

The Politics of Informal Governance

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Abstract

Why do states sometimes use informal instead of formal institutions to govern global problems? Traditional research on the forms of institutionalization in world politics focuses on formal modes of cooperation, such as intergovernmental organizations and treaties. Formal rules, however, do not exhaust the institutional variety of international cooperation. They are often inadequate, if not entirely misleading, descriptions of the games that actors play in world politics. Recent work has started to examine informal governance as a mode of cooperation among nations. This project examines the factors that lead states to choose the specific level of informality of an international institution that they create to structure their interactions and govern global problems. We highlight the political dimensions of informal governance and argue that distributional conflict and power asymmetries are critical for the selection and design of informal modes of international cooperation. States use informal institutions as a means to project power and bias outcomes toward their special interests. Using a new dataset on formal and informal international institutions we test hypotheses derived from this argument as well as alternative functionalist explanations of international cooperation. Our results indicate that power dynamics are a strong driver of the informality of international institutions, while functionalist factors are of less importance. The results of this project are relevant for scholars and practitioners alike. On the one hand, our systematic account of the institutional choices of states and transnational actors goes beyond existing work on informal governance within intergovernmental organizations as well as the established research on international institutional design. On the other hand, we present new insights about the factors that shape the emergence and design of informal forms of governing at the global level which will support policy-makers in effectively providing public goods and enhance the legitimacy, equity, and efficiency of global governance institutions.

Executive summary

The interdisciplinary project “The Politics of Informal Governance” allowed us to establish a cooperation of researchers and practitioners from international organizations, transnational organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and governments which resulted in an innovative dataset on formal and informal international institutions, a large number research papers (all either published, forthcoming, under review, or works in progress), and two joint workshops. The financial support by the Swiss Network for International Studies (SNIS) made this research project possible by financing, field work, research assistants, participation in academic conferences, project meetings, and one of two project workshops. The final project report proceeds with a brief summary of the project and its associated members in section one. Section two presents our main research outputs and findings. Section three describes our outreach and dissemination activities. The final section provides an outlook on future research activities.

Project summary

The research project “The Politics of Informal Governance” analyzes the recent trend in international cooperation toward informal forms of cooperation. Traditional research on the

forms of institutionalization in global governance focuses on formal modes of cooperation, such as intergovernmental organizations and treaties. Formal rules, however, do not exhaust the institutional variety of international and transnational cooperation. They are often inadequate, if not entirely misleading, descriptions of the games that actors play in world politics.

Recent work in political science, economics, and international law has started to examine informal governance as a mode of international cooperation. Informal governance refers to unwritten (and often vaguely specified) rules, shared expectations, and norms that are not enshrined in formally constituted organizations and which modify or substitute legally binding rules. It includes informal practices within formal intergovernmental organizations, informal institutions, and a broad array of networks constituted by state and non-state actors. Examples include: informal intergovernmental organizations, such as the G8; and transnational public-private governance schemes of governments, companies, and NGOs, such as the Kimberley Process.

Whether focused on formal or informal institutions, existing scholarship reflects only small portions of the institutional architecture of contemporary global governance in isolation. Yet, if we do not take into account the wider spectrum of institutional variation, our analyses of the determinants of institutional choices at the global level remain partial. This lacuna also hinders states, international organizations, and non-state actors from developing efficient solutions in dealing with global challenges.

To address this research gap, our project examined the factors that lead states to choose between formal intergovernmental organizations (FIGOs), informal intergovernmental organizations (IIGOs), and transnational public-private governance initiatives (TGIs) to structure their interactions and govern global problems. We also investigated the interactions between formal and informal institutions.

It is nearly impossible to provide any definite answers to the questions that our research addressed as this would curtail the breadth of insights gained in the project. Nonetheless, some tentative conclusions can be offered:

- Informal forms of cooperation among nations in the form of TGIs and IIGOs have become increasingly important elements of global governance since the mid-1990s.
- Informal institutions are not equally present in all issue areas of world politics and different types of informal institutions show different patterns of distributions across issue areas. In some cases, these informal institutions can play a rather formal role (such as the negotiation groups within the international climate negotiations). TGIs sometimes exist quite independently, but sometimes also as “satellites” of FIGOs, driven by the incentives set by the latter. In addition, there is quite some variety in the degree of informality observed within IIGOs.
- It is analytically and empirically useful to consider differences in the formalization of international institutions as a continuum rather than clear-cut categories. In order to take this insight into account, we developed an informality index which allows researchers to examine degrees of informalization of international institutions independent of institutional categories. Based on this index we find broad variation in the formality and informality of FIGOs, IIGOs, and TGIs.
- Informal forms of cooperation among states are a response to the level and concentration of power among the states involved in international cooperation.

