

How key concepts such as justice and equity are negotiated and incorporated by actors during stakeholder engagement: Critical test case in a multilateral context by analysis of multiple examples during the Green Climate Fund (GCF) project development process.

GCF funded interventions seek to transform national circumstances and stimulate climate resilient development. The programming of these resources involves the contestation and mediation of key concepts, such as justice and equity. The range of stakeholder perspectives that are incorporated into GCF proposals is broad, ambitious and inclusive, involving beneficiaries at the national level, national and sub-national agencies, implementing entities, development partners and the GCF. The GCF involves a range of power dynamics, is instrumental in organising the various frames of understanding and provides a valuable lens for understanding the concepts. These concepts have situated meaning and are reinterpreted, allowing exploration of the politics of decision-making, and scrutiny of the inclusion of ambitious principles.

Research into stakeholder engagement has highlighted that participatory methods can reinforce existing dynamics at the same time as depoliticising actors; the so-called ‘Tyranny’ critique. As such, participatory engagement is central to the Fund’s transformative goals. This research would add to the scholarly response to the ‘Tyranny’ critique, and aims to learn from the power dynamics within and surrounding the series of stakeholder consultations of the GCF. Furthermore it explores the negotiation of an evolving social contract (Nussbaum, 2004; O’Brien et al. 2009) as multilateral organisations innovate and contest collective goals. At a time when multilateral organisations are central actors in the response to global challenges, this research uses discourse analysis (Foucault, 1982, Hewitt, 2009) to reflexively consider the design of projects to explore how such principle driven goals are operationalized, and how diverse understandings thereof are mediated.

Questions to aid this exploration include:

- How is equity negotiated between the various actors? What can the study of rhetorical devices illuminate about the concept of equity?
- What are the politics of decision-making? Which framings of power, positions and justice matter most? What different versions of power are observable, and how do these organise participation and what is the implication of this?
- Are various understandings of ‘success’ reconcilable?
- How do diverse understandings become operationalized? How does power organise in and out different frames of understanding.
- Is there an emergent ‘social contract’?

Contribution

This research will offer a new lens for looking at power dynamics in a relevant and modern multilateral context, and enhance understanding within this of key terms such as equity and justice. Taking justice as an artificial virtue, key to civil society, and a product and function of voluntary agreements of the social contract; the project would enhance understanding of how multiple stakeholders with diverse perspectives engage around climate change, which is essential in this professional field. Methodologically, this will provide a case study of the application of discourse analysis in a multilateral context, with wider application for a range of disciplines. Analysis of this process can enhance the efficacy of GCF country programming and contribute to a more responsive, broader understanding of these key terms.

References

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