NAVIGATOR

SEARCH COSTS IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

FEBRUARY 2024

Ole Jacob Sending (NUPI)
Leonard Seabrooke (CBS)
John Karlsrud (NUPI)

This project receives funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the Call HORIZON-CL2-2021-DEMOCRACY-01 – Grant agreement n°101061621

This project receives funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the Call HORIZON-CL2-2021-DEMOCRACY-01 – Grant agreement n°101061621

Abstract

To navigate global governance, policymakers need to adjudicate how they should allocate their scarce resources to organizations and networks that can best fulfill specific governance tasks. Given growing regime complexity, and the rise of private transnational regulatory organizations in multiple issue areas, policymakers are faced with a task that is insufficiently captured in existing research on global governance. It concerns the need to identify and assess which governance options, offered by what actors, are best suited to advance a particular set of interests. These interests are not limited to considerations of what is the most effective governance solution, but also include "political" interests in maintaining alliances and status hierarchies in terms of deciding on who to govern with. On this basis, we suggest that in addition to the conventional focus on sunk-, transaction-, and opportunity costs, what we call "search costs" are growing in importance for policymakers: Policymakers can rely less on publicly mandated intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) with control over an issue-area and must identify and assess different governance options provided by IGOs, NGOs, private regulatory actors. In so doing, both considerations of legitimacy (e.g. multilateral v minilateral models) and effectiveness (e.g. hard v soft governance models) as well as alliances and partners must be considered. We outline our search costs framework and provide examples of the hidden (search) costs of global governance and identify why it matters. For scholars, it is important to understand what increased complexity entails for states. For policy-makers it is important to strengthen awareness and develop frameworks that can aide in assessing and choosing best-fit governance arrangements that match both concerns with effectiveness and legitimacy, as well as status-concerns and alliances.

NAVIGATOR

Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
C J Hambros plass 2D
0164 Oslo
Norway
Contact: jka@nupi.org

https://eunav.eu/ EU_Navigator

This project receives funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the Call HORIZON-CL2-2021-DEMOCRACY-01 – Grant agreement n°101061621

Introduction

Over the past two decades, formal multilateral organizations have been supplemented and supplanted by club formats such as the G7, the G20, and BRICS+ at the level of decision- making, and by firms, NGOs, and different forms of public-private partnerships at the level of policy-development and project delivery. There are important on-going debates, both scholarly and policy-focused, about the drivers and consequences of these changes for the legitimacy and efficacy of global governance. Scholars have shown how and when intergovernmental organizations change (Manulak, 2022), identifying trends of increased regime complexity (Raustiala and Victor, 2004) and the consequences of such complexity at the international level (Alter and Meunier, 2009). In this working paper we explore how increased complexity in global governance systems requires states to identify a range of organizations and pathways to fulfil their objectives.

We contend that while conventional explanations have stressed the importance of sunk costs, transaction costs, and opportunity costs, the amount of complexity in the field of global governance makes the shorthand of 'cost'—such as committed resources delegated to a publicly mandated organizations with authority over an issue —insufficient to properly understand key aspects of global governance. In ideal-typical terms, the "old" world of global governance was overwhelmingly dominated by publicly mandated inter-governmental organizations (IGOs), with authority over well-defined issue-areas. In the "new" world of global governance, IGOs are but one among several types of actors, the boundaries between issue-areas and who controls them is more contingent, and new governance models—notably public-private partnerships and networked forms of governance—are becoming more prevalent.

This systemic change introduces a significant increase in the governance options available for states. It also means that there is more uncertainty about what constitutes best-fit governance arrangements that satisfy: i) concerns about effective and legitimate solutions to a problem, (what is governed, how); and ii) concerns with status and alliances (by what organization, together with whom). On the first concern, the landscape of global governance is both denser and more fragmented than before, where increased heterogeneity in terms of the actors involved, their membership structures, funding mechanisms, degree of universality, governance models etc. exhibit significant variation (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni and Hofmann, 2020). To survey and assess what constitutes the most effective and legitimate governance arrangement is no small task. On the second, international political competition is increasingly taking place on the terrain of governance arrangements, where decisions on what arrangement to support sends signals of status and alliances between "like-minded" states. For example, the China-backed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) emerged in part as a competitor to the US/Japan dominated Asian Development Bank (ADB), BRICS+ is a competitor with the G7, and the New Development Bank seeks to compete with the World Bank.

