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# Democratizing Global Environmental Governance? Stakeholder Democracy after the World Summit on Sustainable Development

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One of the most pressing problems confronting political scientists today is whether global governance has democratic legitimacy. Drawing on an analysis of the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002, this article advances and empirically deploys an ideal-typical model of a new approach to key areas of global governance — ‘stakeholder democracy’. This work is located in the context of the changing practices of global governance, in which concerns about legitimacy, accountability, and participation have gained prominence. Sustainability is an arena in which innovative experiments with new hybrid, pluri-lateral forms of governance, such as stakeholder forums and partnership agreements institutionalizing relations between state and non-state actors, are taking place. A central argument is that sustainability governance imperfectly exemplifies new deliberative stakeholder practices with general democratic potential at the global level. In examining these governance arrangements, we draw together the nascent elements of this new ‘model’, such as its distinctive takes on political representation and accountability.

KEY WORDS ♦ civil society ♦ global environmental governance ♦ multi-stakeholder participation ♦ sustainable development

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The prospects for democratizing global governance absorb much attention in academic and policy practice today. How can global governance, multilateral institutions and intergovernmental negotiations be designed and function in more representative, accountable and effective ways? These questions are relevant since international institutions are increasingly

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challenged on normative grounds for their 'democratic deficit' and inadequate accountability mechanisms. In this article I advance a model of 'stakeholder democracy', and examine the extent to which it may offer the potential to enhance the democratic legitimacy of global environmental governance. Debates about sustainable development are increasingly dominated by questions of how to secure values such as participation, representation, accountability and legitimacy in transnational governance arrangements. These debates are entered with an interest in deliberative modes of global governance, which engage civil society actors in a manner that is far less state-centric than, for example, cosmopolitan models of democracy (Held, 1995). How can civil society actors be 'representative' and held 'accountable'? The aim is to provide a realistic assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the stakeholder democracy model by examining how non-state actor participation plays out in the complex and multi-layered global governance arrangements for sustainable development. By drawing on an array of empirical and theoretical analyses I critically evaluate the new participatory and deliberative practices that were consolidated in conjunction with the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002. This taps into contemporary debates on how to address the three inter-related 'deficits' permeating global environmental governance structures: the governance deficit, the democratic deficit and the implementation deficit (Haas, 2004; Held and Koenig-Archibugi, 2004). In the spirit of John Dryzek's comment that 'experimenting with what democracy can mean is an essential part of democracy itself' (Dryzek, 2000: 135), the overall aim is to explore WSSD stakeholder practices against the background of an ideal-typical model of stakeholder democracy, and to contribute to debates about transnational democracy and global environmental governance by reaching an open-minded appraisal of the democratic legitimacy and effectiveness of stakeholder processes. The following three points of departure are offered, which underpin our analysis of the democratic legitimacy of contemporary global sustainability governance:

1. The debate on global governance takes place at a time when governance arrangements more generally shift to more hybrid, bifurcated, plurilateral, multi-level, and complex modes. The call for 'stakeholder participation' is associated with a shift in governance, namely that from top-down steering to informal, bottom-up and voluntary approaches. Multi-stakeholder dialogues and partnership agreements represent key innovations in this shifting context. These new modes of governance bring together governmental and non-governmental actors, and offer unfamiliar and hybrid takes on constituency, representation and deliberation. The article's focus is precisely to explore the legitimacy of

these participatory modes of governance in the context of sustainable development.

2. Cosmopolitan dreams of world government are unrealistic, Realist dismissals of global democracy are too quick and neo-gramscian approaches un-nuanced. These radically different accounts of the viability of a global democratic order fail to move beyond the conceptual trap of state-centric notions of democracy. A central argument is that stakeholder democracy fits within the liberal-reformist perspective for democratizing global governance, which develops alternative notions of accountability and legitimacy compatible with the realities of the world order (Keohane and Nye, 2001; Risse, 2004) and thereby avoids exporting domestic models of democracy to the global level.
3. A recurrent but problematic assumption in the literature on transnational democracy is that civil society is conceived as a force for democratizing the global order. While recognizing the constructive force of civil society in its advisory and critical roles in global environmental governance, caution should be raised against naive views of NGOs as representatives of public good and free from self-interest. Civil society represents certain interests only and is not necessarily more accountable and representative than the market or the public sector (Scholte, 2002).

The article proceeds as follows: the next section briefly outlines how global summits have emerged as an important arena in which experiments with new forms of stakeholder participation have gained prominence the last decade. The second section explores key tenets of a model of 'stakeholder democracy' and advances a framework for evaluating the democratic legitimacy of this model. The third section examines participatory governance arrangements, such as multi-stakeholder dialogues and public-private partnerships, which became consolidated after the Johannesburg summit. Arguably, these new modes of governance represent viable examples of the practices that prompt thinking about the democratic potential of the stakeholder model in the context of global environmental governance. The conclusion offers some implications for the prospects of democratizing global governance through 'multi-stakeholdership' for sustainable development.

### *Sustainability Governance and Stakeholder Participation*

It is crucial to note that the 'democratic efficiency' storyline in global environmental politics has been pronounced in the decade between the two Earth Summits both in policy practice and academic debates. Sustainable development rhetoric has put a strong emphasis on grass-root and civil society engagement, representation and transparency in policy processes. The post-UNCED agenda encapsulates norms of liberal environmentalism

(Bernstein, 2001). In this vein, liberal democracy, capitalism 'good governance' is regarded as the most viable political institutional framework for tackling sustainable development challenges. The conventional wisdom underpinning environmental multilateralism in the 1990s is that more participation, accountability and transparency are the basis for stronger environmental policies and a more effective institutional framework (Lipschutz, 1996; Wapner, 1996). Attention has been given to the problem of the 'participation gap' in environmental politics. Inclusion of the so-called marginalized groups, such as women, indigenous people and youth, has been perceived as particularly critical to the achievement of sustainable development (Elliot, 2004). The underlying assumption is that participation and representation by non-state actors in multilateral environmental negotiations strengthen the democratic basis of environmental governance (Chambers, 2005).

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro is associated with the beginning of the participatory turn of global environmental governance. The civil society forum at Rio emerged as a template for subsequent parallel forums at mega-summits on population, environment, development and poverty. Due to the emphasis on participation the involvement of major groups from civil society emerged as a cornerstone of the Agenda 21 and the Rio accords. The United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) was established after UNCED as a functional commission under the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). CSD was given the responsibility for monitoring the progress of the implementation of Agenda 21 and for enhancing dialogue with NGOs and the business sector. So-called 'major group' representatives (non-state actors) in the CSD increased from 300 to 800 between 1993 and 2000 (Chambers, 2005; Dodds et al., 2002: 32).

The call for participation was repeated ten years later at the Johannesburg summit. However, there was a significant difference with respect to how the implementation of sustainable development should be achieved. More participation was not enough; it had to be structured to encourage deliberation and collaboration of disparate actors with a stake in the implementation of Agenda 21. The CSD made 'multi-stakeholdership' a cornerstone of its work, which moves beyond participation to include new forms of hybrid governance and deliberation between state, business and civil society. While vibrant civil society participation is regarded as essential, efforts to link stakeholding practices with formal intergovernmental decision-making and negotiation arenas is seen as a key principle in sustainability governance. However, critics argue that the new participatory governance paradigm is just neo-liberal regulatory models dressed in the language of participation, which privileges powerful actors and consolidates sovereign,

capitalist and modern power structures (Paterson, 2001). Furthermore, rather than being an expression of a genuine sphere of transnational contentious politics between civil society actors, multi-stakeholder processes are deeply embedded in, and even co-opted by, the system of inter-governmental regimes based on sovereign state power (Conca, 2006).

