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Between mandate and motivation: Bureaucratic behavior in global climate governance

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Abstract

International Public Administrations (IPAs) play a significant role for the success of multilateral negotiations. As the bureaucratic bodies of international organizations, they are deeply involved in international negotiations, but receive little credit for their outcomes. By studying the administrative styles of the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), we arrive at an understanding of how this IPA aims at contributing to the outcome of multilateral climate change negotiations. Administrative styles can be conceived of, ideal-typically, as being entrepreneurial or servant-like, with the former entailing advocacy in policy-making and the latter characterized by the strict adherence to formal and legal arrangements. We observe that, despite a prohibitively strict mandate as a technocratic facilitator, the UNFCCC Secretariat adopts an entrepreneurial style at the policy initiation stage and a cautiously entrepreneurial style during the phase of policy formulation. It has acquired a distinctive actor quality in the climate regime, motivated by a strong commitment to furthering meaningful cooperation and driving the UNFCCC process towards ambitious climate policies.

Keywords

International Public Administrations, UNFCCC, policy cycle, administrative styles, climate policy

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1. Introduction

Climate change is without doubt one of the most critical and pressing policy challenges within the United Nations system. The issue has risen starkly on the agendas of nation states, which committed themselves in the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change¹ to limit global warming to 2°C, and possibly to 1.5°C. While the Paris Agreement is first and foremost an outcome of intergovernmental negotiations, the success of multilateral environmental negotiations may also depend on how these are organized, managed, and facilitated and on how the task of

¹ UNFCCC. 2015. 'Paris Agreement.'

agreeing on a binding treaty is framed and communicated.² These logistical and administrative tasks are usually performed by the secretariats of multilateral treaty systems. Against this backdrop, this article focuses on the role of international secretariats and, more generally, international public administrations (IPAs), in processes of intergovernmental cooperation. Two broad questions guide our case study of the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). First, we ask which types of administrative styles can be observed in the UNFCCC Secretariat at different stages of the global climate policy process. More specifically, we seek to assess whether the Secretariat purposefully seeks to influence the process and outcome of intergovernmental climate negotiations or whether it maintains a passive stance, leaving the definition of the problem and the design of policies to the negotiating parties. Second, we ask what motivates the UNFCCC Secretariat to choose a particular administrative style. By focusing on administrative styles, we seek to contribute to debates on when and why IPAs move from a neutral stance towards impact-seeking behavior driven by their own preferences and strong political agency. Our article builds on studies that conceptualize IPAs' impact on global governance and transnational policymaking³ and that analyze the internal dynamics and strategies they develop in order to influence climate governance.⁴ A central interest of this body of literature is to identify which factors determine

² R. S. Dimitrov, 'The Paris Agreement on climate change: Behind closed doors', *Global Environmental Politics* 16 (3) (2016); P.-O. Busch, 'The independent influence of international public administrations', in: S. Kim, S. Ashley and W. H. Lambricht (eds), *Public Administration in the Context of Global Governance* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2014), 45–62, 51–52; Joanna Depledge, *The Organization of Global Negotiations: Constructing the Climate Change Regime* (London: Earthscan, 2005).

³ M. Bauer, C. Knill and S. Eckhard (eds), *International Bureaucracy: Challenges and Lessons for Public Administration Research* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); H. Dijkstra, 'Collusion in international organizations: How states benefit from the authority of secretariats', *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations* 23 (4) (2017).

⁴ Sikina Jinnah, *Post-treaty Politics: Secretariat Influence in Global Environmental Governance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014); Depledge, *The Organization of Global Negotiations*; J. Depledge, 'A special relationship: Chairpersons and the secretariat in the climate change negotiations', *Global Environmental Politics* 7 (1) (2007); P.-O. Busch, 'The climate secretariat: Making a living in a straitjacket', in: F. Biermann and B. Siebenhüner (eds), *Managers of Global Change: The Influence of International Environmental Bureaucracies* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 245–64.

an IPA's autonomy and how this autonomy enables that IPA to have an impact on policy.⁵ Moreover, our article builds on studies that take bureaucratic behavior—rather than state delegation—as a starting point, acknowledging that not all bureaucratic behavior is state defined and that IPAs can play a constitutive role in shaping state preferences.⁶

The term 'administrative style' describes behavioral aspects of an administration's daily routines in the policy process. Following Knill and colleagues, we distinguish between two ideal-typical styles, forming two ends of a spectrum: an entrepreneurial style, entailing advocacy in policy-making and a servant style, characterized by the strict adherence to an IPA's formal and legal mandates.⁷ By studying administrative styles and how they relate to the role of IPAs in international policymaking, we focus on informal routines, thereby emphasizing the informal rather than the formal sources of IPA autonomy. This perspective sheds light on IPAs' strategic behavior as being driven not only by 'hard' constraints such as an IPA's legal mandate or the availability of human and financial resources, but also by the intrinsic motivations of an IPA's staff. While recent research on administrative styles has emphasized concept development, typologizing and comparing IPAs accordingly, scholars are only beginning to investigate the underlying reasons why IPAs choose to employ a specific style.⁸ We aim to contribute to both the empirical research and the theoretical debate on IPA autonomy by mapping the administrative styles of a specific IPA, the UNFCCC Secretariat, along different stages of the policy cycle and providing explanations for the Secretariat's choice of particular

⁵ M. H. Ram, 'International organization autonomy and issue emergence: The World Bank's Roma inclusion agenda', *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations* 23 (4) (2017); K. Michaelowa and A. Michaelowa, 'The growing influence of the UNFCCC Secretariat on the clean development mechanism', *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics* 17 (2) (2017).

