Readers’ Guide: Global Redesign Initiative

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Section by Section Commentary

Four Building Blocks
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Section by Section Commentary

This section of website contains verbatim extracts from the report of the Global Redesign project along with interpreted commentary by the Readers' Guide author. At the bottom of all the web pages is an invitation to engage with the relevant issues using a moderated commentary option.

The Global Redesign Initiative report, Everybody’s Business: Strengthening International Cooperation in a More Interdependent World, was launched in Doha, Quatar in late 2009. This report is cited in the website as “GRI”. The page references in the Readers Guide follows the text of the report of the project, Everybody’s Business. This is the version that is provided on World Economic Forum’s Global Redesign Initiative website.


The two versions of the text have slightly different layouts, slightly different presentations of the taskforce reports and therefore different paginations.

Four Building Blocks: Introduction

In addition to the Five Steps, Four Tools, and Three Special Mechanisms, WEF has identified Four Building Blocks. These four elements are seen as cornerstones on which to push along the transition to a new system of global governance. According to GRI, these Building Blocks “can be applied in partial and different combinations ... to strengthen progress on any given issue.” 1

Despite the implied importance for a solid foundation starting with the GRI Building Blocks, three of the four are not dramatic departures from existing and longstanding suggestions. Building Block One, “high-level political commitments and objectives,” is essentially a repetition of WEF’s earlier endorsement of the leadership role for the G20. Such an appeal to high level political will has been part of the call for every international campaign and program.

Building Block Two, “multilateral legal frameworks and institutions,” is the same appeal for coherence and cooperation at the international level which has been made by nation-states and intergovernmental Actors for years. Almost every international effort to address a global policy matter has been accompanied by calls for supplemental legal frameworks and conventions. What is noteworthy in the GRI is that it repeats this call, and then proposes very limited new legal institutions or agreements.

Building Block Four is simply a call for “information metrics [that can] assist with anticipating risks, shaping priorities and benchmarking performance.” At the moment there are more than enough data, benchmarks, and priorities on globally significant problems. This information has not significantly changed the behavior of firms or governments. Therefore repackaging this information as a separate building block within the GRI program is not particularly noteworthy.

It is the Third Building Block that is significant. It calls for “plurilateral, often multi-stakeholder, coalitions of the willing and able” as a means to getting an agenda item moving. This Building Block implies that diverse institutional arrangements for dealing with a specific global problem, irrespective of formal organizational arrangements and mandates, should be a regular part of the global system. WEF is arguing that one can legitimately build a coalition and get results from a loose coalition of governments, self-interested MNCs, NGOs, and, if necessary, an international organization. In short, WEF is proposing opt-in-opt-outism as a practical solution.

Building Block One:  High-level political commitments and objectives

Building Block Two:  Multilateral legal framework and institutions

Building Block Three:  Plurilateral, often multi-stakeholder, coalitions of the willing and able

Building Block Four:  Information metrics to assist with anticipating risks, shaping priorities and benchmarking performance

1. GRI, pg 18.
Building Block One: Education

pg. 32: Education presents another complex challenge of global proportions. . . However, there is a notable lack of high-level political commitment, a comparatively weak and poorly resourced set of international institutions and an insufficient emphasis on practical, results-oriented alliances, including those involving the business community. In response, the [WEF Council] has proposed a multi-stakeholder review of the structure and capacity of the Education for All architecture, and it has issued a call to action to G20 Leaders to champion educational reform and resource mobilization in much the same way they rallied attention – and support – for global health in the past decade. In particular, they have called on these leaders to engage their education, development and finance ministries in this review as well as undertake with other stakeholders a first set of practical, targeted initiatives in the areas of teacher training, North-South university cooperation, lifelong and informal learning, and new approaches to assessment.