This project receives funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the Call HORIZON-CL2-2021-DEMOCRACY-01 – Grant agreement n°101061621

These considerations – the choices on what to support, together with whom and for what purpose - are important as they pattern the landscape of global governance by diverting more resources to some types of organizations and less to others, recognize some actors as authoritative on some issues while marginalizing others. For example, the WHO used to be the unrivalled authority on health, but over time, both UNICEF and the World Bank moved in to engage on health aspects, and during the last two decades GAVI and the Gates Foundation have become significant players in global health governance (Hanrieder, 2020; Kentikelenis et al., 2023). More importantly for our focus here, our wager is that states are not fully appreciative of the eco-system in which they are operating, the costs involved in identifying the best governance alternatives, and the importance of adopting proper search practices for identifying best-fit solutions.

Costs and Institutions

Different theories of international politics offer different perspectives on the role and functioning of institutions in international politics. For realists, they are epiphenomenal, reflecting rather than shaping the interests of states and the distribution of power (Mearsheimer, 1994). This view provided the reference for institutional approaches, arguing that international organizations can, in fact, induce self-interested states to cooperate. Writing in 1995, Keohane and Martin made the case that international organizations "can provide information, reduce transaction costs, make commitments more credible, establish focal points for coordination, and in general facilitate the operation of reciprocity" (Keohane and Martin, 1995, p. 42). In so doing, they summarized the view that institutions or organizations matter and thus also making the case for how international organizations could facilitate and deepen international cooperation.

This view of international institutions as hubs for information and the reduction of transaction costs, was already formulated by Robert Keohane (Keohane, 1984) in which international organizations facilitate cooperation by reducing costs relating to a transaction, such as planning, resolving disputes, negotiations etc. Further, international organizations here emerge as offering "focal points" (Schelling, 1960), which is the default meeting place in the absence of communication with counterparts (e.g. if a security crisis emerges, there is a meeting at the UN Security Council (UNSC)). A focus on transaction costs offers an analytic to explain why international institutions exist in the first place. It can be defined as the "comparative costs of planning, adapting, and monitoring task completion under alternative governance structures." (Williamson, 1981, pp. 552–553). The concept was originally used to explain the existence of firms, where low transaction costs imply market interaction, and high transaction costs imply the formation of a firm (Coase, 1937).

From this view, international cooperation perceived by the actors to have low transaction costs—such as between friendly neighboring countries on a non-sensitive issue—will be done through direct negotiations, outside an institutional framework or regime. Conversely, if transaction costs are high, then more institutionalized forms of cooperation will be formed to reduce these costs. Note that considerations of transaction costs are relative to the value of goods or services being "traded:" the transaction costs of negotiating the UN Charter were extremely high, as it committed states to a new legal and institutional framework, but the value of it being established was considered so high that the costs were worth it.

This project receives funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the Call HORIZON-CL2-2021-DEMOCRACY-01 – Grant agreement n°101061621

In the contemporary period, the difficulties of reaching agreements within organizations with universal memberships has arguably increased the transaction costs of operating within and through them for the purpose of reaching agreement on how to act on an issue. Or put differently, the perceived governance benefits have gone down, while the transaction costs remain the same, because of a lack of an overlapping consensus on how to define and act on a particular problem. We thus have the paradoxical situation where the very thing—an international institution—that was established to reduce transaction costs (cf. Keohane, 1984) may actually increase it.

