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THE AUTHENTICITY OF ‘TYPE TWO’ MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS FOR WATER AND SANITATION IN AFRICA: WHEN IS A STAKEHOLDER A PARTNER?

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1. Abstract

This article is a study of the way in which two Type Two multi-stakeholder partnerships (TTPs) for water and sanitation in Africa – the UK-based Partnership for Water and Sanitation (PAWS) and the EU-based European Union Water Initiative (EUWI) – have interpreted the concepts of ‘stakeholder’ and ‘partnership’. First, we show how stakeholding and partnership are elements of the contemporary shift from government to governance, whereby responsibility for public decision-making is widened beyond politicians to include the private sector and civil society. Second, we analyse the meaning and implications of the concepts of ‘stakeholder’ and ‘partner’. Third, we apply this conceptual analysis to our two case studies – PAWS and the EUWI – and we find that in both TTPs, governments are the primary partners, while the private sector and civil society are the secondary stakeholders. We argue that in the case of PAWS, this two-tier structure is mainly unintentional, but in the case of the EUWI, it is partly strategic.

2. Introduction

In the world today, approximately 18 percent of the population have no access to safe drinking water, and more than double that figure lack adequate sanitation, with the majority of these disadvantaged people living in the developing world. Addressing these problems has been recognised internationally as being of fundamental importance to any strategy of poverty reduction. At the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002, governments reiterated their support for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to halve the number of people lacking access to safe water and to adequate sanitation by 2015. In the past, large-scale international efforts to increase access to water and sanitation have usually been undertaken by bilateral/multilateral agreements between governments in the developed world and those in developing countries, but these efforts have frequently failed to achieve sustained improvements. At Johannesburg, a new framework, called partnerships for sustainable development, or Type Two partnerships (TTPs), was established “to contribute to and reinforce the implementation of the outcomes of the intergovernmental negotiations of the WSSD” (Kara & Quarless 2002, 1). In the guiding principles for these partnerships it was affirmed that “Partnerships should have a multi-stakeholder approach and preferably involve a range of significant actors in a given area of work. They can be arranged among any combination of partners, including governments, regional groups, local authorities, non-governmental actors, international institutions and private sector partners” (Kara & Quarless 2002, 2).

In this paper, we ask how different this new framework is from the existing, and firmly established, government-dominated bi/multi-lateral development paradigm. To answer this question, we examine two TTPs: Partners for Water and Sanitation (PAWS); and the European Union Water Initiative (EUWI). The data we have used comes from the transcripts of 33 interviews with people associated with these partnerships, supplemented by documentary material. Whilst some interviewees are named, others prefer to remain anonymous, and the majority wish it to be stressed that the opinions they have expressed are personal and do not necessarily represent the views of the organisations with which they are associated. We begin by investigating the foundations of the multi-stakeholder partnership approach in sustainable development, arguing that it is a manifestation of a growing trend away from government towards governance. We then examine the concepts of ‘stakeholder’ and ‘partner’, and, finally, we use this conceptual apparatus to consider how well our two cases fulfil the established criteria for TTPs.

3. Theoretical framework

There is not a theoretical framework that focuses specifically on international partnerships per se, but there is a large literature on the theory of policy networks (see Klijn 1997 for a review of this
literature). In one of the most important contributions to this literature – Kickert *et al* (1997a) – there is a seminal distinction made between three perspectives on networks: *instrumental*; *interactive*; and *institutional*, and we have made use of this distinction in our analysis of TTPs. The *instrumental perspective* is summed up by De Bruijn and Tel Heuvelhof (1997, 120) as follows: “Network management…is aimed at creating conditions under which goal-oriented processes can take place”. On this perspective, TTPs are designed to make the achievement of the MDGs possible, goals that are unlikely to be achieved by the existing bi/multi-lateral system. However, the instrumental perspective has been criticised for threatening to replicate the top-down structure of the bi/multi-lateral system, because of northern governments imposing a pre-determined goal upon southern partners. In the case of TTPs, it is not true that the MDGs have been imposed by the north – they were internationally agreed at the WSSD - but the threat may come from northern imposition of methods for achieving the goals. To guard against this threat, TTPs could take steps to ensure that southern partners are fully committed to the MDGs, and that decisions about how to implement the MDGs are made through dialogue between all partners. Our analysis reveals that PAWS has been rather more energetic than EUWI in encouraging all stakeholders to participate in such decision-making.

The *interactive perspective* on networks is presented by Klijn and Teisman (1997) as an analysis of the process of collective decision-making in terms of game theory strategies of bargaining and negotiation, in which the outcomes depend upon the relative success of the participating actors in building coalitions to defeat rival alliances. “Network management is aimed at facilitating the process of interaction, including conflict reduction and conflict resolution” (Kickert *et al* 1997b, 184). On this perspective, TTPs manifest competing attempts on the part of different stakeholders to influence decisions by brokering deals with each other. There is some truth in this interpretation of TTPs, especially the EUWI, but it is wide of the mark in one respect – game theory assumes that all actors are equally free and independent agents in the bargaining process, but partners/stakeholders in TTPs come to the table with all sorts of inequalities.