Readers' Guide Comment on “the [WEF Council] has . . . issued a call to action to G20 Leaders to champion educational reform and resource mobilization in much the same way they rallied attention – and support – for global health in the past decade”

Putting educational reform at the top of the global agenda is a very interesting proposal. In the field of health care in developing countries, a multi-stakeholder institution, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations (GAVI Alliance), did act to transform international priorities and thinking on immunization and vaccination in developing countries. It is now the key health financing and policy body in the area of preventable diseases, eclipsing the WHO. However, GAVI was not built from a multi-stakeholder foundation, and it was not created in response to high-level political calls from the G20 or its predecessor G7/G8. It was the Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation that provided the means and the will for GAVI. It was therefore not a high level declaration that turned the direction on preventable diseases, nor was it the actions of private corporations seeking profit; it was the political and financial decisions of the Gates Foundation.

In the field of international education, UNESCO hosts the Education for All initiative (EFA). The EFA and its six 2015 educational targets were created in 2000 in Dakar with the endorsement of 165 governments. According to UNESCO, governments, development agencies, civil society and the private sector are working together to reach the EFA goals. As of 2012, “the prospect of achieving these goals is failing.”

It is not clear how WEF expects a new high-level declaration on education from the G20 to move the world forward toward a new level of pedagogic commitment. As it is citing GAVI as an example, then perhaps it is indirectly seeking another corporate sponsor on par with the Gates Foundation to fund a global educational program.

Related Ideas: Four Building Blocks; Options for functional aspects of governance; G20 as global leaders; Public-private governance; a fix for UN system
Building Block One: Worker Protection

pg. 32: Employment and Social Protection. [The WEF] Council ... call[s] for G20 Leaders to direct their labour, finance and development ministers to develop a set of reforms to upgrade the mandates and resources of development finance institutions and the ILO for the purpose of providing much greater assistance to countries wishing to strengthen domestic institutions related to employment creation, private investment, labour standards assessment and implementation, and basic pension, unemployment and health insurance systems. They also propose a process of surveying and encouraging the replication of good practice in respect of raising the employment intensity of economic recovery and limiting the employment and social impacts of economic downturns. And they call for a broadening of macroeconomic policy cooperation exercises, such as the mutual assessment process that the G20 created in Pittsburgh last year, to include explicit analytical parameters and policy dialogue on progress in employment and living standards

Readers' Guide Comment on “[The WEF] Council ... call[s] for G20 Leaders to direct their labour, finance and development ministers to develop a set of reforms... unemployment and health insurance systems”

Enhancing employment, investment, labor standards, pension finances, unemployment regimes and workers’ health insurance systems is a very interesting proposal from the corporate-centric World Economic Forum.

From a governance point of view, what is interesting here is the proposed mechanism. WEF expects that G20 Leaders should instruct their appropriate ministers to take these actions at the development finance institutions and the ILO. WEF could have called for the MDBs to act and called directly for the ILO to act. Rather, the approach here is to help build the public perception of the G20 as the leader body who will carry the initiative for making these labor market changes.

Related Ideas: Four Building Blocks; Options for functional aspects of governance; G20 as global leaders; Public-private governance; a fix for UN system
Building Block Two

Despite its focus on multilateral legal frameworks and institutions, this Building Block contains no recommendations for new international legal regimes, nor any new calls for intergovernmental negotiations or recommendations for new international organizations.
Building Block Two: Joint Review

pg. 36: To cultivate a culture of systemic oversight and collective responsibility for coherence among their group, leaders should direct the IMF, World Bank, ILO and WTO to prepare each year for their review a joint annual report on the performance of the world economy. This report should be signed by the heads of the organizations and be made a standing item for discussion on summit agendas. It should analyze trends in growth in economic activity, trade, capital flows, employment and living standards, and document how these multilateral institutions are working together to improve these trends. Strengthening the joint accountability of these institutions to heads of government should improve cooperation among them and help ensure that all relevant international economic policy tools are being applied in an integrated fashion to the challenge of maximizing the contribution to global growth and broad living standards of global economic integration.