The reason for this paradox is that there is a qualitative difference between the logic of establishing an institution (to reduce transaction costs), and using an institution to deliver governance outcomes favored by states. Jupille et al. argue, for example, that increased international institutionalization leads to increased, not decreased, transaction costs because of the costs of acquiring information, bargaining, contracting, and institutionalization itself" (Jupille et al., 2013, p. 38). Abbott and Faude make a similar point when they introduce a discussion of "low-cost institutions" by differentiating between the formation and running of international institutions (Abbott and Faude, 2021). The latter involves operating costs—of running an international institution; change costs—of efforts to change institutional design (think reform of the UNSC); and exit costs—of withdrawing from an institution.

Contemporary research on global governance operates, broadly speaking, very much within such an institutional view, emphasizing how states approach global governance seeking to maximize control and governance effectiveness with minimal costs. But the focus is not so much on how inter-governmental organizations reduce (transaction) costs of cooperation between states, but rather on the design and uses of IGOs to engage in collective problem solving. We can observe a shift in explanatory focus from why states cooperate through IGOs at all, to how states design and use these organizations to achieve governance outcomes. This shift in focus stems in no small part from the observation of the increased density and complexity of global governance arrangements, characterized by regime complexity in terms of "nested, partially overlapping, and parallel international regimes that are not hierarchically ordered" (Alter and Meunier, 2009, p. 13).

Scholars have noted that this development makes up a global "market" for governance (Seabrooke and Sending, 2020; Seabrooke and Sending, 2024), where a range of private organizations and governance initiatives have emerged as central vehicles for rule-development, project delivery, advocacy, and even law-enforcement (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni and Sharman, 2022). Related to this trend is the increased use of earmarking or "preferencing" (Graham, 2017), and the resulting increase in the use of trust funds in organizations such as the World Bank (Reinsberg, 2017). International organizations, behaving according to 'rational design' principles established by powerful states (Koremenos et al., 2001), are also seeking more and more flexiblility in how they operate. For example, the rise of 'adhocism' from international organizations has 'deinstitutionalized' many of their standard decision-making procedures and transforms accountability from a hierarchical relationship to a network-based one (Brosig and Karlsrud, 2024; Hofmann et al., 2024).

This project receives funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the Call HORIZON-CL2-2021-DEMOCRACY-01 – Grant agreement n°101061621

This development signals the emergence of what some scholars call "low-cost institutions" as both supplements and competitors to formal IGOs with clearly defined mandates and delegation from states. Such institutions—informal governance networks, public-private partnerships and private regulatory organizations—"changes the cost-benefit logic of institutional choice in a densely institutionalized international system" and also "expands governance options" for states (Abbott and Faude, 2021, p. 1). A similar focus is found in the research on organizational ecologies, which explains why we see the rise of private regulatory organizations occupying "niches" of governance with reference to the lower costs of establishing and using them compared to established IGOs (Abbott et al., 2016, p. 251). The increased complexity in global governance goes beyond the types of actors involved, and extends to the modes of governance, where technical standards on e.g. telecommunications, and soft law on climate and environmental and climate agreements combine with more conventional hard law (Falkner, 2016).

In this research on the changing attributes of global governance, the question is not whether and how international institutions can reduce costs of cooperation (transaction costs) between states, but rather how and why states—increasingly—rely on soft rather than hard law, choose minilateral over multilateral arenas, and engage in partnerships with private actors rather than IGOs to perform governance. The original focus on international institutions as reducing transaction costs is replaced with a focus on the costs of governance, where governance through IGOs with universal membership are seen as "high cost" and new forms governance being seen as "low cost."

We expand on this research agenda by focusing on a different but related issue, namely how states—as principals—make decisions on what types of institutions or governance initiatives to invest in. Put differently, we are less interested in explaining the emergence of these new types of institutions, and more interested in exploring the related issue of how states are compelled to navigate and assess a much broader range of governance options. To do so, we develop an approach organized around the concept of "search costs" to capture how a more complex governance landscape means that states incur a specific type of "search cost" in navigating and assessing which actors to invest in to advance their goals.