Hence, sustainable development emerged as a domain for experimenting with new modes of hybrid governance, exemplified with collaborative multi-stakeholder forums, dialogues and public-private partnerships bringing together representatives from the non-state groups and governments. A critical outcome of the summit was that the responsibility for implementation of sustainable development did not rest solely on the governments but was diffused among societal actors such as NGOs and industry. The Johannesburg partnership initiative, which entails voluntary public-private agreements between state and non-state actors, also reflected the move to broader responsibility and 'self-government' for realizing sustainable development. How these emerging practices fit into a model of stakeholder democracy is the topic of the next section.

### *Stakeholder Democracy as an Ideal-typical Model*

Debates around global governance have increasingly emphasized new forms of democratic practices and ideas, and stakeholder processes can be localized in this specific context. Good governance in the field of sustainable development is argued to be the ultimate win-win solution, securing public participation as well as more effective environmental outcomes. Stakeholder democracy is squarely placed within less state-centric notions of global governance such as 'governance from below' and 'governance without government' (Rosenau and Czempiel, 1992). This brings informal, participatory, non-electoral and non-territorial forms of democracy at the global level to the fore. This section advances an ideal-typical model of stakeholder democracy as a conceptual framework for evaluating the democratic legitimacy of the practices for stakeholder inclusion in sustainable development. I do not suggest that this ideal-typical model represents the reality of stakeholder practices after the Johannesburg summit. In this context, the model is no more and no less than a conceptual tool that is essential if we are to gain a clear sense of the prospects for and limits of stakeholder democracy. The presentation of the model is followed by some brief comments on its character and, in particular, how the democratic potential of multi-stakeholder processes can be delineated and assessed.

A familiar treatment of 'models of democracy' is that of Held (1995). The representation of stakeholder democracy in Box 1 mimics Held's clear and pithy style of presentation of other historical and contemporary models.

*Box 1*  
A Model of Stakeholder Democracy<sup>1</sup>

*In sum: model S*  
*Stakeholder Democracy*

**Principles of justification**

Democratic modes of governance at local, national and global levels cannot follow exclusively electoral and parliamentary patterns. Lacking traditional constituencies and consisting of multiple modes and sites of decision-making, global governance in particular needs to embrace more diverse and hybrid forms of inclusion of key social actors within and across nation states in addition to government representatives. Participation of a wider range of social and other stakeholder interests adds to the legitimacy of outcomes. The quality and impact of global deliberations is increased by expanding the range of voices and perspectives heard. 'Ownership' of outcomes and agreements by a wider range of stakeholders who are affected by issues and who may be partly responsible for policy implementation along with governments is desirable on grounds of the efficacy of democracy. Stakeholder democracy draws variously upon principles of protecting the vulnerable, functional representation, affectedness and expertise. Representation beyond elections allows for the representation of more varied and differentiated perspectives, and more emphasis on deliberative features compensates for the relative absence of electoral bases.

**Key features**

- Participation of a representative range of major groups (e.g. NGOs, women, business, trade unions, and indigenous peoples) in global summits and intergovernmental organizations
- Inclusion of these groups in partnership agreements with governments and other actors
- Expectation on major groups to play a role at national and regional levels in implementing spirit and letter of partnership and other summit and forum agreements
- Major group representatives play continuing roles with respect to follow-up, implementation and forward planning
- Deliberative processes and institutionalized deliberative forums strongly favoured
- Participating stakeholder spokespersons chosen by, and accountable to, constituencies consisting of members of their interest group

**General conditions**

- The need for legitimate decisions on pressing environmental and other issues at the global level
- The existence of major economic, political and civil society groups with a stake in the matters to be decided
- Absence of homogenous or formal political constituencies

Four key aspects of the model are elucidated: (1) The concept of democracy underpinning the global stakeholder democracy model; (2) the status and understanding of a 'model'; (3) the creative use of new institutions and the role of stakeholder processes in complementing existing institutions in international politics; and (4) the distinctive role of deliberation in stakeholder democracy. Finally, criteria for assessing the democratic legitimacy of variants of multi-stakeholder processes will be developed.

### *Democratic Legitimacy and Transnational Governance*

How do we evaluate the legitimacy of global multi-stakeholder processes based on non-electoral and non-territorial participation, representation and deliberation? Since global governance structures are multi-layered and lack distinct centres of authority, criteria stemming from ideal-type national democracy are inadequate to assess transnational democracy. Hence, we have to rethink democratic legitimacy and accountability beyond the conceptual trap of the nation state. Broadly, legitimacy can be defined as the quality of the particular social and political order; the belief held by actors that a particular rule, institution or order ought to be obeyed. Normatively, global governance is the process of creating a legitimate political order in the absence of supranational authority or world government. Legitimacy refers to the overall quality of the social order — the institutions, norms and rules rather than the actors (Risse, 2004: 7). Legitimate governance then, is the means to achieve efficiency, order and public participation (Scholte, 2002).

In assessing the legitimacy of global governance, the concepts of *input* and *output* legitimacy (Scharpf, 2001) can be used as heuristics. While originally applied to supranational governance in the EU, this twofold conception of legitimacy can arguably be extended to global governance structures without supranational rule and authority. Input legitimacy relates to the participatory quality of the decision-making process and asks whether the process conforms to procedural demands, such as representation of relevant stakeholders, transparency and accountability. Output legitimacy revolves around the effectiveness or problem-solving capacity of the governance system. In the context of governance for sustainable development, these two dimensions of legitimacy are captured in the following two questions: Are the forms of governance open to public scrutiny representative and inclusive of different stakeholders' interests (i.e. input legitimacy)? Do participatory processes 'perform' and 'deliver' the promised results-based environmental governance (i.e. can the output be considered legitimate)? High output legitimacy in terms of effective collective problem-solving can, on some accounts, compensate for low input legitimacy. Likewise, lack of effective regulatory capacity prompts the need for



greater input legitimacy in terms of transparent and accountable decision-making processes. Though contested, the assumption underpinning the ‘governance from below’ paradigm is that more participation and deliberation by affected groups will generate more effective collective problem-solving. In other words, input legitimacy will increase output legitimacy through deliberative mechanisms for stakeholder inclusion.

*What is the Status of the Stakeholder ‘Model’?*

Clearly the ‘models’ that Held sets out in *Models of Democracy* (building on the lead of MacPherson, 1977) are artificial distillations of a more complex set of ideas and practices. His model of ‘participatory democracy’, for example, includes elements that are representative and indirect as well as others that are direct and strongly participative. The models get their name, and their distinct character, from their more prominent or defining features, not their *only* important features. The same applies to the conception of ‘stakeholder democracy’. Multi-stakeholder forums and public-private partnerships, whether in ideal-typical or in other practical forms, sit alongside — or, more accurately, in sequence with — other devices which together ‘enact’ democracy in distinctive ways (Saward, 2003). In particular, in sustainability governance, the stakeholder model can only be examined in relationship to the structure, processes and norms governing international decision-making. While the scope and participation of non-state actors in global politics have increased, states are still the only entity given sovereign ‘standing’, i.e. formal entitlements to vote and to enter into international agreements under international law. There is no formal system of authority and government above states; it is ultimately a self-help system. Arguably, there is no contradiction between offering this model to promote a focused discussion, on the one hand, and these enduring anarchic features of international politics.