⁶ Jinnah, *Post-treaty Politics*; F. Biermann and B. Siebenhüner (eds), *Managers of Global Change: The Influence of International Environmental Bureaucracies* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009); H. Jörgens et al., 'Orchestrating (bio-)diversity: The secretariat of the Convention of Biological Diversity as an attention-seeking bureaucracy'; C. Knill et al., 'Administrative styles of international organizations'.

⁷ C. Knill et al., 'Administrative styles of international organizations'.

⁸ C. Knill et al., 'Bureaucratic influence and administrative styles in international organizations', *The Review of International Organizations* 7 (3) (2018).

administrative styles. In order to explain the observed administrative styles, we distinguish between two types of motivation and assess whether they are better explained by the positional motivations of the Secretariat staff aimed at improving an IPA's institutional position within the international climate regime or by functional motivations aimed at increasing the policy effectiveness of this regime.⁹

We study the Climate Secretariat's administrative style at two stages of the policy cycle,¹⁰ policy initiation and policy formulation, because these phases provide treaty secretariats with the greatest opportunity to play an active role in the policymaking process.¹¹ We expect administrative styles to vary over time, due to the different roles that IPAs can play at different stages of multilateral negotiations. During the policy initiation phase, problems are defined, framed, and placed on the policy agenda. At this stage, IPAs' provision of authoritative knowledge is crucial.¹² During the policy formulation phase, IPAs are key actors in facilitating and coordinating intergovernmental negotiation processes.¹³

Section two situates our research question within recent IPA scholarship and introduces the concept of administrative styles. In the third section, we present our methods and data, followed by a discussion of administrative styles at different stages of the policy cycle in section four. We present our findings in section five and close our article by discussing these and drawing conclusions.

⁹ Knill et al., *Bureaucratic influence and administrative styles in international organizations*.

¹⁰ Michael Howlett, M. Ramesh and Anthony Perl, *Studying Public Policy: Policy Cycles & Policy Subsystems*, 3. ed. (Ontario: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009).

¹¹ H. Jörgens et al., 'Orchestrating (bio-)diversity: The secretariat of the Convention of Biological Diversity as an attention-seeking bureaucracy', 75–76.

¹² P.-O. Busch and A. Liese, 'The authority of international public administrations'.

¹³ Biermann and Siebenhüner, *Managers of Global Change*, 327.

2. Current perspectives on IPAs and administrative styles

2.1 Explaining IPA influence

A rich body of literature conceives of IPAs as partially autonomous actors, inquiring whether and how they exert influence on international policymaking¹⁴ and identifying factors that determine this influence. A first group of factors refers to IPAs' traits, such as its expertise, reputation, trust in its impartiality, organizational culture, or material resources. A second group emphasizes relational factors, such as an IPA's position within a given decision-making structure.¹⁵ Recently, this literature has been linked to the study of administrative styles.¹⁶ This new strand goes beyond identifying the structural determinants of an IPA's autonomy and sheds light on the strategic behavior through which IPAs use (and deliberately expand) their formal autonomy. Administrative styles may vary between IPAs and within any given IPA.¹⁷ Moreover, an administrative style perspective is interested in the motivations of IPAs. Two distinctive motivations of secretariat staff can underpin administrative styles: positional and functional orientations.¹⁸ This distinction enables a better understanding of why IPAs adopt different administrative styles (see Section 2.2).

¹⁴ Busch, 'The independent influence of international public administrations', 49; Y.-C. Xu and P. M. Weller, 'To be, but not to be seen': Exploring the impact of international civil servants', *Public Administration* 86 (1) (2008).

¹⁵ Busch, 'The independent influence of international public administrations', 54; Biermann and Siebenhüner, *Managers of Global Change*; Jinnah, *Post-treaty Politics*; Michaelowa and Michaelowa, *The growing influence of the UNFCCC Secretariat on the clean development mechanism*; N. Kolleck et al., 'Climate change education through social networks', *Global Environmental Politics* 17 (4) (2017).

¹⁶ C. Knill et al., 'Administrative styles of international organizations'.

¹⁷ J. Enkler et al., 'Administrative styles in the OECD: Bureaucratic policy-making beyond formal rules', *International Journal of Public Administration* 40 (8) (2017).

¹⁸ Knill et al., *Bureaucratic influence and administrative styles in international organizations*.