Search Costs

Search costs are a "higher-level" form of cost, not linked to specific organizational design or policy choices per se, but to the process preceding it concerning the information gathering and assessment on which choices are made. We define "search costs", as the costs of surveying, assessing, and choosing where to invest both economic and political capital to advance particular goals through global governance arrangements. When deciding on where to allocate resources, any potential member or donor has to consider what type of support best serve their interests. We thus shift focus to the costs involved in navigating what is an increasingly dense but also fragmented and conflict-ridden institutional landscape of global governance.

This project receives funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the Call HORIZON-CL2-2021-DEMOCRACY-01 – Grant agreement n°101061621

The concept of search costs is inspired by work on relational contracting where the metaphor is that the state is a like a firm producing some form of governance (Williamson, 1985). As developed by David Lake, states "choose relations to economize on resources—in other words, to maximize benefits from exchange and minimize transaction costs. In short, actors choose the relationship that is most efficient for conducting the transaction." (Lake, 1996, p. 10). This emphasis on the assessment of costs and benefits when choosing between different alternatives is a fruitful one, but it does should be supplemented with an appreciation of the complexity of global governance and the costs involved when states "economize on resources". Relational contracting theory presume a well-functioning market where information about alternative governance options is reflected in prices. This is not so in the in the "market" for global governance, because there simply is no uniform metric by which alternatives are evaluated, and different states have differential access to information. Therefore, figuring out costs and benefits of different governance alternatives require extensive search- and assessment processes.

Conceptually search costs belong to a logic in which the agent seeks not to simply match to the most optimal offer but to gather information on the premise that "total search costs as well as the total search benefits increase in the amount of information" (Blumberg, 2001, p. 332). This requires assessments of who is present, whether they should be recognized, if they can be trusted, how new partnerships will damage existing ones, and levels of both external uncertainty (in the world) and internal uncertainty (within the state).

A focus on search costs captures the costs of navigating and choosing between different governance alternatives for states. The question of "why cooperate" is increasingly being supplanted by a question of how, with whom, and through what channels. It seeks to sensitize our analytics to the type of questions that states are asking when they do seek to navigate the terrain of global governance. These questions raise an important issue in that the drive to search—and to take on the costs associated with searching—comes from both distributive and recognitive elements. Searching is not simply about trying to ensure access to resources or ensure that one states wins materially over another. It is also about assessing who should be recognized (Epstein et al., 2018) and who has status (Mukherjee, 2022; Murray, 2018). This includes, as economic sociologists have studied, perceptions about a state's own capacity to assess others, as well as assessments of what peers and organizations are capable of providing (Podolny, 1993; Zuckerman, 1999).

As we discuss below, there are a number of trade-offs involved, such as between input and output legitimacy, as expressed in a choice between governance arrangements with universal membership contra investing in club governance. Moreover, these considerations may vary between issue-area or type of governance: investing in normative work may be most effective in the long-term via universal membership-organizations, but more effective in the first phases of agenda-setting (Risse et al., 1999).

The search costs also involve considerations of so-called "sunk costs" (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2020). This is of some importance, because many IGOs have "mandatory" membership, with membership fees and personnel costs of representation to them etc. While some of these organizations may be deemed to be ineffective and of little importance, the prospective costs of withdrawing are quite high in terms of the signal it sends to other states and also legal ramifications of withdrawing from an international treaty that established the institution.

This project receives funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the Call HORIZON-CL2-2021-DEMOCRACY-01 – Grant agreement n°101061621

The most straight-forward cost to be assessed are opportunity costs, which concerns the trade-offs involved in making decisions on which organizations or institutions to support. Opportunity costs are the loss of potential gain from other alternatives. It refers to the cost, or loss, of not enjoying the benefit of the road not taken. It is premised on resource constraints, so that deciding or prioritizing one course of action also excludes taking another one. For example, a state may choose to spend a lot of resources—money, time, personnel—on one particular issue, such as solving a trade dispute with another state, thereby foregoing the potential value of engaging with other states to act on other issues (Kelley and Pevehouse, 2015). In our context, this is important: because the institutional landscape offers a wider range of options for advancing particular objectives, the search costs involved in actually assessing the trade-off are higher than in an institutional landscape that offers few choices.

