

A Theory of International Organization

A Postfunctionalist Theory of Governance,
Volume IV

Liesbet Hooghe, Tobias Lenz, and Gary Marks

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP,
United Kingdom

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of
Oxford University Press in the UK and in certain other countries

© Liesbet Hooghe, Tobias Lenz, and Gary Marks 2019

The moral rights of the authors have been asserted

First Edition published in 2019

Impression: 1

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in
a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the
prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press, or as expressly permitted
by law, by licence or under terms agreed with the appropriate reprographics
rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of the
above should be sent to the Rights Department, Oxford University Press, at the
address above

You must not circulate this work in any other form
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer

Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

Library of Congress Control Number: 2019934006

ISBN 978-0-19-876698-8 (hbk.)

ISBN 978-0-19-884507-2 (pbk.)

Printed and bound by

CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

Links to third party websites are provided by Oxford in good faith and
for information only. Oxford disclaims any responsibility for the materials
contained in any third party website referenced in this work.

Contents

<i>Detailed Contents</i>	xi
<i>List of Figures</i>	xv
<i>List of Tables</i>	xvii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xix
1. Introduction	1
2. Philosophical Foundations of a Postfunctionalist Theory of International Organization	9
3. Measuring International Authority	26
4. The Basic Set-Up: How International Organizations Vary	44
5. Why Do Some IOs Expand their Policy Portfolio?	60
6. The Resistible Rise of International Authority	84
7. Why States Pool Authority	104
8. Five Theses on International Governance	121
<i>Appendix</i>	135
<i>References</i>	159
<i>Index</i>	187

4

The Basic Set-Up

How International Organizations Vary

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the basic set-up of an international organization—its membership, policy scope, and contractual basis. Why are some IOs highly selective in their membership while others span the globe? Why are some IOs narrowly targeted at specific problems, while others have policy portfolios almost as broad as that of a national state? All IOs are based on contracts among their member states, but while some are highly specified, others are almost as incomplete as marriage contracts. Why, in short, are some IOs limited arrangements of mutual convenience while others are journeys to an uncharted destination? How do these basic features of IO design interconnect? Can one identify an underlying logic to IO design?¹

To answer these questions it makes sense to consider the entire population of IOs rather than regional or global subsamples. We wish to explain the trade-offs that shape an IO's institutional structure across the full range of possibilities.

All IOs face the tension between scale and community. On the one hand, an IO is a means to facilitate cooperation among states. From this angle, an IO is a

¹ Prior research theorizes delegation (Hawkins et al. 2006b), rational design (Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001), legalization (Goldstein et al. 2000), and trade agreements (Dür, Baccini, and Elsig 2014). There is also an extensive literature on (a) voting, accession, expulsion, and flexibility clauses in IOs (Blake and Lockwood Payton 2015; Davis and Wilf 2017; Grigorescu 2015; Koremenos 2016; Koremenos and Lerner 2017; Kucik and Reinhardt 2008; Mansfield and Milner 2012; Rosendorff and Milner 2001; Pelc 2016; Rosendorff 2005; Vabulas 2017); (b) IO bodies, including dispute settlement mechanisms, courts, parliaments, secretariats, consultative bodies, and emanations (Allee and Elsig 2016; Alter 2014; Arnold and Rittberger 2013; Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Biermann and Siebenhüner 2009; Cockerham 2007; Duina and Lenz 2016; Elsig and Eckhardt 2015; Haftel 2013; Jo and Namgung 2012; Johns 2015; Johnson 2014; Lenz, Burilkov, and Viola 2019; McCall Smith 2000; Manulak 2017; Mitchell and Powell 2011; Rocabert et al. 2018; Tallberg et al. 2013; Voeten 2007); and (c) IO policies, including trade, economic liberalization, security, social policy, environmental protection, and human rights (Barnett and Coleman 2005; Bernauer 1995; Davis 2012; Hafner-Burton 2005; Haftel 2011; Hoffman 2013; Mansfield 1998; Simmons 2009).

The Basic Set-Up

functional adaptation to the provision of public goods at an international scale. However, an IO is, at the same time, a form of collective rule. Collective rule depends on its sociality as well as its functionality. Do the participants have some normative commonality that underpins the legitimacy of an IO, or do they perceive collective rule as rule by foreigners?

In this chapter we describe and explain the basic choices that characterize an international organization. General purpose IOs build on transnational community to contract cooperation as an open-ended venture among peoples. Task-specific IOs have a clear-cut focus so that states, no matter how diverse, can come together to problem-solve in a targeted way. We then test our theory with an original data set covering seventy-six IOs from 1950 to 2010.

The Basic Set-Up

Governance—binding rule making in the public sphere—raises three fundamental questions which decision makers must engage with when constructing an IO. First, how is governance contracted? Second, who is governed? And third, what is governed? The response to these questions can be described as the *basic set-up* of an international organization.