2.2 Administrative styles

Formal autonomy and administrative style are two distinct characteristics that may affect an IPA's potential for bureaucratic influence. Formal autonomy is derived from organizational characteristics, such as formal competencies, resources, and administrative capacity to develop autonomous preferences. Principal-agent approaches assume that the potential for bureaucratic influence rises with the level of an IPA's formal autonomy, contending that formal autonomy determines the role that an IPA will have.¹⁹ By contrast, administrative styles are defined as those informal routines that characterize activities of IPAs in the policy-making process. Administrative styles consist of standard operating procedures of administrative behavior and decision-making and as such describe the behavioral aspects of an administration's daily routines. Focusing on administrative styles allows us to study how IPAs creatively respond to the constraints and exploit the opportunities of their formal autonomy, that is, their mandates, tasks and resources. An administrative styles perspective thus emphasizes IPAs' strategic behavior in the policymaking process.²⁰ To give an example, a policy-oriented style can enable treaty secretariats to slip into the role of partially independent actors in processes of multilateral negotiations, even if their formal autonomy is low and their mandated role is merely instrumental.²¹ An administrative style approach assumes that the choice of a specific style is not fully determined by a bureaucracy's formal autonomy. Nonetheless, it is possible that a specific formal setting, such as a low degree of formal autonomy, can have an impact on the choice of style. For example, an IPA might choose an entrepreneurial style to circumvent the limitations of low autonomy. Hence, while formal autonomy and administrative styles are

¹⁹ Michaelowa and Michaelowa, *The growing influence of the UNFCCC Secretariat on the clean development mechanism*; L. Hooghe and G. Marks, 'Delegation and pooling in international organizations', *The Review of International Organizations* 10 (3) (2015).

²⁰ C. Knill et al., 'Administrative styles of international organizations'; M. Howlett, 'Administrative styles and regulatory reform: Institutional arrangements and their effects on administrative behavior', *International Public Management Review* 5 (2) (2004).

²¹ A. Jordan and D. Huitema, 'Innovations in climate policy: The politics of invention, diffusion, and evaluation', *Environmental Politics* 23 (5) (2014).

distinct administrative characteristics, the choice of style can be impacted by the opportunities or restrictions that the formal settings entail. However, there is no ‘default choice’ IPAs make when faced with high or low autonomy. The choice of style depends on the specific motivations that IPAs have.²²

Against this backdrop, we aim to understand which styles underlie the UNFCCC Secretariat’s work and what motivates the adoption of these styles. We differentiate between the two ideal-type styles of entrepreneurial versus servant-like patterns of administrative behavior. An *entrepreneurial style* captures those administrative routines that imply intensive advocacy in policy-making and that are typically associated with policy brokers. IPAs following a *servant-like style* understand their role as reactive and instrumental and strictly adhere to formal and legal arrangements.²³

These two ends of the spectrum guide our analysis. The UNFCCC Secretariat employing a servant-like style in the multilateral climate negotiations would imply a narrow, literal reading of the formal mandate that closely adheres to Article 8 of the UNFCCC Convention. Article 8 stipulates that the functions of the Secretariat are limited to organizing COP and Subsidiary Bodies (SB) sessions, compiling reports and providing information, facilitating assistance to parties, coordinating with other secretariats, and conducting other administrative activities as requested by the COP.²⁴ Due to this institutional design that limits the Secretariat’s scope to technical tasks, its formal autonomy is low.²⁵ A servant-like administrative style would imply that the Secretariat respects these formal limits. By contrast, an entrepreneurial style would imply a wide reading of the mandate based on the Secretariat’s own interpretations. In the case of the UNFCCC, such a wide reading would place the overall goals of the Climate Convention

²² Knill et al., *Bureaucratic influence and administrative styles in international organizations*.

²³ C. Knill et al., 'Administrative styles of international organizations', 50.

²⁴ UN. 1992. 'United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.'

²⁵ Depledge, *The Organization of Global Negotiations*; Busch, 'The climate secretariat: Making a living in a straitjacket'.

and of the Paris Agreement above the Secretariat's formal competencies as they are outlined in its mandate. The goal of the UNFCCC, adopted in 1992, is to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations 'at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.'²⁶ COP 1 established a working group to agree on GHG reductions, which resulted in the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 (United Nations, 1998). With the Paris Agreement, the goal was raised: 'Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change' (Article 2, 1). In short, the founding mandate of the post-2015 climate regime consists of the parties' agreement to prevent dangerous climate change. An entrepreneurial secretariat would interpret these goals as part of its mandate, thereby legitimizing a more proactive role in negotiations than a narrower reading of its mandate would allow for.

A second distinction tells us more about why IPAs choose a certain administrative style. A secretariat's motivation for adopting a particular administrative style may be either positional or functional, i.e. aimed at either institutional consolidation or policy effectiveness. IPAs driven mainly by positional considerations orient their informal routines towards shaping the institutional conditions under which they operate, aiming to increase their resources, reputation, and legitimacy. The primary driver of action in this case is the pursuit of a positional advantage. In this case, an IPA's activities are oriented towards its principals and organizational environment and are aimed at supporting its legitimacy or increasing its room to maneuver within the institutional setting (e.g. by wider competencies or an increased budget). In contrast to this, IPAs with a predominantly functional orientation strive to improve the policy performance of an international organization (IO) by providing effective solutions to policy

²⁶ UN. 1992. 'United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change'.

problems. This orientation stimulates informal routines that aim to enhance the initiation, formulation, and implementation of policy solutions.²⁷ Activities are less oriented towards increasing its own role or legitimacy and more motivated by a desire to forward regime goals as defined in treaty texts, irrespective of state preferences that might lose sight of these goals over time.²⁸ This includes a focus on solving controversial issues in negotiations or advocating for greater ambition in the policy process. The relationship with principals or other counterparts is less in focus than the contents of policies themselves. The above-mentioned founding mandate of the UNFCCC could be used by the Climate Secretariat in a functional way, i.e. to bring about more ambitious and effective climate policies, or in a positional way, i.e. to legitimize a more central role of the Secretariat in or beyond the climate change regime.