Search Cost Conjectures

The substantive content of the information that states need as they assess different governance options matter. We highlight three dimensions that cut across different types—e.g. IGOs, NGOs, firms, networks—that pertain to: i) open v closed (e.g. UN General Assembly v UNSC); ii) normative v technical (e.g. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights v International Maritime Organization standards; and iii) formal v informal (UN Environment Programme v Just Energy Transition Partnerships). This serves to specify salient features that matters for governance performance, but also that different types of governance actors are more costly to assess and identify than others. Consider, for example, the following combination of the attributes of different climate governance actors:

- Formal + Open + Technical = UNFCCC secretariat
- Formal + Open + Normative = UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP)
- Formal + Closed + Technical = Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
- Formal + Closed + Normative = UN Global Compact Caring for Climate
- Informal + Open + Technical = Climate Disclosure Standards Board
- Informal + Open + Normative = Carbon Disclosure Project
- Informal + Closed + Technical = Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change
- Informal + Closed + Normative = WWF Climate Savers

Actor attributes and search costs

These dimensions allow for a more granular understanding of the substantive focus and information needs that make up search costs for states as they assess different governance arrangements. We suggest that—ceteris paribus—search costs for closed, technical and informal governance actors are higher than for open, normative and formal ones, which augments already established hierarchies in global governance (on which, see below). We also propose that the trend associated with the growth of informal and closed governance arrangements (cf. Abbott and Faude 2021) suggest that states are gradually emphasizing output legitimacy—and thus effectiveness—as more important than input legitimacy in the assessment of different governance arrangements. As a range of studies show, output legitimacy or effectiveness has become an increasingly important factor in how states choose to invest (Steffek, 2015).

This project receives funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the Call HORIZON-CL2-2021-DEMOCRACY-01 – Grant agreement n°101061621

Trends in governance and differential search costs

Ecological work on global governance tells us that transnational private, regulatory organizations (PTROs) are growing, occupying niches in governance tasks that IGOs do not fill (Abbott et al., 2016). A central difference between PTROs and IGOs is that the latter, by virtue of their formality and state membership, are better known by all states, thus reducing search costs with regards to getting information and assessing their performance. PTROs, on the other hand, tend to emerge from and be headquartered in OECD countries, are less well known for all states, and thus increases search costs for states outside the OECD sphere. It follows that search costs are lower for states in the OECD sphere, and these are also more likely to be initial backers of PTROs.

Network ties and knowledge platforms

As discussed above, the "old" world of global governance was dominated by states pooling resources and defining mandates for IGOs. It was a world of established, public networks of "strong ties" between diplomats and international civil servants (Eriksen and Sending, 2013). Such networks affirm trust in established relationships. However, "weak ties" are often more important in searching for new information and identifying new actors (Granovetter, 1973). The "strength of weak ties" argument has been empirically confirmed in a range of contexts, including noting that strong ties can be more effective when the complexity of information increases (Aral, 2016). One conjecture to consider is that in a world of complexity in global governance, weak ties become more important in identifying and collecting information about alternative governance arrangements. This can potentially help explain the rise to prominence of "intermediary" platforms and networks that serve as clearing houses for data and information. This includes the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment (MOPAN), the Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI), and Convergence, which serves as a hub for knowledge on blended finance. These intermediaries perform "weak tie-functions" in global governance by collecting data and metrics that ease search costs for states in how to navigate in global governance networks. They also use their own strong-tie networks to try to influence how states articulate their objectives (van den Broek and Klingler-Vidra, 2022).

Status and privileged access

Status hierarchies are important in terms of access to information and offers to join exclusive governance clubs. In surveying the landscape of global governance, great powers have distinct advantages over small and medium sized powers. Great powers can rest assured that information flows in their direction, because their support is a key asset in the eyes of others (Mukherjee, 2022). They also receive invitations to join governance initiatives. Clubs like the G7 can be seen to function, in a search cost perspective, like a trade fair where powerful states get inside information on new governance initiatives and updates on progress in established ones.