- *How* is governance contracted? What is the nature of the contract underpinning the IO? Is the purpose of the IO contractually open-ended or is it precisely specified?
- *Who* is governed? Who does the IO encompass? Is the membership of the IO unrestricted or is it limited?
- *What* is governed? How diverse are the policy competences of the IO? Does the IO have a broad-ranging policy portfolio or is it task-specific?

These questions are fundamental in the sense that they are logically prior to other questions that one may wish to ask, including how decisions are made or what decisions are made. The *basic set-up* is resolved in decisions that cannot be avoided in designing a jurisdiction, whereas the policy outputs of an IO are negotiated along the way. As we move forward in subsequent chapters we will find that the basic set-up of an IO is institutionally sticky and highly consequential for other features that we care about, including the authority that an IO exercises vis à vis its member states.

IOs vary widely on each of the questions set out above. Some IOs, like Mercosur or the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR), encompass just a few member states; others, including the World Health Organization (WHO) or the International Monetary Fund (IMF), are

A Theory of International Organization

worldwide. Some IOs focus on a single policy, such as regulating whale hunting (the International Whaling Commission: IWhale) or research in high-energy particles (the European Organization for Nuclear Research: CERN); whereas others, such as the United Nations or the European Union, have policy portfolios that are almost as diverse as that of their member states. Some IOs, such as NAFTA and the World Customs Organization, have contracts that specify their purpose in considerable detail; whereas others, such as the Andean Community and the European Union, set out open-ended goals for cooperation among peoples.

It is worth noting at the outset that this variation cannot be reduced to the conventional regional/global distinction. Some regional IOs are general purpose, but others are task-specific. To say that an IO is regional does not tell one about the breadth of an IO's policy portfolio, who the IO governs, or how it is contracted. Most regional IOs, such as the Southern African Development Community, the European Union, and the Andean Community, are contractually open-ended, but there are many exceptions, including NAFTA and the European Space Agency, that have contracts specifying the goals of the organization with considerable precision. Many regional IOs have a broad policy portfolio, but several, including the Southern African Customs Union and the Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine, target specific problems. Beyond this, the regional/global distinction is theoretically inert, serving merely to partition the study of international organization. Our intent is to provide an explanation that puts the conventional classification in its place. Is it possible that a distinction that is regarded as obvious and unproblematic is actually puzzling and theoretically interesting?²

Theorizing Variation in the Basic Set-Up

The premise of our theory is that the basic set-up of an IO is a response to the tension between scale and community. This section explains how.

Scale and Community

Our point of departure is the idea—shared with functional theories of international cooperation—that the purpose of an IO is to facilitate the provision

² Lakatos describes a progressive theory as “having some excess empirical content over its predecessor, that is, if it predicts some novel, hitherto unexpected fact” (Lakatos 1970: 118). “Typically, when questions are more sharply formulated, it is learned that even elementary phenomena had escaped notice, and that intuitive accounts that seemed simple and persuasive are entirely inadequate” (Chomsky 2015: 4).

The Basic Set-Up

of public goods.³ Governance is scale efficient if it is guided by the costs and benefits of providing a particular bundle of public goods at a particular population scale. If the externalities of human interaction are transnational, then the jurisdiction that reduces the transaction costs of internalizing those externalities should also be transnational (Deutsch 1966 [1953]; Hooghe and Marks 2009a; Keohane 1982). There may also be economies of scale. The greater the number of persons who pay for a public good such as disease prevention or weather prediction, the cheaper it is for any one person. In order to internalize externalities and exploit economies of scale, the benefits of international governance encompass the entire range of transnational public goods, including those related to economic exchange, common pool resources, cross-border communication, and the environment.

However, international governance depends also on the willingness of the parties to share rule (Hooghe and Marks 2009a, 2009b). Do the participants conceive shared rule as rule by foreigners with whom they have little normative commonality? This is the constraint of community (Hooghe and Marks 2016; Lenz et al. 2015; Marks 2012). Community beyond the national state is thin by comparison to that within states. Still, national states have never been able to homogenize their populations into normatively insulated peoples. Most states encompass normatively diverse peoples and norms flow across the borders that separate a state from its neighbors. Hence, normative affinities both divide states and extend beyond them. Where transnational community exists it may ground general purpose governance.

The tension between scale and community produces a strategic terrain for IO design. This gives rise to distinct responses—either root international governance in transnational community or carve out a cooperation problem that can be handled by a diverse membership. These responses take the form of logically coherent alternatives, and we conceptualize them as ideal types. Both reflect human ingenuity in providing governance at a scale beyond the national state.