Functional/positional orientations provide us with a model that aims to capture the types of reasons for choosing a specific style. These must be understood as ideal types, and we expect to see a mixture of motivations in our data.

It is important to note that any combination of entrepreneurial/servant-like styles and functional/positional motivations are possible. While the combination of a servant-like style and predominantly functional motivation might seem counterintuitive, the Climate Secretariat displayed exactly these traits around 2008. At a time when parties distrusted the multilateral process and tightly controlled the Secretariat, its staff adopted a servant-like style in order to retain trust in its impartiality which, in turn, allowed it to exert the minimum amount of influence that was feasible at that time.²⁹ This shows that if the parties' trust erodes, attempts to seek influence are likely to be punished, e.g. by curtailing the Secretariat's mandate or

²⁷ Knill et al., *Bureaucratic influence and administrative styles in international organizations*.

²⁸ Jinnah, *Post-treaty Politics*, 30.

²⁹ Busch, 'The climate secretariat: Making a living in a straitjacket'; Depledge, *A special relationship: Chairpersons and the secretariat in the climate change negotiations*.

withholding contributions. An IPA can only afford to have an entrepreneurial style if this does not compromise the trust of the parties.³⁰

3. Data and methods

The UNFCCC Secretariat is a suitable case for studying administrative styles for several reasons. First, as a treaty secretariat, it is a small IPA, which has nonetheless grown from 34 staff members before COP 1 to around 450 members today.³¹ It services a complex treaty convention with 197 members and engages with members and non-party stakeholders, facing heterogeneous demands. Second, as a single-issue secretariat with a focus on policy formulation and few implementation tasks, the individual output of the UNFCCC's divisions is narrow and clearly defined. A potential variation of administrative styles within the UNFCCC Secretariat must therefore not be attributed primarily to horizontal fragmentation resulting from different types of tasks performed by this organization. Third, the UNFCCC Secretariat has little formal autonomy and a narrow mandate limited to technocratic facilitation. This lack of formal autonomy facilitates the empirical observation of both entrepreneurial and servant-like patterns of informal administrative behavior. Therefore, the UNFCCC is a strong case for studying the administrative styles of an IPA. It plays a crucial role in the increasingly urgent field of global climate politics but has only very limited formal power to fill this role.

³⁰ Michael N. Barnett and Martha Finnemore, *Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2004), 20.

³¹ Depledge, *The Organization of Global Negotiations*, 63; UNFCCC. 2018. 'About the Secretariat.'

Methodologically, we draw on 22 qualitative semi-structured expert interviews³² with Secretariat staff from different hierarchical levels and areas of work (interviews are marked with 'S'), UNFCCC parties (marked with 'P') and non-party stakeholders ('N'), on participant observations of negotiations in 2015 and 2016, and on the analysis of documents (official reports, declarations, and speeches). They were analyzed using qualitative content analysis³³ based on a deductive approach drawing on previous IPA studies. Interviewees offered insights about how styles developed over time, their perception of the Secretariat's role during and between negotiations, their relationship to chairpersons and stakeholders and their motivations for being engaged in the multilateral negotiations. During the years prior to and shortly after the adoption of the Paris Agreement (2013-2016), the negotiations resulting in the Paris Agreement and its further concretizations were in the spotlight of the Secretariat's work. The task of facilitating these crucial negotiations was met with a specific administrative style, departing from the previous approach that is under study here. Fleshing this out justifies the emphasis on these years. Interviewees could naturally only report their own perceptions of events and processes; therefore, validating these with participant observations and document analysis has proven an important step.³⁴ Additionally, the original data collected were compared to data published by previous studies on the UNFCCC Secretariat, allowing for a cross-time comparison.³⁵

³² M. Meuser and U. Nagel, 'The expert interview and changes in knowledge production', in: A. Bogner, B. Littig and W. Menz (eds), *Interviewing Experts*, Research methods series (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 17–42.

³³ P. Mayring and T. Frenzel, 'Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse', in: N. Baur and J. Blasius (eds), *Handbuch Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2014), 543–56.

³⁴ John Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2009).

³⁵ Busch, 'The climate secretariat: Making a living in a straitjacket'; Depledge, *The Organization of Global Negotiations*; Depledge, *A special relationship: Chairpersons and the secretariat in the climate change negotiations*; Michaelowa and Michaelowa, *The growing influence of the UNFCCC Secretariat on the clean development mechanism*.

4. Administrative styles at different stages of the policy cycle

4.1 Policy initiation

We can identify and characterize administrative styles along the typical tasks, activities, and informal routines of a specific IPA, expecting that these can vary over time within a given IPA, i.e. between different stages of the policy cycle. Typical activities in the *policy initiation* stage include defining problems, identifying and framing the issues at stake, setting the political agenda, and developing an accompanying communication and outreach strategy.³⁶ The central analytical question here is whether an IPA's approach to problem solving is active/entrepreneurial or reactive/servant-like regarding the definition and agenda-setting of policy problems and solutions. More specifically, we need to determine whether IPAs shape policies by developing their own preferences, analyzing political opportunities and strategically mobilizing support for their agendas, or whether they leave the definition of problems and solutions to states, limiting themselves to supporting states logistically.³⁷

The entrepreneurial ideal type IPA identifies policy problems and brings these to the attention of parties, taking a strong role in issue initiation and framing. By drawing on their own ideas and values, entrepreneurial IPAs contribute to defining what constitutes a policy problem from the very onset of the process, which can also involve linking new issues to established ones³⁸ or strategically cooperating with like-minded states on these issues.³⁹ To this end, IPAs are expected to frequently reach out to both their political principals and non-state actors. The intent of such a purposeful communication and outreach strategy is to exploit the IPA's high embeddedness among parties and non-state actors in order to mobilize support for the IPA's

³⁶ Enkler et al., *Administrative styles in the OECD*, 639.