- Informal institutions are sought by small groups of states with heterogeneous or homogenous preferences.
- Democracies are more prone than non-democracies to participate in informal international institutions in the form of TGI's.
- Countries with strong domestic veto players are more prone to participate in informal international institutions in the form of TGI's than countries with no or only weak domestic veto players.
- Informal international institutions are a way of states to cooperate with other states that have a reputation of neglecting their international obligations.

In order to successfully conduct our research, we were able to build on an international, interdisciplinary research team that brought together senior and junior scholars from political science, international law, and economics, as well as practitioners from international organizations, transnational organizations, NGOs, and governments. Our project team consisted of researchers and practitioners from multiple disciplines including political science, economics, and international law. This was to ensure a wide variety of substantive perspectives as well as methodological approaches to address the research questions that motivated our project. The core team consisted of Dirk Lehmkuhl (University of St. Gallen), Katharina Michaelowa (University of Zurich), Oliver Westerwinter (University of St. Gallen), Bernhard Reinsberg (University of Zurich) who first was involved as a doctoral student and later as a postdoctoral researcher, and Chandreyee Bagchi (University of Zurich) as a second doctoral student.

Eight associated project members contributed to the research papers that were developed in the context of our project. While the associated project team members worked independently on their respective research papers, they all contributed to the overall endeavor of the project and answering the questions that motivated the project. Kenneth Abbott (Arizona State University) and Thomas Biersteker (Graduate Institute Geneva) contributed co-authored and individual research papers. Duncan Snidal (Oxford University) and Felicity Vabulas (Pepperdine University) contributed a research paper that focuses on the concept and measurement of IIGOs. Axel Michaelowa (University of Zurich) contributed to a co-authored project paper. Christopher Kilby and Erasmus Kersting (both Villanova University) contributed a co-authored research paper on informal influence within the World Bank. Miles Kahler (American University) and Barbara Koremenos (University of Michigan) both contributed individual research papers to our project. Finally, Lora Viola (Free University Berlin) and Michal Onderco (Erasmus University Rotterdam) both contributed research paper to our project without being officially associated to our project.

Furthermore, Thomas Hale (Oxford University), Lisa Martin (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Mareike Kleine (London School of Economics), and Christine Reh (University College London), as well as Marion Karmann (Forrest Stewardship Council), Conor Seyle and Lindsay Heger (both One Earth Future) provided detailed and invaluable feedback at various stages of our research project. Also our associate members Mark DeWitt (International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers), Melissa Powell (United Nations Global Compact), Megumi Endo (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), and Jonathan Cuenoud (Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Government of Switzerland) provided valuable inputs at different stages of our research project.

In order to support the creation of our large-n database on formal and informal international institutions which builds on existing datasets on FIGOs (Pevehouse et al. 2015) and IIGOs

(Vabulas and Snidal 2013), we hired ten undergraduate research assistants at the University of St. Gallen. Stefano Jud, Giulia Parini, and Ruslan Aybazov joined our team in September 2015. Dominik Schneeberger and Christian Andres joined in October 2015 and Keto Schumacher joined in November 2015. Laura Leibundgut further strengthened our team of research assistants in St. Gallen from March 2016 onwards. Finally, Rosie Keller, Johannes Schultz, and Tino Good joined our team of research assistants at the University of St. Gallen in May 2016. All undergraduate research assistants at the University of St. Gallen were hired at the 30 percent level.

We also hired one doctoral student, Mihwa Hong, and five undergraduates, Taylar Young, Nora Ling, Victoria Noble, Michael Lerner, and Julia Gysel at the University of Michigan to support Barbara Koremenos' work on Islamic states and informal governance as well as to assist with the coding of an important variable in our dataset, namely uncertainty about the state of the world.

Moreover, we were able to mobilize extra resources by collaborating with a project on "Power and Interactions in the Politics of Transnational Public-Private Governance" funded by the International Studies Association and led by Virginia Haufler (University of Maryland) and Oliver Westerwinter. In the context of this collaboration, David Prina (University of Maryland) became part of our team of coders who have been working on the creation of our large-n dataset on formal and informal international institutions. David Prina especially contributed to identifying cases for the inclusion in our database as well as the coding of issue areas of the institutions in our database.

