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

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9 Conclusions and discussion

9.1 Introduction

In this book, I focus on how governance networks in small to medium-sized cities – Geneva, The Hague, Vienna, and Copenhagen – attract IOs and how they succeed or fail. The central question is: *What contributes to the successes and failures of governance networks in small to medium-sized Western European host cities in attracting International Organizations?* In the light of collaborative governance literature, the concept of governance networks is used as an umbrella for the following three groups: organizational networks attracting IOs, policy networks retaining them, and the IO representatives in the candidate cities. I explore eight cases using these perspectives. In the empirical chapters, I research how the processes of IO attraction correspond with expectations and their underlying mechanisms. My explorative analysis shows that some of my expectations are substantiated, while others are not. In this chapter, I will summarize and reflect on these findings.

In the following sections, I will first summarize my findings and then explain the broader implications of this study, both for theory as well as practice. I conclude this chapter with concluding remarks and avenues for future research.

9.2 Reflection on the findings

The instrumental perspective has led to an unexpected outcome: in contrast to what I expected, the findings show that the more host policies are aligned with the bid book for the IO, the less likely the IO attraction is to be successful. Additional qualitative findings also give reasons to suggest that the process is probably more successful when the bid focuses predominantly on the needs of the IO itself and less on aligning with host and branding policy goals. For this perspective, I also find what I did expect: that a positive perception of host policies contributes partially to success in attracting new IOs. One example of this is the UNOPS case in Copenhagen, where the perception of the elements in the bid and the rules and regulations was quite positive: the 'premises free of charge' element in the bid was the most important asset for new IO employees to move to Copenhagen. They were interested in the good support they heard about.

For the discursive perspective, I find that overlap of perceptual frames between governmental groups does not contribute to the likelihood of success. This finding is unexpected and suggests that the alignment of priorities and narratives within governmental networks does not automatically lead to success. However, for the overlap of perceptual frames between the governmental network and IO representatives, I do find a relationship with success. This finding is in line with my earlier observations, showing that putting more emphasis on the needs of the IO could be rewarding in the process of attracting an IO.

Contrary to my expectations, I find that, for the relational perspective, no relation exists between network cooperation within the organizational network and the likelihood of success. In addition, I find that a high centrality in a network is partially related to success, but that, especially, network diversity contributes to success, and to a lesser extent network size. Table 9.1 summarizes these findings:

Table 9.1 Perspectives, expectations, and outcomes

Perspective	Expected contribution to success:	Outcome as expected:
Instrumental	1. Alignment of host policies with bid book	Opposite
	2. Perception of host policy and support	Partially
Discursive	3. Similar frames between organizational and policy network	No
	4. Similar frames between organizational network and IO representatives	Yes
Relational	*Internal legitimacy:* 5. Network cooperation	No
	Actor-level properties: 6a. Betweenness centrality 6b. Degree centrality	 a. Partially b. Partially
	Network-level properties: 7a. Network diversity 7b. Network size	 a. Yes b. Partially

The empirical findings based on my case studies lead to three main conclusions. The first concerns the need for a more externally aimed orientation of governance networks. Especially when the organizational networks attracting IOs are more attentive to the specific needs and wishes of IO representatives, the processes tend to be more successful.

My second conclusion is based on the finding that broader actor centrality in the network leads to success. When reviewing network structures, I found that having several actors centrally positioned is better than only one. Furthermore, the existence of sub-networks and linkages between the core network and these sub-networks are important and lead to a further increase in the likelihood of success.

My third conclusion is based on my findings on the last expectation dealing with network diversity and number of nodes: network *diversity* and, to a lesser extent, network *size* positively affect the likelihood of success.

9.3 Theoretical implications

My first conclusion, that governance networks need a more external orientation when attracting IOs, is related to all three perspectives.

