The challenge: growing disconnect between environmental problems and solutions

My vision for the Environmental Change Institute stems from, and directly addresses, and enduring conundrum for problem focused environmental scientists: despite a plethora of policy innovations engaging the private sector, civil society, and global governance in the last quarter century, the state of the planet's environment is rapidly deteriorating. From the climate crisis that threatens unparalleled catastrophic ecological impacts, to ongoing rapid extinctions of flora and fauna around the word, to ocean degradation, the overwhelming amount of scientific evidence tells us that humans are not doing enough, at almost any scale, to significantly dent these ecological crises. At the same time, the world has never seen such an impressive scale of policy experimentation and instruments from which to choose.

The explanation: shifting world view, power, and "good governance" norm complexes

I have recently explored three related explanations for the causes of this policy innovation/environmental degradation paradox (van der Ven, Rothacker, and Cashore 2018). First, I argue that professional environmental institutes and schools created during the first two waves of environmentalism have slowly shifted from an emphasis on "bioenvironmentalist" world views to largely reinforcing anthropogenic needs in general, and utility in particular, through the domination of market-liberal world views and likeminded institutionalist perspectives (Cashore 2018). Second, powerful interests have sought to prioritize market solutions over regulation, by arguing they are more effective and efficient. Resulting "feasibility" logics further reduce consideration of regulatory approaches in favour of finance and private governance initiatives. Third, and related, a "good governance norm complex" has come to treat a range of procedural goals, such as transparency, inclusion, and balance, and substantive outcomes such as livelihoods, environment and economic growth as *synergistic* with each other (Cashore and Nathan 2019 In Progress). Evidence that these goals are inversely related is treated as a policy design challenge rather than confronting the inherent paradox of the norm complex itself. This phenomenon plays out at multiple levels such as, for example, the UN shifting from Millennium Development Goals to implementing the "better designed" Sustainable Development Goals.

The solution: explicit problem conceptions, forward looking policy design, stakeholder policy learning

As a corrective, I offer three related solutions. First, those designing, and justifying, policy innovations must be required to distinguish the problem in question according to 4 different conceptualizations: Type 1 *win/win collective action* such as "tragedies of the commons"; Type 2 *win/lose optimization* that prioritizes utility as a moral philosophy; Type 3 *win/lose compromise* orientations in which tradeoffs are internalized, and Type 4 *win/lose prioritization* in which, to be solved, the specific problem in question must be given priority over others (Cashore and Bernstein 2018). Second, policy designers must be required to project forward multiple causal change processes their innovations might be expected to unleash (Cashore and Goyal In development 2019). Third, relevant stakeholders must be engaged in policy dialogues around the causal process they can help nurture (Cashore et al. 2019).

Implications for ECI: Institutional layering

The existing ECI approach is consistent with, and poised to help champion this vision. The ECI's rigorous and sophisticated interdisciplinary approach has yielded significant knowledge about the state of the environmental crisis, as well as producing research relevant for understanding the effects of policy innovations on problem definitions.

For the reasons I envision a new "***Learning Dialogues for Effective Environmental Governance"*** initiative with which to integrate ECI efforts around two related themes: institutionalization of stakeholder and scholarly learning processes focused on "cause and effect" relationships between policy design and clearly defined environmental problems; how trigger and nurture, multiple step causal processes through which transformative impacts might occur (Levin et al. 2012, Bernstein and Cashore 2012, Yona, Cashore, and Schmitz Under review 2019).

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