Project accomplishments

The research undertaken in the context of the project produced a range of tangible outputs. Project team members as well as associated scholars wrote several research papers that use the dataset generated in the context of the project and/or address research questions of the project. We also produced three in-depth case studies that informed the large-n data collection process and provide the basis for individual research papers. Furthermore, we created an innovative dataset on formal and informal international institutions. Finally, in addition to the doctoral dissertations of Bernhard Reinsberg and Chandreyee Bagchi that were supported by our project, several Bachelor and Master theses were written in the context of the project. We provide detailed information on each of these tangible outputs in the remainder of this section.

The project resulted in a large number of academic articles. Three of them have been published or accepted for publications in journals, such as *International Interactions* and *Global Policy*. Some additional articles are currently under review, while most of them will be finalized later this year or in the first half of 2018. In addition, at the time of writing this report, we are working on preparing a proposal for a symposium at the journal *International Studies Quarterly*. If our proposal is successful, the contributions to this symposium will enter the process of academic peer review at the end of the summer. We will also prepare a proposal for a monograph on the project topic for a political science university press.

A first tangible output of the project is a conceptual paper written by Kenneth Abbott, Thomas Biersteker, and Oliver Westerwinter that provides the conceptual framework for our project. This paper discusses the conceptual distinctions and contributions that our project makes to the study of informal global governance. It also establishes the importance of the growth of informal international institutions by using some information about the growth of different types of international institutions contained in our new large-n dataset. The paper

served as the framing paper for the discussions at our project workshops in St. Gallen and Geneva and provides the basis for the special issue proposal that we are currently preparing.

A second paper written by Oliver Westerwinter with the title “Measuring Transnational Public-Private Governance Initiatives in World Politics: A New Dataset” introduces the most original portion of the large-n dataset that we created as part of the project. It summarizes the Transnational Public-Private Governance Initiatives in World Politics Data. The data contains detailed information on the scope, participants, and institutional design of 468 TGIs in which states and/or formal intergovernmental organizations cooperate with business and civil society actors to govern global problems. In the paper, Oliver Westerwinter describes the sample generation and discusses coding rules. He also maps the development of TGIs at the initiative and state level of analysis, and shows how the new data contributes to enhancing researchers’ understanding of transnational public-private governance. The paper concludes by identifying puzzles and avenues for future research on transnational public-private governance initiatives in world politics.

The paper “The Politics of Informal Governance” by Oliver Westerwinter provides a first analytical cut through our newly built data in its current form. This paper is attached to this report as the required working paper. All other papers are available upon request. The paper presents the overall motivating puzzle of our research project and develops hypotheses based on functionalist and power-oriented arguments about when we should expect international cooperation taking informal forms. Examining our data at the institution level of analysis, the preliminary results presented in the paper suggest that functional as well as power-related factors are both important for understanding states’ choices of informal governance and that power-related variables are stronger predictors of informal governance than functional factors. While the preliminary results should be treated with caution, the paper points to the descriptive and analytical innovations that will be feasible based on our new database. Drafts of this paper were presented at the Annual Convention of the Swiss Political Science Association in January 2016 in Basel, at the ECPR Joint Session Workshops 2016 in Pisa, at a seminar at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, as well as our two project workshops.

The paper “Transnational climate initiatives: an alternative way to climate change mitigation?” by Katharina and Axel Michaelowa examines whether transnational climate governance initiatives can be expected to fill the gap left by formal intergovernmental negotiation processes within the UNFCCC. They assess 109 such initiatives based on four criteria of their contribution to greenhouse gas mitigation: existence of mitigation targets, incentives for mitigation, definition of a baseline, and existence of a monitoring, reporting and verification procedure. About half of the initiatives do not fulfill any such quality criterion and only 10 percent satisfy three or more. On average, quality of newly set up initiatives was highest during the “heyday” of the international climate policy regime between 2005 and 2010. Government orchestration and the existence of national emission targets show a positive correlation with quality. While effective entrepreneurial initiatives are generally started only as a complement to existing regulation, sub-national governments and NGOs show some attempts to go beyond that and compensate for the lack of dynamics at the UNFCCC. Yet, given the low overall quality assessment, transnational climate governance initiatives cannot be expected to fill the “mitigation gap”. Vulnerable developing countries that should have the strongest preferences for such mitigation action do not seem to be more successful within transnational initiatives than within the international system as a whole. The paper was presented at the 2016 Political Economy of International Organizations conference in Salt Lake City and is currently under revise-and-resubmit for a special edition on transnational climate initiatives at the Journal International Interactions.

