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‘Walking the extra mile’: how governance networks attract international organizations to Geneva, The Hague, Vienna, and Copenhagen (1995-2015)

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Citation

Groen, R. S. (2022, November 24). *‘Walking the extra mile’: how governance networks attract international organizations to Geneva, The Hague, Vienna, and Copenhagen (1995-2015)*. Eleven, The Hague.
Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3487203>

Version: Publisher's Version

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Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3487203>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

‘Walking the extra mile’

The commercial edition of this book is published by Eleven.

ISBN 978-94-6236-283-3

ISBN 978-90-5189-681-7 (E-book)

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This study was supported by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (grant number 023.005.004) and The Hague University of Applied Sciences: Faculty Management & Organisation (Bedrijfskunde Program), the Centre of Expertise Governance of Urban Transitions (Lectorate Public Governance), the former Lectorate International Peace, Justice & Security, and the Centre of Expertise Global Governance (Lectorate Changing Role of Europe).

Published, sold and distributed by Eleven

P.O. Box 85576

2508 CG The Hague

The Netherlands

Tel.: +31 70 33 070 33

Fax: +31 70 33 070 30

e-mail: sales@elevenpub.nl

www.elevenpub.com

Sold and distributed in USA and Canada

Independent Publishers Group

814 N. Franklin Street

Chicago, IL 60610, USA

Order Placement: +1 800 888 4741

Fax: +1 312 337 5985

orders@ipgbook.com

www.ipgbook.com

Eleven is an imprint of Boom uitgevers Den Haag.

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‘WALKING THE EXTRA MILE’

*HOW GOVERNANCE NETWORKS ATTRACT
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO
GENEVA, THE HAGUE, VIENNA, AND COPENHAGEN
(1995-2015)*

PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van
de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van de rector magnificus prof.dr.ir. H. Bijl,
volgens besluit van het college voor promoties
te verdedigen op 24 november 2022
klokke 16.15 uur
door
Rosa Sara Groen
geboren te Amsterdam
in 1979

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*For Ruben,
Japi and Pom*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Here I am, on the train in Spain, writing the acknowledgements. I pinch myself. Is this really happening? While working on this book I went through many stages, of which I learned so much. I owe many people my thanks for this. The 150 respondents have been generous with their time, I want to thank every single one of them. I am grateful to the municipalities of The Hague and Vienna, as well as the Canton of Geneva and the Greater Copenhagen. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, The Netherlands, Austria, and Denmark have been helpful, as well as the many International Organizations, experts, and NGOs I bothered with my curiosity and questions. I am grateful to my supervisors, Bernard, Joris, and Henno. Without your steering efforts and constructive feedback, the manuscript would not have become a success. Our pleasant meetings started with compliments, and the rest of the hour was full of scientific objections. It was tough at times, but it made me stronger. Thanks to the three of you for keeping faith in me. I am grateful to the advisors in academia as well, such as the Pyjama Elf team on lobbying and interest groups: Ellis, Adriá, Moritz, Erin, Rik, and Linda, Patrick and Jeroen. I would like to thank the Dual-PhD center of Leiden University, especially Yvonne, Johannes, and Petra, and in the final years the Kopgroep. We shared frustrations and successes, which made the whole experience more relatable. I want to thank Mark Dechesne, Geertje and Titus for their help on the SPSS part of the book. I want to thank my academic Twitter community, and the inspiring colleagues I met at conferences of the Netherlands Institute of Governance (NIG) and the European Group of Public Administration (EGPA). The feedback of Yvonne Kleistra, Gerard Wuisman, Lisa Roodenburg, Patrick Kenis, Jörg Raab, Allan McConnell, Paul Kuijpers, Ruben Stern, Roos van Os, and Flip Schrameijer on earlier versions improved the manuscript. I am thankful to all of you. Christopher Chambers and John Hayes, natives who revised my English: I owe you. I would also like to thank my fellow lecturers from The Hague University of Applied Sciences, especially Carolien, Wil, Thessa, Frank, Maarten, Henk, Loes, Esther, as well as my (former) managers Willem, Marjolein, Dolf, Phine, Ronald, Florian, and Michiel. Colleagues at the lectorate Changing Role of Europe have been very supportive and fun to work with. Thanks to Mendeltje, Tibor, Remmelt, Vasilis, Chris, Rieneke, Emma, and the new researchers, I feel like having a research family. I am especially thankful to my boss Mendeltje van Keulen for supporting me during the last phase of the PhD. I want to thank Geert Mak, Herman Tjeenk Willink, and René van Stipriaan for being my inspiration. I am indebted to the Japi-and-Pom-caretaker-team: Sas, Jacqueline, Jan, Flip, Martien, and Gelske – also for our runs where we process every past week: thank you! Your love and support have been insanely helpful. I am grateful to the existence and care of the team of Castle Slangenburg. I would like to say a few words of thanks for keeping me physically sane to the acupuncture, beauty therapist, yoga, and massages of Marijke, Linda, Anja, Annelies, and Marlien, and to the Walrusclub for our cold swims