Types of Governance

We conceptualize two contrasting types of governance, one that builds on transnational community and one that finesses community by searching for Pareto-optimal solutions to problems on a narrow policy front (Hooghe and Marks 2003). General purpose and task-specific IOs relate to their constituencies differently. This is expressed in their contractual specificity, the scale of their membership, and the breadth of their policy portfolios (Table 4.1).

³ Including collective goods.

A Theory of International Organization

Table 4.1. General purpose and task-specific governance

	General purpose (Type I)	Task-specific (Type II)
How is governance contracted?	The IO has a contract that specifies its purpose incompletely.	The IO has a contract that specifies its purpose relatively completely.
Who is governed?	The IO encompasses normatively related peoples.	The IO encompasses those affected by a problem.
What is governed?	The IO has a diverse policy portfolio.	The IO has a narrow policy portfolio.

General purpose IOs handle the problems that confront a given set of peoples as they interact across national borders. Such IOs are formed by states whose peoples have some mutuality of expectations grounded in a shared sense of purpose. A general purpose IO bundles the provision of public goods for a transnational community possessing what Elinor Ostrom (2005: 106–7) describes as “shared mental maps”—a bed of common understandings that facilitate convergent interpretation of behavior. That eases open-ended cooperation based on highly incomplete contracts, which require not only that others believe one’s promises but that they also understand one’s promises (Gibbons and Henderson 2012: 1351).

General purpose (or Type I) governance is oriented to peoples who share a “common ethos” (Schimmelfennig 2002: 417) or a “sense of common identification” (Ellis 2009: 8–9; Jackson 2000). This may be as liberal democratic Europeans, Central Latin Americans, Arab Gulf people, Pacific Islanders, or Africans in anti-imperial struggle. It may be rooted in a shared federal past or a history of subjugation. In each case, there is the possibility that overarching norms rather than a specific transborder problem can provide a basis for governance.

Because the problems that arise as peoples interact are difficult to predict, the contract that underpins a general purpose IO is attuned to flexibility. Solving one problem may generate others (Haas 1958, 1980; Schmitter 1970a). Hence, the contract underpinning a general purpose IO signals an ambition to provide public goods to an evolving political community rather than to groups that happen to share a problem. For example, the European Union’s Article 352 effectively grants the EU subsidiary powers and explicitly authorizes the Union to take up a policy problem unforeseen in the Treaty.⁴

⁴ The clause was first included in the Treaty of Rome and has been amended several times. Article 352 of the Lisbon constitutional treaty is the most recent version, and begins as follows:

“If action by the Union should prove necessary, within the framework of the policies defined in the Treaties, to attain one of the objectives set out in the Treaties, and the Treaties have not provided the necessary powers, the Council, acting unanimously on a proposal from the Commission and after obtaining the consent of the European Parliament, shall adopt the appropriate measures.”

The Basic Set-Up

As an organization oriented to a community, a general purpose IO is conceived as a commitment among peoples as well as states. Its contract invokes an aspiration as well as a bargain—the “formation of a subregional community” (Andean Community), “creation of a homogenous society” (Economic Community of West African States: ECOWAS), “comprehensive integration” (Arab Maghreb Union: AMU), “an ever closer union” (European Union).

Task-specific governance, by contrast, minimizes uncertainty that might arise from contending interpretations. The issue domain of a task-specific IO is contractually specified in advance. The agreement details a particular cooperation problem, such as lowering barriers to trade or coordinating the use of a common pool resource. While it is true that no contract can specify “the full array of responsibilities and obligations of the contracting parties, as well as anticipate every possible future contingency” (Cooley and Spruyt 2009: 8), the contract for a task-specific IO is considerably more complete than the contract for a general purpose IO.

Whereas general purpose governance is comprehensive in its policy portfolio, but selective in its membership, task-specific governance is comprehensive in its membership, but limited in its policy portfolio. Task-specific governance is suited to problems that are amenable to Pareto optimal solutions, and to problems that have been decomposed into discrete policies that are connected to others only in the medium term, but not in the short term (Simon 1981). These features of task-specific governance have the considerable effect of reducing dependence on shared norms.

A task-specific IO encompasses all those affected by a problem. Hence, it is prevalent in dealing with problems that have global externalities and a correspondingly weak community basis. However, some task-specific IOs handle local problems that are decomposable. For example, the CCNR regulates social rights and environmental externalities related to shipping on the Rhine; the Organization of Petroleum-Exporting Countries (OPEC) coordinates production and price-setting among oil-exporting economies; and OTIF sets standards for railways in Europe and contiguous countries in Central Asia and the Middle East. The size or geographical span of membership is secondary; what distinguishes these IOs is that they target a specific problem.