*Institutional Creativity and Complementarity*

However, the principles and practices of state sovereignty, which are entrenched in the United Nations Charter, are not static but have been transformed through the processes of globalization. In assuming one predominant ‘culture of anarchy’, neo-realism and neo-liberal institutionalism neglect the emergence of islands of hybrid, multi-layered, multilateral governance in many domains such as sustainability issues. This ‘greening of sovereignty’ implies that the sovereignty norm is transformed by the evolution of environmental multilateralism. Global environmental threats, the forces of globalization, calls for humanitarian intervention, and the

development of the role of the European Union have together redefined and transformed the sovereignty principle (Litfin, 1998). Similarly, normative theories about the green state point towards more ecologically responsible modes of state governance (Eckersley, 2004). In this light, multilateralism has unbundled territorial and sovereign rule in many domains. The stakeholder democracy model can provide a complement to the reality of sovereign territorial governance, in the form (for instance) of participatory or deliberative democracy. It can also be seen as an instance of creative rethinking of institutions and their relationships. It can be conceived as one way to ‘transnationalize democracy in piecemeal, experimental, consensual and domain-relative ways’. The purpose is not to ‘replace states but rather find more effective and more legitimate ways of addressing the shortcomings of exclusive territorial governance’ (Eckersley, 2004: 193). This space can lead to a renewal and reinvention of democratic governance — new devices, sequences, decision rules, procedures, and modes of representation.

Hence, the transnational stakeholder model complements intergovernmental decision-making by providing a key mechanism for transmission of civil society deliberations to the public arena of decision-making (Smith, 2003: 79–80). Having said that, the principle of stakeholding is central to the idea of a transnational democracy: those affected by, causing or having a stake in the issue at hand should have a voice in its resolution (McGrew, 2002: 223). Stakeholding is, in principle, suitable to governance with overlapping ‘communities of fate’ that do not respect territorial boundaries (Hajer, 2003). Global environmental threats highlight the need for those affected having a say in defining and addressing them — bringing what has been called the ‘all-affected principle’ to bear on deliberative and decisional procedures (Saward, 2000).

### *Deliberation and Stakeholder Democracy*

The stakeholder democracy model clearly taps into the importance of deliberative approaches to democracy. The deliberative account of democratization of the world order is based on the premise that democracy is more about deliberation, reasoned argument and public reflection than voting and aggregation. The route to the legitimacy of global governance is to encourage vital transnational public spheres rather than institutional reform or democratic constitution of the world polity. This means relaxing the necessity of a homogeneous global constituency or ‘demos’, and assuming that legitimacy can be enhanced through deliberation rather than an international equivalent of constituency-based national elections. It does not see a global constituency or demos consisting of a transnational civil society as a precondition for transnational democracy; rather it is the open

deliberation of market, civil society and government actors. The stakeholder democracy model resonates with the strengths of a deliberative emphasis in that the latter is more deeply compatible with the structures and processes of global governance compared to an aggregative or conventional electoral emphasis (Nanz and Steffek, 2004).

Furthermore, the stakeholder model links to a specific sense of deliberation, namely group-based deliberation (Meadowcroft, 2004). According to Meadowcroft, there are three types of deliberative interaction, at the 'politico-constitutional', the 'societal' and the 'meso' level. The first one refers to deliberation in central political institutions (such as courts, legislatures, and agencies) and the second entails public deliberation and opinion-formation among citizens and the media. In contrast, the meso level involves group-based deliberative interaction at the interface of state and society, in which agents of governments, business and civil society meet. This type of deliberative action, which allows stakeholder–government interface in negotiation, policy design and implementation, holds the promise of a more results-based environmental governance. In the stakeholder model, individuals participate *as* representatives of different groups. In contrast, in individual-based deliberation such as citizens' juries, the individual takes part as a citizen with no formal requirement to 'represent' any societal interest.

Group-based deliberation is advantageous when it comes to issues where the focus is on implementation, and where the stakeholders become collaborative partners in the process. Moreover, deliberation centred around execution and implementation of complex issues often requires specialist knowledge that stakeholder groups can provide to a larger extent than individual citizens (Meadowcroft, 2004). Legitimacy in the stakeholder model is generated through democratic deliberation of a variety of societal actors, from governmental delegates, social movements, business and scientific communities. The democratic legitimacy hinges upon the successful creation and institutionalization of global public spaces for deliberation. This entails designing deliberative spaces mediating between state, civil society and economy that can be forums for the negotiation of a wide array of concerns and include many voices.

#### *Legitimacy of Multi-stakeholder Dialogues and Partnership Networks*

We can conceive of a model of stakeholder democracy which employs deliberative and 'hybrid' governance arrangements as centrepieces, exemplified by stakeholder forums and public–private partnerships. Drawing on group-based conceptions of the importance of deliberation to democracy, the stakeholder model also encourages us to think about democratic mechanisms as sporadic and temporary as well as 'permanent'. These points

may help to fill out key features of a conception of stakeholder democracy, and to show its distinctiveness from a range of different views of democracy. But what can make the use of multi-stakeholder forums and networks *democratically legitimate*?

There are examples in the literature of detailed discussions and classifications of multi-stakeholder dialogues (Hemmati, 2002; Susskind et al., 2003). However, these existing analyses are ambiguous when it comes to the democratic credentials of such dialogues. Susskind et al. (2003), for example, produce a four-part typology built around (1) reasons for participant selection and (2) the purpose of the dialogue. However, it is more productive to think of a continuum of practices rather than a typology, and to build that continuum more explicitly around the twofold conception of input and output legitimacy. This relates to the balance between process and substance values, representation and effectiveness in creating legitimate stakeholder governance.

First, input legitimacy concerns procedural demands such as balanced representation of different stakeholder groups, forums for collaboration and deliberation between government, market and civil society actors, transparency, access, information sharing and accountability. We will focus specifically on two aspects of input legitimacy: *representation* and *accountability*.

On *representation*, the question would be to what extent is an appropriately wide range of stakeholder groups participating formally in the stakeholding arrangement. 'Multi-stakeholdership' has been launched to make multilateralism more inclusive and responsive to marginalized groups (for example women and indigenous people), and as a remedy to the 'participation gap' and disenfranchisement in global environmental governance (Elliot, 2004; Fisher and Green, 2004). Multilateral financial institutions, which have come under fierce criticism for suffering from a democratic deficit, have responded by establishing consultative arrangements with civil society (Mason, 2004).

A range of concepts can assist in making difficult assessments of the adequacy of representation in the context of stakeholder participation. First, we need to broaden and modify our traditional thinking in order to consider largely non-territorial modes of 'constituency'. Any notion of representation requires a notion of constituency, otherwise there is no way to approach the question 'who requires representation?' In the global context it is inevitable that those constituencies will be less formal, less homogeneous, more changeable and more contested than in national-electoral contexts. These facts make it difficult, though by no means impossible, to assess the representativeness of stakeholder forums. Among the resources that are useful for the task are Young's distinction between the representation of interests, opinions and perspectives. Perspectives, in her view, arise from

actors who are 'similarly positioned in the social field'. She stresses the importance of finding modes of representation that encompass previously 'excluded or marginalized social perspectives' (Young, 2001: 123).