Readers’ Guide Comment on “IMF, World Bank, ILO, and WTO”

The G20 in 2009 and 2010 requested that the IMF alone provide the G20 with a report on the state of the world economy. WEF’s recommendation is to expand this function to four international organizations.

It is interesting to note that the United Nations is not one of these four organizations, even though UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) already release a joint annual report at the start of each calendar year. The World Economic Situation and Prospects: Global Outlook (WESP), prepared annually for over a decade, has been largely ignored by the business community and OECD governments, who often feel that it does not reflect their self-interests. Of the four organizations selected by GRI to provide their global report, two, the IMF and the WTO, are very proud of their restrictive, narrow agendas (IMF on monetary matters and WTO on trade). Only one of the four organizations has day-to-day engagement with social, labor, environmental, or cultural issues. GRI’s call for a global report card then is heavily weighted against global social, developmental, and ecological concerns.

Readers’ Guide Comment on “strengthening the joint accountability [of the four organizations] ... to the heads of government”

The accountability is to a selective group of heads of government, not all heads of government. The effect of this proposal is to concentrate the attention of the heads of these agencies on the G20 countries, not on the remainder of the membership or on those countries/regions which have been extended quota and voting shares in the respective governing bodies.

Readers’ Guide Comment on “broad living standards of global economic integration”

GRI wants the new global report to address the ‘challenge of maximizing the contribution to global growth and broad living standards of global economic integration.’ The choice of the new and undefined terminology, ‘broad living standards of global economic integration,’ suggests that Davos considers irrelevant the long-standing concerns for ‘development,’ ‘living wages,’ and ‘Millennium Development Goals.’

Related Ideas: Four Building Blocks; Options for managing financial globalization; Step One; G20 as global leaders; UN and the private, non-state world
Building Block Two: Leap Forward

pg.32: They should dedicate themselves in 2010-11 to taking a synchronized, systemic leap forward in international cooperation in which: . . . Emerging and least developed economies win voting rights in the Bretton Woods institutions approximating their weight in the world economy, as well as major, sustained increases in aid for the Millennium Development Goals and climate adaptation, and greater access to developed countries’ agricultural markets, and major new public and private investment from developed countries in low-carbon energy systems as compared to the Kyoto Accord’s Clean Development Mechanism.

Readers’ Guide Comment on “greater access to developed countries agricultural markets”

There were four discrete targets for enhanced multilateral legal frameworks that Davos advocated for 2010-11. None of them were implemented. Most did not even have a strong OECD governmental or corporate advocate in the biennium.

The proposal for greater access to developed country agricultural markets has been presented on and off for over 50 years and in four GATT/WHO trade negotiation rounds. ¹ The proposal has been regularly blocked by agribusinesses and the major OECD states. Its inclusion here seems to reflect that many of these so called ‘new’ multilateral legal frameworks are presented more as appeals to developing countries to accept the new WEF global governance framework than as serious proposals for new legal frameworks.

Readers’ Guide Comment on “take a synchronized, systemic leap forward [in various ways] as compared to the Kyoto Accord’s Clean Development Mechanism”

No arguments are presented in the report about the failure of Clean Development Mechanism [CDM] to deliver on any of its goals; WEF is probably expressing its support for the Copenhagen Accord rather than the Kyoto Protocol.

Related Ideas: Four Building Blocks; Options for managing economic globalization

¹ ‘Trade Rounds’ is the name for the trade negotiations that are often long multi-year processes. See General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade on http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_Agreement_on_Tariffs_and_Trade (accessed July 9, 2012)
Building Block Two: Fair Representation in Global Decision-Making

pg. 40: An agenda of international institution building and modernization in these and other areas would go a long way towards satisfying the legitimate aspirations of developing and emerging economies for sustainable development and fair representation in global decision-making, thereby providing their leaders the additional political space necessary for them to make the meaningful additional climate and market access commitments on which the success of the UNFCCC and WTO negotiations depend.

