1 Issue Control in Transnational Professional and Organizational Networks

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Transnational governance is a process of coordination and competition among professionals and organizations to control issues. This book is concerned with professional networks in transnational governance, particularly how professionals navigate their peer and organizational networks to control transnational issues. Recent scholarship has focused on how transnational issues are governed, concentrating on how organizational actors arrive at governance outcomes. Standards, benchmarks, and procedures commonly attract the most attention, with explanations on what actors were able to achieve what outcomes and why (Broome et al. 2018). Recent scholarship has noted how transnational governance has an increasingly hybrid character (Andonova et al. 2009), where international organizations (IOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and firms are engaged in various combinations to coordinate on issues. Work on 'orchestration' also suggests that transnational governance is characterized by institutions that work less as command centres and more as enablers among different types of organizations (Abbott and Snidal 2009a; Abbott et al. 2015; Henriksen and Ponte 2017). Recent literature also points to states increasingly delegating transnational governance issues to private actors (Büthe and Mattli 2011), and professional interaction with a variety of organizations has been the norm, including a role for firms and NGOs in transnational governance networks. Firms and NGOs create alliances with fellow organizations to obtain or retain resources and knowledge with issue control in mind.

This work on transnational governance has sought to identify how non-state actors have power compared with standard frameworks that concentrate on the power of states. Much of the emphasis here has been who has authority over transnational issues. A particular focus has been on how different 'global governors' can create different forms of authority (Avant et al. 2010) or how new global rulers are emerging from organizational entrepreneurship (Büthe and Mattli 2011). The causal logic of much work in transnational governance is that organizations have a type of authority that enables them to engage in rule making. This causal chain

of *organizational strategy* > *authority type* > *rules and standards making* dominates the literature, with a range of scholars seeking to identify 'private authority', 'delegated authority', 'capacity-building authority', and so forth (Avant et al. 2010). Authority can also come from mixes of organizations, as the recent scholarship on hybrid governance points out (Abbott and Snidal 2009a). Coordination between the actors occurs via the organizational form. In many way, the literature is still stuck within the 'complex interdependence' framework of the 1970s (Keohane and Nye 1977; Abbott et al. 2016), as we note below.

From this common viewpoint, issue control is an outcome of organizational strategy, from what issues are selected to work or campaign on, given the capabilities of the organization. This is true for IOs, NGOs, and firms, all who carefully choose issues to control. The World Bank, for example, has expanded its issue scope through 'mission creep' during recent decades, while similar institutions, such as the European Investment Bank (EIB), have chosen not to expand into as many issue areas and have, until the recent crisis, stayed 'under the radar'. Historically, NGOs and those organizations and movements operating in transnational advocacy networks (TANs) have chosen issues linked to bodily harm or inequality of access, since such issues can more readily garner support (Keck and Sikkink 1998). NGOs select issues according to organizational resources and the capacity to expand their networks (Wong 2012a; Stroup and Wong 2017). Oxfam provides a good example of a well-resourced NGO that covers a wide variety of issues, from arms trading to climate change and others. Tax Justice Network (TJN) provides a contrasting case of a small organization armed with specialists on taxation issues (Seabrooke and Wigan 2016), see also Chapter 9 this volume. Firms also seek issue control as this volume amply documents. Controlling governance and regulation around transnational issues can give firms significant competitive advantages and can enable the construction and expansion of niche markets, such as products that are labeled sustainable (Henriksen and Seabrooke 2016). Professional service firms (PSFs) spend a great deal of time engaging in templating activities that permit them issue control rather than simple profit generation (Suddaby et al. 2007; Faulconbridge and Muzio 2008). This is certainly the case for the Big Four accountancy firms and expert influence on accounting standards (Strange 1996; Botzem 2008, Murphy and Stausholm 2017), as well as for transnational law firms seeking to provide consistent treatment of issues across national legal boundaries (Quack 2007; Faulconbridge et al. 2012). In short, organizations carefully select what issues they seek to control and what professionals are most appropriate to work with them in doing so.