On *accountability* a relevant question would be to what extent participating representatives are chosen by, or otherwise accountable to, a wide range of grassroots members of the communities or collectives they are drawn from and speak for. In this context it is helpful to distinguish between internal and external accountability (Risse, 2004). Internal accountability is about the relationship within an organized collective, like an NGO, a company or a state and concerns the relationship between the members of the collective and its leaders. Internal accountability means that democratically elected governments are accountable to their citizens, companies to their shareholders, NGOs to their members, and international organizations to their member states. Different types of control mechanisms such as electoral and hierarchical accountability are normally employed to assure internal accountability. External accountability means that decision-makers have to justify their action vis-a-vis stakeholders that are affected by their decisions. The World Bank's consultation with civil society and the stakeholder dialogues in the World Commission on Dams are two examples of efforts to institutionalize external accountability (Dingworth, 2004).

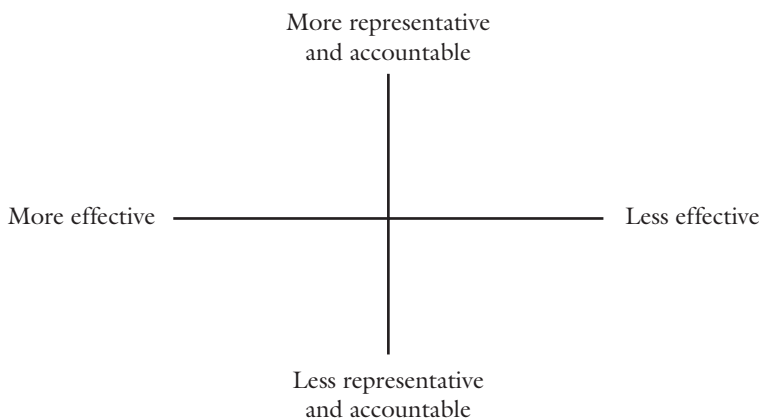
Again, in the global context, traditional notions of accountability require rethinking and adaptation. Traditional electoral accountability is closely linked to formal and hierarchical ways of identifying responsibilities for actions, and for pinpointing the adequacy of representatives in that light. In the global context, more informal and non-hierarchical modes of accountability become more central. There are two key dimensions here: first, we can ask who chose representatives of groups in terms of internal accountability, or if they are not chosen by their constituents we can ask if they are statistically or sociologically representative of the groups for whom they speak. And second, crucially, we can ask how accountable representatives are to their group constituencies in terms of a transparent giving of accounts, or answerability for actions. We might consider in certain contexts that the latter modes of accountability, based more on reporting and on financial transparency, for example, can compensate for the absence of the former. In general terms, there has to be some process of effective accountability, but precisely which one can be an issue that remains open.

Output legitimacy can be formulated as *effectiveness* of the new modes of multi-stakeholder governance and public-private partnerships networks. The scholarly debate on the compliance, implementation and effectiveness of international environmental agreements is largely a response to the low

implementation record of the existing hundreds of multilateral environmental treaties (Victor et al., 1998; Young, 1999). While the extensive debate on how to measure effectiveness of international agreements (Wettestad, 2006: 302) is beyond the scope of this article, three points are worth noting. First, effectiveness in general refers to problem-solving and implementation capacity and responds to the question whether the agreements or governance mechanisms generate effective results. Second, effectiveness can be assessed in various dimensions, such as problem-solving effectiveness and compliance effectiveness (Wettestad, 2006). The former refers to the extent to which the international agreement leads to solving the environmental or developmental problem and generating desired outcomes (poverty eradication, clean fresh water, biodiversity protection). This problem-solving or 'outcome effectiveness' may be particularly hard to judge since the implementation of sustainable development goals is an extensive, conflict-ridden and long-term process. In contrast, compliance effectiveness is the extent to which an agreement has an adequate and effective institutional framework such as monitoring procedures and implementation review, which in turn is a precondition of reaching desired environmental outcomes. Compliance or 'institutional effectiveness', rather than 'outcome effectiveness' will be in focus when evaluating the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder processes and public-private partnerships for sustainable development. Arguably, clear procedures and institutional mechanisms for measuring and monitoring progressive attainment of sustainable development goals are a precondition for reaching the long-term desired environmental outcomes. Finally, institutional effectiveness is inexplicably tied to procedural values of input legitimacy, such as representation, participation, accountability and transparency as outlined above.

Note that these are not 'yes or no' questions; they prompt responses about degrees and continuums, not absolutes and tight classifications. Assuming that a balanced assessment of input legitimacy (representativeness/accountability) and output legitimacy (effectiveness) can be gleaned from responses to the above questions, our suggestion is that high levels of both representativeness and effectiveness stand for a strong version of stakeholder democracy. Low levels of representation/accountability and effectiveness represent symbolic and co-optive politics. Low representation/accountability and high effectiveness may amount to effective stakeholder influence but not on a democratic basis. Finally, high levels of democratic representation and low effectiveness would amount to symbolic participative politics. Figure 1 below illustrates the variants of stakeholder democracy according to the effectiveness and representation/accountability criteria.

*Figure 1*  
Assessing Democratic Legitimacy of Multistakeholder Processes



### ***Global Stakeholder Democracy in Sustainable Development Governance***

After this stylized presentation of the key attributes and features of stakeholders, this section delves into the crucial issue of the workings of stakeholder participation at the WSSD and post-summitry. First, the general rationale for multi-stakeholder collaboration in sustainable development issues will be discussed. Then the major outcomes of WSSD will be summarized in order to put stakeholder democracy in a context. Finally, the multi-stakeholder governance modes will be assessed according to the two criteria of representativeness/accountability and effectiveness as outlined above.

#### ***Rationale for Stakeholder Democracy***

The WSSD provided an ample opportunity for interactive policy-making by establishing systematic processes for stakeholder dialogue and participation with the purpose of informing intergovernmental decision-making. Sustainable development governance is particularly amenable to the potential of stakeholder governance due to the involvement of transnational communities of fate in cross-cutting issues such as poverty eradication, environmental protection and gender equality.

The dominant focus at the Johannesburg summit was the implementation of Agenda 21 and the purpose was to conduct a ten-year review of the progress of the sustainable development agenda since the 1992 Rio Conference. The UNEP Executive Director described it as a ‘summit of

implementation, accountability and partnership'. Stakeholder participation as well as partnership agreements were a central means for achieving the implementation of Agenda 21 adopted at Rio. Nine non-state actors are identified in Agenda 21 as major groups: business, farmers, indigenous people, local governments, non-governmental organizations, the science and technology community, trade unions, women and youth.<sup>2</sup>

### *Earth Summit Outcomes*

The WSSD marks the end of the era of mega-conferences in the 1990s whose purpose was to raise the issues on the 'margin' of the traditional UN and intergovernmental agenda, i.e. environment, population, women and poverty. The official summit in the end gathered around 22,000 participants from national delegations in 190 countries, major groups and media representatives. The summit was heavily criticized as a failure even before it started. For some of it represented 'Rio minus ten', referring to worsening ecological trends and lack of substantive commitments from governments to implement Agenda 21. Most of the critical assessment is based on the official UN documents that came out of the summit, i.e. the Johannesburg Declaration and the Plan of Implementation (JPOI).<sup>3</sup> In this perspective the summit was a wasted opportunity with little concrete action as only existing commitments were reaffirmed while new goals were lacking. The lack of binding target and timetables, financial resources and compliance mechanisms, and an over-reliance on voluntary mechanisms has also generated criticism. There was a fear that the WTO's agenda for trade liberalization would take primacy over the sustainable development agenda. The summit was a reminder of the lack of leadership of the US in global environmental affairs ever since its steadfast rejection of the Kyoto Protocol.