Readers’ Guide Comment on “An agenda of international institution building . . . would go a long way towards satisfying the legitimate aspirations of developing and emerging economies for sustainable development and fair representation in global decision-making”

The phrase ‘agenda for international institution building’ is likely to be read differently by different communities. In the political community and the academic community, “international institution building” is usually taken to mean an intergovernmental body supported by an international secretariat. As WEF has not recommended new intergovernmental bodies, it presumably includes in its use of the phrase ‘international institution building’ all its calls for public private partnerships and multi-stakeholder governance arrangements.

Readers’ Guide Comment on “to make the meaningful additional climate and market access commitments on which the success of the UNFCCC and WTO negotiations depend”

This proposal anticipates tradeoffs between the negotiations for new climate change agreement and the negotiations for the Doha Trade Round. No major OECD country, corporation, or international NGO has advocated for such a complex trade off. Everybody’s Business, unfortunately, does not lay out how a climate agreement could be packaged along with a trade agreement, nor does it explain which features of a trade agreement could be modified to gain approval of a climate agreement.

Even if it is not the GRI’s intention to be vague, what is significant is that GRI does not explain at all how a combined climate and trade negotiation approach could possibly satisfy the aspirations of the developing world or emerging economies. This is a serious omission, as it is one of the few explicit new organizational recommendations of Building Block Two.

Related Ideas: Four Building Blocks; a public-private UN system; Managing international financial globalization; Managing functional aspects of governance
Building Block Two: Nuclear Terrorism

pg. 16: the creation of a Global Alliance Against Nuclear Terrorism composed of states that commit to secure all nuclear weapons and materials to a “gold standard” – beyond the reach of terrorists or thieves – by embedding principles of “assured nuclear security” and “nuclear accountability”

Readers' Guide Comment on “states that commit to secure all nuclear weapons and materials to a ‘gold standard’”

This is a rather traditional state-based proposal. It ignores states with vast nuclear stockpiles that implicitly threaten other states with their land, air, and sea-based nuclear capacities. It presumes that future significant nuclear threats will come from non-state terrorists.

It is also interesting that this proposal does not include chemical and biological weapons. If WEF is serious about multi-stakeholder approaches, it should recommend that international civil society, academic, religious, and corporate representatives become formally involved in reducing all weapons of mass destruction, not just the nuclear variety.

Related Ideas: Four Building Blocks; Options for military governance; Beyond territorial boundaries; Opt-in-Opt-outism
Building Block Two: R2P

pg. 16: a series of steps to strengthen particularly the non-military institutional capacity required for the effective prevention of mass atrocities under the United Nations Responsibility to Protect framework.

Readers' Guide Comment on “a series of steps to strengthen particularly the non-military institutional capacity required for the effective prevention of mass atrocities”

While GRI is arguing for effective global institutions, it presents a number of interesting proposals without any attention to their operational realities. Just how a non-military institutional capacity would have prevented a Rwanda, a Serbia, or a Congo is not made clear at all.

Related Ideas: Four Building Blocks; Options for military governance
Building Block Three: Plurilateral

pg. 29: Plurilateral, often multi-stakeholder, coalitions of the willing and able.

Readers' Guide Comment on “Plurilateral, often multi-stakeholder”

In the history of diplomacy, first there were ‘bilateral’ relations between two countries, and then there were “multilateral” relations among countries which were all part of the same intergovernmental organization. More recently, there are “plurilateral” arrangements which are formal relations between sub-groups of countries in a multilateral organization.

GRI is introducing two modifications to the plurilateral terminology. First, that some parties to plurilateral relations might not be countries. Second, that some plurilateral coalitions might not involve countries but only other categories of stakeholders.

One implication of these modifications is that GRI might considerable as a legitimate ‘plurilateral coalition of the willing and able’ a grouping of multinational corporations working together on a common project. This arrangement would be a form that previously would have been called an oligopoly – a coalition of like-minded firms which set the rules of the game for their collective self-interest. A second implication is perhaps more interesting. As GRI treats nation-states as just one possible global Actor in international governance, then some combination of businesses, nation-states, and civil society organizations could work together not just as a ‘multi-stakeholder partnership’ but as a ‘plurilateral coalition of the willing and able.’ See the note on ‘willing and able’ below.