Finally, the *institutional perspective* on networks focuses on the structure of organisations and rules which form the context in which networks operate (Kickert *et al* 1997b, 185). On this perspective, TTPs are networks whose members bring to the organisation preconceptions derived from their own institutional backgrounds, and they also develop a commitment to the institutional integrity of the TTP once it has been established, resulting in a tendency to be cautious about changing its structure. We can see these dual patterns of institutional loyalty in both our cases, especially in PAWS, but the theory ignores the fact that innovative TTPs do exist, and that some changes in TTPs’ structures do occur, for example, in the EUWI, but even to some extent in PAWS.

To sum up our theoretical framework, we can find some evidence of all three network perspectives in both of our TTPs, but the most convincing perspective is the instrumental, because what drives both PAWS and EUWI above all, is the MDG, an objective to which interactivity and institutionalisation are both subordinate.

### 4. The emergence of multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development

The concept of sustainable development, which currently dominates both environmental and development discourses, emerged in the 1970s as a responsibility of governments, but attempts to realise the sustainable development agenda have increasingly sought to involve a range of stakeholders. As a result, the number of partnerships between governments, intergovernmental organisations, the private sector and non-governmental bodies has been steadily growing, most notably since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. At Rio, a framework for achieving sustainable development was adopted, entitled Agenda 21, which identified nine so-called ‘Major Groups’ as key actors or stakeholders, in sustainable development: “women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, non-governmental organizations…business and industry, workers and trade unions, the science and technology industry, farmers and local authorities” (Hemmati 2002, 3). Since then, the United Nations has continued to work towards involving these ‘Major Groups’ in sustainable development, especially in the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The Johannesburg World Summit for Sustainable Development, ten years later, emphasised the importance of not just multi-stakeholder *consultation*, but also multi-stakeholder *partnership*, bringing this notion to the forefront of the sustainable development agenda with the initiation of Type Two Partnerships.
4.1. GOVERNANCE NOT GOVERNMENT

The logic of sustainable development described above, and the initiation of the WSSD multi-stakeholder partnerships, can be viewed as part of a growing trend away from government alone towards governance. The term ‘governance’ has been defined in a variety of ways (CGG 1995, 2; Lovan et al 2004, 7-8; Huillet 2004, xvi), but the common thread running through these different definitions is the widening of participation beyond politicians to other stakeholders in sharing responsibility for managing public affairs. “Governance includes the state, but transcends it by taking in the private sector and civil society” (UNDP 1997, iv). TTPs reflect this notion of governance in their multi-stakeholder approach.

However, there are two possible dangers in this process of transition from government to governance. The first danger (which was alluded to by many commentators at WSSD, and again at CSD-12 (UNDESA 2004, 9)) is that a system of governance could offer governments an opportunity to abdicate their responsibilities and off-load them to other actors. This danger has two strands. Firstly, in the northern context, TTPs could be used by northern governments to deflect the pressure on them to increase their overseas development aid (ODA). Secondly, in the southern context, partnerships within an individual country could be used as scapegoats to take the blame for what is really indigenous governmental failure (Mohan 2002, 149). The second possible danger lies in the opposite direction – that the governance model could be used by a government to preserve and strengthen its supremacy through superficially encouraging greater participation and engagement. In this scenario, a business-as-usual, bi/multi-lateral, top-down, government-centred approach would dominate TTPs for water and sanitation, and the notion of stakeholder partnership would merely be a veneer whereby governments (both north and south) would gain legitimacy and stave off criticism.

In our view, the task for TTPs is to steer a course between these two extremes. Properly interpreted, governance allows for both government leadership and genuine stakeholder engagement and participation, so that governments may still retain a certain level of sovereignty and take ultimate responsibility, while other actors or stakeholders increasingly share responsibilities in the governance of public affairs. This is the central problematic, which we will investigate through examining two TTPs which have been established to improve access to water and sanitation in Africa: PAWS and the EUWI. However, first we must establish the meaning and implications of the concepts of ‘stakeholder’ and ‘partnership’, which are integral to our understanding of TTPs as modes of governance.

4.2. THE CONCEPT OF ‘STAKEHOLDER’

We can divide our analysis of the concept of stakeholder into economic and political terms. In economic terms, the idea of stakeholding has been debated by economists for the last forty years (Economist 1996), gaining favour in the mid-1990s, when it was heralded as an organisational principle which promised to provide a “more socially inclusive agenda” than that provided by the existing market-driven model (Maile & Braddon 2003, 148). These debates focus on whether companies are responsible solely to shareholders and their boards of directors, or are also accountable to a wider audience of “‘stakeholders’ who reflect the larger public interest” (Torjman 1999, 15). The latter approach entails a company taking into account the interests of all the stakeholders - not only shareholders and management, but also employees, suppliers, customers, local residents, and NGOs, all of whom could “have an interest, or take an interest, in the behaviour of a company” (UN Secretary General, quoted in Hemmati 2002, 297).