³⁷ C. Knill et al., 'Administrative styles of international organizations', 51.

³⁸ Jinnah, *Post-treaty Politics*.

³⁹ Dijkstra, *Collusion in international organizations: How states benefit from the authority of secretariats*.

problem perception and map the political space, i.e. to monitor the political implications and sensitivities relevant to policy development.⁴⁰

Treaty secretariats engage in this kind of agenda-setting and may act as policy entrepreneurs and brokers by seeking the attention of states.⁴¹ The authority of attention-seeking bureaucracies is not primarily delegated from their principals, but results to a significant degree from their entrepreneurial stance.⁴² This perspective complements the principal-agent inspired viewpoint on IPAs that conceives of them as attention-avoiding ‘under cover agents’ pulling strings ‘behind the scenes’ without openly articulating their stances on certain policies.⁴³

By contrast, a servant-like/reactive IPA does not engage in initiating policies and defining problems, making extensive outreach activities unnecessary. This style presupposes that IPAs only perform tasks for which they have explicit mandates, rendering a mapping of political preferences beyond the negotiating parties superfluous, since delegated tasks pose no risk of acceptance.⁴⁴

4.2 Policy drafting

The typical activities in the *policy drafting* phase are structured by two indicators: an IPA’s efforts in evaluating policy alternatives and its sensitivity towards political interests.⁴⁵ Policy

⁴⁰ H. Jörgens et al., ‘Orchestrating (bio-)diversity: The secretariat of the Convention of Biological Diversity as an attention-seeking bureaucracy’; Kolleck et al., *Climate change education through social networks*; Enkler et al., *Administrative styles in the OECD*.

⁴¹ Biermann and Siebenhüner, *Managers of Global Change*; Jinnah, *Post-treaty Politics*; H. Jörgens et al., ‘Orchestrating (bio-)diversity: The secretariat of the Convention of Biological Diversity as an attention-seeking bureaucracy’.

⁴² For a conceptual distinction between delegated and entrepreneurial authority, see Jessica F. Green, *Rethinking Private Authority: Agents and Entrepreneurs in Global Environmental Governance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 33.

⁴³ John Mathiason, *Invisible Governance: International Secretariats in Global Politics*, 1st print (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2007); D. G. Hawkins et al. (eds), *Delegation and Agency in International Organizations*, Political economy of institutions and decisions (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008).

⁴⁴ Enkler et al., *Administrative styles in the OECD*.

⁴⁵ Enkler et al., *Administrative styles in the OECD*, 639.

drafting is a central task for administrations, which essentially hinges upon bureaucrats' informational advantages vis-à-vis their political principals, in particular their expert knowledge.⁴⁶ In this principal-agent relationship, administrative agents can frame and pre-structure political questions and thereby exert influence on policy processes and outcomes.⁴⁷ However, the different ambitions that IPAs can have as agents during the policy drafting process need to be studied in detail. Two opposing logics can underlie such ambitions: the logic of optimization vs. the logic of satisficing,⁴⁸ for which an IPA's efforts in evaluating policy alternatives and its sensitivity towards political interests are indicators.

Optimizing IPAs evaluate different policy alternatives and pursue the option they believe to be the most effective. Satisficing IPAs pursue the solution that has the greatest support among the negotiating parties. Whereas optimizing IPAs correspond to the entrepreneurial style, the satisficing mode corresponds to the servant-like style.⁴⁹ An entrepreneurial IPA is typically accountable to the founding mandate of the IO, pursuing solutions that most closely fit these goals. By contrast, a servant-like IPA is primarily accountable to the wishes of the parties, following these in a cost-effective manner. Furthermore, an optimizing IPA strives to anticipate political sensitivities and to reconcile opposing views, e.g. by reframing issues via the presiding officers.⁵⁰ A satisficing IPA would avoid such time-consuming behavior.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Barnett and Finnemore, *Rules for the World*.

⁴⁷ Hawkins et al., *Delegation and Agency in International Organizations*.

⁴⁸ Herbert Alexander Simon, *Administrative Behavior: A Study of Decision-making Processes in Administrative Organizations*, 4. ed. (New York, NY: Free Press, 1997).

⁴⁹ C. Knill et al., 'Administrative styles of international organizations', 54.

⁵⁰ H. Jörgens et al., 'Orchestrating (bio-)diversity: The secretariat of the Convention of Biological Diversity as an attention-seeking bureaucracy', 79; Depledge, *A special relationship: Chairpersons and the secretariat in the climate change negotiations*.

⁵¹ Enkler et al., *Administrative styles in the OECD*.

