

15 Years of 'Managing Global Governance' (MGG) How do transnational knowledge networks create impact?

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Bonn, 28 November 2022. The global nature of current challenges requires effective cross-country and -sector cooperation. Transnational networks can provide spaces needed for diverse actors to collaborate and contribute to managing global governance. They can help establish a common understanding of global problems, share expertise, develop joint solutions, and initiate change processes. However, global networks are not easy to navigate; not every network is successful. After 15 years of the 'Managing Global Governance' (MGG) network, a policy-relevant network between Brazil, China, Germany and other EU countries, India, Indonesia, Mexico and South Africa, we can draw lessons on how networks sustain and materialise impact.

MGG brings together government, academia, civil society and business organisations focusing on global challenges, in particular the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the global common good, using interlinked formats for training, research and policy

dialogue. It is financially supported by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Since 2007, a central element of the programme is the MGG Academy, bringing together young leaders from all participating countries. It combines academic studies and leadership training with the development of applied transformation projects. Today, more than 430 alumni and around 100 partner institutions form the basis of the network's research and policy advice projects. In this way, all activities strengthen MGG as a permanent system of knowledge cooperation.

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15 years of MGG show how transnational networks can unfold impact at different levels. At the individual level, external evaluations could confirm that participants of the Academy have improved their professional and personal skills and built their own networks, with lasting effects on career prospects. Individuals have brought problem-solving capacities to their home organisations and have initiated change at the organisational level, e.g. by integrating sustainability questions or new research units in their portfolio. MGG has also led to a lasting internationalisation of the perspectives and expertise of partner organisations, including IDOS. The network has become part of their strategic infrastructure.

At the organisational level, the MGG community has also initiated change through proposing candidates for the Academy or new partners, topics for cooperation, by forming sub-groups and developing instruments to expand the scope of activities, including additional third-party funded projects. PRODIGEES (2020-2025) is a case in point; as an EU-Horizon-2020 project developed by MGG partners, it offers a structured research and staff exchange scheme to analyse the interconnection of digitalization and sustainable development. Following the example of MGG, IDOS implements an African-German Leadership Academy to develop cooperation infrastructure with and among African reform partner countries. A far-reaching collaboration between national schools of

public administration in all MGG countries has been initiated, changing the ways in which public servants are trained.

In this way, MGG creates impact at the institutional level, addressing wider political-economic systems. Institutional impact extends to involvement in high-level political arenas of global governance, such as the T20/G20, BAPA+40 or the UN High-Level Political Forum. The network has acted as a sounding board in the formulation of BMZ's position papers for cooperation with Global Partners. Further, MGG members shape discussions and cooperation structures at UN level, such as in the field of voluntary sustainability standards.

A network's potential to initiate change is linked to the mix and relationships of actors and their respective professional ties; networks can bring together countries, political levels, and disciplines, overcome boundaries and implement change with “the right people at the right time”. To integrate expertise of a heterogeneous group of members, thematic flexibility based on shared reference points – like the common good – is important. It allows the interests of the network and current developments to be addressed, while network relevance, motivation, and ownership are highly dependent on the selection of cooperation areas, and the specific definition of purposes. This requires interactive and participatory methods along with necessary resources to facilitate the complex coordination within the network. Trust is key in this process: it makes communication possible even in times of political tensions. However, establishing trustful environments needs time; which often contradicts with the need for early successes that make networks attractive to collaborate, and with the need to satisfy demands of funding institutions.

The long-term vision of networks to create impact – ideally on global institutional systems – must therefore be balanced with short-term achievements, which are more likely at the individual and the organisational level. Long-term orientation, however, is key to gradually institutionalise the cooperation structures, build reputation, and integrate more actors and instruments that are needed to generate impact at the institutional level. The example of MGG shows, after 15 years of network development, that this combination can ultimately enable networks to address global challenges at different levels at the same time.