This common view of how organizations select and control issues includes an important assumption about the sources of power within

the system. As stated, for this work the causal chain is typically as follows: *organizational strategy* > *authority type* > *rules and standards making*. A mandate or effective claim to authority equals control over the issue. In fact, this may overplay the importance of recognized authority coming from organizations as entities. Professional and organizational networks working on the issue may well be changing how the issue is understood at the transnational level and who has the right to work on it, while organizations mandated to authoritative treatment of the issue are out of sync with movement and struggle within these networks. Professional networks may be able to circumvent formal circuits of authority in exercising issue control, as some of the chapters in this volume attest.

A key claim in this book is that competition and cooperation in professional networks for issue control is more important than what organization has a formal mandate over an issue. While organizational forms are important, professionals often form networks to circumvent and manipulate them in their battles for issue control in transnational governance. This book provides an alternative account of how issues are controlled in transnational governance. We stress how the causal chain can often be identified as *professional strategy* > *organizational opportunities* > *issue control*. This is not to dismiss the importance of authority claims but to assert that they are not the only channels of power within systems of transnational governance.

Professional strategies include plans within professional and organizational network to disrupt, reproduce, or transform how issues are treated and who is entitled to work on them (Suddaby and Viale 2011). Professional strategies are not only located within professional networks (Galaskiewicz 1985) but also come from the observation of how peers operate across different social domains and organizational types (White 2008). *Organizational opportunities* provide positions of action and platforms from which to build and expand peer networks. They are provided by differences between organizations, such as the scope of their mandate, how they hire staff, how they find resources, how distant they are from their key principles, and how centralized their knowledge production is on their issue of concern. Canny professionals can navigate these opportunity structures from the inside-out, from within organizations, as well as from the outside-in through their peer networks. .

Issue control is recognized stability in what professionals and organizations dominate the treatment of an issue in a particular way. As such, issue control has a temporal dimension (stability is temporary and can be disrupted) and a strategic dimension within a two-level network, as professionals locate themselves within both professional and organizational networks to enhance their capacities and secure resources. Analysing issue control in transnational governance as a two-level professional and organizational network is another key contribution of this volume.

To provide a hypothetical example, a professional agronomist working on food security at the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has a particular initiative to treat an aspect of the issue. Her boss at the FAO is not so keen on the idea and blocks activities that damage his organizational performance objectives, including competing with other UN agencies like the World Food Programme. Still, our agronomist creates a network with professionals from other IOs, as well as NGOs like CARE and firms like DuPont, to form an alliance on how to treat the transnational issue. She creates with them a professional taskforce that attaches itself to regular meetings already funded by the organizations. This taskforce creates a new transnational professional consensus on how an aspect of food security should be treated and who is best equipped to do so. A new benchmark on what constitutes a best practice has been created, and the boss at the FAO is then asked by his superiors to introduce it as common practice within the organization. Control of the issue has changed due to outside-in professional coordination, followed by inside-out organizational changes backed by formal authority. This is a hypothetical example, but one that frequently occurs in a range of issues in transnational governance.

This book is concerned with how professionals and organizations navigate networks in attempts at issue control in transnational governance. Here the transnationality of issues matters. At the transnational level of activity, professionals and organizations exhibit high levels of distributed agency in their activities, with both incremental and strategic activities taking place from a range of actors working on an issue (Quack 2007; Whittle et al. 2011). Transnationality permits greater diversity in who seeks to control issues, as well as often fracturing control through multiple levels of formal and informal governance. While conventional theories of change in transnational governance point to key drivers, such as states engaging in the 'rational design' of IOs (Koremenos et al. 2001) or norm entrepreneurs operating through NGOs (Barnett and Finnemore 2004), transnationality muddles these images by introducing greater complexity between the range of actors in the international political economy.

We also suggest that transnationality matters for professional strategies for issue control, and while efforts have been made to understand transnational community and identity formation (Djelic and Quack 2010), transnationality can also be depicted as providing an opportunity space that looks like strategic networks of a more emergent character. Issues in transnational governance are difficult to control because they cannot be held too tightly by one organization. Organizations can become fragile if they hold too tightly to a singular conception of an issue or become host to professional activity that inverts original conceptions of how the issue should be treated (as with international whaling, see Epstein 2008).