This project receives funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the Call HORIZON-CL2-2021-DEMOCRACY-01 – Grant agreement n°101061621

One conjecture is thus that fragmentation and proliferation of different governance arrangements increases the information differential between great powers and others, so that search costs increase for small and medium sized powers, who are less centrally placed about new governance initiatives. Further, more powerful states serve as "search cost-substitutes" for less powerful states, as smaller states rely on the assessment of more powerful allies, thereby also sorting out alliance- and status considerations. However, powerful states arguably have more at stake in the management and maintenance of their status, so that in assessing which governance initiative to support, they have to factor in a range of considerations about status-maintenance and thwarting rivals. Consider, for example, the diplomatic effort that the US put in to try to dissuade European allies from joining the China-backed AIIB (He and Feng, 2019). Against this backdrop, our conjecture is that powerful states have lower search costs in terms of access to high-quality, privileged information, but spend more time assessing and lobbying others to maintain status.

Domestic politics and search costs

Some governance arrangements are politically contentious domestically. The US withdrew from UNESCO between 1984 and 2003, and again between 2019 and 2023, for example. During NATO´s operation in Afghanistan—through the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), several member states had placed caveats on what their troops could and could not do (Saideman and Auerswald 2012). These caveats reflect domestic political systems and negotiations. These examples suggest that domestic politics matter for search costs: If an issue or specific organization is contentious domestically, the search costs increases because more time and effort has to be invested in gathering information and assessing pros and cons and deciding on what caveats to put in place, or what conditions should be placed on monetary support. We thus expects that, in democracies, issues that are contentious domestically increases search costs.

Geopolitical rivalry and search costs

The contemporary dynamics of global governance is not only marked by increased complexity but also by geopolitical competition. This leads to both deadlock within multilateral institutions and to the emergence of alternative governance arrangements outside of established ones. The expansion of BRICS to BRICS+ and a similar expansion of members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) suggest that China and Russia, for example, are seeking to establish governance arrangements that they can control. For states that are not clearly allied with one side in such rivalry, the search costs increases because alternative governance arrangements have to be assessed in light both of the governance being produced, but also the signal being sent by such a decision to great powers (cf. He and Feng 2019: 157). This also applies to examples of decisions about voting on which IGO should "own" an issue. A case in point is how high-income countries are joining forces to keep the OECD as the hub for work on international taxation, while middle-and low-income countries are making a push to move this work to the UN. Breaking rank with traditional like-minded countries—such as the OECD members, or the Non-Aligned Movement is politically costly, thereby raising the stakes of assessing governance arrangements.

.

This project receives funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the Call HORIZON-CL2-2021-DEMOCRACY-01 – Grant agreement n°101061621

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, we identify three areas of importance: How a focus on search costs can advance the research agenda on complexity in global governance; the need for further analytical work and the development of research designs and methods to explore conjectures related to search costs, and; potential policy implications.

The concept of search costs can potentially help expand the broad research agenda on the complexity and fragmentation of global governance. In particular, it focuses on costs *for* states given this complexity rather than the costs of institutions. We highlight that the question for states is typically not whether to cooperate, but rather with whom, how, and to what end.

To further advance this research agenda, it is necessary to further specify the scope and analytical contents of the concept of search costs and to develop research design. For example, important questions include what type of data can be used to explore different conjectures, using what types of methods.

Policy implications can be identified by looking at the EU: The EU is at one level particularly well positioned to have low search costs due to its economic resources and political power, as discussed above. Nonetheless, the EU only partially operate as a uniform actor in foreign policy, and one potential implication of the analysis presented here is to explore how more institutionalized cooperation between EU member states on searching for best-fit governance arrangements can reduce search costs and increase strategic decision-making on choosing best-fit governance arrangements.

This project receives funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the Call HORIZON-CL2-2021-DEMOCRACY-01 – Grant agreement n°101061621

References

Abbott, K. W. and Faude, B. (2021) 'Choosing Low-Cost Institutions in Global Governance', International Theory, 13, 397–426.

Abbott, K. W., Green, J. F. and Keohane, R. O. (2016) 'Organizational Ecology and Institutional Change in Global Governance'', International Organization, 70, 247–277.