General purpose IOs and task-specific IOs are distinct responses to the basic dilemma of international governance: how to achieve scale in the provision of public goods in the absence of national community. The answer from general purpose governance is to build cooperation on existing community even if this is thin compared to that within states. The answer on the part of task-specific governance is to focus on a discrete problem. We conceptualize general purpose and task-specific governance as ideal types because they appear to be different in kind. General purpose IOs combine a small membership with an open-ended contract and broader policy portfolio. Task-specific IOs

A Theory of International Organization

combine a clearly specified contract with a narrow policy portfolio for an undefined membership. Hence, the basic set-up of an IO appears to be the result of a choice between stark alternatives, each of which is internally coherent. We next hypothesize some key implications for an IO's basic set-up.

Key Expectations

We are hypothesizing a system of mutual constraint arising from *deliberatively produced regularities*. Deliberatively produced regularities occur when individuals anticipate the consequences of their choices (Pearl 2009: 108; Snidal 1994: 450, 455–8).⁵ We are dealing with forward-looking human agents who have expectations about the likely effects of their institutional designs, and then build this into their choices. Hence, it makes little sense to say that the contract *causes* the policy portfolio or that the scale of membership *causes* the contract in a “before and after” sense. Our argument is that member states anticipate the constraints of scale and community when they design an international organization, and so one can say that scale and community are mutually constraining. This is no different from how you might react to a weather forecast of rain. If you decide to arm yourself with an umbrella, in what sense does the forecast *cause* your behavior? You could of course decide to ignore the forecast and get soaked even if you are convinced it will indeed rain. Likewise, member states can simply ignore the logics of scale and community. However, if they choose not to, the international organizations they create will have features that one can predict. Hence, general purpose and task-specific governance can be conceived as equilibrium institutions that constrain how forward-looking states manage the tension between scale and community.

A theory that engages the sociality of governance alongside its functional benefits has several empirical implications. We begin by considering the trade-off between scale and community and then draw out its effects for the *basic set-up*.

- H₁: *There is a convex association between the scale of an IO's membership and the extent to which it encompasses a community of peoples.*

We theorize that the trade-off between scale and community is non-linear. An additional member state in an IO will reduce the normative coherence of the IO as a whole. However, the marginal effect of an additional member state

⁵ The concept of deliberatively produced regularities is consistent with Pearl's conception of the “marriage of the counterfactual and probabilistic approaches to causation” (Pearce and Lawlor 2016: 1895). “A variable X is a cause of a variable Y if Y in any way relies on X for its value . . . X is a cause of Y if Y listens to X and decides its value in response to what it hears” (Pearl, Glymour, and Jewell 2016: 5–6).

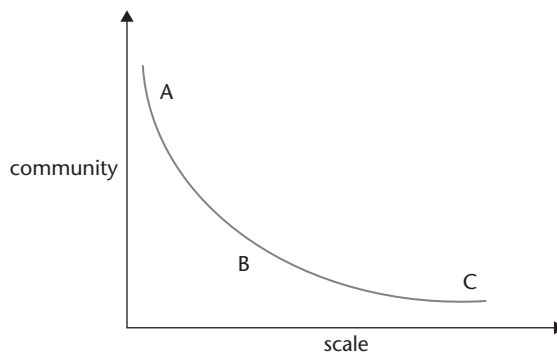


Figure 4.1 The community versus scale trade-off

will diminish with the number of member states in an IO. This is represented in Figure 4.1 by a convex curve plotting the number of member states in an IO against the proportion of the IO population that regard themselves as part of an overarching community.

The intuition here is that the decision to set up or enlarge an IO involves contrasting considerations at different levels of membership. The normative coherence of an IO with just a handful of members is sensitive to just a single additional member state. For example, the Nordic Council, which is composed of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, would become a lot more diverse if it extended to the Netherlands or Estonia. Even a single additional member can change the dynamics of a general purpose IO. The enlargement of the European Union to the United Kingdom transformed the organization as a whole by encompassing a country in which around half of the population felt little community with Europe and regarded EU legislation as rule by foreigners. Each IO will have unique discontinuities in its scale/community trade-off. The conjecture is that, in general, the sensitivity of community to an increase in the membership of an international organization is greater for a small, normatively cohesive IO than it is for a large, already diverse, IO.

- H_2 : *The distribution of IOs with respect to the scale of their membership is bimodal.*

The convex trade-off between scale and community has a strong implication for the basic set-up of an IO and for the overall pattern of international organization. An IO is faced with a stark choice—either sustain community by limiting the scale of membership, or go for scale irrespective of community. The choice is discrete rather than continuous. In Figure 4.1, moving from *A* to *B* leads to a large loss of community, but not much increase in the number of member states. Conversely, moving from *C* to *B* leads to a large decrease in the number of member states, but not much increase of community. Of course,

A Theory of International Organization

the curve *ABC* will vary across IOs depending on the distribution of political, religious, and cultural norms among the peoples in its neighborhood. However, if the convexity hypothesis is valid as a general description of the trade-off, the effect will be to bifurcate the basic set-up of international organization towards the extremes. This would mean that IOs would cluster at *A* or at *C* in Figure 4.1. The overall distribution of IOs with respect to the scale of their membership would then be bimodal.