Conclusion 1. The need of an external orientation when attracting IOs
Looking first from an instrumental perspective, I found that the alignment of the bid book with policy goals is counterproductive. When formulating a bid for an IO, governance networks are more successful when they are outward-looking instead of inward-looking. When the bid book considers what the needs of the specific IO are and is less aligned with host policy goals, it tends to be more successful.

My conclusion has implications for the literature on collaborative policy designs, in which public actors often seek to optimize alignment between policy goals. As Rogge (2018) argues, targets need to be consistent with long-term targets to be successful. Furthermore, "consistency and coherence" are crucial in successful policy formulation (p. 44). Others agree, like Mukherjee and Bali (2019), who state that a successful policy design needs "coherence, consistency, and congruence" (p. 4). My finding contradicts this line of thinking. For the cases of attracted IOs I studied, more coherent policies lowered the likelihood of success. Of course, this is a result based on a sample of eight cases, but it is nonetheless remarkable. One of the explanations of this finding is that a host policy needs flexibility. The more a bid book is aligned to the wishes and the nature of the IO, and the less it is bound by existing policy document guidelines, the higher the likelihood of success. One example of this is the successfully attracted Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat to Geneva. After having lost the Green Climate Fund, the organizational network in Geneva 'walked the extra mile': the network adapted the bid book more consistently to the IO. Moreover, a great deal of the elements in the bid were left open for further discussion, which led to a flexible attitude. A second example is the failed case of The Hague, where the policy alignment was also higher than in the successful case. Although the annexes for the bid were quite complete, some of the requests had to wait and could not be fulfilled. The governance network was more resistant towards the UNICEF Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division. This means that when strictly adhering to nation host policy formats and marketing strategies, bid books are likely to fail in attracting an IO, at least in the cases I studied.

The second part of the instrumental perspective also supports this conclusion. When studying how the ‘target group’ of IO employees perceived host policies, I find that a more positive perception of host policies and government support leads to a higher likelihood of success. It matters how ‘policy recipients’ or IO employees perceive policymaking. It is therefore crucial that governance networks have an external orientation in which their host policies are adaptable to the needs of the IOs. If the IO employees are more satisfied with the government support received from the host city and state, this has an impact on attracting new IOs. In Vienna, for example, when international employees note that their field is supported sufficiently – in the successful case – they comment more positively on host policies, and this also attracts more new activity in that field – of sustainable energy in this case. In Copenhagen, where the employees are disappointed about the administrative change in obtaining identity numbers for non-EU citizens, a substantial part of the international community is dissatisfied, and this has a carry-over effect to possible new international employees. Theoretically, this finding is consistent with the policy success literature (McConnell, 2010; McConnell, Grealy, & Lea, 2020), which agrees that higher benefits for the target group lead to more policy program success.

Taking this a step further, since this finding indicates that a positive perception of host policies by policy recipients could potentially lead to more network success, it also addresses the ‘success for whom’ question, which offers an important nuance in the discussion on policy success (McConnell, Grealy, & Lea, 2020). In this literature, little attention has been paid to this question, and although I conducted a limited study, it adds to the discussion: the perceptions of policy recipients can potentially have a positive effect on policy success. A further analysis of these processes in this light is still needed to make this a more robust contribution to the policy success literature. For this purpose, using a ‘success for whom’ heuristic can have an added value to this finding, by first *capturing* actor success by focusing on how the existing IO representatives affect the possibility of attracting new employees, then *explain* their success, and finally *evaluate* it (McConnell, Grealy, & Lea, 2020, p. 605).

The discursive perspective also emphasizes the need for an externally oriented governance network, but in a different way. When looking at the overlap of perceptual frames, I expected that governmental groups would make better policy decisions when they shared a similar discourse (Peters, 2012). Contrary to my expectations, the findings do not support this. I find no relationship between a discursive overlap between governmental networks and success. The opposite may not be true either: networks are not more successful when showing less overlap in their priorities and narratives. What *does* lead to a higher likelihood of success is a similar frame between different networks. The overlap of priorities and narratives between the organizational network attracting the IO and the IO representatives does lead to a higher likelihood of success. This finding has links to the first perspective; the more the policies are adapted to the needs of policy recipients, the better.