The paper “Do Domestic Politics Shape U.S. Influence in the World Bank?” by Erasmus Kersting and Christopher Kilby (Villanova University) investigates whether U.S. presidential administrations exert more influence over international financial institutions when the U.S. government is divided. They find evidence of this for several dimensions of U.S. influence in the World Bank, a pattern consistent with the U.S. administration substituting multilateral aid for bilateral aid when its control over the latter is hampered by an uncooperative legislature. This provides a much richer picture of when and why the U.S. exerts influence in multilateral settings and an alternate explanation to persistent questions about the role of international organizations in the international political economy. The paper was presented at the 2016 Political Economy of International Organizations conference in Salt Lake City.

The paper “Regime Type, Veto Players, and State Participation in Transnational Public-Private Governance Initiatives” by Oliver Westerwinter examines the relationship between states’ domestic regime type and veto player configurations and their tendency to participate in a particular type of informal governance; namely, transnational public-private governance initiatives. It argues that states’ choice to participate in TGIs is driven by forces at the domestic level. Specifically, it argues that the extent to which a state participates in TGIs depends on its political regime type and the presence of domestic veto players. The added value of the flexibility and low legal rigidity of cooperation based on TGIs allows democratic leaders to avoid the cumbersome domestic ratification processes of international agreements. It also allows governments irrespective of their regime type to bypass domestic veto players with opposing preferences. The push toward informal global governance that originates in the presence of domestic veto players, however, decreases as the level of democracy in a country increases. The argument is tested using the new data on 468 TGIs that we generated as part of our project. Results suggest that state participation in TGIs is strongly driven by domestic politics. A first version of the paper was presented at the 2016 ECPR Joint Session workshops and a revised draft was presented at the 2017 Annual Conference of the European Political Science Association.

The paper “The Evolution of Transnational Governance Interactions: A Network Approach” by Oliver Westerwinter examines the relationships among transnational public-private governance initiatives and what drives their evolution over time. TGIs in which governments and/or formal intergovernmental organizations, business, and civil society organizations cooperate to govern global problems have become an important element of world politics. In many issue areas, TGIs co-exist with other TGIs. This co-existence creates room for institutional overlap and interactions that are observable in the form of networks among TGIs. While in some issue areas the overlap and interactions among TGIs have been rapidly growing, in others they have been characterized by a mixed pattern of growth and decline, and in still others they have stagnated. What explains this variation? Oliver Westerwinter uses network analysis to examine the evolution of the overlap and interactions among TGIs across issue areas and over time. He finds that TGI overlap and interactions are facilitated by a shared issue area focus and the size of TGIs as well as clustering and popularity within the TGI network. A draft of the paper was presented at a workshop on transnational business governance at the University of Toronto in 2016.

The paper “The institutional design of formal intergovernmental organizations” by Bernhard Reinsberg and Oliver Westerwinter employs one part of our newly coded dataset to examine the determinants of formalization of the 534 FIGOs established between 1816 and 2014. Owing to a lack of data, there has hardly been any analysis testing the predictions of three grand theories of international cooperation with respect to the design provisions of FIGOs. The

empirical analysis also improves upon previous work by considering that design choices are interdependent.

The paper “Influence through trust funds” by Bernhard Reinsberg proposes a theoretical argument to understand the rise of trust funds at multilateral organizations and legally independent global funds over the past two decades. In both cases, donors use these funds to wield ‘influence’ – leveraging financial resources to alter the policies of multilateral organizations. Based on interviews at the World Bank, the study shows that influence is a dominant motive behind trust funds, though the capacity and willingness to wield influence varies across donors. Influence is a salient motive especially for medium-sized donors and emerging donors but surprisingly less so for large donors. These results contribute to our understanding of the factors underlying the proliferation of new institutions while considering the heterogeneity of approaches taken by differentially powerful member states.