Alter, K. J. and Meunier, S. (2009) 'The Politics of International Regime Complexity', Perspectives on Politics, 7, 13–24.

Aral, S. (2016) 'The future of weak ties', American Journal of Sociology, 121, 1931–1939.

Blumberg, B. F. (2001) 'Efficient Partner Search: Embedded Firms Seeking Co-operative Partners', The Journal of Mathematical Sociology, 25, 329–354.

van den Broek, O. M. and Klingler-Vidra, R. (2022) 'The UN Sustainable Development Goals as a North Star: How an Intermediary Network Makes, Takes, and Retrofits the Meaning of the Sustainable Development Goals', Regulation & Governance, 16, 1306–1324.

Brosig, M. and Karlsrud, J. (2024) 'How Ad Hoc Coalitions Deinstitutionalize International Institutions', International Affairs, iiae009.

Coase, R. H. (1937) 'The Nature of the Firm', Economica, 4, 386–405.

Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, M. (2020) 'Death of International Organizations. The Organizational Ecology of Intergovernmental Organizations, 1815–2015', The Review of International Organizations, 15, 339–370.

Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, M. and Hofmann, S. C. (2020) 'Of the Contemporary Global Order, Crisis, and Change', Journal of European Public Policy, 27, 1077–1089.

Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, M. and Sharman, J. C. (2022) Vigilantes Beyond Borders: NGOs as Enforcers of International Law, Princeton University Press.

Epstein, C., Lindemann, T. and Sending, O. J. (2018) 'Frustrated Sovereigns: The Agency That Makes the World Go Around', Review of International Studies, 44, 787–804.

Eriksen, S. E. and Sending, O. J. (2013) 'There Is No Global Public', International Theory, 5, 213–237.

Falkner, R. (2016) 'The Paris Agreement and the New Logic of International Climate Politics', International Affairs, 92, 1107–1125.

Graham, E. R. (2017) 'Follow the Money: How Trends in Financing Are Changing Governance at International Organizations', Global Policy, 8, 15–25.

Granovetter, M. S. (1973) 'The Strength of Weak Ties?', American Journal of Sociology, 78, 1360–1380.

This project receives funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the Call HORIZON-CL2-2021-DEMOCRACY-01 – Grant agreement n°101061621

Hanrieder, T. (2020) 'Priorities, Partners, Politics: The WHO's Mandate beyond the Crisis', Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations, 26, 534–543.

He, K. and Feng, H. (2019) 'Leadership Transition and Global Governance: Role Conception, Institutional Balancing, and the AIIB', The Chinese Journal of International Politics, 12, 153–178.

Hofmann, S. C., Karlsrud, J. and Reykers, Y. (2024) 'Ad Hoc Coalitions: From Hierarchical to Network Accountability in Peace Operations?', Global Policy, 15, 121–127.

Jupille, J., Mattli, W. and Snidal, D. (2013) Institutional Choice and Global Commerce, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Kelley, J. G. and Pevehouse, J. C. W. (2015) 'An Opportunity Cost Theory of US Treaty Behavior', International Studies Quarterly, 59, 531–543.

Kentikelenis, A. E., Seabrooke, L. and Sending, O. J. (2023) 'Global Health Expertise in the Shadow of Hegemony', Studies in Comparative and International Development, 58, 347–368.

Keohane, R. O. (1984) After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

Keohane, R. O. and Martin, L. L. (1995) 'The Promise of Institutionalist Theory', International Security, 20, 39–51.

Koremenos, B., Lipson, C. and Snidal, D. W. (2001) 'The Rational Design of International Institutions', International Organization, 55, 761–99.

Lake, D. A. (1996) 'Anarchy, Hierarchy, and the Variety of International Relations', International Organization, 50, 1–33.

Manulak, M. W. (2022) Change in Global Environmental Politics: Temporal Focal Points and the Reform of International Institutions. New York, Cambridge University Press.

Mearsheimer, J. J. (1994) 'The False Promise of International Institutions', International Security, 19, 5–49.