5. Empirical findings

Here, the findings are structured along the indicators introduced in the previous section. The analysis aims at discerning the Climate Secretariat's administrative styles and assessing whether and how they vary along different stages of the policy cycle. We analyze the degree to which they correspond to an entrepreneurial or servant-like style and whether they are motivated by functional or positional considerations. The policy issues discussed in the following sections were brought up by the interviewees themselves when they provided a picture of their informal routines. Their views on these issues helped us understand how administrative styles manifest themselves in their daily routines.

5.1 Policy initiation: Defining the opportunity arising from global climate action

To increase the effectiveness of the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol was adopted in 1997, committing industrialized countries and countries transitioning to a market economy to achieving quantified GHG emissions reduction targets in two commitment periods: 2008–2012 and 2013–2020. In order to negotiate an agreement succeeding it, parties agreed to 'develop a protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the Convention applicable to all Parties' no later than 2015 and that it should enter into force in 2020. This negotiating mandate for the Paris Agreement was adopted at COP 17 in 2011.⁵²

Confronted with a long-lasting stalemate among parties, the Secretariat began to invest in an elaborate communication and outreach strategy prior to COP 21 in 2015 aimed at creating a policy discourse that showed the urgency of achieving a successor treaty with binding mitigation and adaptation targets. This strategy combined connecting with parties and

⁵² UNFCCC. 2012. 'Decision 1/CP.17.'; UN. 1998. 'Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.'.

strategically drawing actors outside of the Convention into the policy debate. External actors comprised both non-party stakeholders active at COPs and actors able to multiply the Secretariat's calls for action beyond the UNFCCC. This entrepreneurial communication and outreach strategy rested on several factors. First, the network position of Secretariat staff, i.e. their links to high-level actors from different governance areas and their ability to connect parties, non-parties, and different perspectives such as science and policy were important.⁵³ Second, the organizational culture in the communication and outreach department shifted from a conservative approach to a culture of ambitiously following a unique course of action⁵⁴ while still staying dedicated to the deliberation between parties and stakeholders. Third, a favorably changing characteristic of the policy issue itself mattered, i.e. the general shift in the global response to climate change.⁵⁵

One staff member described the evolution of the communication and outreach approach in more detail. Originally, the approach had been servant-like, due to a 'fear of the parties to the Convention', following the credo: 'unless we have a mandate to do this, we can't do it', with no mandate for advocacy.⁵⁶ Motivated by the goal of achieving a strong agreement prior to COP 21, senior staff changed the strategy into a more advocacy-oriented approach and included broader considerations, trying to 'break the communication side of things away from it [being] just about governments' to include also 'the wider economy'.⁵⁷ In addition, Secretariat staff aimed to pass on a spirit of 'irrepressible positivity'⁵⁸ highlighting the positive outcomes of climate action that were already visible before COP 21.⁵⁹

⁵³ Kolleck et al., *Climate change education through social networks*.

⁵⁴ S6

⁵⁵ S. Chan et al., 'Reinvigorating international climate policy', *Global Policy* 6 (4) (2015).

⁵⁶ S6; Busch, 'The climate secretariat: Making a living in a straitjacket', 257.

⁵⁷ S6

⁵⁸ S6

⁵⁹ S3, S6

This strategy involved two parts: first, advocating for a forward-thinking and multi-sectoral approach to climate action and second, multiplying this message via high-level non-party stakeholders, which necessitated both strong links to potential multipliers and cultural re-orientation within the Secretariat. Considering possible sanctions by parties, the innovative communication strategy was perceived as ‘risky’. Still, this new narrative was put forward to ‘change the atmosphere, to give a sense of positivity and optimism’.⁶⁰ By showing negotiators that climate action was already well underway, a climate agreement was depicted as achievable, a message that the executive secretary communicated decisively.⁶¹ One platform for delivering this narrative was the Momentum for Change initiative spearheaded by the Secretariat and based on an idea by the then Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres after a first failed attempt at COP 15 (2009) to reach agreement on a successor to the Kyoto Protocol.⁶² This narrative crucially relied on a general shift in the global response to climate change, which was marked by an increasing recognition of non-state activity working towards policy change.⁶³

In order to amplify this message as a campaign, the Secretariat identified key groups and players from different policy levels and fields. Specific actors were asked to promote the Secretariat’s message ‘in a way that didn’t look as though we were encouraging them to do anything’, which helped highlight global climate action in political discourses in 2014.⁶⁴ Hence, the Secretariat’s task of ‘communication and outreach’ was interpreted as political *campaigning*, leading to an extension of the original portfolio: ‘We spent a lot of time forming partnerships with key stakeholders and with the key figures linked’ to them.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ S6, S5, S3

⁶¹ S6; UNFCCC. 2018. ‘Momentum for Change Annual Report 2014.’.

⁶² D. Bodansky, ‘The Copenhagen climate change conference: A postmortem’, *The American Journal of International Law* 104 (2) (2010).

⁶³ Chan et al., *Reinvigorating international climate policy*.

⁶⁴ S6

⁶⁵ S6, S3, S4

Several interviewees described themselves as being the ‘hub of a network’⁶⁶ or in similar positions⁶⁷ of managing information flow. By connecting parties with different stakeholder types, they pursued the ‘vision’ to create ‘better quality conversations’⁶⁸ for enabling and upgrading policy innovations. Acting as a knowledge broker, the Secretariat aimed at catalyzing and enhancing policy discussions, development, and implementation.⁶⁹ The functional motivation to enhance knowledge exchange is apparent in these informal routines.