With regard to the political dimension of the stakeholder concept, in 1996, Tony Blair gave a speech in which he “declared that stakeholder capitalism would provide a Labour government with a blueprint for office” (Prabhakar 2002, 2). In this vision, “everyone would be a ‘stakeholder’ in a dynamic partnership between the private sector and the state” (WS 1998, 1). Stakeholding has also been adopted as a principle of governance at the global political level, especially within the sustainable development agenda. Here, stakeholding offers to empower global players to the extent that they are given a voice, though it does not necessarily imply that they have a vote (Guardian 1996).

4.3. THE CONCEPT OF ‘PARTNERSHIP’
The term ‘partnership’ has often been used to characterise the business relationship between individuals who unite in a profit-making enterprise. It also denotes personal relationships between intimates (Murphy & Bendell 1997, 19). Moreover, there can be ideational partnerships, as Gourisankar Ghosh (2004), Executive Director of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), pointed out at CSD-12: “you can also partner around an idea, you can partner around a programme, around a common cause”. There are also political partnerships. Murphy & Coleman (2000, 208) argue that “Partnership is an idea with increasing political power today”, and just as Tony Blair, the UK Prime Minister, has adopted the rhetoric of stakeholder, so he and his Cabinet have also “frequently referred to ‘partnerships’ when implementing their policies. The partnership concept stands for the New Labour, which works with society rather than directing it from above” (Teisman & Klijn 2002, 197).

There are four major principles that characterise partnerships: mutual benefit; mutual responsibility; mutual respect; and mutual participation. The foundation stone on which all these principles rest is that partnerships are mutual enterprises; partnerships are established to achieve goals which cannot be realised by any single party acting alone (Wilson & Charlton 1997, 10; Stigson 2004). This is the instrumental perspective. However, as with stakeholder rhetoric, partnership rhetoric does not always live up to its principles, and an ideal vision of partnership is rarely realised. For example, whilst partnership has strong connotations of consensus, often “inter-agency working involves a high degree of competition among organizations” (Lowndes & Skelcher 1998, 326). This is the interactive perspective. Moreover, northern governments may use partnership rhetoric in order to make their donor strategies more palatable to the south (Craig & Porter 2003; Kayizzi-Mugerwa 1998; Mercer 2003). Hence, whilst a partnership in its purest form indicates a sense of inclusivity, mutuality, equality, unity and collaboration, we should also be aware that the use of such a concept can hide powerful interests, and be adopted as a smokescreen for particular political, social or economic agendas. “‘Partnership’ may appear innocuous but can be ‘a terminological Trojan Horse’” (Fowler quoted in Crawford 2003, 142). There is also the question of who are the partners? In the CSD, governments are often seen as the only partners or central players, while other actors, such as the private sector and NGOs, are deemed to be merely stakeholders in governmental activities. As TTPs have grown out of the work of the CSD, they must decide whether or not they want to replicate the restricted model of CSD, or to constitute themselves into genuine ‘multi-stakeholder partnerships’, in which all stakeholders are partners. This is the institutional perspective.

5. Case Studies: PAWS and EUWI
5.1 PAWS

Let us now examine the concerns highlighted in the above analysis by reference to our two TTP cases: PAWS and the EUWI. We begin with PAWS. In March 2001, the UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair, urged private companies and NGOs to work with government on a water initiative (the sanitation element was added later) for the WSSD, and thus PAWS was launched. Among its stated aims (PAWS 2003a, 1-2) are to promote multi-stakeholder engagement; tri-sector partnership; socially, environmentally and economically sustainable services; and the delivery of water and sanitation to peri-urban areas. There are over 30 members of the PAWS partnership: almost all of the UK private sector water companies; two professional water associations and NGOs to work with government on a water initiative (the sanitation element was added later) for the WSSD, and thus PAWS was launched. Among its stated aims (PAWS 2003a, 1-2) are to promote multi-stakeholder engagement; tri-sector partnership; socially, environmentally and economically sustainable services; and the delivery of water and sanitation to peri-urban areas. There are over 30 members of the PAWS partnership: almost all of the UK private sector water companies; two professional water associations; five NGOs, including Tearfund, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and WaterAid; the trade union, UNISON; several engineering and consultancy firms and institutes; a law firm; a marketing and communications company; and four UK government departments (the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Department for International Development (DFID), the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)). PAWS is, therefore, “a UK tri-sector initiative” (PAWS 2004a, 3). In addition, it has three sub-Saharan African government partners – South Africa, Nigeria and Uganda.