Mukherjee, R. (2022) Ascending Order: Rising Powers and the Politics of Status in International Relations. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Murray, M. (2018) The Struggle for Recognition in International Relations: Status, Revisionism, and Rising Powers. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Podolny, J. M. (1993) 'A Status-Based Model of Market Competition', American Journal of Sociology, 98, 829–872.

Raustiala, K. and Victor, D. G. (2004) 'The Regime Complex for Plant Genetic Resources', International Organization, 58, 277–309.

Reinsberg, B. (2017) 'Organizational Reform and the Rise of Trust Funds: Lessons from the World Bank', The Review of International Organizations, 12, 199–226.

This project receives funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the Call HORIZON-CL2-2021-DEMOCRACY-01 – Grant agreement n°101061621

Risse, T., Ropp, S. and Sikkink, K. (eds) (1999) The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Saideman, S. M., & Auerswald, D. P. (2012). 'Comparing caveats: understanding the sources of national restrictions upon NATO's mission in Afghanistan', International Studies Quarterly, 56(1), 67-84.

Schelling, T. C. (1960) The Strategy of Conflict. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.

Seabrooke, L. and Sending, O. J. (2020) 'Contracting Development: Managerialism and Consultants in Intergovernmental Organizations', Review of International Political Economy, 27, 802–827.

Seabrooke, L. and Sending, O. J. (2024) The Market for Anarchy: Profiting from Uncertainty in World Politics, unpublished monograph.

Steffek, J. (2015) 'The Output Legitimacy of International Organizations and the Global Public Interest', International Theory, 263–293.

Williamson, O. E. (1981) 'The Economics of Organization: The Transaction Cost Approach', American Journal of Sociology, 87, 548–577.

Williamson, O. E. (1985) The Economic Institutions of Capitalism: Firms, Markets, Relational Contracting. New York, Free Press.

Zuckerman, E. W. (1999) 'The Categorical Imperative: Securities Analysts and the Illegitimacy Discount', American Journal of Sociology, 104, 1398–1438.

This project receives funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the Call HORIZON-CL2-2021-DEMOCRACY-01 – Grant agreement n°101061621

Authors

Ole Jacob Sending is Director of Research and Research Professor at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. His research interests include the character of global governance arrangements, the changing form of state sovereignty, and the evolving features of power politics. His research on global governance focuses on the role of expertise, the dynamics of authority constitution, and the nexus between public and private actors.
ojs@nupi.no

Leonard Seabrooke is a Professor in International Political Economy and Economic sociology at the Copenhagen Business School, and Research Professor at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. His research primarily concerns the role of professionals and experts in treating social and economic problems and the role of 'Global Wealth Chains' in the international political economy.
lse.ioa@cbs.dk

John Karlsrud is Research Professor at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. He is co-Principal Investigator (PI) of ADHOCISM, a 1,2 EUR million Research Council of Norway project examining the role of ad hoc coalitions in global governance, and PI of NAVIGATOR, a 3 EUR million Horizon Europe project exploring changes in global cooperation across a range of issues.
jka@nupi.org

NAVIGATOR

NAVIGATOR is a 4-year research project set to examine how the EU shall navigate the increasingly complex – and conflict-laden – institutional spaces of global governance to advance a rules-based international order. What factors should be emphasized when considering which institutions to strengthen, which to reform, and which to by-pass when revitalising multilateralism? NAVIGATOR's main objective is to answer these questions and deliver a ready-to-use "search mechanism" and associated pathways of action that the EU and its member states can use as it seeks to strengthen a rules-based international order.

To achieve this, NAVIGATOR comprises a strong, global and inter-disciplinary team of researchers that explores institutional variation on six policy issues – climate change, digitalisation, finance/tax, health, migration and security – to identify what institutional mixes that enables the EU to have optimal impact in a given policy issue.

This project receives funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the Call HORIZON-CL2-2021-DEMOCRACY-01 – Grant agreement n°101061621

This project receives funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the Call HORIZON-CL2-2021-DEMOCRACY-01 – Grant agreement n°101061621