"Polycentricity and the Information Revolution - Exploring the Interface"

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Abstract

Information processing – including the collection, analysis and dissemination of information – plays a key role for self-organization in complex actor settings. As political science scholars have noted, the governance capacities of states is highly dependent on their abilities for information gathering and processing ((Pierre and Peters 2005:46). As other studies have explored, this also very much applies at the international level as international organizations try to maintain their role as main coordinators of international affairs through improved monitoring systems, and renewed capacities to facilitate collective action in multilevel and multi-network settings (Galaz 2009, Galaz et al. 2011). In theoretical terms, information processing capacities plays a key role for the ability of actors to both adapt and innovate in the face of changing circumstances. Despite the clear linkages between information processing, polycentricity and adaptive capacity, the resilience and global change community has yet to explore their interplay in more detail. In this paper I combine theory development and in-depth case studies to elaborate the interplay between information technological change, and polycentricity with a special focus on international organizational networks. I not only highlight some tangible features that seem to improve polycentric coordination in complex actor settings, but also some likely tensions such as information overload, disinformation, and the "securitization" of environmental issues.

Keywords: polycentric governance, information technology, information dynamics, networks