This result reflects a finding in the literature on normative institutionalism. Schimmelfennig and Thomas (2009) have used this theory to analyze how bargaining processes take place in the EU. Although this is a different type of study, they argue that when different groups have similar normative frames, it contributes positively to the ability to reach agreement – better than between similar groups. This supports my finding that governance networks need to be externally oriented to be successful.

Finally, based on the relational perspective, I can draw a similar conclusion. The finding concerning network cooperation shows that a positive perception of cooperation among the network members does not lead to success in attracting IOs. My relational expectations originate from the network performance indicators of Kenis and Provan (2009): mandated/voluntary inception, form of governance, and developmental stage of the network. These lead to my concepts of *internal legitimacy*, *actor-level properties,* and *network-level properties.* The variable of network cooperation is based on the first concept, internal legitimacy. Although Kenis and Provan (2009) suggest that the need for a high internal legitimacy applied only to voluntary networks, I expected that the cooperation levels should be high, especially in mandated networks led by Network Administrative Organizations (NAOs). This expectation was wrong. In fact, there is no relationship at all between good cooperation and success, implying that a high degree of internal legitimacy in an organizational network is not linked to success. This also implies that NAO-led networks might need another assessment criterion for their effectiveness. I would propose using *external legitimacy* as a criterion, which refers to a positive assessment of network cooperation by outsiders such as the policy recipients, funders, regulators, the public, and the media (Kenis & Provan, 2009). An outside observer can often provide more valuable information about network effectiveness than an insider who can often be too involved in the middle of the process to provide insight into what is going well.

Networks need an external orientation to attract IOs successfully. As shown, this is supported by all three perspectives. Firstly, from the policy alignment and perception perspective, secondly from a discursive perspective where the overlap of perceptual frames works better between different than similar networks; and finally, from a relational perspective where a positive perception of network cooperation does not lead to higher levels of success.

Conclusion 2: Network centrality and the existence of sub-networks contribute to success in attracting IOs

My second conclusion relates to network centrality. Having several central actors contributes to success. It is better to have a few actors primarily responsible for the attraction process than only one – such as in the UNICEF Private Fundraising and Partnerships case in The Hague. Furthermore, the existence of sub-networks linked to the core of the broader network also contributes to success.

What I find in terms of network centrality is that the frequency of meetings does not have an effect, but the type of actors matters. In some successful cases, I find that although actors of high political standing do not frequently meet with others, their involvement can be crucial. For example, one meeting with the Prime Minister might affect success more than several meetings with the Secretary of State. An example in the case of the Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat attracted to Geneva is that Foreign Minister gave a speech at the right event at the right time. This may have been the last push that got member states to vote for Switzerland and Geneva. Another example is the way the Dutch Prime Minister got involved in the attraction of the International Criminal Court. His activity was only at the periphery of the network and quite limited, whereas the effect of his involvement has presumably been considerable.

The importance of sub-networks aligns with earlier work by Provan and Sebastian (1998) and Provan and Lemaire (2012), who argue that the existence of sub-networks (which they call *cliques*) can lead to higher network effectiveness. Moreover, the importance of single actors as bridges between networks and sub-networks is found in the work of Granovetter, who developed a long-standing hypothesis on ‘the strength of weak ties’ (1983), arguing that weak ties had a strength, as they could be crucial bridges between two densely knit groups of close friends or coworkers. When looking, for example, at the network graph of the Sustainable Energy case attracted to Copenhagen, one of the most influential ties is the Ministry of Taxation, which does, in the end, have a decisive say in the failure to attract the Quasi-IO by preventing the granting of tax exemptions. This is an actor in between sub-networks. A more positive example is that of the network attracting the same IO to Vienna. Two of the most important nodes, the Legal advisor of the Foreign Ministry and the Energy department of the Foreign Ministry can be considered *weak ties* or ‘institutional plugs’ located in the periphery, but nevertheless linking two sub-networks. These two are decisive actors, making sure that the network ‘walks the extra mile’. In the network graphs, these ‘weak ties’ link cores and sub-networks and turn out to be key characters in gaining success. In recent studies, these single actors – or ‘institutional plugs’ (Bosselaar & Bannink, 2021) – are considered promising players in networks (Van Duijn, Bannink, & Ybema, 2022). This advances the literature on network governance, as it suggests that the interactions of participants in the network might have more explanatory value than governance modes (Kenis & Provan, 2009) or building relations between actors (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015). This finding contributes to the literature by adding empirical detail and exploring the actors' positions in the networks and how these might have been decisive for successfully attracting IOs.