Readers' Guide Comment on “coalitions of the willing and able”

The most famous use of the phrase ‘coalition of the willing’ was made by the Bush Administration and the Blair Government to describe the alliance of governments in the military intervention in Iraq, an intervention which occurred without Security Council review.

The choice of words here is interesting in another manner. There are many civil society organizations that have a will to address global problems but lack the ability to force dominant players to change their practices. In this sense the addition of the concept of ‘ableness’ implies that only politically (or militarily) strong Actors should drive economic and social change.

Related Ideas: Key third building block; WTO plurilateral protocol; Governance by volunteering; Opt-in-Opt-outism; Civil society as governors; Options for military matters
Building Block Three: Multidimensionality

pg. 10: Multidimensionality, rather than multilateralism alone, is the strategy that emerges from the work of the Global Redesign process for achieving a breakthrough in progress on global warming. It is also the approach proposed to achieve much stronger results on several other critical global challenges, including Oceans, Education, Nuclear Proliferation, Health, and Employment and Social Protection.

Readers' Guide Comment on “Multidimensionality, rather than multilateralism alone, is the strategy that emerges from the work of the Global Redesign process ...”

The concept of ‘multidimensionality’ is not fully developed in the report. It appears that it is introduced here to provide a way to describe multiple, independent actions in a variety of international forums, as if in aggregate all these autonomous efforts would solve a global crisis.

The introduction of the term might also be seen as a variant expression for opt-in-opt-outism in global governance. For example, during the Copenhagen climate conference, a select group of countries declared their own greenhouse emission goals and made independent, voluntary commitments toward meeting this goal, even if the multidementional approach, the Copenhagen Accord, did not involve all the participants in the conference. For the GRI, this laissez-faire approach, while inconsistent with the stated goal of more globally efficient management, might actually help reassure some less-willing global Actors of the legitimacy of a GRI-designed global system. Multidimensionality might be the Harry Potter invisible umbrella that permits some observers to see a solution to a global issue without having to take on actual commitments to make something ‘real’ happen.

Related Ideas: Key third building block; Step One; Governance by volunteering; Opt-in-Opt-outism; Multi-stakeholder governance; Multi-stakeholdism
Building Block Three: Repositioning

pg. 22:... while experimentation with individual public-private and multistakeholder partnerships has flourished over the past decade, including in many international organizations, they continue to play an incremental, even experimental, role in the international system rather than a systematic one. For this to change, policymaking processes and institutional structures themselves will need to be adapted and perhaps even fundamentally repositioned with this in mind.

Readers’ Guide Comment on “For this to change, policymaking processes and institutional structures themselves will need to be adapted and perhaps even fundamentally repositioned with this in mind.”

To move from an incremental, even experimental, role in multi-stakeholder partnerships to a more institutional role for multi-stakeholder governance will require more than a casual adaptation by government policymakers or a repositioning by international civil society. Such a transformation would probably require a new set of rules and procedures for acceptable governance outcomes, a new willingness by governments to step back from their presumptions of exclusivity in intergovernmental decision making, and the institutionalization of multi-stakeholder groupings to implement the outcomes of their decisions. The new set of rules and procedures would be something analogous to the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties and Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. The institutionalization of multi-stakeholder bodies would entail some form of ‘dues or taxes’ to support a staff to follow up on its decisions as well as an arrangement for holding members of the multi-stakeholder group accountable for their actions.

There are precedents for major industrial governments providing intergovernmental recognition to multi-stakeholder bodies. For example, the ISO established product standards under the WTO Technical Barriers To Trade Agreement, and the Financial Stability Board and the Bank for International Settlements established bank disclosure standards under the ‘authority’ of the G20. These precedents for the transfer of state authority to non-state bodies, however, all originated within the inter-state system. It would be quite different if a multi-stakeholder body called for independence in global decision making, and then expected the inter-state system to withdraw from a given thematic area.