The PAWS partnership is administered and supported by a Secretariat which is housed in DEFRA, which, together with DFID, provides most of the funding for PAWS, and until recently chaired all meetings. Over the first three years of the partnership’s history, there was a Forum which met roughly
twice a year to which all members were welcome (PAWS Secretariat 2004). After the establishment of the Forum, a Steering Group (which was to report back to the Forum) was appointed, “comprising representatives from each sector of the partnership” (PAWS 2004a, 4). In theory, the Steering Group was to meet more regularly than the Forum, and be responsible for devising and co-ordinating partnership policy, and formulating strategy for the involvement of partner countries. In practice, however, the Steering Group became incorporated into the Forum (PAWS Secretariat 2004). In February 2005, Terms of Reference for PAWS were adopted and these retain the concept of a Forum, but which now only meets annually, and “at which meeting it will formally appoint the Chair and Steering Group” (PAWS 2005a; 3). The formalisation and creation of a Chair outside of government is a new position stipulated in these Terms of Reference, and the Chair’s “function is to provide strategic leadership of the Partnership and ensure that PAWS is effectively managed” (PAWS 2005a, 2). The Steering Group is chaired by the PAWS Chair and is “responsible for overseeing implementation of the business plan”, with its membership being made up of “at least one representative of the three sectors”, government, the private sector, and civil society (PAWS 2005a, 3).

5.2 EUWI

Turning now to the EUWI, this is a much broader partnership than PAWS. The EUWI was launched at WSSD by the 15 Member States of the European Union, although the initial impetus came from the European Commission and the Environment Commissioner, Margot Wolstrom. The EUWI is conceived as being not only a partnership itself but also “a platform for strategic partnerships” (EU 2002, 4). Among the main objectives of the EUWI (AMCOW-TAC &EU 2003, 5) are to reinforce the political will of indigent governments; to promote water governance and capacity building; to improve water management through multi-stakeholder dialogue; and to identify additional financial resources and mechanisms to ensure sustainable financing. Unlike PAWS, the EUWI is not focused solely on sub-Saharan Africa: the EUWI adopted a wider scope, embracing the whole of Africa as well as the Newly Independent States (NIS) and Central Asia. Since Johannesburg, more components have been added to the EUWI's portfolio, and there are now four regional ‘modules’ - Africa; Eastern Europe, Caucasus, and Central Europe; Mediterranean; and Latin America - as well as the two original thematic modules (research and finance), and a new module for monitoring and information systems.

Clearly, then, the EUWI is a more ambitious project than PAWS, and has a much larger and more cosmopolitan make-up. According to the EUWI’s website (EUWI 2004) and the launch document produced for Johannesburg (EU 2002), its member include, at the European and international level, on the governmental side, the Member States of the EU; interested third countries (such as Switzerland and Norway); the European Commission; European local authorities; and other European institutions (including the European Environmental Agency and the European Space Agency). Additional members include four international regimes, notably the OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development] and UNEP UCC [United Nations Environment Programme Collaborating Centre on Water and Environment]. From the private sector, six of the major European water companies (including RWE Thames, Suez, Veolia and Northumbrian Water), as well as various technical experts, are members. There are also partners from European and international financial and development institutions (including the European Investment Bank, the African Development Bank and the World Bank). On the civil society side, at least eight organisations (including WaterAid, Tearfund and WWF as well as the trade union Public Services International) participate, and international water organisations (such as the Global Water Partnership and the International Network of Basin Organisations) are also involved. At the regional level, membership of the EUWI includes, on the governmental side, potentially 53 African governments (forming the African Ministerial Council on Water [AMCOW]; the New Partnership for Africa’s Development [NEPAD]; Latin American Environment Ministries (through Ibero-Latin American Water Directors), governments of the Mediterranean (the Euro-Mediterranean Water Directors Forum); as well as the national governments in individual partner countries. Other regional partners (potentially) included, are local authorities, water operators, NGOs, and experts, in the individual countries where project work is undertaken.

The organisation of the EUWI was a constant source of deliberation during its first two years of existence, even more so than PAWS. Initially, the structure consisted of a closed Expert Group, made up of the Member States, to make political decisions; a Multi-Stakeholder Forum (MSF), to be used “as a means to discuss and agree the final programmes of action” (EU 2002, 10), taking a similar form to that of the PAWS Forum but meeting more frequently and led by the European Commission; Working Groups, led by either individual Member States or the Commission, for each of the focal components
(including the African Water Supply and Sanitation group), which report to the MSF; and a small Secretariat staffed by the European Commission with the role of supporting and co-ordinating the partnership. However, this structure did not prove satisfactory, largely because the roles and powers of the different bodies were not well defined at the outset, especially those of the MSF (Interviewee 8, 2004; Interviewee 10, 2004). For example, one NGO member (Interviewee 3, 2003) observed at the end of 2003 that while she had originally believed that the MSF was to be a decision-making body, proposals agreed at the MSF are regularly “contradicted by Member States meetings”. She added that “there is still, after two years, no structure, no decision-making process, no governance, nothing”.

Since then, however, there has been a major effort to reform and clarify the structure of the EUWI, with a series of proposals debated, resulting in the final adoption, in June 2004, of “the organisational framework and modalities for the EUWI” with an agreed structure founded on four main bodies (Walshe et al 2004, 5): the multi-stakeholder forum, open to all, with an advisory function; the Steering Group, driver of the EUWI; the Working Groups, in charge of implementation at the regional level; and the Commission/Secretariat of the Initiative. Three representatives from water operators and three from the NGOs are elected from the MSF’s constituents to be members of the Steering Group (SG). The SG also includes all interested Member States, European third countries, the European Commission, the European Investment Bank, chairs and co-chairs of the working groups and other invitees. It meets at least three times a year and has the responsibility to agree and ensure delivery of “the strategic orientations of the Initiative…and relevant annual work programme of the EUWI”, and takes “practical decisions about the operation of the EUWI” (Walshe et al 2004, 12). The Secretariat supports the work of the SG, and the Working Groups now have to report to the SG in addition to the MSF. This reorganisation should increase stakeholder engagement in EUWI decision-making.