in the Markermeer. Merel and Annemarie, thanks for our cozy sauna visits. Without the *Feestclub* in Amsterdam, I would never have finished the book: Merel K., Merel L., Laura, Fenneke, Leonard, and Eleá, I hope to ‘party’ many more years in libraries, Coffee Companies and houses of friends and family who are on vacation. I want to thank my friends Roos, Rutger, Maya, Sarah, Lone, Tjarda, Marloes, Janne, and Anne for being there for me with a coffee, drink, lunch, or dinner, or just a call when I needed you. For keeping me mentally sane, I want to thank our English Book Club: Emily, Ruben, Tineke, Albert, Eric, Jane, Giles, Linda, Alex, Chris, Mas, and all the others. We have read 52 novels during this PhD-work which has been wonderful. Fellow *Warderberen*, thank you for listening and taking care of the kids in rush hours. I would also like to thank my paranymphs Marloes and Maya for the effort you put in supporting me, and in the festivities. And of course, my family for being there for me, and especially Floor for the magnificent book cover. Mom and dad, I am incredibly grateful for your love, listening ear, and presence. My dear brother Ruub, I thank you for our annual dinners, let’s keep them going. Finally, I am limitlessly indebted to my daily companions. Ruben, Japi, and Pom: thank you for your love, laughs, music, play, patience, and time. Without you, I would not have managed to finish anything. Therefore, I dedicate this work to you.

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PROLOGUE

It is the summer of 2019. The outcome of the Brexit negotiations is unpredictable, and most EU-funded European agencies are preparing to leave the United Kingdom to survive. One of them is the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF), an independent Intergovernmental Organization based in Reading. In September 2019, the ECMWF sends a letter to all the 23 member states of the organization informing them of the necessity to establish a new ECMWF facility to host the Copernicus program, the IGO branch dependent on European Union funding. They issue a Call for Proposals and request all member states to consider hosting the program, good for 250 workstations and, more importantly, a creation of synergies on scientific weather and climate excellence and thereby an increased reputation in the field.

On 15 April 2020, one month into the COVID pandemic, 9 of the 23 member states hand in a *letter of intent*, stating they want to host the facility. Originally, the deadline for the *proposals* and *bid books* is 10 September; due to the pandemic, it is postponed to October. This allows time to select a city to host this program, set up an organizational network, and lobby internally to get sufficient government support for an attractive proposal.

In May, Bologna, already hosting an ECMWF facility, is the first to publish its candidacy, followed by Toulouse. The other cities are Utrecht, Bonn/Helsinki, Barcelona, Tallinn, Lisbon, and Dublin. Bonn and Helsinki hand in a proposal together, indicating that they support each other. Reading also applies just in case the Brexit deal allows for EU-funded institutions to stay in the UK. Nearing the deadline, the host city of Utrecht backs out. The remaining countries and cities compete fiercely to get the necessary support from the member states, especially once the deadline for proposal is past and it is clear who the competitors are.

On 9 December 2020, a panel of non-bidding member states of the ECMWF decide in favor of Bonn. The proposal, supported by Helsinki from the start, consists of a 16-story glass tower with all the requested facilities to be built between 2021 and 2023, and a temporary facility in the city center. The panel notes that Bonn is home to ‘numerous UN agencies’ and has ‘a clear strategic advantage’ in being ‘within a radius of only a few hundred kilometers’ of several other EU countries. The ECMWF Council will be further investigating the setting-up of an ‘EANode’ (scientific hub) in Helsinki, Finland.

Now the questions arise: what were the conditions under which Bonn and Helsinki successfully attracted the organization? What did the organizational network do right? What did the others do wrong – if anything? Was it the promised new building? Was it the collaboration with Helsinki, giving the proposal a more international profile? Was it

Chancellor Angela Merkel's strong position across the EU? Or was it sheer luck? Why did the other seven proposals, despite having 'blown away' the committee, fail? In short, what determined the success of Bonn and Helsinki and the failure of the others?