- *H₃: A general purpose IO has considerably less membership growth than a task-specific IO.*

The convexity hypothesis underpins the idea that general purpose and task-specific IOs have contrasting logics of membership growth. General purpose IOs are located at *A* in Figure 4.1, while *C* is populated by task-specific IOs. IOs sited at these points will have distinctive strategies of membership accession producing divergent trajectories of membership growth. A task-specific IO will seek to encompass all those affected by a particular policy problem, no matter who they are or where they live. Local problems will produce a small-*N* IO, global problems a large-*N* IO. The externalities of the policy problem, rather than the character of the participants, determine the scale of membership. Where the problem is global, a task-specific IO will expand as the number of states in the system increases. A general purpose IO, by contrast, is more discerning because it cares about the normative coherence of its membership. It is one thing to admit a new member when the purpose is clearly specified, and quite another when it is contractually open. Membership in a general purpose IO involves a commitment to join a community of peoples, and an applicant for membership can expect to be carefully vetted. Whereas the membership of a task-specific IO can increase quickly, the membership of a general purpose IO will increase slowly, if at all.

- *H₄: A general purpose IO has a dynamic policy portfolio; a task-specific IO has a stable policy portfolio.*

A general purpose IO is contracted incompletely in the expectation that it will adjust its competences to problems that arise for a community of peoples. It is oriented to peoples sharing a way of life, and this requires flexibility in responding to changing circumstances. Hence, a general purpose IO is involved in making decisions about its policy competences. It is a forum for negotiation about its mission as well as an instrument to make policy. And given the dense connections among policies, the portfolio of a general purpose IO will tend to grow over time. By contrast, the purpose of a task-specific IO is contracted more completely around the challenge of problem solving on a given front. Task-specific governance is grounded on the belief that no

The Basic Set-Up

matter how diverse their religious beliefs or cultural practices, human beings can cooperate to solve a pressing problem. Complex problem solving involves continuous learning and adaptation, which in a task-specific IO will be focused around a given problem. Only if the problem confronting a task-specific IO were to creep into new areas, would one expect a task-specific IO to broaden its policy portfolio.

Key Variables

We assess the validity of these expectations for seventy-six international organizations on an annual basis from 1950 to 2010.⁶

How governance is contracted refers to the contractual incompleteness of an IO's purpose. *Contract* is a dichotomous variable for the extent to which the purpose of an IO's contract is incomplete, which we code annually using a lexicon of words to assess an IO's foundational documents. We describe an IO with a highly incomplete contract as general purpose, and an IO with a relatively complete contract as task-specific.

Who is governed refers to the number of member states in the IO. *Membership* is a discrete annual measure for the number of states that are formal members of an IO. Unless otherwise stated, we use the logarithm (log10).

What is governed refers to the breadth of an IO's policy portfolio. *Policy scope* is a discrete variable for the range of policies for which an IO is responsible from a list of twenty-five policies assessed annually using eight legal, financial, and organizational indicators.

Community refers to normative commonality among the members of an IO. This variable is a principal components factor for indicators of the extent to which the members of an IO share an overarching religion, culture, geographical location, type of political regime, and legal tradition. These are indicators of deeply rooted norms expressed in distinctive ways of life.⁷

Results

We are now equipped to examine the four hypotheses concerning the basic set-up of IOs. Our prior is that the basic set-up of an IO is a trade-off between

⁶ The Appendix provides details on all variables in this chapter.

⁷ In the absence of comparative surveys, these indicators have the additional virtue of providing annual observations for all countries. Using any four rather than five indicators makes little difference. *Community* has an alpha of 0.94.

A Theory of International Organization

community and scale. The linear association between community and the number of member states for seventy-six IOs in their last year in the dataset is -0.85 . We expect the relationship to be convex because the decline in community will be greater for a given increase in membership in an IO with few members than in one with many members (H_1). This is exactly what we find when we plot a factor for five indicators of community against the absolute number of member states in an IO in Figure 4.2. The fit is impressively strong.⁸

No IO is as much as two standard deviations from its expected value under the convexity hypothesis. The two IOs that are furthest from the predicted value of community are the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) ($sd = 1.25$) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) ($sd = 1.12$). These IOs are more diverse than expected given the size of their membership. IGAD came into being in 1986 after pressure by international donors and the United Nations Environment Programme for an intergovernmental organization that could coordinate drought and famine relief (El-Affendi 2009: 5–6). Its seven member states are all located in Eastern