Issues must be continuously managed through attempts at control, including stratagems to obtain knowledge and resources that enhance the capacity for control (Henriksen and Seabrooke 2016).

Issues that have transnationality may be partially decoupled from professions or organizations in national spaces. Instead, they can be opened up for contestation and cooperation at a level where professionals and organizations must continuously justify and adapt their claims to legitimacy on issue control. Attempts at justification often follow professional lines, suggesting that the issue at hand is highly technical and can only be addressed with a specific skill set or ethical comportment. Justifications can also follow organizational lines, with organizations seeking to affirm their original mandate or creeping into others' territory as they seek to expand their bureaucratic capacities and reach (Weaver 2008).

Professionals in Transnational Governance

Scholarship on professionals and organizations in transnational governance can be traced to the early 1970s, especially Robert W. Cox and Harold K. Jacobson's (1973) *The Anatomy of Influence*. Cox and Jacobson identified 'initiators, vetoers and brokers' who had influence within IOs as individuals, depending on how they were positioned in the organization. This inside-out view of professionals and organizations described why IOs differed, while others worried about how growing transnationalism would accord too much power to unaccountable professionals and experts, providing an outside-in view on how professionals affect domestic organizations (Kaiser 1971). Interest in professionals and organizations as competing entities soon gave way to Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye's (1972, 1974, 1977) work on 'complex interdependence' that provided a basic network understanding of how non-state actors achieve influence over issues. This, in turn, evolved in a microeconomics-led shift into regime theory that focused on decision-making from public organizations (Keohane 1984).

The resurgence of interest in professionals in transnational governance emerged around the work on 'epistemic communities', following the view that shared scientific expertise could lead to the diffusion of knowledge and what we would in International Relations terminology now understand as norms. The members of epistemic communities were explicitly understood as a 'network of professionals' who could make an 'authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge' (Haas 1992). They were brought together by shared normative frameworks and understandings of what constitutes proper science in their field (Djelic and Quack 2010: 20). Much of this literature was concerned with the marginal influence of professionals in relation to the interstate system. A cognate field of

literature emerged from the 'World Polity' approach, which located professionals as theorizing change within the strictures of global cultural and normative structures, with noted reluctance to attribute them 'actorness' due to these structural constraints (Meyer and Jepperson 2000). In both streams of literature, less emphasis was placed on what we identify in this volume as professional strategies: how professionals use networks to control issues and to create new markets, and how professionals create demand for their services. We are informed by this earlier literature while adding strategic elements to professional competition and cooperation. In this regard, we follow scholars working on transnational advocacy who view networks not only as a means of community formation but also as sites of 'cultural and political negotiation' (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 211).

The highly influential work on 'pathologies' in IOs placed great emphasis on how professionals are moulded by organizational cultures, so as to produce irrational policy outcomes (Barnett and Finnemore 1999, 2004). Here 'socialized' professionals produce policies through a range of pathologies, such as the 'irrationality of rationalization', 'bureaucratic universalism', 'normalization of deviance', and 'insulation'. Insulation is linked to professionals in that training is not simply technical but also involves the shaping and orientation of one's worldview, which is then accentuated when the same type of professionals are marched in line by a bureaucracy. Here professionals insulate themselves from outside voices and conform to their own norms and values (Barnett and Finnemore 1999: 722–723). The punch-line here is that technical expertise matters for IOs to have authority, but that technical expertise often comes at a high cost from pathologies that distort the policymaking process and implementation and as a result deteriorate the responsiveness of IOs. This framework provides the 'iron cage' version of earlier, more optimistic, work on epistemic communities, highlighting how scientific consensus might mediate otherwise fierce struggles between self-interested states.

More recently, work on professionals in transnational governance has continued these themes at a greater level of magnification. Jeffrey Chwieroth's (2007, 2010, 2012) studies of how professional training is important alongside organizational socialization provides an excellent example. Chwieroth demonstrates how economists trained by elite American institutions went to the IMF and then went back to their home countries, mainly in the Americas, and changed policies on capital account liberalization to conform with their professional education and IMF socialization. Importantly, the impact of professional training and socialization determines much of what is going on here, and Chwieroth and others (Nelson 2014, 2017) identify *trajectories* from professional

experience rather than how it permits strategies to change how issues are controlled. This volume provides a specific contribution to this growing literature in detailing how professional strategies interact with organizational opportunities and how professionals operate from the inside-out and also the outside-in in pursuing issue control. We also contribute to methodological advances in how professionals and professional strategies can be identified from their career patterns and network position (see, in particular, Chapters 4, 11, and 12 in this volume).