Related Ideas: Key third building block; Step One; Multi-stakeholder governance; Multistakeholderism; Governance by volunteering; Opt-in-Opt-outism
Building Block Three: Results-Oriented Coalitions

pg. 30: Examples of the third building block, practical, results-oriented coalitions, include such intergovernmental initiatives as the World Trade Organization Information Technology Agreement, US-Russia START nuclear arms reduction treaty and even the recent Copenhagen climate accord, which was originally signed by 28 countries but now has over 110 adherents. They also include such multistakeholder initiatives as the Investment Climate Facility for Africa, Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), Marine Stewardship Council, Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, UN Global Compact, etc. These alliances of willing and able parties can often achieve considerable progress on a problem, particularly when a large proportion of the most relevant actors participate.

Readers’ Guide Comment on “Investment Climate Facility for Africa, Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), Marine Stewardship Council, Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, UN Global Compact, etc”

This listing of ‘practical, results-oriented coalitions’ provides a glimpse of the WEF’s vision. Each of these multistakeholder bodies have fundamentally different ‘legitimacies and... constituencies.’ They also have fundamentally different track records on effectiveness and success. The most effective in delivering new global services is the GAVI Alliance, a consortium brought together by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, to increase vaccinations and immunizations. This does mean, however, that other major medical crises are better addressed by private foundations rather than an intergovernmental process or a domestic institution.

By far the most interesting governance arrangement cited is the Marine Stewardship Council. Its effectiveness, however, is severely curtailed by its inability to legally control fishing in “international waters.”

The Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) is in a precarious position politically and financially and has not demonstrated any success in preventing corruption.

The United Nations Global Compact has not demonstrated any widespread impact on global corporate behavior. Firms have been willing to associate with the Global Compact as far as it paints them with a UN brush of good global corporate citizenry. For these firms the lack of accountability in the Global Compact is one of its best assets. In fact, one of its best successes is that it has reduced demands for governments to negotiate a legally binding set of corporate rules in favor of ten voluntary statements. The Global Compact set of standards has been so weak that they recently acknowledged that 200 firms should never have been included as members of the Global Compact. ¹

Related Ideas: Key third building block; Governance by volunteering; Opt-in-Opt-outism; Multi-stakeholder governance; Multi-stakeholderism; Fear of enforcement

¹. For the status of members on non-compliance with the communication expectation see http://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/news_events/8.1/2011_Global_Compact_Implementation_Survey.pdf
Building Block Three: Nuclear Fuel

pg. 32: . . . the Council on Energy Security has proposed a . . . practical approach to nuclear non-proliferation: a global public-private partnership to manage the nuclear fuel cycle of civilian power plants in a politically neutral and technically secure manner, thereby reducing the incentive for countries to develop their own nuclear processing and enrichment capabilities.

As with other calls by the GRI for public-private partnership (PPP), it is useful to examine exactly who ‘the public’ and who the ‘private’ Actors might be. The ‘public side’ for GRI’s new nuclear PPP could be nations who currently possess nuclear weapons, those who dominate the movement of civilian nuclear power plant technology. In short, this would imply that the commercial beneficiaries of an expanded public-private system would be able to open new markets, markets restricted under the current public system.

Alternatively, the ‘public side’ might be the current nuclear power countries and all the countries that have explicitly disavowed the use of nuclear power. As it would be unprecedented to have non-nuclear states with an equal role in controlling the nuclear market, the GRI is probably not proposing such a shift here.

A third alternative for the ‘public side’ could be to have all 193 members of the UN family as the designated ‘public’ body. In addition to allowing states that oppose nuclear power to have a voice in the nuclear club, it would also democratize the control of civilian nuclear power in a way that might someday legitimate democratic control of military nuclear powers. This does not even include the possibility that ‘public’ might mean some role for the international civil society.