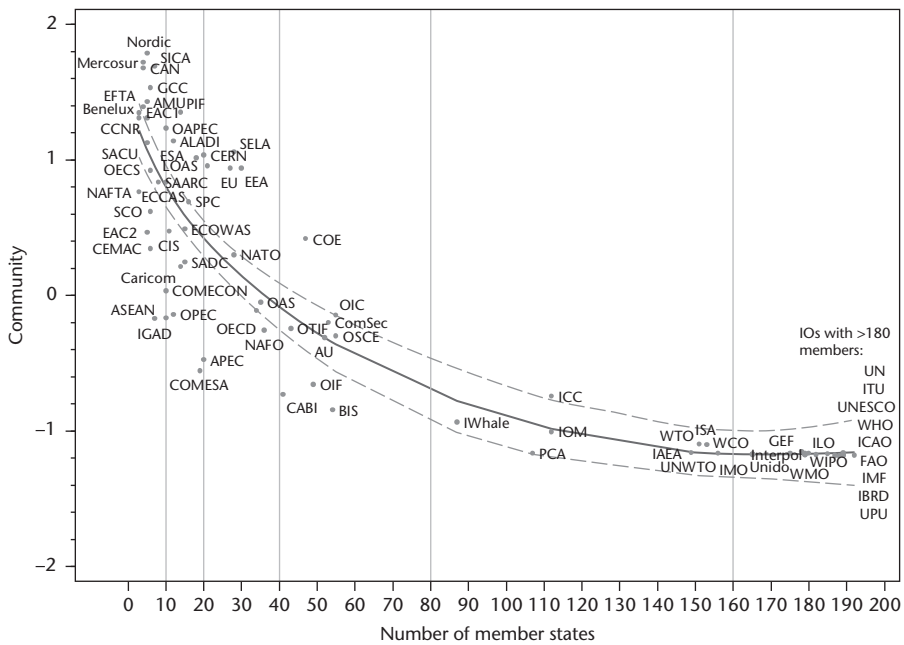


Figure 4.2 The trade-off between scale and community

Note: $N = 76$ international organizations in their last year in the dataset. Community is standardized, and ranges from -1.1 to 1.8 . The fit line is a fractional polynomial function.

⁸ A fractional polynomial that regresses members on community in the final year of the dataset has an R^2 of 0.81 .

The Basic Set-Up

Africa, but are diverse in religion (Orthodox, Christian, Sunni), political regime (ranging from -7 to $+8$ on the Polity scale), and legal tradition (common law, civil law, Islamic law, mixed law). Set up in 1966, COMESA was a product of efforts by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to ensure the continuation of trade in post-colonial Eastern and Southern Africa (Mwale 2001: 39). With nineteen members, COMESA is a conglomerate of former British and French colonies with diverse legal traditions, political regimes, and cultures.

One implication of the theory is that IOs will cluster at high and low values and away from the middle range. This is broadly confirmed in Figure 4.2. Three things are worth paying attention to. The first is that many IOs are, as expected, located at the high member, low community end of the curve (at *C* in Figure 4.1). The second is that almost all remaining IOs are densely packed at the low member, high community end of the curve (*A* in Figure 4.1), though it is notable that the distribution extends to the range of forty to fifty-five member states. Four IOs in this range deal with specific problems that have limited geographical externalities.⁹ The remaining IOs in this group reveal how the scale/community trade-off can be tempered by non-spatial forms of community. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation has sixty-seven member states in four continents sharing a religious vocation. La Francophonie and the Commonwealth encompass geographically diverse countries that have been shaped by the experience of the French or British empires. The African Union, with fifty-five member states, is rooted in shared resistance to colonial rule and racial exclusion. In each case, an unusual source of normative affinity is robust to an increase in membership of the organization, up to a point.

A third thing to notice is the nearly empty space in the middle of the curve in Figure 4.2 corresponding to *B* in Figure 4.1. Strikingly, more than half of the entire range in Figure 4.2 is very sparsely populated.¹⁰ The key expectation is that the overall distribution of IO membership is bimodal (H_2). Figure 4.3 confirms this by estimating a kernel density function which smoothens the sample distribution of IOs with respect to their membership.¹¹ The probability distribution is bimodal, and comfortably meets the Hartigan dip test (Table 4.2).

⁹ These are the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI), and the Intergovernmental Organization for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF).

¹⁰ The entire range for the number of member states in IOs is from three (NAFTA and Benelux) to 192 (the United Nations). Precisely 49.7 percent of the range—the middle part—is home to just 5.3 percent of the cases.

¹¹ Kernel density estimation is a non-parametric method in which the data are treated as a randomized sample and the distribution is smoothed. We have no prior about the smoothing bandwidth, and so use Stata's default, the Epanechnikov estimator.

