

A Matter of Style?


Organizational Agency in Global Public Policy

International public administrations (IPAs) have become an essential feature of global governance, contributing to what some have described as the ‘bureaucratization of world politics’. While we do know that IPAs matter for international politics, we neither know exactly to what extent nor how exactly they matter for international organizations’ policy making processes and subsequent outputs. This book provides an innovative perspective on IPAs and their agency in introducing the concept of administrative styles to the study of international organizations and global public policy. It argues that the administrative bodies of international organizations can develop informal working routines that allow them to exert influence beyond their formal autonomy and mandate. The theoretical argument is tested by an encompassing comparative assessment of administrative styles and their determinants across eight IPAs, providing rich empirical insight gathered in more than 100 expert interviews.

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Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-83637-1 — A Matter of Style
Louisa Bayerlein , Christoph Knill , Yves Steinebach
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978-1-108-83637-1 — A Matter of Style
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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-108-83637-1 — A Matter of Style
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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
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 79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108836371

DOI: 10.1017/9781108864671

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First published 2020

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Bayerlein, Louisa, 1991– author. | Knill, Christoph, author. | Steinebach, Yves, 1987– author.

Title: A matter of style? : organizational agency in global public policy / Louisa Bayerlein, Christoph Knill, Yves Steinebach.

Description: Cambridge ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2020. |

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2019058108 (print) | LCCN 2019058109 (ebook) |

ISBN 9781108836371 (hardback) | ISBN 9781108864671 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: International agencies – Administration. | International organization. | Political planning. | Management.

Classification: LCC JZ4850 .B39 2020 (print) | LCC JZ4850 (ebook) |

DDC 352.3/4211–dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019058108>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019058109>

ISBN 978-1-108-83637-1 Hardback

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*This book is dedicated to Klaus Bayerlein,
who would have been so proud of his daughter.*

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Cambridge University Press
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Preface

This book was inspired by the idea that in order to better understand international organizations' agency, we need to redirect our attention from their formal characteristics and exceptional achievements or failures to the ordinary, informal workings of their staff. Much ink has been spilled on international public administrations' role in shaping various extraordinary events and policy outputs. Yet, we can learn a lot about (international) organizations by examining their staffers' actions not in critical moments but in their daily work. Likewise, formal characteristics alone fail to capture the deeper running, less easily quantifiable intricacies of international organizations. There is simply more to international public administrations than single indicators can tell us.

Consider the very simple example of wanting to learn more about a person. When we observe someone dressed up quite extravagantly one day, we would not immediately consider them a flamboyant dresser based on this snapshot. Only at the point where the person regularly, often intuitively, chooses attire of that kind would we speak of a personal style. This style is an expression of the person, his or her spirit, ambitions, and the like. When interested in what really 'makes somebody tick', these distinctive patterns of behaviour are at least as informative as considering single, exceptional acts. In this book, we are of course less interested in appearances or individual attire, but in 'how things are done' in international public administrations as a whole. There is a certain way of going about quotidian tasks which is distinct to a given organization. Similar to the quite mundane example above, these administrative styles only emerge in regularity, as a routine. They are so deeply embedded in the respective organizational culture that they can be considered an organization's default way of working. These defaults teach us about an organization's underlying orientations just as a clothing style clues us in on someone's personality.

Similarly, knowing exactly how tall or short, young or old, rich or poor said person is only reveals a small part of the story of who they are. These readily quantifiable bits of information could hint at certain character traits, but no one would seriously claim to really know somebody based on these statistics alone. Just as demographic characteristics are thus only loosely coupled with who a person truly is, administrative styles are not entirely determined by formal organizational characteristics, such as size, membership, budget, or mandate. Although shifting attention away from these characteristics obviously comes with the risk of introducing complications, what drives international public administrations, their underlying orientations in policy making, is more elusive than numbers can tell. Hence we believe this effort, which we undertake in this book, to be worthwhile.

After more than three years in the making, this book really came together in the summer of 2018. The effort of eventually putting everything in place was made bearable – fun even – by a good portion of team spirit, long walks, and Munich beer gardens. We would like to thank our colleagues of the Research Unit 1745 on ‘International Public Administrations (IPAs)’ funded by the German Science Foundation (DFG) for continuously providing valuable input and stimulating discussions. In supporting this research group, the DFG also provided generous funding for the specific research carried out for this book (grant no. KN 891/7–1). Especially in the earlier stages of this research project, Jan Enkler, Stephan Grohs, Steffen Eckhard, Christina Kern, Lucia de Grandi, and Sylvia Schmidt gave very valuable input on the overall concept and manuscript. We are also greatly indebted to them for their efforts and assistance in gathering the data for this book. Throughout the years, Dionys Zink has been a tremendous help in preparing and finalizing the manuscript for this book. Kim Greenwell has provided excellent language editing assistance. We are especially grateful to our editor at Cambridge University Press, Joe Ng, and the series editors Michael Howlett, M. Ramesh, and Xun Wu for their time and encouragement, as well as to the three anonymous reviewers for their willingness to truly and thoroughly engage with our work. Above all, we would like to thank the over 100 staffers who took the time to provide us with insights into their work routines. Despite all this invaluable help in making this book possible, all errors of course remain ours.

Abbreviations

AusAid	Australian Agency for International Development
BIS	Bank for International Settlement
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
CDG	Center for Global Development
CFC	Chlorofluorocarbon
COFO	Committee on Forestry
CPF	Country Programming Framework
CPR	Committee of Permanent Representatives
DEWA	Division of Early Warning and Assessment
DFID	Department for International Development
DTIE	Division of Technology, Industry, and Economics
ExCom	Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
G20	Group of 20
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEO	Global Environment Outlook
GMG	Global Migration Group
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IHR	International Health Regulations
ILC	International Labour Conference
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMS	International Military Staff
IO	International Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPA	International Public Administration
IPPC	International Plant Protection Convention
IR	International Relations

IS	International Staff
ITC-ILO	International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization
ITPGRFA	International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
LFA	Logical Framework Approach
MTS	Mid-term Strategy
MOPAN	Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PHEIC	Public Health Emergency of International Concern
PoW	Programme of Work
QUART	NATO's four biggest budget holders, US, UK, France, and Germany
QUINT	NATO's five biggest budget holders, US, UK, France, Germany, and Italy
RTS	Regional Thematic Specialists
SRI	Socially Responsible Investment
TC	Technical Cooperation
TSR	Triennial Surveillance Reviews
UN	United Nations
UNCSD	United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEA	United Nations Environmental Assembly
UNEO	United Nations Environment Organization
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WEA	World Environment Organization

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-83637-1 — A Matter of Style
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WFP	World Food Programme
WHA	World Health Assembly
WHO	World Health Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

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