More actors in the core of a network, as well as actors who can bridge between the core and different sub-networks, are important for success. A third aspect is that the high activity of actors does not contribute to success, but that it does matter what types of actors are involved. This argues for a more actor-oriented approach to governance network analysis.

Conclusion 3: The diversity of a network and the number of actors therein contribute to success in attracting IOs

My third and last conclusion, that a *diverse* network contributes to success, suggests that involving many different actors in an organizational network is important. For instance, NGOs, experts, businesses, and academics – or 'Third UN' – play a crucial role. I find that the most diverse networks are also the most successful. One telling example is the case of Geneva's successfully attracted Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat. In this case, the number of actor types is high: eight types that range from public, private, municipal, regional, political, non-profit, and administrative levels. The diversity of this network shows that many different types interact. The intensity of the lobby, through the interaction with NGOs, and the United Nations Office of Geneva most probably led to a persuasion of all countries that voted for Vienna in the first round, to vote for Geneva in the next. This finding is in line with studies in the lobbying literature, such as the work of Junk (2019), who shows that diverse networks have a higher level of lobbying success. It also supports the 'strange bedfellows' argument of Phinney (2017) who, in his qualitative analysis, finds that diverse coalitions in broader networks help groups to increase their power. The inclusion of other actors contributes to network diversity and, as I find, to network success.

The number of actors also partially contributes to success. This conclusion indicates that the developmental stage of a network affects success. The longer a candidate city and host country have experience with attracting IOs, and the longer they have time available to establish 'playbooks' for organizational networks to use when attracting IOs, the higher diversity and number of actors there will be in the network.

This conclusion indicates that involving actors from different backgrounds contributes to successfully attracting IOs. Furthermore, including more actors in the network also contributes partially to success.

Assessment theoretical framework
The findings have consequences for the three independent perspectives I used in developing my expectations. On the other hand, the three perspectives also have consequences for the findings of this work.

As discussed, I found substantiation for most expectations based on each of the perspectives, while for others these were only partially supported or not supported at all. As the three perspectives are looking at the eight cases with different emphases and interpretations, asking questions based on different frames, the answers are also quite different. Interestingly, the perspectives are complementary to each other. The insight of the instrumental perspective is that policy alignment is no guarantee for success. The perspective reveals what is being omitted, and how alternative frameworks are essential. It shows that policy *goals* do not need to be aligned, but rather host policies need to be aligned with the policy *needs* of the IO representatives (the policy recipients).

The second perspective focuses on narratives of collaborating networks in the cities, thus explaining the attraction of IOs in a contextual way. This perspective implies that the 'perceptual frames' of these different stakeholders are important, especially if the organizational networks consider the priorities of the IO representatives and not those of the policy network. This implies that, when wanting to predict or explain the actions of governmental groups while attracting IOs, these might need to be less concentrated on internal overlaps of priorities and contextual narratives.

The third perspective looks at the network actors, the lobbying power and influence of the core network, and the political circumstances in which these networks operate when attracting IOs. When predicting or explaining the attraction of IOs in this way, the answers imply that having more than one centralized actor in a network, creating sub-networks, and including a diverse set of actors contribute to success.