In the paper “The Concept and Measurement of IIGOs: Building and Describing the Data Set”, Duncan Snidal and Felicity Vabulas start from the observation that as our system of global governance continues to be defined by new issues and power imbalances, international relations scholars are paying growing attention to the emergence of new forms of international cooperation. As part of this institutional shakeup, states are increasingly turning to IIGOs to both supplement and complement FIGOs. These recent trends in creating and using IIGOs, however, also have strong historical roots, going back to the Concert of Europe which was established in the same year as the first formal IGO. This paper looks at the emergence of IIGOs and describes them as an important yet understudied category of institutions along a spectrum of institutional choice. In building the IIGO dataset, they present four main descriptive findings that challenge our existing knowledge of international organizations. First, the lifecycle of IIGOs is distinct: states are increasingly creating IIGOs while FIGOs and INGOs have plateaued, and these IIGOs tend to be more durable than FIGOs, dying off or hitting ‘zombie’ status far less often. Second, there is a disproportionate amount of security-related IIGOs when compared to other institutional choice, emphasizing how states organize when they covet sovereignty and need to limit agency. Third, the variety of administrative setups in IIGOs shows that secretariats are not just a binary choice, but instead, states choose a variety of administrative tools to help them organize without delegating. Fourth, IIGOs are used as both a tool of the powerful as well as a mechanism for weaker powers to try to correct power disparities, emphasizing how both hegemonic and rising powers attempt to adjust to new global realities.

The paper “Locating Islamic States on the Continent of International Law” by Barbara Koremenos starts from the observation that Islamic states seem underrepresented in successful (visible) international law. She asks the questions: Do Islamic states simply participate in fewer international agreements than non-Islamic states? With respect to participation in international agreements, is there variation within the set of Islamic states that can be explained by whether Shari’a is officially adopted in a state’s constitution? Do Islamic states participate in international agreements that are not registered with the UNTS? If so, are these agreements “officially” registered in some other way? Do Islamic states participate in relatively more informal international agreements? Answering these questions is an important first step in determining the placement of Islamic states on the “continent of international law.”

In her paper “Informal Institutions and Procedural Justice in Global Governance” Lora Viola contributes to recent scholarship on informal institutions by shifting the focus away from a concern with the causes or functional consequences of informal institutions to address a set of

questions concerning the implications of informal institutions for procedural justice. To what extent do informal institutional practices give (marginal) actors a voice in making decisions, allocating resources, and resolving disputes? How can informal institutions offer opportunities of voice, especially to those who may be disadvantaged by formal institutional procedures? She argues that existing literature on informal institutions pays insufficient attention to the social mechanisms by which informal institutions can be effective. Drawing on organizational sociology, she argues that informal institutions have the potential to transform justice relations, even while acknowledging their conservative and power-reinforcing tendencies. In contrast to much of the literature, she argues that this potential does not derive from an inherently greater flexibility vis-à-vis formal institutions. Rather, it springs from the socially generative, responsive and reflexive nature of informal institutions, especially in relation to formal institutions. In particular, informal groups facilitate coalition-building, socialization, capacity-building, and status updating. These attributes of informal groups give them the potential to enhance procedural justice in global governance. This potential, however, is circumscribed by the underlying structures that imbue actors with asymmetrical power in the first place. She illustrates her argument with examples from the G20 and WTO.

In the paper “From Complex Interdependence to Complex Governance” Miles Kahler starts from the observation that recent commentary on global governance has emphasized both the shortcomings of conventional, intergovernmental institutions and the proliferation of new modes of governance. Some of the “new” in contemporary global governance existed prior to Bretton Woods, however, in particular hybrid and private modes of governance. A more compelling innovation is the emergence of complex governance: an accelerated disruption of the role of national governments in global governance. National governments have become only one set of actors among a larger and more heterogeneous group of participants in global governance arrangements. National governments can no longer interpose themselves between subnational levels of government and local actors on the one hand and global and regional governance on the other. A final characteristic of complex governance is an apparent trend toward more informal and less institutionalized governance outcomes. Miles Kahler argues that determining where complex governance has appeared and why should become a central research agenda in international relations.

In the paper “Transformation of informal networks in conference diplomacy”, Michal Onderco argues that multilateral conferences are the bread-and-butter of international politics. In such settings, countries may pursue their interests individually, but most of the time they prefer to act through coalitions. Such coalitions are flat and overlapping, having a network structure. States build and utilize networks to get agenda items pushed through, or to block unfavorable ones. While sometimes they are formed on the basis of formal institutions (such as NAM or EU), frequently their membership is based on either ad hoc cooperation, or existing informal bodies (such as the NSG, New Agenda Coalition, or Zangger Committee). The attention to such networks is, however, still in infancy. This paper looks at how state networks within one of the most important recurring diplomatic conference – the quinquennial NPT Review Conference – develop and transform over time. By doing so, the paper maps the existing networks, and explains their transformation.