In evaluating the comparative effectiveness of PAWS and the EUWI in living up to the established criteria for TTPs, we divide the discussion into two contexts - the northern context and the southern context.

5.3 THE NORTHERN CONTEXT

5.3.1 PAWS

In the original conception of PAWS, the UK government would provide seed money and initial secretarial support for PAWS before it evolved with “a life of its own” (Mitchell 2003). However, this evolution has not happened, and two years after the partnership was launched, the UK government continues to provide both the Secretariat (housed in DEFRA) and funding for the partners’ subsistence and travel costs. Interviews with a cross-section of PAWS members in 2003 and 2004 suggested that there was a general consensus that PAWS was largely a northern government-led initiative with most meetings taking place in civil service offices in London, chaired by the Secretariat (Interviewee 1, 2003; Rouse 2003; Mitchell 2003; Interviewee 3, 2003; Barker 2004, Interviewee 2, 2003). Members were in agreement that the initiative would cease to exist without the input of funds and administrative support from the UK government, because partners other than government lacked a sense of ownership and a perception of mutual benefits (Mitchell 2003; Interviewee 3, 2003; Oudyn 2004; Nowak 2003).

Indeed, there was a widely held impression within the partnership that the UK government was too firmly positioned in “the driving seat” of the initiative (Mitchell 2003). John Barker (2004) of WWF contended that the process needed to “be made more independent of government”, because, while “There is no doubt that it is a multi-stakeholder process…it is driven by government, they are the major players” and this has meant that “engagement from the [other] partners is [not] as full as it probably should be”. A not-for-profit member (Interviewee 2, 2003), maintained that PAWS “could have [been] structured…in such a way that it would create greater equity between the partners”. Members suggested that this could be achieved through rotating the chair and/or through having secondments from civil society and the private sector to the Secretariat (Barker 2004; Interviewee 2, 2003).

On the other hand, Interviewee 3 (2003) stated that although “the government ultimately dominates…[it is not] in a way that is unacceptable”, and “the actual structure and governance has worked out well” with “openness, transparency, and joint decision making”. Similarly, Jeff Davitt (2004) of the Kelda Group argued that “holding the secretariat within DEFRA keeps things moving and aligned”. Christopher Causer (2005) of the law firm, Kirkpatrick & Lockhart Nicholson Graham LLP, agreed that the secretariat “needs to take a lead because the rest of us have all got busy jobs…It’s a
classic civil service function and a very important one – to pull people together, circulate the papers, sum it up afterwards and send out action points”. Moreover, Michael Rouse (2003) of the International Water Association observed that within the partnership, “there are equal opportunities for those who want to put the effort in”, while Rachel Oudyn (2004) of Biwater claimed that “you’re as integrated as you want to be”. Even a critic of PAWS’ governance structure has conceded that while it “has faltered in terms of its partnership mechanisms at times…it’s done a lot better than most” TTPs (Interviewee 1, 2003).

Furthermore, during the last year, developments have taken place that aim to address some of the criticisms voiced above – evidence that PAWS is showing reflexive tendencies. A new Chair has been appointed outside of government, Ashley Roe, a private sector participant, formerly with Severn Trent Water International (PAWS Secretariat 2004). Furthermore, Paul Turner of Northumbria Water has joined the Secretariat on a 12-month secondment as PAWS Manager, and more partnership meetings are now held in the offices of partners other than DEFRA (PAWS 2004b; Clarke 2005). Nicola Clarke (2005), a member of the PAWS Secretariat, says the changes that have been made are about trying to make PAWS less government-led, and that the idea is to put “the onus on the partners to take it forward and take responsibility”. She claims that “It has to move that way if it’s going to be sustainable, the government is a very important partner to have but it’s no more important than the private sector or civil society”.

5.3.2 EUWI

In the case of the EUWI, there has been an even more pronounced feeling among many members that northern governments have dominated the initiative, in that Member States and the European Commission have assumed a superior status in relation to other stakeholders. As one NGO representative (Interviewee 10, 2004) puts it, “It’s a very unequal partnership if it’s a partnership”. Jaques Labre (2004) of Suez concurs, stating that “everybody is not on an equal footing so I do not accept the word partnership in this case”. A member of the Secretariat (Interviewee 6, 2004) affirms that the EUWI “was initiated by the European Commission, and leadership is with the European Commission and EU Member States, that is clear. If you look at the Working Groups, they are all led by EU Member States. The whole process is led by public institutions with strong stakeholder involvement. It is a multi-stakeholder process but it is clear that the leadership of it remains with those who are in the end providing the funding instruments for the operational side”.