A Theory of International Organization

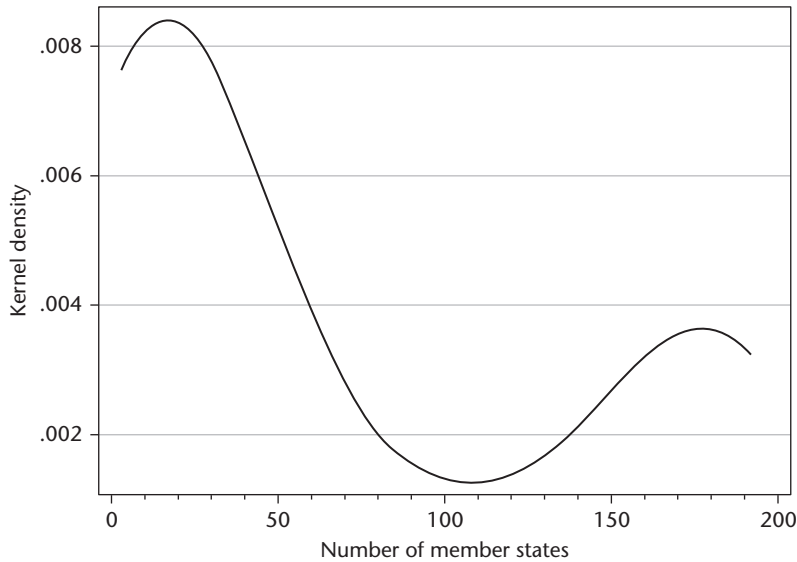


Figure 4.3 Bimodal distribution of international organizations

Note: $N = 76$ IOs in latest year in dataset. Kernel density function (gaussian, $n = 450$).

Table 4.2. Predictions and findings

	Prediction	Finding
H ₁	As the number of IO members increases, community diminishes non-linearly.	The trade-off between scale and community is convex (see Figure 4.2).
H ₂	The distribution of IO membership is bimodal.	The Hartigan diptest for bimodality = 0.087 ($p < 0.000$). ^a
H ₃	A task-specific IO has greater membership growth than a general purpose IO.	Mean annual membership increase for task-specific IOs = 1.304. Mean annual membership increase for general purpose IOs = 0.310. Paired t-test = 13.650 ($p < 0.000$). ^b
H ₄	The policy portfolio of a general purpose IO is more dynamic than that of a task-specific IO.	Mean annual increase in policy scope for task-specific IOs = 0.022. Mean annual increase in policy scope for general purpose IOs = 0.185. Paired t-test = -5.715 ($p < 0.000$). ^b

Note: Analyses for H₁ and H₂ use data for 76 IOs in their last year in the dataset; analyses for H₃ and H₄ use the full time series. See the Appendix for operationalization.

^a The Hartigan dip test estimates whether a distribution is bimodal or unimodal. It is the maximum difference between the empirical distribution and the reference unimodal distribution that minimizes the maximum difference. The dip measures how much a sample departs from unimodality, whereby lower values indicate significantly different departures from zero (Hartigan and Hartigan 1985).

^b Two-tailed significance paired t-test with unequal variances.

The Basic Set-Up

Just four IOs have more than 55 member states and fewer than 149 in 2010: IWhale (87 member states), the Permanent Court of Arbitration (107), the International Criminal Court (112), and the International Organization for Migration (112). Each of these IOs has a particular reason for being in the convex region of the scale/community trade-off. IWhale and the International Criminal Court (ICC) have global intent, but they have been stymied by the refusal of states to join. Both are contested organizations: IWhale because it pits states supporting whale hunting against those opposing it, and the ICC because several countries resist its efforts to bring human rights abuses to trial (Berger-Eforo 1996; Kelley 2007; Mills and Bloomfield 2018; Simmons and Danner 2010). The Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) is the oldest worldwide international court, but it has had to contend with alternative venues for international dispute settlement, including the International Court of Justice and private arbitration channels. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is in transition. It began as an IO concerned with refugees in post-war Europe, and it went global only in the 1980s. Its membership has been on the rise, and by 2019 it stood at 172.

The findings suggest that the population-wide distribution of member states in IOs has a micro logic rooted in the trade-off between scale and community for an individual IO. General purpose governance in the international domain requires that an IO limit the scale of its membership. Beyond the national state, it is certainly possible to find peoples who, despite living in separate states, have normative affinities arising from a history of interaction that can sustain general purpose governance.¹² However, the orbit of such peoples is usually limited by geographical proximity, or more unusually by the reach of empire or religion. A general purpose IO encompassing normatively related states may face a sharp trade-off when it enlarges its membership. The alternative mode of governance—task-specific governance—relaxes this constraint by contracting around a specific problem that can be handled by the affected group no matter how diverse. Whereas a general purpose IO is constrained to a select membership, a task-specific IO adjusts the scale of its membership to the collective goods it provides. Hence, a task-specific IO is attuned to handle global problems. This contrast is reflected in the scale of IO membership. The median general purpose IO in our dataset has ten member states; the median task-specific IO has 110 member states.