If the yardstick for evaluating the achievements of WSSD is concrete timetables, it will inevitably be seen as a failure. But was such an expectation reasonable? A more positive assessment would stress how the summit reaffirmed the overarching political commitment to sustainable development, consolidated earlier agreements, set a framework for future negotiation, and set out some institutionally innovative implementation plans. Moreover, the WSSD tapped into other negotiation processes, such as the UN Millennium Summit 2000, the First Conference on Finance and Development in Monterrey 2002 and the Doha round of the World Trade Organization. In this sense the Johannesburg summit provided an opportunity to forge together and bridge the environmental agenda, the development agenda and the trade agenda. The fact that the WSSD tapped closely into these other meetings helped to locate globalization, aid, corporate



responsibility, consumption and production patterns and poverty eradication squarely within the quest for sustainable development (Clapp and Dauvergne, 2005).

The WSSD has been cited as the most inclusive summitry due to the range of styles and types of both formal and informal stakeholder and civil society participation. The official UN negotiations were only one part of the summit. The summit was defined by hundreds of side and parallel events such as civil society Global Peoples' Forum, the Indigenous Peoples' Summit, the Stakeholder Forum Implementation Conference, the Local Government Session and the Business Council for Sustainable Development featuring work on sustainable development by governments, companies and NGOs.

The new and innovative deliberative practices that have been strengthened after the Johannesburg summit represent a shift toward enacting a model which reflects key features of the stakeholder model of democracy outlined in the previous section. It is important to note that two distinctive deliberative mechanisms, which aimed at facilitating interaction between government delegates and non-state actors, can be identified in this context: Multi-stakeholder Dialogues (MSD) and the Partnership initiative (Type II agreements). These two are a subset of a range of new deliberative governance instruments employed in local and national settings. For example, Meadowcroft (2004: 192) outlines seven forms of deliberative technique: citizen advisory panel, citizen jury, public inquiry, referendum, environmental covenant, negotiated regulation and mediation. In a similar vein, Smith (2003: 77ff) discusses three models of deliberative democracy: referendum, citizen forums and stakeholder group engagement. The latter form of deliberation corresponds both to the UN multi-stakeholder consultations as well as the Johannesburg public-private partnerships. Stakeholder dialogues represent a 'top-down' participatory process, initiated by the UN agencies. In contrast, the partnership initiative represents voluntary agreements between major stakeholders and in this vein represents 'bottom-up' and self-evolving deliberative process among networks of market, civil society and government actors.

### *Multi-stakeholder Dialogues*

Stakeholding is not a new idea. Its profile has risen as the role of non-state actors has changed from a consultative status to partnership in varied arenas. It has been practised in the International Labour Organization (ILO), in which business, trade unions and governments are represented in a tripartite arrangement. The World Bank has formal communication channels with civil society and the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) invites stakeholder participation. The World Trade Organization established guidelines for

consultation with NGOs in 1996 (Wilkinson, 2002). Furthermore, the EU has a tradition of stakeholder consultation, and more recently, public and civil society consultations. The 'battle of Seattle' in 1999 reinforced the need to create more open and transparent decision-making procedures for the global financial institutions. The boost in stakeholder deliberations initiated by multilateral institutions and the European Commission, both of which are said to suffer from democratic deficits, reflect the need to increase external accountability.

Multi-stakeholder dialogues have been arranged on a more or less ad hoc basis in issues such as biotechnology under the auspices of OECD, the World Commission of Dams and international conferences on fresh water (Suskind et al., 2003: 245). However, the CSD has been pioneering in its effort to open up, extend and institutionalize procedures for stakeholder and major group participation. In CSD, 'multi-stakeholdership' has been launched as a way to operationalize the principle of inclusion, and to increase legitimacy and broad 'ownership' of decisions in international decision-making and deliberation (Ferenz, 2002) before, during and after the Johannesburg summit. In contrast to traditional forms of participation, MSDs are processes of interaction between state and non-state actors. Dialogues can be processes of information sharing, dialogue, consensus building, decision-making, problem-solving, implementation and monitoring. Representatives of major groups are seated together in front of state representatives as a chairperson or facilitator directs the discussion. In order for non-state actors to participate in international negotiation they need to be accredited, which grants open access to official intergovernmental meetings and negotiations. In essence it provides the non-state actor with observer status, i.e. the right to speak at plenary sessions and to participate in working groups.

Multi-stakeholder dialogues have been part of the regular CSD sessions since 1998 with the purpose of informing intergovernmental decision-making. There have been dialogue segments on designated themes such as sustainable industry, tourism, agriculture, and energy and transport preceding high-level or ministerial sessions. In 2001 the multi-stakeholder dialogue between the nine major groups and government delegates became an integrated part of the preparatory process leading to the WSSD.<sup>4</sup> At the WSSD in Johannesburg 8000 major group representatives in the end were accredited (compared with 10,000 government delegates). During the summit the multi-stakeholder panels were organized within thematic plenary sessions and high-level roundtables where major group representatives shared perspectives on sustainable development in dialogue with heads of state and government representatives. Post-Johannesburg multi-stakeholder dialogues with a similar format have been arranged on various themes at the annual session of the CSD. Furthermore, regional- and sub-

regional-level multi-stakeholder processes under the umbrella of the CSD have been vitalized.

What was the balance between effectiveness on one hand, and representation and accountability on the other hand, between substantive outcomes and procedural demands? We now return to the concepts of input and output legitimacy developed in earlier sections. In rhetoric, multi-stakeholder processes for sustainable development aspire to be both democratically legitimate and efficient; they should contribute to effective problem-solving as well secure balanced representation and accountability.

*Effectiveness* While the aspiration was that multi-stakeholder dialogue should enable joint problem-solving between major groups and official state representatives, in practice dialogues were decision finding rather than decision-making. The advisory nature of stakeholder dialogues at the WSSD summit and afterwards, makes the question of effectiveness secondary. Stakeholder dialogues did not aspire to reach consensus or engage in joint problem-solving between state and non-state actors. The purpose was rather to spell out different positions of the nine non-state stakeholder groups in an open manner without the demand for consensus. Process was favoured over outcome: the purpose was to identify the different values and positions of stakeholder groups and national delegations. In this respect, they took place within an existing system of multilateral negotiations where conflicts of interests are ultimately resolved through states making authoritative decision-making. The structural constraint is therefore the iron law that 'governments negotiate with governments' (Ferenz, 2002: 21). Hence in the deliberative context, the major groups are not formally equal to states: they have voice but not vote (Suomi, 2002). The purpose of the dialogues was to supplement and inform decision-making rather than to replace it.

However, this lack of formal decision function does not rule out influential roles for multi-stakeholder panels and dialogues. While stakeholders have no formal authority to make decisions they can still influence official delegates. Evaluations of the stakeholder practices before and at the summit indicate that the major groups exerted substantial influence on texts, such as Plan of Implementation (Ferenz, 2002; Suomi, 2002). However, according to the major groups themselves, this influence was attributable more to traditional lobbying than the official dialogues. In general, the role of major groups revolves more around lobbying governments rather than negotiating with them. This evokes the general question: if participation is without real decisional power, is it meaningless? According to major group representatives, the stakeholder dialogues were meaningful as a whole because of the ability to deliberate rather than to decide. This stands in sharp

contrast to the democratic ideal that assumes that meaningful participation should include equality of power with decision-makers (Suomi, 2002: 36).