As with PAWS, this northern governmental dominance reflects the fact that northern governments provide the Secretariat and the funding, which facilitate the partnership, and do so “with a strong element of leadership” (Interviewee 6, 2004). Another member of the EUWI Secretariat (Interviewee 7, 2004) asserts that the Member States “lead because they have money in their pockets”, whilst Danielle Morley (2004) of the Freshwater Action Network argues that Member States assume a more prominent role because at the end of the day, “they have to take all the political decisions and all the financing decisions”. However, many EUWI participants have “argued very strongly that the secretariat shouldn’t be a Commission secretariat but an EU Water Initiative partnership secretariat” with stakeholder secondments (Interviewee 10, 2004).

These observations reflect a deep-seated tension within the foundation of the EUWI, which one independent consultant (Interviewee 10, 2004), representing an NGO, identifies in the following terms: “is the EU Water Initiative a European Union structure, or is it a partnership which involves others outside?” An example of this tension is that in the past, the MSF has been by-passed by the “so-called Expert Group” of Member States, which has held separate meetings, and has agreed policies without even the consultation, let alone the participation, of other stakeholders. This reduced the Forum to a mere talking shop, a place “where you meet, you chat, you exchange views…not a process that you can make decisions and agreements in” (Interviewee 10, 2004). Darren Saywell (2004) of the WSSCC, stated in early 2004 that “You get the impression that they’re going through the motions of consultation because that’s what they need to be seen to be doing”. Similarly, Morley (2004) argued that “There isn’t equity within the membership of the partnership”. Two members of the Secretariat (Interviewee 4, 2004; Interviewee 7, 2004) both described the EUWI as a “multi-stakeholder process” rather than a multi-stakeholder partnership.

It appears, therefore, that the EUWI is a two-tier structure: partners at the top (comprising governmental bodies such as the European Commission and Member States), and stakeholders at the
bottom (comprising non-governmental bodies like the private sector and NGOs). As one Member State representative (Interviewee 13, 2005) describes MSF meetings, “there was an inner circle and an outer circle, the inner circle would be the Member States and the Commission and...we couldn’t make decisions but we could decide what to recommend, and then you had an outer circle of multi-stakeholders...and they could voice their opinions”. A Secretariat member (Interviewee 4, 2004) states that “I can’t agree that the Commission or Member States are stakeholders...what we understand as stakeholders are NGOs and the private sector”. A representative from a private water firm (Interviewee 8, 2004) maintains that “stakeholders are not partners in this partnership”. This interviewee contends that “there is a partnership between the African governments and the EU basically, so this is the partnership. And then we have the stakeholder process which is supposed to sort of surround this whole thing but we are not considered as partners...The Commission, the Member States, and the African governments are partners. The whole governmental level is where the partners are. Stakeholders are at the non-governmental level”.

It could be argued that this problem lies less with the EUWI’s structure, and more with the lack of commitment on the part of stakeholders. A Member State representative (Interviewee 13, 2005) points out that at the beginning of 2004 “the list of people invited to the Multi-Stakeholder Forum had more than 200 people on it and only about 40 of them would come”. He suggests that this is because only those participants who were “seriously interested” were still attending. However, could it not also be that stakeholder commitment to the EUWI waned because the EUWI failed to make ‘partners’ feel as if they were engaged on a mutual basis?

The new operational structure adopted in June 2004 tries to address the above concerns, in that, whilst governments will remain predominant, other stakeholders will play a more significant role than before, most notably in the new multi-stakeholder Steering Group, which will be the driving force of the initiative, with extensive decision-making powers. Whether the new organisational modalities will facilitate a multi-stakeholder partnership, however, remains to be seen. As Annette van Edig (2004) a representative from the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development said, when interviewed in November 2004, “we [the Steering Group] have met once so far...[and] it was a bit like a Multi-Stakeholder Forum meeting...we didn’t have any real discussions”. Labre (2004) of Suez also believes that the new organisational modalities cannot overcome the deep-rooted institutional tension within the EUWI because “the major role is, and will remain with the Member States...by no means can the NGOs and private companies decide anything in terms of financing or legal decisions. It would be against the institutional rule of the EU”. One thing then seems clear – that the partners with the money will always have the last word in the EUWI. This is another illustration of the institutional perspective.

5.4 THE SOUTHERN CONTEXT

Similar insights into the ambivalence of multi-stakeholder partnership principles and practices can be found by observing these two TTPs in the southern context. Let us once more begin with PAWS.

5.4.1 PAWS

In addition to partnership between northern PAWS stakeholders, there is also supposed to be partnership between northern and southern PAWS stakeholders. The logic underlying PAWS is that it should be demand-driven and therefore fully inclusive of southern partners. However, some interviewees feel that PAWS must be classified as a northern partnership working in the south, rather than a north/south partnership. For instance, one NGO member insisted that “It’s absolutely a northern partnership...essentially it’s a northern group going to a predetermined southern spot and fishing around for some work to do” (Barker 2004). At best, it is a partnership between northern and southern governments.

