through binding regulations enforced upon all stakeholders) nor include all stakeholders in the decision-making thereof (which indicates that there are conflicting interests of different stakeholders and little or no agreement among them)? Moreover, this conceptualization sets sustainable development, a discourse that brings together the often conflicting aims of environmental protection and economic development, as an ultimate goal.

But how could all these conflicting statements, assumptions and demands end up in the official definition of a new governance mechanism after long negotiations? This question has to be answered at two levels. Empirically, the discourses mentioned must be studied in greater detail. The mediating discourses on partnerships were selected for this study, accordingly: voluntariness points towards privatization, multi-stakeholderism points towards non-state actor involvement (both in terms of participation and privatization), and the sustainable development is set as the goal for all CSD partnerships. Therefore, it needs to be scrutinized how such conflicting discourses can merge in an official definition, starting with an initial theorization on the relationship between discourses and institutions.

Maarten Hajer (1995: 61) defines discourse as 'a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations that is produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities'. If these sets of practices are deeply established and socially agreed upon, it is more difficult to change them. Thus, the more a discourse structures our understanding and articulations, the deeper it lies in the consciousness of the society and the more normal it feels; hence, the more difficult it would be to politicize and change it. Hajer calls this process 'discourse structuration' (*ibid.*: 60). A successful

discourse, Hajer argues, almost always solidifies into an institution, or is translated into institutional arrangements, a process he calls 'discourse institutionalization' (ibid.: 61).

In a more theoretical vein, the relationship between institutions and discourses is established via the concept of *sedimentation*. According to David Howarth (1995: 132) post-structuralist discourse theory does not account for institutions 'as referring to trans-historical and objective laws of historical development, or [. . .] as unified subjects or agents endowed with intrinsic interests and capacities [but as] discourses which, as a result of political and social practices, have become relatively practical and durable'. Both of these approaches to the relationship between institutions and discourses are detailed in the following chapters. For the initial problematization, my aim is to highlight their common approach to sedimentation and conflict: neither of these descriptions excludes the possibility of conflicting discursive elements, storylines, or practices to sediment into the logics of the same institution. In a more recent article, David Howarth writes more explicitly about the inevitability of inconsistencies and the possibility of conflict in policy regimes, linking them to discourse theory through Derrida's concept of 'undecidability':

Poststructuralist discourse theory stress[es] the *radical contingency* and *structural undecidability* of discursive structures. All systems of meaning are in a fundamental sense lacking or incomplete, [and any] policy regime or practice will exhibit inconsistencies or tensions, as well as various exclusions or negations, which cannot be captured by any essential set of rules or principles. [. . .] Discourses thus exhibit moments of *structural undecidability*, in which the argumentative logic of the text is poised between two equally plausible lines of development. In Derrida's words, these moments of undecidability require the taking of 'ethico-theoretical decisions' that exclude certain possibilities. (Howarth 2009: 312)

The empirical chapters trace such moments wherein ethico-theoretical decisions were made in the history of partnerships. This is important to reveal that allegedly neutral, technical stances in fact conceal highly normative commitments. Examination of the agents that fulfil these positions further discloses the political consequences of such decisions (Hajer 1995: 55). Secondly, these conflicts and their sedimentation into the partnerships regime remains a focal point throughout this analysis. The *sedimentation of conflict* in international relations has so far not been examined in detail. Mainstreaming this idea with the general discourse theoretical framework is one of the theoretical pursuits of Chapter 3, after the main theoretical premises and ontological presuppositions are discussed.

1.6 ORGANIZATION OF CHAPTERS

This book is organized into two parts. The first part continues with two chapters on methodological and theoretical reflections that have guided the research and writing process. It concludes with the first empirical chapter, based on the Global Sustainability Partnerships Database (GSPD), developed at the Institute for Environmental Studies, VU University Amsterdam. This chapter compares the aims of various stakeholders during negotiations of Type-II outcomes with the actual partnerships regime. Part II comprises the analysis of three mediating discourses, resulting in the conclusions.

After this introductory chapter, Part I continues with ‘Methodological reflections: studying change within continuity’. This chapter explains the tools and methods for a circular narration that analyzes and embeds partnerships. Discourse theory and eco-criticism are powerful methods, but they also must be grounded in ontological presuppositions guiding their use and interpretation. Such ontological presuppositions and the analytical concepts are mainly established in Chapter 3. ‘Theoretical reflections: discourses and institutions *after Nature*’, reveals the antiessentialist theoretical foundation of this book, wherein nature is no longer considered in opposition to or the exclusion of society.

The first empirical chapter (Chapter 4) focuses on the ‘story’ of CSD partnerships, from the first time they have been mentioned in an official UN document to their negotiations and official enactment. Titled ‘Partnerships as sedimented discourses: the emergence of Type-II outcomes’, it details how the partnerships regime emerged, what role Type-II outcomes were given in governance, and whether actual partnerships contradict these goals.

In Part II, each chapter studies one of the mediating discourses, both historically and in relation to sustainability partnerships. Chapter 5 contextualizes partnerships to their economic background, to observe how the term evolved from a form of business ownership to an institution of transnational governance. It focuses on the discussions around *privatization of governance* in terms of the shifts in the perception of corporations and rights of ownership. More generally, it establishes the framework of globalization and the increasing influence of capital markets on governance. In Chapter 6, the discourse of sustainable development is examined, to place CSD partnerships in their political context. Bringing together the unlikely ideas of environmental protection and economic development, sustainable development has been an exceptionally successful UN discourse, since 1987. To look into this dual origin of the term, a history of environmentalism and one of developmentalism are constructed and

linked. Through this nexus, global environmental governance and its various contemporary institutions can be understood in their historical setting. Chapter 7 examines the participation deficit in governance and the proposition that partnerships address this problem. Participation is an ideal that is often employed to justify and legitimize partnerships. Studying participatory discourses historically reveals what kind of democratic inclusion partnerships can deliver.

Chapter 8, 'Conclusions', begins with the empirical, theoretical and methodological results of this study. However it also aims to take another step – as Andersen observed, partnerships are a promise to address the dilemmas between the political centre and left and between the logics of cooperation and competition among public and private sectors. The implication of this observation for global and transnational governance is the extension of democracy to the global level and the promise of inclusion. Thus, the concluding chapter reflects on the potential of partnerships for democracy and environmental governance.