These three perspectives give a richly varied overview of what works best when governance networks attract IOs. I have shown that the perspectives are independent in their answers to different questions, emphasizing distinctive characteristics. This leads to solutions to some puzzles I noticed. I have found that attaining the alignment of policy goals, as often propagated in collaborative policy design literature (Mukherjee & Bali, 2019; Rogge, 2018) has not been found beneficial for attracting IOs. Also, I have shown that similar perceptual frames within a network are less likely to result in success than those between the governance network and IO employees. This advances the theory of *overlapping discourses*, as it gives evidence that an overlap of narratives between different groups is more advantageous than between similar groups, when pursuing successes in attracting IOs. The third theoretical advancement this study has achieved is that it shows that 'institutional plugs' (Bosselaar & Bannink, 2021) or so-called *weak ties* are essential for an effective network governance. This leads to the suggestion that more attention is needed for the specific actors and their characteristics in networks, instead of how networks 'as a whole' or *whole networks* operate, as suggested by Provan and Lemaire (2012). In line with this, the practical implications will be discussed in the following sections.

9.4 Practical implications

My main findings, as discussed in the preceding section, can also be used to formulate suggestions that are important for governance networks aiming to attract IOs. First, maintain an external orientation of the network and good contacts with the IOs already established in the host city. Second, ensure there is a (networked) continuity of the host policy within the host city and state. Finally, maximize the diversity of the network, including as many actors and encouraging as much enthusiasm as possible. These three suggestions are in line with the three conclusions above, although they are related more to practical than theoretical implications. The following sections explore the suggestions in more detail.

1. Keep an external orientation of the network

A first suggestion is that the network should be less focused on internal coordination and more on external relationships. Rather than considering host policies and attraction *on paper*, it is important to consider the needs and wishes of the specific IO. While doing so, it is crucial to tighten relations abroad and with international partners in the host city.

Additionally, it is crucial to maintain good contacts with the IOs that have already settled in the city. Ambassadors and international employees can act as agents for the voting member states of the IOs, as they also have many external contacts that can use their influence. It is therefore crucial that international employees be taken seriously. Handling complaints in the city is crucial for a good relationship with IO employees. Naturally, governance networks must weigh up whether these complaints are justified, but the findings of the study suggest that diplomatic relations should not be disrupted by complaints that have not been dealt with. It is worthwhile to consider the policy recipients' perceptions of host policies and governmental support.

Furthermore, personal relationships appear to be crucial in this respect. An example is Geneva, where the governance networks honor the tradition of 'being a host', which penetrates the attraction processes for IOs and enhances awareness among practitioners. In cases where the respondents negatively perceive host policies, attraction processes tend to fail.

2. Networked continuity of host policy

The attraction of IOs is a networked endeavor that happens once or twice a decade. As it only occasionally takes place more often, these types of processes are rare and not embedded in existing policies. Nevertheless, it is important to have a 'playbook' ready in case it occurs. Other departments of involved ministries are best to be informed on a regular basis about established IOs, possible future IOs, and the advantages of hosting IOs. This will help to gather resources to offer a future IO an attractive location. In this effort, the ad hoc character of the policy could be diminished by updating other ministries in bi-annual or quarterly interdepartmental meetings. By informing other ministries more often, the effectiveness of the effort can be increased.

Furthermore, I find that having several core players in the center of a network is more effective than a single responsible actor 'in the middle'. Shared responsibility is therefore recommended. Finally, in some cases where higher-ranking political actors are involved in the network, the chances of success increase. An example is the Prime Minister in the case of the International Criminal Court in The Hague. It might be desirable to involve high-profile players who can warm up other ministries and ensure a support base is present.

3. Diversity and number of actors involved and 'Walking the extra mile'

A third suggestion is that networks involve different actors in the process, both additional IOs and NGOs as well as specialists in the field of the new IO, and other ministries to generate interest. Diversity in the governance network brings more synergies and more ideas and creativity. For example, in the Sustainable Energy for All case in Vienna, many types of energy-related NGOs, businesses, and specialists were involved, making it an undivided interest for different actors that the Quasi-IO would remain seated in Vienna. With these various parties involved, convincing other ministries of the importance of attracting and hosting IOs is more likely.