Professional Tasks and Issue Professionals

Professionals and organizations seek to control issues in transnational governance, and a capacity for control over an issue has a strong relationship to how professionals understand their tasks. Following Andrew Abbott, professional tasks are composed of objective elements, such as technological advancements, organization, natural objects and facts, and slow-changing cultural structures, as well as from subjective qualities in how professionals construct the problem to be addressed by the task (Abbott 1988: 39–40). This also includes gearing the science or knowledge involved in task allocation to support 'defensive institutional work' (Lefsrud and Meyer 2012). The subjective qualities of tasks include the modalities of action for professionals in how they classify, reason, and take action on identified problems, or how they diagnose, infer, and treat their identified problems. In areas of governance that are highly technical and narrow, professional tasks and transnational issue control may go hand in hand. The response to the SARS and bird flu crises provide an example where transnational issue control was held by doctors and health scientists who diagnosed and treated the problem. Professional tasks were closely matched to issue control. By contrast, concern over demographic change and falling fertility in the OECD has led to a range of professionals assigning tasks to problems, such as doctors working on subfertility and demographers working on delayed family formation, without any particular group exercising transnational issue control despite the obvious political salience (Seabrooke and Tsingou 2015, 2016). Differentiating professional tasks and how professionals and organizations attempt to control transnational issues directs us to the work content in issue management as well as to strategies for contestation and cooperation.

Issues of transnational governance can be contested and open up considerable space for professionals who seek to influence them by bringing together resources from their personal networks that are derived from relationships with other professionals and organizations. Both professional tasks and issues can be transformed through institutionalization,

including movements to liberalize what were national tasks in the creation of a transnational profession, as with neoclassically trained economists (Fourcade 2006). Changes to tasks can also occur through processes of professionalization, including demands for conducting work in particular ways, according to codes of ethics, as well as treating professionalism as a capacity to manage and organize tasks rather than the knowledge and training that inform their execution (Muzio and Faulconbridge 2008; Evetts 2013). Professionals have a strong incentive to maintain their position within a network by excluding others who do not agree with their understanding of issues or threaten their resources. In some areas, such as financial reform, professionals behave according to prestige incentives and will be reluctant to introduce controversial ideas and topics in which they have little expertise, such as shadow banking, or political power, such as tax havens. Rather, they will control debates in a manner that confirms their affiliations and prestige networks (Seabrooke and Tsingou 2014; Ban et al. 2016). Similarly, as is well known in organization studies, professionals can network to ensure that knowledge production is under their control rather than from bureaucracies formally running the organization (Kamoche et al. 2011). Furthermore, an important and poorly understood factor here is what we can refer to as professional 'style' (White 2008). The capacity to induce deference on who can control an issue is not simply a matter of formal training and socialization but also professional presentation, manners, and behaviour. Professionals invest time in 'impression management'. Clever professionals can use style to manoeuvre within professional networks and organizational networks, heightening their control over an issue and focusing their tasks.

Still organizations are far from helpless. Tightly held professional tasks can also be challenged by organizations through 'mission creep' or 'crowding', whereby those less able to provide professional services barge in nevertheless to fulfil organizational objectives (Weaver 2008: 140). Such behaviour is common from competing IOs and NGOs who seek to demonstrate policy relevance across issues even when they do not employ the relevant professionals (Cooley and Ron 2002: 17).