The limited decisional force and joint problem-solving of multi-stakeholder segments for sustainable development generated disappointment for many. For example, the official stakeholder dialogues have been criticized for being cosmetic and symbolic and representing pseudo-participation. The stakeholder panels organized during the PrepComs were described more as monologues than dialogues. The dialogues were often marginalized, as high-level officials did not participate to a great extent. Major group representatives presented position papers without any substantial response from government delegates. However, post summitry there have been follow-ups and many proposals for reforming multi-stakeholder dialogues and creating a closer interactive forum between government officials and stakeholders.

*Representation* Stakeholder representation is the second dimension in evaluating the strength of different instances of stakeholder democracy. The first question is whether there is a sufficiently wide range of stakeholder groups formally represented. In this respect, the CSD process was inclusive on an unprecedented level. Nine major groups were granted formal stakeholder status, which represents the broadest selection of constituencies in any international organization or global summitry hitherto. These groups went well beyond neo-corporativistic arrangements privileging major economic ‘social partners’, to encompass women’s and indigenous people’s groups that have been historically marginalized. As we noted above, there are of course possibly endlessly varied ways to delineate and aggregate social groups for the purposes of political representation. But in this case, the inclusion of previously excluded perspectives in the CSD model suggests that a genuine broadening of representation of perspectives had occurred. The CSD stakeholder model followed the principle of group-based deliberation where representatives participated not in their capacity as individuals but rather as representatives of key constituencies as spelled out in Agenda 21.

A key issue at the heart of the concern with *accountability* is the extent to which stakeholder representatives selected their own constituencies and communities. The CSD multi-stakeholder practice is a decentralized and bottom-up process in comparison to other global stakeholder processes (Susskind et al., 2003: 257). The CSD secretariat picks focal organizations, i.e. those whom it regards as obvious leaders among the major groups. Hence, the secretariat coordinates the dialogue process by identifying core organizing partners. Each major group is given the responsibility to coordinate and select their representatives in line with their internal

organization, skills and network (Ferenz, 2002: 33). The two major tasks are: (1) to recruit a delegation of around 20 members who will be participating in dialogue segments, and (2) to prepare dialogue papers on the designated theme for a particular session or for the year. Each major group has its own more or less formalized procedure for completing these tasks (Ferenz, 2002: 35ff). Some of the most organized major groups, such as the NGOs, had a steering committee to govern selection of representatives to stakeholder segments. The different networks, organizations and issue causes within the NGO community at large were represented in the steering committee. However, this arrangement dissolved in 2001 (Susskind et al., 2003: 257).

A first challenge is coordination and the achievement of consensus and self-organization in major groups, since each group is made up of diverse constituencies, communities and networks. The internal cohesion of each group is difficult due to differences and imbalances in representation (for factors such as north vs south, women vs men, urban vs rural, age, grassroots vs professional) (Munnik and Wilson, 2002). Major groups are often dominated by western professional advocacy organizations, while representatives from grassroots movements in developing countries are often marginalized.

With respect to accountability and stakeholder dialogues, then, a complex picture emerges. The multilateral process lacks representative and electoral mechanisms of internal accountability. Even if that were not the case, the great variety of groups with quite different internal structures, lines of communication and operating cultures would make consistent and formal mechanisms of internal accountability difficult to establish and enforce. Consequently, external accountability mechanisms are in many ways more suitable to the process of UN sustainability governance. The regularized global multi-stakeholder panels represent an attempt to hold governments as well as multilateral institutions accountable to a plethora of overlapping global constituencies, such as civil society, business and social movements. Demands by non-state actors for external accountability of governments and intergovernmental organizations in the age of globalization have increased. Nevertheless, internal accountability of various stakeholder groups, some of them claiming to represent public interest, is increasingly important. It raises the critical question, to whom are these different stakeholder spokespersons accountable? For example, the business representative at the global multi-stakeholder dialogue should arguably be accountable to the numerous national and international business associations as well as to individual companies around the globe. The same applies to the NGO representative participating in the dialogue, who ought to be accountable to the diverse

global NGO community; Northern as well as Southern groups, and grassroots movements as well as professional lobbyists.

Furthermore, an important aspect of accountability is transparency. The positions of the different stakeholders were transparent and accessible to the public as position and consensus papers of the major groups were put on the website in advance of the negotiation and multi-stakeholder dialogue segments both at the Johannesburg summit and on CSD yearly sessions. However, the selection procedures for representatives of stakeholder groups, such as NGOs, business or women, for deliberation in global multi-stakeholder dialogues generally lacked transparency. In other words, there were limited opportunities for the public to track the selection process of the final representatives speaking on behalf of their particular major group. While evidence suggests that most representatives were nominated through various caucuses or organizations, in practice it is difficult to identify clearly procedures whereby certain individuals were selected to represent organized stakeholder interests.

In sum, the legitimacy of multi-stakeholder dialogues for sustainable development (as one example of stakeholder democracy) adds up to a mixed picture. The stakeholder dialogues lacked effective problem-solving capacity since they were advisory rather than decision-making. However, the practice of multi-stakeholdership displays a high degree of representativeness as the nine stakeholder groups in the UN were represented in a process that was largely bottom-up, decentralized and self-organized. However, despite secured formal representation of all major groups' representatives, the patterns of disenfranchisement of civil society and 'Southern' states persist in environmental multilateralism, which was confirmed in recent research on voice, participation and power in sustainability governance (Fisher and Green, 2004). As previously stressed, the democratic potential and credentials of stakeholder governance represent a continuum and matters of degrees rather than absolutes. Post-Johannesburg, there has been continuous follow-up and refinement of multi-stakeholder practices at annual sessions of the CSD with the attempt to integrate marginalized groups in joint problem-solving with government representatives.

### *Partnerships — Type II Agreements*

Throughout the preparatory process for the Johannesburg summit there was an emphasis on enlisting non-state actors not only as advocacy groups but as partners in the implementation of Agenda 21. The Type II agreements or the Partnership initiative represented this.<sup>5</sup> In essence, public-private partnerships for sustainable development represent voluntary, multi-stakeholder initiatives specifically linked to implementation of commitments

outlined in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and Agenda 21 (United Nations, 2004b). If MSDs are conceived of as 'talk-oriented', the partnerships were seen as 'action-oriented'. They are non-negotiated and self-enforced agreements between governments, civil society and business. These tri-sectoral policy networks between market, government and civil society actors have gained prominence as hybrid governance (Risse, 2004). Partnership networks can be seen as a subset of multi-stakeholder processes. They 'are diffuse, complex weakly institutionalized collaborative systems that are neither directly accountable to an electoral base nor do they exhibit clear principal agent relationship' (Benner et al., 2003: 3). They have a more spontaneous and decentralized character as they represent a 'coalition of willing' of non-state and state actors. Multi-sectoral networks represent a new species of governance that can be defined as 'voluntary cooperative arrangements between actors from the public, business and civil society that display a minimal degree of institutionalization, have common non-hierarchical decision-making structures and address public policy issues' (Steets, 2004: 25). These networks capture the essence of post-sovereign governance entailing collaboration between market actors, governments, international organizations and NGOs on a range of issues such as sustainable development, climate change (Bäckstrand and Lövbrand, 2006), water, AIDS, Malaria prevention and biodiversity protection (Benner et al., 2004: 191–2). Public-policy networks are voluntary, non-legislative and often geared towards implementation and joint problem-solving. They represent soft and non-hierarchical steering, and consequently, the logic of arguing and persuasion as rule making (Risse, 2004).

