

The Cambridge Companion to International Organizations Law

The Cambridge Companion to International Organizations Law illuminates, from a legal perspective, what international organizations are, what makes them 'tick' and how they affect the world around them. It critically discusses such classic issues as the concept of international organization and membership, as well as questions of internal relations, accountability and how they make law, set standards and otherwise affect both their member states and the world around them. The volume further discusses the role of international organizations in particular policy domains, zooming in on domains which are not often discussed through international organizations, including disarmament, energy, food security and health. Eventually, a picture emerges of international organizations as complex phenomena engaging in all sorts of activities and relationships, the operation and authority of which is underpinned by the rules and regulations of international law.

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Invitations were sent out sometime in 2017, with drafts envisaged in the summer of 2019, and final deadlines only scheduled for February 2020. Pretty much all authors I approached seemed to find this a workable idea, and accepted: I got the 'dream team' I wanted. An improvised, last-minute author's workshop took place in late 2018 at the Erik Castrén Institute of International Law and Human Rights (ECI) at the University of Helsinki, with financial support (gratefully acknowledged) from the Academy of Finland. The practical organization rested in the very calm and extremely capable hands of Anna van der Velde, ECI's coordinator. By the summer of 2019, the first drafts were coming in, received comments and were returned to their respective authors, in eager anticipation of the final texts.

And then, by the time those final versions were expected, the Covid-19 pandemic hit, and all schedules could be thrown out. Some authors had already more or less finalized their texts by then; but most had to tear up their timetables. Some have young children, and all of a sudden needed to focus on home-schooling. Some may have had elderly relatives requiring care and attention. Some have spouses working in hospitals on the Covid-



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19 frontline. All needed to adapt to new demands of online teaching, attending webinars and meetings online; needed to reschedule and rethink their commitments; and all needed to come to terms with the idea that globalization (something international lawyers, no matter how critical, tend to look at with some natural affinity) may have been part of the problem. And the author of the planned chapter on international organizations working on global health became possibly the busiest international lawyer on the planet. After all, there were few others that newspapers, blogs, podcasts, and other outlets and institutions could turn to with a similar level of expertise in precisely the legal aspects of global health.

So, February 2020 came and went, and while quite a few chapters understandably came in later than anticipated, the amazing thing is that they arrived at all. None of the authors dropped out; none of them gave up. All authors remained committed, showing grace under pressure – considerably more so than the harried editor of this volume. Hence, in terms of acknowledgements, the only fitting tribute is to say a kind (but loud) word of thanks to the authors, who have all produced wonderful, informative and illuminating chapters. Covid-19 taught us (or those of us who did not realize it before) that there are more important things in life than producing academic volumes, but even so, if academic volumes must to be produced, they might as well be good. Taken together, the chapters in this volume demonstrate that international organizations are among the main institutions exercising global governance, and are worthy of considerably more attention and scrutiny than they have traditionally been given.



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