

Preface

Public–private partnerships for sustainable development are today widely seen as the most prominent outcome of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa. Governments could then not agree on major new legislative initiatives to mitigate global environmental change and to advance sustainable development. Instead, they opted to focus on the implementation of existing policies and on the support of ‘type-2’ outcomes of the summit, with ‘type-2’ denoting a new model of global governance that complements traditional, ‘type-1’ modes of intergovernmental cooperation. Several hundred ‘partnerships for sustainable development’ have been agreed before, during and in the few years after the Johannesburg summit. While the idea of public–private partnership at the global level was not new in 2002, the high number of the newly agreed partnerships, as well as the prominence and, in parts, enthusiasm that surrounded this mechanism of global governance, was surely unprecedented. And yet, the eventual role and relevance of these partnerships remains open to debate till today.

Now, exactly 10 years after the Johannesburg summit, it is time to take stock and to provide a comprehensive assessment of what the hundreds of Johannesburg partnerships could achieve, of the reasons they emerged, and of the problems and potentials associated with this new governance mode. This 10-year assessment is the main goal of this book.

The research presented here is the result of a long-term research programme developed in 2004/05 by Frank Biermann and implemented from 2006 to 2010 under the co-leadership of Biermann and Philipp Pattberg at the Institute for Environmental Studies of the VU University Amsterdam, The Netherlands. As such, the programme was part of the Global Governance Project, the long-term joint research programme of 12 leading European research institutions in the field of global environmental governance that lasted from 2001 to 2011.

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