Approaching Collaborative Governance Legitimacy through Discursive Legitimation Analysis

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Abstract : Legitimacy can be regarded the very fabric of political orders. Up to this point, IR scholarship was particularly interested in the legitimacy of nation-states, international regimes and of non-governmental actors. The legitimacy of collaborative governance comprising public, private and civic actors, however, has not received much attention from an IR perspective. This is partly due to the fact that the concept of legitimacy is difficult to operationalise and measure in settings where there is no clear boundary between political authorities and those who are subject to collaborative governance. In this case, legitimacy cannot be empirically approached in its own terms, but can only be analysed in terms of dialectic legitimation processes. The author develops a three-fold analytical framework based on a dialogical understanding of legitimation. Legitimation first has to relate to public legitimacy demands and contestations of collaborative governance and second to legitimacy claims issued by collaborative governance networks themselves. Lastly, collaborative governance is dependent on constant self-legitimisation. The paper closes with suggesting a discourse analytic approach to further empirical research on the legitimacy of collaborative governance.
Keywords : legitimacy, collaborative governance, discourse analysis, dialectic legitimation
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