More than 220 partnerships for sustainable development (amounting to \$235 million) were announced in conjunction with the Johannesburg summit in 2002. In October 2006, 321 partnerships in the fields of water, energy, health, and biodiversity were registered in the Partnership Database, which had its own website since February 2004. The overarching idea of the partnerships was to reduce the 'implementation gap' in sustainable development by 'results-based' and 'outcome-oriented' partnerships. The purpose of these public-private partnerships was to speed up the implementation of intergovernmental agreements as well as to promote corporate responsibility. The underlying idea is that responsibility for the achievement of sustainability cannot be limited to government but should be diffused into wider sectors of society.

First, to the issue of *representation*. Does the partnership initiative include a wide base of stakeholder interests corresponding to the nine formal UN major groups? Which stakeholder groups are included or are leaders of partnerships? Recent assessments argue that resourceful and powerful actors dominate the WSSD partnerships. Few partnerships are multi-stakeholder

endeavours in terms of involving the widest feasible range of affected groups. Only 6% of the partnerships (i.e. less than 20) include stakeholders from all major categories; developed and developing countries, inter-governmental organizations and the nine major groups (Andonova and Levy, 2003: 23–4). The broad picture is that the partnerships are North-driven, sponsored primarily by international organizations and a handful of industrialized countries. There is both a lack of grassroots and local participation from the South as well as private sector involvement. The private sector leads only 2%, and is involved in only 20% of partnerships (Hale and Mauzerall, 2004: 230–1). It is noteworthy that the business sector is quite marginal in the partnership enterprise given the recurrent argument that partnerships pave the way for privatization of environmental governance. The lead partners are primarily international organizations (26%), western-based NGOs (35%) and governments from OECD countries (33%). International organizations lead almost a third of the partnerships, which indicates that partnerships are an opportunity for multilateral institutions to reinvent their mission and reassert their programmes. In partnerships led by governments, six states (Australia, France, Indonesia, US, Italy and Japan) are represented in 70% of the partnerships (Hale and Mauzerall, 2004: 231). Local actors, low-income countries, small NGOs and grassroots organizations are less well represented. For example, only 6% of the partnerships are led by low- and middle-income countries.

The second issue concerns *accountability*. Even though partnerships are voluntary, the need for transparency and accountability in partnering has been emphasized at recent sessions of the CSD (reference) as partnerships have been repeatedly criticized for lack of accountability. Critics argue that the promising rhetoric of partnership is not matched with progress and results on the ground. In this perspective, partnership networks need to be accountable to the various stakeholders affected, for example NGOs, indigenous people, business, governments and multilateral financial institutions. The need for systematic monitoring of the progress of partnerships has been emphasized at the annual meetings of the Commission on Sustainable Development (UN 2003, 2004a, 2004b). WSSD partnerships are amenable to horizontal accountability (market, reputational and peer accountability), which fits the flexible and decentralized features of partnerships rather than top-down forms of accountability (such as a centralized agency overseeing and sanctioning partnerships).

The absence of any single principle in multi-sectoral networks raises the question to whom partnerships should be accountable. The answer would be the many stakeholders who represent diverse constituencies. In order to match these many principles, Witte et al. (2003: 75) have proposed a



pluralistic system of accountability for partnerships. Reputational accountability, i.e. naming and shaming, can be effective since public credibility and images are critical for many actors in partnerships. Market or financial accountability can be an important instrument for consumers and donors to reward and punish lead actors in the partnership. A set of guidelines and criteria to approve partnerships is regarded as crucial to increase accountability. There is no known instance of a partnership being removed from the registry for insufficient accountability to stakeholders. Instead transparency-based accountability mechanisms have been emphasized in the partnership initiative. Transparency is critical, as accountability hinges on access to information on the performance and progress of partnerships. Three indicators can capture the transparency of the Johannesburg partnership initiative: a website for public information sharing, a reporting system to share information about the progress of the partnership, and a monitoring mechanism to define standards (indicators, measures) of goal attainment of partnerships (Hale and Mauzerall, 2004: 227). What is the transparency scorecard for the WSSD partnership networks? Analysis in the spring of 2003 indicates that less than a third of the partnerships score well with respect to the three key aspects of transparency: website, reporting and monitoring mechanism. Less than 50% of the partnerships have a mechanism for monitoring the effectiveness and progress of partnerships. However, only 1% of the partnerships reported that they met their stated goal.

*Effectiveness* Do the Johannesburg partnerships deliver results-based environmental governance by fulfilling the obligations in multilateral agreements such as the JPOI and Agenda 21? Do partnerships close the 'implementation gap' in sustainable development? In order to answer these questions about the effectiveness and of partnerships, clear goals for what to implement is required. The sustainable development agenda, however, is defined by diffuse goals, conflicting agendas and norms, competing ideologies and trade-offs. This is inevitable given the contested and politicized nature of the evasive concept of sustainable development.

A review of effectiveness is too early: the partnerships became operational first after the summit and in average have a time span of more than four years (United Nations/DESA, 2005). Consequently, institutional rather than environmental effectiveness will be considered. Two preconditions for effectiveness will be highlighted: (1) the institutionalization of partnerships, i.e. their linkage to goals and targets in agreements, (2) additionality, i.e. to what the degree partnerships generate new multi-sectoral funding for sustainable development activities.

With respect to the degree of institutionalization, the purpose of the partnerships was to reinforce the implementation of agreed targets, goals

and commitments found in the JPOI and Agenda 21. The connection between partnerships and multilateral goals is a precondition for assessing the effectiveness of partnerships. The problem in assessing effectiveness stems from the unclear relationship between Type I agreements and Type II partnerships that emerged in the WSSD preparatory meetings. Furthermore, guidelines for post-summit partnerships lacked clarity about the mandate of the partnerships. Partnerships should link to Agenda 21, they should have 'added value' and 'relevance' for the WSSD and they should have 'monitoring mechanisms', but these factors remained underspecified (Andonova and Levy, 2003: 22). As a result, the Johannesburg partnerships and the WSSD agreements evolved somewhat separately, rather than being (as was intended) integrated and mutually supportive outcomes. The profile of partnerships clearly converges with themes in Agenda 21. Partnerships cover fields such as poverty eradication, biodiversity, gender equality, education, health and sustainable development. However, Agenda 21 is a very broad action plan without concrete timetables and targets. The vague Agenda 21 commitments make it difficult to subject partnerships to implementation review. The JPOI contained targets and timetables, but most of these were reiterated from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agreed at the Millennium Summit in 2000. The lack of concrete and quantitative targets, timetables and goals was precisely the reason why the WSSD was subject to massive criticism and even dismissed as a failure. Many of the 30 targets in the JPOI were repetitions of existing goals of the Millennium declaration and other agreements (Bigg, 2003), including for example halving the proportion of those living in extreme poverty and people without safe drinking water by 2015. Apart from weak institutionalization, another barrier for assessing effectiveness is that the majority of partnerships fail to provide concrete (and quantifiable) environmental and developmental targets. Around half of the partnerships address substantial issues of environmental management (such as climate change, desertification, energy, forests, fresh water, etc.) but the other half fall within 'means of implementation', i.e. capacity building, education and information for decision-making. These partnerships concern procedural aspects such as information and knowledge sharing but provide no concrete environmental targets, which makes review of partnership performance difficult.