¹² General purpose IOs have an average value of 0.59 against 0.26 for task-specific IOs on *Community*, rescaled from zero to one. The coefficient of variation for task-specific IOs is 1.23 compared to 0.45 for general purpose IOs, which is consistent with the notion that task-specific governance exists under conditions of weak or strong community but general purpose governance requires strong community. A difference of means t-test shows these averages to be significantly different ($t = -4.95$; $p = 0.000$).

A Theory of International Organization

We theorize that these contrasting modes of governance have dynamic effects. One expectation is that a task-specific IO will have considerably greater membership growth than a general purpose IO (H_3). Table 4.2 reports that the average annual rate of membership growth in a task-specific IO is more than four times greater than that for a general purpose IO (1.3 versus 0.31). This easily meets a paired t-test for difference of means. The median membership of a task-specific IO has increased from thirty-four to ninety-seven over the sixty-year period we consider, while the median membership of a general purpose IO inched up from seven to ten.

In line with this, task-specific IOs generally impose less restrictive conditions of entry than general purpose IOs. Many task-specific IOs allow entry if a state meets a written condition, most commonly, membership of the United Nations (Bezuijen 2015). When a task-specific IO imposes a more substantive requirement for prospective members, it is usually to protect the organization's core function, e.g. the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) is expressly committed to "liberal values whether those are achieved by liberal political institutions, economic policies, or commitment to the western alliance" (Davis 2016: 52). Enlargement in a general purpose IO has to pass a higher hurdle on both the side of the applicant and that of the existing members for it involves joining an incompletely contracted community of peoples. Enlargement usually involves intrusive screening and prolonged negotiation. In almost all cases it concludes in a formal vote that must meet the threshold of unanimity.¹³

Our final expectation is that the type of governance affects an IO's policy development (H_4). Contracts are commitments that can be anticipated to constrain future behavior. This motivates clear expectations about the breadth of the policy portfolio many years, or even decades, down the road. A general purpose IO is based on a highly incomplete contract that builds in flexibility. Because it caters to the problems faced by communities, a general purpose IO will sponge additional competences over time as it grapples with unanticipated problems. By contrast, a task-specific IO is designed to reduce the uncertainties of cooperation, and it will expand its competences only if its problem spills over into other policy areas. On average, general purpose IOs take on 6.2 additional policies from the year of their founding to 2010. A task-specific IO, by contrast, tends to have a relatively static policy portfolio, picking up just one policy over the period as a whole. The difference, as reported in Table 4.2, is highly significant.

¹³ Twenty eight of thirty-two general purpose IOs require unanimity for enlargement in 2010 or their final year in the dataset. The exceptions are the League of Arab States, the Organization of American States, the African Union, and the Council of Europe. Thirty-one of forty-four task-specific IOs require only a majority vote for enlargement. For seventy-six IOs, the Pearson Chi2(1) is 31.69 ($p < 0.000$).

Conclusion

This chapter takes a fresh look at the field of international organization. It asks some fundamental questions about institutionalized cooperation among states. How is cooperation contracted? Who is encompassed? What is decided?

One needs to probe the sociality of international governance to answer these questions. Governance depends on a willingness to be governed as well as on its functional benefits. People care deeply about who exercises authority over them and this, we argue, powerfully constrains governance among states. To what extent do those contracting governance share understandings that can underpin diffuse reciprocity?

The hard core of the theory is that governance confronts a tension between scale and community, between the functional benefits of governance at diverse scale and the desire on the part of those who are governed to rule themselves. General purpose IOs structure cooperation around community. They discover, as well as implement, cooperation. Membership of a general purpose IO involves commitments that can affect national sovereignty on a broad front. States therefore pay close attention to who is part of the club. Hence, the membership of a general purpose IO is bounded. Enlargement is a serious matter usually requiring consensus among existing members.

A task-specific IO, in contrast, structures cooperation around a problem and this fixes the scale of membership. By clearly specifying its purpose, a task-specific IO reduces uncertainty, and so opens the door to cooperation in the absence of shared norms. Whereas the membership of a general purpose IO tends to be stable, that of a task-specific IO is flexible. Whereas the policy portfolio of a general purpose IO is flexible, that of a task-specific IO tends to be stable.

This approach to international governance explains phenomena that are often taken for granted, and goes far beyond the regional/global classification of IOs. Why is the membership of IOs not distributed normally around a mean value, but instead clumps towards the ends of a continuum? Why do IOs follow contrasting paths of membership growth? Why do their policy portfolios develop in differing ways?

Our theory is that the tension between scale and community is expressed in the basic set-up of an IO—its contract, membership, and policy portfolio. In the remainder of the book we probe how scale and community also shape an IO's authority.