These communication and outreach strategies are clearly entrepreneurial. They show that the Secretariat developed policy preferences based on its own values, analyzed the opportunities of the specific political situation prior to COP 21, and strategically mobilized political support for this goal. The motivation behind this was predominantly functional, driven by the goal of creating the ambition for negotiation success. The positional rationale is less apparent, as there is hardly any competition in the Secretariat’s organizational environment that could contest its central position in the climate regime.⁷⁰

5.2 Policy drafting: Staying true to the founding mandate of the UNFCCC

5.2.1 IPAs’ efforts in evaluating policy alternatives

The Secretariat’s ambition during the policy drafting phase was to strike a balance between its principled beliefs and its mandate. While striving towards an optimizing mode by evaluating policy alternatives and pursuing the most effective one, staff were naturally constrained by the preferences of the negotiating parties. The policy style could be described as cautiously

⁶⁶ S4

⁶⁷ S1, S3, S6

⁶⁸ S3

⁶⁹ Reported similarly in S1, S2, S4, S5, S6; P2

⁷⁰ K. W. Abbott, J. F. Green, and R. O. Keohane, ‘Organizational ecology and institutional change in global governance’, *International Organization* 70 (02) (2016): 251.

entrepreneurial. Most interviewees made at least one reference to the strict rules that applied to them and characterized their roles as either a ‘secretary’ or ‘assistant’⁷¹ especially concerning the negotiation of contentious mitigation policies. Many specified that trust in the Secretariat’s impartiality was a vital resource, restricting their leeway to depart from the servant-like style that its strict mandate implies.⁷² However, these descriptions, reflecting an anticipatory obedience to parties, were mostly given as an introduction into the staff’s daily routines in order to highlight the ways in which these were changing. Although a servant-like style can still be seen as the backbone of certain daily routines, normative motivations were increasingly shaping the interpretation of tasks. All but one interviewee described the trend of adopting a more entrepreneurial style and reported to carve out considerable leeway in performing their ‘classical’ roles, such as drafting texts or partnering with non-party stakeholders.⁷³

Several interviewees described the need to harmonize the mandate provided by the COP with their own normative aspirations⁷⁴: ‘For the greater good [...] where can we be with the mandate that the parties give us?’⁷⁵ Secretariat behavior in this context can be understood as the interplay of their own organizational agency and the structural constraints they face. While the primary mandate for the Secretariat before COP 21 was to achieve the Paris Agreement, including specific demands of the parties, such as accounting and transparency, beyond this, they explained that it was equally motivating to work towards those ‘climate futures’ that would shape reality for centuries.⁷⁶ However, the Secretariat’s ‘vision for a better world’ that was derived from ‘our values as the UN family’⁷⁷ is not necessarily exactly what parties stipulated in COP decisions. In this situation, Secretariat staff did not pursue the most cost-effective solution, i.e. act as satisficers, but reportedly went to great lengths to balance this ‘interesting

⁷¹ S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S7

⁷² Reported similarly in P1, NP1, NP2

⁷³ N1, N2, N3, N4, N5, S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6

⁷⁴ S1, S2, S3, S6

⁷⁵ S3

⁷⁶ S3, S6

⁷⁷ S3

dialectic’ between sustaining parties’ trust and their impartiality and normative aspirations, which ‘takes very careful choreography and strong leadership to navigate’. ⁷⁸ A practical example of such careful navigation is the preparation of speaking notes for the Chair, which reportedly needed to be approved by several levels of the secretarial hierarchy in order to guarantee the ‘highest degree of seriousness about impartiality’, since ‘the parties will have our heads on the plate if we mess that up’, as one interviewee vividly illustrated. At the same time, Secretariat staff had a clear idea of the general direction that the UNFCCC process *should* have taken, e.g. working towards the integration of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement, taking ‘the bigger picture’. ⁷⁹ In summary, informal routines were oriented towards normative preferences (‘for the greater good’⁸⁰) and evaluating policy alternatives according to their effectiveness, aiming at stimulating the drafting of policy solutions. This stance highlights the Secretariat’s functional motivation, working towards policy ambitiousness and effectiveness.

5.2.2 Sensitivity towards political interests

Secretariat staff invested greatly in anticipating political ‘red lines’ and preventing deadlock when assisting chairs and, via these, parties with drafting negotiation texts. While the process of negotiating and adopting texts is under the sole purview of the parties and the Secretariat is not responsible for the contents of negotiated texts, highlighting its assisting role ‘like a secretary’⁸¹ the importance of the Secretariat’s expertise, acuity, experience, and trustworthy personal relationships to the success of negotiations is apparent. In essence, trust in its impartiality and expertise combined with strong personal relations were described as central traits enabling the Secretariat to assist with the draft text of the Paris Agreement that was ultimately adopted by the parties. A strong sense of ‘doing what is right’ and of partnership

⁷⁸ S3

⁷⁹ S3, S6, S7

⁸⁰ S3

⁸¹ S1

with parties guided the drafting style of the Secretariat. This emphasis on principled beliefs and the aim to reconcile opposing views and anticipate political sensitivities are traits of an optimizing mode. Dedication and ambitiousness concerning the Convention's founding mandate motivated the Secretariat's cautiously entrepreneurial drafting style.

