

Series Foreword

Humans now influence all biological and physical systems of the planet. Almost no species, land area, or part of the oceans has remained unaffected by the expansion of the human species. Recent scientific findings suggest that the entire earth system now operates outside the normal state exhibited over at least the past five hundred thousand years. Yet at the same time, it is apparent that the institutions, organizations, and mechanisms by which humans govern their relationship with the natural environment and global biogeochemical systems are utterly insufficient—and poorly understood. More fundamental and applied research is needed.

Such research is no easy undertaking. It must span the entire globe because only integrated global solutions can ensure a sustainable coevolution of biophysical and socioeconomic systems. But it must also draw on local experiences and insights. Research on earth system governance must be about places in all their diversity, yet seek to integrate place-based research within a global understanding of the myriad human interactions with the earth system. Eventually, the task is to develop integrated systems of governance, from the local to the global level, that ensure the sustainable development of the coupled socioecological system that the Earth has become.

The Earth System Governance series is designed to address this research challenge. Books in this series will pursue this challenge from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, at different levels of governance, and with a range of methods. Yet all will further one common aim: analyzing current systems of earth system governance with a view to increased understanding and possible improvements and reform. Books in this series will be of interest to the academic community but will also inform practitioners and at times contribute to policy debates.

This series is related to the long-term international research program called the Earth System Governance Project.

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This is a section of [doi:10.7551/mitpress/12610.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/12610.001.0001)

Alternatives to Multilateralism

New Forms of Social and Environmental Governance

By: Lena Partzsch

Citation:

Alternatives to Multilateralism: New Forms of Social and Environmental Governance

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DOI: 10.7551/mitpress/12610.001.0001

ISBN (electronic): 9780262359160

Publisher: The MIT Press

Published: 2020

The open access edition of this book was made possible by generous funding and support from the German Federal Ministry of Research and Education



The MIT Press

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This book was supported by the German Federal Ministry of Research and Education (project no. 031B0235A).

This book was set in ITC Stone Serif Std and ITC Stone Sans Std by New Best-set Typesetters Ltd.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Partzsch, Lena, 1978- author.

Title: Alternatives to multilateralism : new forms of social and environmental governance / Lena Partzsch.

Description: Cambridge, Massachusetts : The MIT Press, [2020] | Series: Earth system governance | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2019049226 | ISBN 9780262539227 (paperback)

Subjects: LCSH: Business logistics—Standards—Case studies. | Business logistics—Government policy—Case studies. | Social responsibility of business—Case studies. | Trade regulation—Case studies. | Globalization—Economic aspects.

Classification: LCC HD38.5 .P365 2020 | DDC 338.6—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019049226>

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1