Following this understanding of tasks, we define professionals as individuals with abstract higher level learning and specific skill sets to address tasks. We do not restrict *professionals* to formal *professions*, such as law, medicine, etc. Many professionals attempting issue control have mixed educational backgrounds and are not usefully conceived as 'lawyers' or 'accountants', etc. We suggest that 'issue professionals' are an emergent type of actors that come from attempts at issue control (Henriksen and Seabrooke 2016). Rather than locating in specific associations, such as the American Medical Association or the like, these professionals combine

knowledge and skills to enhance their attempts at control on a specific issue in transnational governance. Issue professionals differ from issue entrepreneurs in that they do not necessarily need to campaign or invent issues, but they are involved in generating, maintaining, and defending attempts at issue control (for example, see, on accounting, Botzem 2013). Issue professionals can be involved in professionalization activities, but formal institutionalization is not a requirement to be considered relevant when it comes to issue control. We highlight how issue professionals network and engage with organizations, as well as how, in some cases, organizations and organizational networks enable issue professionals. To create a shorthand, issue professionals are the actors in this book, issue control is what they want, and a two-level professional-organizational network is their context of action.

We suggest that reflecting on how professionals use networks to navigate organizational logics is much more a reflection of these characteristics rather than the formal designation of the organization. As suggested at the beginning of this chapter, the agronomist from the FAO will select to include professionals in her network based not only on their knowledge and resources but also on what access they can provide to organizational resources they are connected to. DuPont may well be able to finance a new initiative in food security that is not possible in the FAO, with the agronomist still maintaining a high degree of knowledge centralization on the issue at hand. Such interplay between professionals and organizations is how most transnational issues are governed. We suggest that issues in transnational governance exist within *a professional-organizational nexus*.

The Professional-Organizational Nexus as a Two-Level Network

We argue that it is a *professional-organizational nexus* that is the key to explaining who controls issues at the transnational level. We provide a framework for understanding how professionals and organizations interact in transnational issue networks based on differentiating professional work roles and organizational types. Professionals in our framework draw on organizational and professional domains at the same time – building alliances from where they can draw action from both domains as they seek to control issues and how they should be treated. Our claim here is that professional battles are essential for transnational issue control and that patterns of coordination and competition of professionals and organizations are decisive for actors' capacity to interpret and influence issues in transnational governance. As such, we build on earlier work on transnational governance studying 'individual behaviors, interactions and

processes, with studies of institutional and cultural forces' (Djelic and Andersson 2006: 19). This agenda has long turned its attention to professionals and how they create networks to transform organizations and carve out their own markets (i.e. Dezalay and Garth 2002b). This scholarship also complements the research agenda on 'transnational communities' that studies the formation of transnational identities, including among professionals and professions (Djelic and Quack 2010). We suggest that the professional-organizational nexus can best be understood as a *two-level network*, where professionals have relationships, organizations have relationships, and where professionals and organizations interact (for a related point on the duality of persons and groups in networks, see Breiger 1974). While others prefer to describe professionals as operating in organizational fields, we stress that both professionals and organizations have agency in forming strategies – and that neither provide a passive space for the other to operate within. Rather than seeing fields as independent spaces of activity, both professionals and organizations can act as 'fields of agents' in establishing their differences and alliances (Bigo 2011: 239; Dezalay and Garth 2016). As such, professionals will seek to extend their networks through common identification with other similarly trained professionals, though often not through formal professional associations, or by creating alliances with professionals with different but complementary sets of skills (see also Lazega et al. 2017). Those who manage to exploit opportunities to enhance their influence on an issue are likely to maximize issue control beyond their intrinsic organizational capacities. This is, in part, because organizations do not participate in issue networks with their full portfolio of activities, but with specific segments of professionals working on this or that issue within the organization.

Organizations face an apparent trade-off when seeking issue control via knowledge: to dampen issue flux, organizations may choose to increase the technicality of an issue, rendering competitors without the necessary expertise obsolete. If organizations control areas of expertise that are deemed legitimate as a solution to a given issue, or if professional and organizational logics overlap, this strategy may be successful (Broome and Seabrooke 2015). But if expertise for the governance of a highly technical issue is not controlled by a particular organization, groups of professionals may gain considerable discretion and develop strategies of issue control that differ from or oppose the organizational network. Organizations may also pursue the opposite strategy of politicizing or moralizing an issue, bringing principles and values to the fore to trump expert opinion. Both strategies require engaging other organizations and professionals. A two-level perspective enables a view of organizational actorness stemming from elements that are both internal and external to the organization at hand.