What GRI seems then to be proposing is that the private sector civilian nuclear industry formally join forces with the nuclear states in managing the world’s access to, and use of, civilian nuclear power. GRI has provided no evidence that this would result in a more effective global governance system. It would, however, presumably open more domestic markets for the global nuclear industry.

For a set of proposals presented as practical and effective, there is a lack of clarity about how a PPP nuclear body would reduce the incentive for domestic enrichment capabilities. In fact, if the global nuclear supply industry had this power, nation-states might be incentivized to have their own capacities simply to prevent a commercial monopoly.

Related Ideas: Key third building block; Governance by volunteering; Options for military matters; Opt-in-Opt-outism; Multi-stakeholder governance; Multi-stakeholderism
Building Block Four: Assessing Data

pg. 31: Examples of the final building block, information and metrics, include the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) reports, Transparency International’s Global Corruption Report, the WTO Trade Policy Review Mechanism, the World Bank’s Doing Business reports, the Centre for Global Development’s Commitment to Development Index, Human Rights Watch’s World Report, the World Economic Forum’s Global Competitiveness Report, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, etc. Information exercises such as these can be highly effective at influencing the political debate and agenda, shaping policy planning and resource allocation, and tracking results in relation to political objectives. They have the potential to enable and mobilize grass roots political support behind each of the other three building blocks. As such, they deserve to be considered as a structural feature of international cooperation in their own right.

Readers’ Guide Comment on “Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change … Transparency International’s Global Corruption Report”

In this example of institutions which that produce policy metrics, the IPPC and the TI are by far the most influential. The other bodies cited are known only within a narrow, specialized community and have had only a marginal impact on global policy in spite of their value and academic rigor (e.g. Millennium Ecosystem Assessment ). WEF’s own report on competitiveness is an example of a very narrowly focused metric. It directs international policy away from sustainable environmental development and towards a rather traditional macroeconomic growth strategy.

Readers’ Guide Comment on "can be highly effective at influencing the political debate"

In this context one should think about the targeted de-legitimization campaign aimed at the International Panel on Climate Change. It is an early warning of the way such multi-stakeholder scientific bodies can be prevented from effectively laying the groundwork for meaningful policy interventions. If WEF does mean that information metrics should help shape priorities, it should address how corporate-funded mis-education campaigns for self-interested market benefits impair access to sound scientific data.

Readers’ Guide Comment on “the potential to enable and mobile grass roots political support”

The problem is not the lack of quality research on global problems, but rather getting countries and firms to act on available knowledge. Global elites engage in fact-dodging when the truth may require actions that are perceived in the short term to be antithetical to their own interests. In general, high-powered international information panels do not inform non-governmental organizations or cause to them to act.

Related Ideas: Four Building Blocks; Fixing the UN system; Options for managing economic globalization; Effectiveness objective
Building Block Four: Benchmarking

pg. 13: an international initiative to strengthen the quality and broaden the application of benchmarking metrics and other evidence-based policy-making tools [bold in original] as a means of improving the demand for and accountability of performance against economic reform objectives.

Readers’ Guide Comment on “means of improving the demand for and accountability of performance against economic reform objectives”

GRI’s call for more science-based decision-making is a significant break from those in the international business community who routinely attack the research results published by the International Panel on Climate Change and other climate scientists. Calls for more evidence-based policy-making support efforts to create analogous bodies to the IPCC in other global health and environment matters.

The situation is slightly different for when it comes to development data. For at least 30 years, the UN system has been widely recognized for its technical competence in evaluating development indicators. Successive Secretaries-General, religious figures, academic researchers, and civil society leaders have cited these data in urgent calls to action made to governments and corporations. For effective action on development, the world does not necessarily need more evidence of global inequality and under-development. It needs a willingness and an incentive system for governments and MNCs to act, even if it is not in alignment with their perceived short-term self-interests.

Related Ideas: Four Building Blocks; Fixing the UN system; Options for managing economic globalization; Effectiveness objective
Ocean monitors