The PAWS initiative has sought to secure partnership agreements with the central governments of its three focal countries - Nigeria, Uganda and South Africa - before working with more localised tiers of government. Ed Mitchell (2003), of RWE Thames, points out that the African central government “has a certain level of veto over what the municipalities do”, so southern governments must be the first port of call. Furthermore, there has been a growing understanding in development circles that the political commitment of southern governments is vital to secure sustainable reform in the water and sanitation sector. As one NGO interviewee (1, 2003) put it, if you by-pass African government, then you “set up
different levels and types of authority and responsibility” and there is a danger that you “set up a parallel system”. Another interviewee from a Kenyan NGO (Interviewee 9, 2004) believes that although in some cases you can see more results “when you overstep government processes and...work [directly] with civil society organisations or community organisations”, you “can’t ignore governments because at the end of the day they have to carry the process forward after any assistance comes”.

Nevertheless, PAWS regards southern governmental commitment to the participation of the south’s private sector and civil society as essential. The PAWS ‘Memorandum of Understanding with South Africa’ states that “The Government of South Africa supports a partnership between Government, civil society and the private sector in South Africa to engage with the UK based partnership” (PAWS 2004a, 22). PAWS “is committed to the involvement of all stakeholders in partner countries particularly in the communities in which the partnership is engaged” (PAWS 2004a, 21)

However, there have been questions raised about PAWS’ capacity to bring about the participation of non-governmental stakeholders, especially civil society, in the southern context. Speaking in 2003, Les Peacock who then headed the PAWS Secretariat says, “The idea (which has not actually been realised)...when we get involved with the partner countries is to encourage them to have a similar base of government, private sector, and NGOs”, but when “we tried to get out into the communities and talk to them about what they do and how they do it…I don’t think there’s been anywhere where the community has identified anything it wanted” (Peacock 2003). Causer (2005) also notes that “to the extent that there are private sector players in South Africa we’ve not drawn them into the PAWS partnership”. So PAWS has not succeeded in engaging with either civil society or the private sector in South Africa.

However, one interviewee (2, 2003) has defended PAWS against this charge, arguing that “PAWS can’t be expected to be the liaison point for all different actors in South Africa, that’s not its function...I see it as the South African partners’ role to bring in civil society”. But even if South African non-governmental stakeholders’ participation in the initiative increases, it is not clear that they would be considered as partners in PAWS, because their status and role will largely be dependent on the South African government’s attitude. Clare Twelvetrees (2005) of the Environment Agency states that in a new engagement with South Africa on water resources begun in the last year, the northern partners are “trying to push that stakeholders are relevant...so we hope to work with various stakeholders but we’re taking the lead from DWAF [Department of Water Affairs and Forestry]”. Thus, as an NGO member (Interviewee 3, 2003) argues, the UK-based PAWS partnership “probably could have done more to involve communities but it does work within the constraints of what partner governments want to do”.

However, recent activity with regards to Nigeria looks more promising, at least with regard to civil society involvement, and “an engagement with Benue State has been started in partnership with WaterAid Nigeria” (PAWS 2005b, Annex C). Paul Turner (2005), the PAWS Manager, states that in Nigeria, PAWS is “getting a much better engagement between those three sectors”, government, the private sector, and civil society. He puts this down to the different approach employed here compared with their previous engagements. Instead of going straight to the Nigerian government, who, he believes, might have been reluctant to involve civil society, they have begun this programme in partnership with WaterAid Nigeria, who “know the country very well” and also have the links with government. PAWS has also engaged three NGOs “to actually do some of the community empowerment” and “help with getting the principles established for the water consumer associations” which the partnership is aiming to help set up.

5.4.2 EUWI

Like PAWS, the EUWI asserts the need for a bottom-up or demand-driven approach to aid, and it is theoretically “based on the establishment of strategic partnerships in specific regions that draw together government, civil society, private sector and other stakeholders to help achieve water-related goals” (AMCOW-TAC & EU 2003, 5). However, like PAWS, the EUWI has been accused of being northern dominated (Interviewee 10, 2004; Interviewee 9, 2004; Saywell 2004, Interviewee 8, 2004). At the regional level in Africa, the EUWI has focused on partnership between central governments, that is, between the EU Commission and Member States, on the one hand, and African governments, and AMCOW on the other. At Johannesburg, the “African-European Union Strategic Partnership on Water Affairs and Sanitation” was signed on behalf of Africa by the President of South Africa and the
President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, while on behalf of the EU, it was endorsed by the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission. An ex-senior Commission co-ordinator of the EUWI (Interviewee 5, 2004) notes that “The agreement was put out for comment to stakeholders but it was never put to them to sign”.