Finally, the research paper “Ignoring or Involving? Reputation and the Design of International Cooperation” by Stefano Jud and Oliver Westerwinter analyzes how state participation in formal and informal international institutions is affected by state reputation. An omnipresent feature of the current liberal international order are international institutions. Even though it has been shown that international cooperation provides mutual benefits for states, it is puzzling why states comply with their international commitments given the fact that there is

no central enforcement authority at the international level and the strategic nature of cooperation provides ample incentives to defect. In addition to other factors, the reputation of states has been identified as a key variable to explain why states comply with their international commitments. The general notion of reputational compliance theories is that compliance with international commitments is enforced because non-compliance inflicts reputational costs on states and reduces therefore the incentive of defection. Building on works that have stressed reputation as a driving force of international cooperation, in this paper the authors argue that the reputation of states affects both the occurrence and the institutional design of international cooperation. States that are confronted with disreputable states have to decide whether to cooperate or not with those states and, if cooperation is attempted, how to design cooperation institutionally in order to mitigate costs and enhance benefits. The choice between formal and informal institutional arrangements allows states to address this type of strategic situation. Jud and Westerwinter test their argument using our project data on formal and informal international institutions in combination with various proxies of state reputation. They find that state reputation has important effects on the occurrence and design of international cooperation that reach beyond specific issue areas.

In addition, different project team members also worked on several other project papers which are already or will be available as drafts in the coming months. Three case study papers seek to test our theoretical expectations as to when and why states choose informal governance to achieve their policy goals. The first case study by Bernhard Reinsberg addresses recent transformations in the development finance architecture. This paper traces the key trends in the global governance of international development. Using the newly created data of our project, it examines the extent to which the development regime is characterized by informal governance arrangements between states, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations. A qualitative case study scrutinizes more closely the growing popularity of so-called trust funds -- ad-hoc governance structures by which donors channel earmarked funding to multilateral organizations for specific development purposes. Besides assessing the applicability of a new typology of informality, the case study seeks to develop explanations for the choice of states of this particular governance arrangement with a view to generate new hypothesis for informal governance in related issue areas.

The second case study by Oliver Westerwinter focuses on the emerging set of international and transnational institutions that seek to govern the operations of private security service providers. It maps the multiplicity of institutions that have emerged in the area of private security governance using both our project database and complementary qualitative material. It then investigates the processes that led to the creation of different formal and informal governance arrangement based on qualitative evidence drawn from interviews with practitioners and archival documents. Finally, the case study examines how the different formal and informal institutions interact with each other using methods of network analysis.

The third case study by Chandreyee Bagchi, Axel Michaelowa, and Katharina Michaelowa examines the emergence of formal and informal institutions in the governance of climate change. In particular, they are interested in the variation in formal and informal governance over time and across policy problems within the climate change issue area. They trace the actors involved in different climate change governance mechanisms and how a problem changes between being governed informally and formally over time as the interests of states change. The case study also examines the interplay between formal and informal institutions in selected fields within the climate change area, such as climate finance and market mechanisms.

In addition to the numerous research papers that have been and will be produced based on the work we executed in our research project, we have completed a large-n dataset on formal and informal international institutions. The datasets builds on and expands seminal data collections on FIGOs (Pevehouse et al. 2015) and IIGOs (Vabulas and Snidal 2013). Our dataset contains information on 534 FIGOs, 107 IIGOs, and 468 TGIs across a broad range of issue areas of world politics (the attached research paper describes the sample generation and data collection process in greater detail). Particularly the TGI portion of the dataset is an innovative contribution to existing datasets on global governance. Our data contains information on state and non-state actor participation in the international institutions that are part of our data, what issue areas they are operating in, as well as a broad range of institutional design characteristics, such as the existence of a secretariat, monitoring, enforcement, and dispute settlement. To our knowledge, our dataset is the only dataset so far that allows for the comparative analysis of FIGOs, IIGOs, and TGIs. We will make the portions of our dataset that were created in the context of this project available to interested audiences as part of the publication of our research papers (replication data). Furthermore, once the major research papers of the project are published, we will make the data that was originally generated in the context of our project along with the codebook available at the project website. It is important to note that the portions of the dataset that build on the FIGO and IIGO data are owned and controlled by the original authors and any release of this data will be undertaken by the responsible authors.