Secretariat staff described the standard procedure of drafting text as listening to parties extensively, developing an own intuition of what a balanced text would comprise, and assisting the chair with drafting such a text.⁸² They reportedly worked directly with delegates on drafting paragraphs 'in such a way that [it] makes sense'⁸³ building on a working relationship of collegiality and trust.⁸⁴

Staff assisted the parties via different presiding officers, i.e. the chairs or COP presidents.⁸⁵ Parties and observers experienced negotiations during COP 21 as particularly contentious, making it difficult for the chair to table a draft for specific agenda items, which would have been the usual procedure.⁸⁶ Instead, parties developed a draft 'organically'⁸⁷ without the chair, but rather with careful assistance of the Secretariat. They reported that, towards the end of the conference, the President asked them to present a text concerning this item according to their best judgement, taking into account comments based on the President's consultations with parties. In order to comply with this request, they introduced what they 'considered a neutral narrative'.⁸⁸ This account is remarkable in two ways: first, the Secretariat was trusted with finding a 'neutral narrative'⁸⁹ and second, the ability to draft a text that accommodated diverging views at the critical final negotiation phase made it a crucial factor in enabling the agreement. This represented a change compared to what Busch found for an earlier period,

⁸² S1, S3, S4, S7

⁸³ S1

⁸⁴ S1, S7; P2

⁸⁵ Depledge, *A special relationship: Chairpersons and the secretariat in the climate change negotiations*.

⁸⁶ N6, N11, P2, P3, P4, S7

⁸⁷ S1

⁸⁸ S1

⁸⁹ S1

describing staff as reluctant to assist with policy drafting.⁹⁰ The informal routines discussed in this section hence illustrate how the Secretariat's initial servant-like style in policy drafting developed into a cautiously entrepreneurial one. While the aim to reconcile opposing views among parties (directly or via presiding officers) points to an entrepreneurial IPA, the focus on its own evaluation of what 'makes sense'⁹¹ in terms of draft formulations is typical of a functional, effectiveness-oriented motivation.

6. Conclusion

The UNFCCC Secretariat is an IPA that, despite its narrowly defined mandate as a technocratic facilitator, has developed a distinctive quality as an actor within the climate regime, a development which can be captured through the conceptual lens of administrative styles. Rather than administering 'business as usual' between parties, which is unlikely to create a comprehensive agreement, Secretariat staff drive the UNFCCC process towards creating ambitious climate policies. In this article, we have demonstrated that the intent to influence the process and outcomes of the negotiation process prior to the adoption of the Paris Agreement was apparent in the administrative styles of Secretariat staff. Analyzing administrative styles has helped us to understand the process of policy-making in the UNFCCC, taking into account how staff members, as agents, can either chose to fully comply with their principal's (i.e. the COP's) concerns within the boundaries of their formal autonomy or develop individual aspirations for fulfilling the UNFCCC's founding mandate.

⁹⁰ Busch. in: F. Biermann and B. Siebenhüner (eds), *Managers of Global Change: The Influence of International Environmental Bureaucracies* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009).

⁹¹ S1

Both the entrepreneurial policy initiation and the cautiously entrepreneurial drafting styles gave us insights into how the Climate Secretariat has put its formally narrow mandate into practice in order to advance global cooperation on climate change, seeking to impact the processes and outcomes of multilateral negotiations. As expected, administrative styles within the UNFCCC Secretariat vary according to the policy phase. The policy initiation style is entrepreneurial, as we showed in this article by analyzing the Secretariats' communication and outreach strategies. This choice is motivated by functional, effectiveness-oriented considerations, namely by the aim to advocate for higher ambition in negotiations on the one hand and to stimulate more decentralized, local climate action on the other. The entrepreneurial, sometimes risky policy initiation style is rooted in the desire to reach the goal of the climate regime: avoiding dangerous climate change. By alerting the parties to the urgency of enshrining binding rules for climate change mitigation and adaptation in an appropriate treaty, creating a 'can do' spirit', showcasing decentral global climate action already underway, and spreading this message via prominent actors, the Secretariat sought to set the tone and the goal for the negotiations of COP 21. It thereby established itself as a powerful actor in its own right, shaping global climate politics at a crucial time. By contrast, the administrative style in the drafting phase is in sum cautiously entrepreneurial. Secretariat staff increasingly adopt informal routines that are typical of an entrepreneurial drafting style, which is predominantly underpinned by a functional motivation aimed at reconciling diverging views and drafting ambitious and effective climate policies. When employing their specific networks, expertise, and acuity in order to draft text in partnership with parties, staff need to be careful to simultaneously retain the parties' trust in the Secretariat's impartiality. This means that the drafting style oscillates between entrepreneurial and servant-like elements, both of which are derived from the functional motivation to facilitate a successful and ambitious agreement.

Considering these findings, important questions remain and need to be studied in future research. First, this exploratory single case study focusing on a largely entrepreneurial

secretariat needs to be compared to other IPAs. A comparative study that takes into account different combinations of styles and motivations can provide additional insights about the relationship between administrative styles and the fundamental orientations of IPAs. Second, it is worthwhile to investigate the relationship between individual styles and a unified style—for instance, how do personal convictions, leadership styles, and esprit de corps play out in creating a specific administrative style at a certain point in time? Finally, this study could be replicated with other methodologies, such as social network or media analysis.

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