A member of the EUWI secretariat admits that “with regards to the involvement of southern stakeholders there is a lot of progress to be made” (Interviewee 4, 2004). Morley (2004) of Freshwater Action Network argues that at the regional level “It is very much government-based at the moment, they’ve had meetings with civil society in Africa but they don’t really have a role to play”. According to one Member State representative (Interviewee 13, 2005), it has “taken some time for them [AMCOW-TAC] to accept the idea of a multi-stakeholder process because they are government people and are not used to working in that way” (cf Interviewee 12, 2005). It was hoped that the formation of the African Network of Civil Society Organisations on Water (ANEW) in October 2003 could improve the situation, and one ANEW representative (Interviewee 9, 2004) suggested at CSD-12 that since ANEW’s inception, there had been an increased “willingness to collaborate” from both sides. A member of the EUWI Secretariat (Interviewee 11, 2004) adds that “ANEW are becoming quite strongly involved with the Water Initiative which is very good…[and] AMCow and AMCOW-TAC are having a debate on how they should engage with civil society…things are moving in the right direction…but it’s been very hard”. However, ANEW are not partners in the EUWI (Interviewee 9, 2004), and there is as yet no formal protocol or agreement for their engagement with AMCOW.

The EUWI’s ‘in-country’ efforts seem no more immune to criticism than those at the regional or EU level. For example, there is a sense among some in-country partners in Zambia that the EUWI lacks local ownership. A Development Cooperation Ireland (DCI) representative in Zambia (Interviewee 16, 2005) states, “I think it is experienced as a top-down approach rather than a felt need here….It’s external and there hasn’t been much of a buy-in from the local stakeholders”. Roland Werchota (2005) of GTZ (German Technical Cooperation, the lead body for implementing EUWI in Zambia) believes that the solution to this problem is a stronger presence from AMCOW. In a ‘lessons learnt’ document produced about the Zambian country-dialogue process, it is acknowledged that local ownership has been a problem, and the document states that “In order to avoid that the Country Dialogue is regarded as a donor-driven initiative, it is necessary to invest more time in identifying a national ‘champion’ – if possible from AMCOW-TAC” (EUWI-Zambia 2004, 4).

A DCI-Zambia representative (Interviewee 16, 2005) asserts that engagement at the community and district levels is poor, in that local civil society “are the key constituency that needs to be consulted but they’re not the first group that are being consulted. They have a key role but I don’t think they’re getting a chance to play that key role”. However, he goes on to add that it is “not the fault of the initiative, that’s the situation in-country”, because as with private sector organisations in Zambia, civil society organisations which focus on water and sanitation are weak and few. As Chanda (2005) puts it, “Zambian based NGOs are fairly small and not known much yet”. Peter Sievers (2005) Danida’s Programme Co-ordinator for the Water Sector in Zambia, admits that local NGOs and CBOs [community-based organisations] should be involved but that he doesn’t know of any. As an international NGO representative (Interviewee 17, 2005) points out, perhaps the community level is not the most appropriate level with which to engage (at least initially), but “there are organisations like Women for Change, and…others…[such as] the Water and Sanitation Association of Zambia” at the national level, which could be engaged with.

6. Conclusion

From the above analysis, we can draw two conclusions. First, with regard to our theoretical framework of the three network perspectives, we can see, firstly, that PAWS and the EUWI each has a strong instrumental dimension, focused single-mindedly on the MDG, though they manifest this commitment in different ways: PAWS is more engaged at the tactical level; while the EUWI is more engaged at the strategic level. Secondly, while each of them reveals elements of competitive interactivity, this tendency is more evident in the EUWI than in PAWS. Thirdly, both partnerships betray their respective institutional cultures: PAWS reflects the institutional pragmatism of the UK, while the EUWI reflects the institutional centralisation of the EU, though each has shown a capacity to reform its structure.
Our second conclusion is that the new TTP framework may not be very different from the traditional government-dominated model of bi/multi-lateral development. Both PAWS and (especially) the EUWI, seem to be driven mainly by government-led pressures, perhaps reflecting their respective top-down political systems. The good news is that this means that fears that governments (both northern and southern) could use these multi-stakeholder partnerships as a means to abdicate their responsibilities to provide water and sanitation services, may be unfounded. However, the bad news is that it means that governments may not be ceding their power and dominance sufficiently to enable ‘true’ partnerships to form between themselves and other stakeholders. It is clear that governments need to play a strong role in TTPs such as PAWS and the EUWI, because of the fundamental need for political commitment and because they are the main source of funds. Nevertheless, there is also a need for mutuality, and in order for the new framework to fulfil its potential, stakeholders outside government must be embraced fully as partners. It seems that some TTPs, such as PAWS, do aspire to inclusivity, and clearly endeavour to engage all stakeholders as active partners, even if the practices of these TTPs do not always match their aspirations. On the other hand, at some levels in the EUWI (although it is has developed and improved its partnership mechanisms recently), there is a tacit, and, at times explicit, distinction made between partners (who make decisions) and stakeholders (on whose behalf the decisions are made, but who are merely informed, and/or consulted). Rather than offering genuine partnership with full participation, the EUWI tends to give governments a privileged position as partners, while other stakeholders have a voice, but are not considered as equal partners. This tendency is particularly marked in relation to southern NGO involvement, which is often almost invisible. Of course, we must not forget that the poorest citizens in developing countries may have time only for matters of daily subsistence. Nevertheless, we must also recognise that without the participation by such stakeholders in the decisions which vitally affect them, it is unlikely that successful or sustainable solutions will ever be found (Nasro quoted in Allison 2002, 1541).

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