Finally, several of the research assistants that worked for the project at various points wrote their Bachelor and Master theses on topics related to the project and contributed valuable insights. Dominik A. Schneeberger examined in his Bachelor thesis “Major Power Participation in Informal International Institutions of High and Low Politics” whether major power states are more or less likely to participate in informal international institutions. Ruslan Aybazov explored in his Bachelor thesis “Informal Practices in the Context of Conflict De-escalation – Application and Conditions” whether informal rules and procedures can help states to prevent international crises to escalate into violent conflict. Laura Leibundgut investigates whether democracies and non-democracies differ in terms of their participation in formal and informal environmental governance institutions in her Bachelor thesis “The Influence of Regime Type on States’ Participation in Global Environmental Governance.” Finally, in his Master thesis “Sneaking out through the back door? The influence of sanctions on the design of international cooperation” Stefano Jud examines how far states that were subjected to sanctions change their international cooperation behavior in terms of the design of the institutions they participate in. Several other theses projects from current and former project research assistants are currently works in progress and will be submitted in the second half of the year.

This summary of research results and outputs demonstrates the immensely productive collaboration among the members of the project team throughout the project period. Nevertheless, we had to modify our original project schedule as outlined in the project proposal due to delay of contributions of one of our project partners. We applied for an extension of our project until May 2017 which was granted by the SNIS. We also made adjustments in the location of the field study trips as our research progressed. The exchanges and collaborations among the different academic and non-academic members of the project team were extensive and intense. They involved academics from the disciplines of political science, international law, and economics as well as practitioners from NGOs (One Earth Future), international organizations (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, United Nations Global Compact), transnational institutions (Forrest Stewardship Council, International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers), and the

Department of Federal and Foreign Affairs of the Swiss Government. This intensive, multi-disciplinary exchange considerably improved the scope and quality of our research. It also helped and will continue to help to expedite the dissemination of our work in the wider academic community as well as among interested practitioners in international and transnational organizations, government bureaucracies, and NGOs.

The human resources and desk work required to build up the large-n dataset were considerable. In a first phase, we identified institutions for inclusion in our sample in several waves. In each wave we systematically conducted inter-coder reliability checks to ensure the accuracy and quality of our data. In the second phase of the data collection, a team of research assistants at the University of St. Gallen and the University of Zurich coded in detail participant information, issue areas, and institutional design characteristics of the formal and informal international institutions in our dataset. Also at this stage of the data collection process we conducted extensive and systematic inter-coder reliability checks. In a final stage, we went several times through the entire sample in order to clean up the data and address specific questions that have occurred at earlier stages of the project. The time needed for assembling the database was longer than expected given the amount of data that needed to be processed and the need to ensure the quality of the coding. As a result, the analyses that use the new data have only recently been started and will continue in the coming months.

Outreach and dissemination

Throughout the project, we presented our research at academic conferences and will continue to do so in 2017 and 2018. In early-2016, we discussed one of our first working papers at the Swiss Political Science Association annual convention at the University of Basel. The feedback we received there was productive and will substantially improve the revised versions we prepare for publication. The feedback encouraged us broaden our exploration of formal and informal international institutions from various theoretical angles in addition to those that we were already considering at that point. We continued to present our research to a range of different audiences, including political science (Political Economy of International Organizations Annual Conference, International Studies Association Annual Convention, Atlanta, International Studies Association Annual Convention, Baltimore, European Consortium for Political Science Research Joint Session Workshops, Pisa, “The Future of Global Governance” workshop, Barcelona, European Political Science Association Annual Convention, Milan), international law (Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives Workshop, Duke University), and practitioners (Transnational Business Governance Interactions workshop, York University).

Furthermore, in collaboration with Christine Neuhold (Maastricht University), one of our project team members organized a European Consortium for Political Science Research Joint Session Workshop on “The Informalization of Global Governance” at the 2016 European Consortium for Political Science Research Joint Session Workshops in Pisa. The workshop prominently figured the overall topic of our research. In addition, three working papers of our project were presented at this workshop by Bernhard Reinsberg (“The politics of informal governance in international development”), Oliver Westerwinter (“The Domestic Politics of Informal Governance”), and Oliver Westerwinter (“The Politics of Informal Governance”). The workshop provided us with additional opportunities to raise awareness for our project and disseminate some of our first results. It was also an opportunity to reach out to other scholars who are working on topics related to our research.