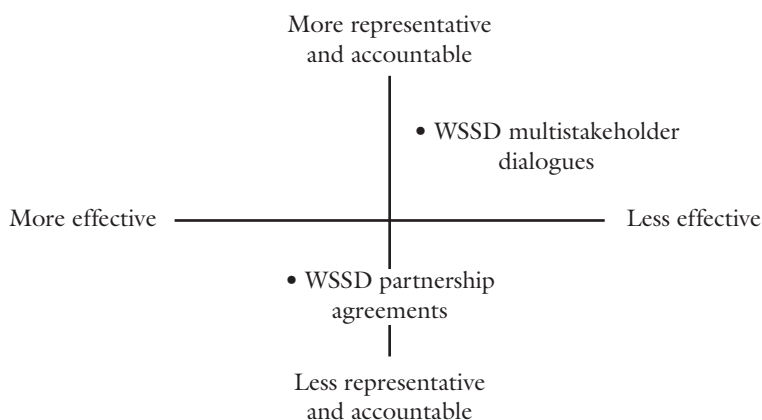
Do the partnerships provide new and fresh funding for sustainable development activities? Mobilizing new resources is critical in the implementation of Agenda 21 and to meet the objectives of poverty eradication, sanitation and health protection in the JPOI and in the Millennium Development Goals. After the Johannesburg summit the funding for partnerships was almost USD 250 million. As of June 2004 the partnership funding had increased fourfold to USD 1.02 billion (Hale and Mauzerall,

2004: 235; United Nations, 2004b). However, close analysis suggests that the extra money consists of 'repackaged' rather than new funds. Large intergovernmental programmes have been redirected to, and reclassified as, Type II partnerships. More than 80% of the funding comes from multilateral institutions, mostly from current programmes in the UNEP, the UNDP and the World Bank. Consequently, little funding comes from new sources and a strikingly small portion (less than 1%) comes from the private sector. This suggests that the partnerships initiatives have not yet paved the way for new and multi-sectoral funding for sustainable development initiatives. The repackaging of existing initiatives in the format of Type II partnerships suggests that international organizations are trying to reinvent their mission and reassert their agendas and ongoing intergovernmental programmes. Business has remained cautious about the Johannesburg partnerships, partly because of a fear of over-regulation and centralized bureaucratic structures to regulate and monitor partnerships (Benner and White, 2004: 7). A reflection of this concern was that the World Business for Sustainable Development announced 95 partnerships prior to the Johannesburg summit and in a separate registry.

Both dialogues and partnerships display strong multi-stakeholder elements and hybrid mechanisms. Partnerships represent the 'coalition of willing'; they can, but do not have to be, collaborative endeavours between government, business and civil society.<sup>6</sup> The Johannesburg summit recognized that partnership agreements had a 'voluntary and self-organising nature' (Dodds et al., 2002). In this vein, partnership agreements represent 'franchising of global governance' (Levy, 2004). If we evaluate partnerships according to the criteria of effectiveness, representativeness and accountability, a mixed picture emerges. Given that they are regularly monitored and evaluated, partnerships for sustainable development hold out some promise of having a significant impact. They represent collaborative action with a potential to change things on the ground and produce results-oriented governance and address the implementation deficit. However, this article suggests that in order to realize their potential, partnerships need better links to existing institutions and multilateral agreements, measurable targets and timetables, more effective leadership, improved accountability mechanisms, and more systematic review, reporting and monitoring. However, since they are a product of a 'coalition of willing', partnerships have a narrower range of stakeholder groups participating. Governments or NGOs from the North tend to set the agenda and dominate, a point that critics have stressed. In this respect, the North-South inequalities in world politics are mirrored in the partnership agreements (Levy, 2004).

Both stakeholder dialogues and partnership agreements constitute group-based deliberative mechanisms and epitomize hybrid governance. The multi-

*Figure 2*  
Evaluating Legitimacy Stakeholding Practices for Sustainable Development



stakeholder dialogues have a broad and formalized representation of stakeholder interests but have relatively little decisional impact. The partnerships have the potential to become genuine examples of problem-solving and result-oriented governance; however, in practice, they evade implementation review due to their unclear goals and a lack of transparent progress reporting mechanisms. The Johannesburg partnerships tend to have more skewed representation and are less accountable to constituencies (see Figure 2).

### *Conclusion*

While stakeholder democracy cannot be advanced as a panacea for the challenge of global democracy, multi-stakeholding processes and public-private partnerships continue to be deployed alongside traditional modes of intergovernmental negotiations. The 2002 Earth Summit propelled the institutionalization of new, hybrid modes of representation in the form of multi-stakeholder dialogues and partnership agreements. These new modes of governance are launched to counter the ‘democratic deficit’ as well as the ‘implementation deficit’, which both permeate global governance structures, particularly in the field of sustainable development. What are the implications of this experience for the study of the democratic legitimacy of global environmental governance? First, these post-sovereign hybrid forms of governance complement rather than replace sovereign-based decision-making. Hence, stakeholder democracy represents a gradual reform toward

‘participatory multilateralism’ or ‘public–private multilateralism’ rather than the transformation of the structures of international relations where sovereign states still form the main arena for democratic accountability. Second, the innovative modes of stakeholder governance resonate with deliberative models of democracy, stressing communicative action and dialogue in a global public sphere where business and civil society engage in deliberation and protest. While deliberative democracy has been advocated as the most viable model for democratizing global governance, questions of power, voice, representativeness and accountability of non-state actors remain central. Third, in line with critics of multi-stakeholder processes as largely symbolic participation, we identify an unsurprising but tantalizing gap between the ideal type of stakeholder democracy and contemporary structures of global environmental governance, where advanced industrialized states, business and Northern environmental NGOs largely define the playing field. In principle, how could that gap be closed to some degree, deepening the democratic quality of stakeholder participation in global governance? At a minimum, attention needs to be given to multiple aspects of representation, accountability and effectiveness. On representation, there may not be much scope for further expanding the range of interests among stakeholder groups at multilateral negotiations, but there is much scope to explore ways to ensure that spokespersons speak for the varied interests contained within these internally diverse umbrella and lobby groups, representing, for example, the North and the South. On accountability, there is much scope for exploring ways to formalize and publicise procedures whereby stakeholder group spokespersons are selected or elected. And on effectiveness, means to further clarify multilateral environmental goals and how public–private partnerships can be harnessed to decrease the ‘implementation gap’ in international environmental politics.

To reiterate: this article advances stakeholder democracy as an ideal-typical model rather idealizing it. Having said that, the model is not an embodiment of hopeless idealism. One might say that it represents a middle way between the cosmopolitan dreams of world government, the realist dismissal of global democracy and radical perspectives’ depiction of all attempts to democratize global governance as inevitably hegemonic. Stakeholder democracy can be conceived of as a contribution to ongoing debates about new and innovative modes of governance at the global level and their democratic potential as well as problem-solving capacity.

### *Notes*

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the American Political Science Association Conference (APSA), held in Chicago August 30–September 2, 2004.

1. The author would like to thank Michael Saward for developing this model.
2. A list of major group and their networks can be found on the website <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/mlinks.htm>
3. See the official website of the Johannesburg Summit, [www.johannesburgsummit.org](http://www.johannesburgsummit.org)
4. Dialogue papers for PrepCom and WSSD can be found at [http://www.un.org/jsummit.org/html/major\\_groups/multistakeholderdialogue.html](http://www.un.org/jsummit.org/html/major_groups/multistakeholderdialogue.html)
5. The partnership initiative can be found at <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/partnerships/partnerships.htm> and the partnership database at <http://webapps01.un.org/dsd/partnerships/public/browse.do>, accessed 4 October 2006.
6. However, a significant majority of registered partnerships involve the government (85%) and major groups (90%) (United Nations, 2004: 8).

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