In October 2016, we organized our first project workshop hosted at the University of St. Gallen. The workshop provided a context for an expedited exchange among the members of our project team as well as scholars from outside our team. In total, the workshop brought together 21 participants, including scholars and practitioners. In particular, the practitioners included representatives of the Forrest Stewardship Council and One Earth Future. Academic participants came from Arizona State University, the University of Zurich, the Graduate Institute Geneva, the University of St. Gallen, Oxford University, American University, Villanova University, London School of Economics, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Cambridge University, University of Chicago, and Free University Berlin. The discussions at the workshop provided invaluable in-depth feedback for the 11 papers that were presented, several of which were written by members of our project team. Of particular importance was the feedback obtained from practitioners as well as academics from outside the project team which provided several useful inputs to further revise and focus our research papers and outputs.

In May 2017, we organized our second and final project workshop. The workshop was organized in collaboration with our project team members at the Graduate Institute in Geneva and held at the Graduate Institute in Geneva. This workshop was dedicated to preparing several research papers that are written by project members and academics associated with our project for the submission to a political science journal as a special issue. The workshop brought together 21 academics from political science, economics, and international law, as well as practitioners from One Earth Future. Academic participants came from the Graduate Institute Geneva, University of St. Gallen, American University, Villanova University, University of Michigan, Erasmus University Rotterdam, University College London, Cambridge University, Oxford University, University of Chicago, and Free University Berlin. With two exceptions, the papers were revised versions that benefitted from the intensive discussions at the St. Gallen workshop. All nine papers were presented by the authors and received extensive and detailed feedback which will serve as the basis for a final round of revisions and the preparation of the submission of a special issue proposal during the summer.

In collaboration with our project team members from One Earth Future, we will summarize the main findings of our research in form of a policy paper and organize a dissemination event with practitioners from international and transnational organizations in late-2017 or early-2018. The event will take place in New York and will serve as communication platform for sharing our main research results with interested practitioners and discuss their relevance and impact.

Finally, as we finalize our project work and start publishing research papers, we will provide research results and data on the project website under www.informalgovernance.org. This website will provide information about the overall project and our activities as well as the research papers produced in the context of the project. As we progress with the publication of our research results, the website will also provide some information on the dataset including the codebook that we used in the project. In addition to publishing information about research outputs on the personal websites of project team members, this website will provide a focal point to collect findings and outputs of our project and make them accessible for academics, practitioners, and interested public audiences.

Outlook

As can be expected for a two-year project, not all potentially interesting research questions regarding informal forms of global governance could be addressed. We deliberately focused

our efforts on finalizing the new dataset, which opens up ample room for innovative research on informal international cooperation and lays the groundwork for future studies. The new dataset allows researchers to systematically explore why states choose informal and formal forms of international cooperation, why some states participate more often than others in informal international institutions, and why the particularities of institutional design differ across international institutions and issue areas.

Further research papers are already under way, but will only be finalized in the aftermath of the project. These papers will continue to explore the determinants of informal governance and focus on aspects different from those that are highlighted in the research papers that we have been working on so far, but will also start exploring the effects of informal governance in world politics. One of these research papers will analyze in how far the choice of informal modes of international cooperation is shaped by states' domestic law tradition. Here, the central idea is that differences in domestic law traditions in the form of civil law, common law, and Islamic law may affect the propensity of states to participate in informal international institutions. Focusing on the effects of informal governance, another research paper will examine how far state participation in informal governance institutions affects the transition of state to democracy at the domestic level. Similarly, a third research paper that is currently in preparation will investigate whether state participation in informal international institutions has an effect on the outbreak of violent conflict among nations.

Finally, some of the members of our research team will participate in the preparation of a follow-up research project that focuses on the effectiveness and democratic legitimacy of informal forms of global governance in comparison to formal international institutions. We plan to submit a grant proposal for this project to the next call for projects of the SNIS in early-2018. This project will explore whether the various new types of informal governance which have rapidly grown in terms of their number since the 1990s actually make effective contributions to governing global problems and compare this effectiveness to the effectiveness of conventional intergovernmental organizations. The project will also analyze in detail to what extent informal forms of cooperation at the global level can be considered democratically legitimate and how their legitimacy compares to the legitimacy of intergovernmental organizations. The answers to both questions is essential to assess whether the rise of informal governance that our project has documented is good or bad news for the effectiveness and legitimacy for contemporary global governance.

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