Finally, it is important to create motivation and enthusiasm in the network. The most successful networks are the ones prepared to 'walk the extra mile.' This term is mentioned several times in the interviews and shows that 'getting the most out of it' is an essential condition for network success. This also means that the organizational network in charge of attracting the IO is best consisting of a competent team that does not have a 'nine-to-five' mentality. In this light, it is crucial that network actors do not underestimate what attracting an IO means for the urban environment, the region, and the host country, and for the network itself. The process entails a lot of groundwork and requires substantial effort and drive.

9.5 Limitations and future avenues

This study has revealed many aspects related to IOs, cities, and the successes and failures of governance networks attracting IOs to cities. Nevertheless, there are questions remaining about the way these networks can attain more influence and organize a better lobby. In this section I will discuss some of these questions while plotting avenues for future research.

In this thesis the processes of attracting IOs have been studied exploratively for the first time. While doing this, I have shown that IO employees in candidate cities prioritize a favorable host state agreement, international schools, livability, and dual-career possibilities, whereas governmental networks often focus on political stability, hospitals, and relevant centers. This discrepancy can be reduced by being more in touch with IO employees and their needs. One of the remaining questions is *how* the priorities and narratives of governmental networks can be better aligned with those of IO representatives, and how the two groups can, in practice, remain more in continuous deliberation about what they find important, regardless of busy work schedules and governmental staff changes.

In line with these questions, the first conclusion of this study shows that policy alignment when attracting IOs does not substantially contribute to success. A promising avenue for future research would be to explore when such alignment does and when it does not contribute to success. Which policy types benefit from alignment, and which need more flexibility? When looking at educational curricula, for instance, studies have shown that these do benefit from alignment (DeLuca & Bellara, 2013), whereas attraction policies for IOs, as seen in eight cases, do not.

A second set of remaining questions is about the core players and high-ranking political actors in these kinds of processes. In some of the case studies, it appears that when political stakes are high, a contribution from political actors such as the Prime Minister can be very effective. Questions are: In which situations is the effect the strongest? and what does this mean for the strategy of attracting IOs? It would be worthwhile to investigate situations when the deployment of higher-ranked political actors *does* make a difference and when it does not.

An intriguing question that remains after this study is about the conceptual framework I used. When focusing on governance networks and their successes and failures from three complementary perspectives, I have used a broad scope to study the processes of attracting IOs. This decision has the advantage that the empirical material is studied in-depth, and that I gained new insights for each of the perspectives. There were some insightful advancements of the different theories I used. However, the decision also comes at the cost of developing cutting-edge theoretical advancement for each of the perspectives. Some questions remain, such as: had I only used one theoretical perspective, what would have been the consequences? What would have been the result of using a different methodology, such as process tracing methods, or a more quantitative mixed methods approach? Or when the theoretical framework would have been supplemented with a fourth, a lobbying perspective, looking at the material purely from an interest group scope, what would have been the empirical and theoretical advancements? These questions may pave the way for more research on this important topic.

To conclude, I would like to refer to the case introduced in the Prologue. An Intergovernmental Organization, the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecast (ECMWF), needed to find a new location for its EU funded Copernicus program. The city of Bonn was selected after a biennial struggle of candidate states and cities that needed to find their way in the competition for such a big opportunity, at the start of the global pandemic.

How this process ended can be associated with my three conclusions. Firstly, the governance network attracting the ECMWF Copernicus program to Bonn deployed an external lobby, commencing by handing in a bid in tandem with Helsinki. Secondly, the Federal Government was deeply involved in the Bonn offer, which was quite attractive, and lobbied intensively to gain votes from the IO member states. Thirdly, the network involved North Rhine-Westphalia’s Prime Minister, as well as the Mayor of Bonn and climate related businesses, experts, and NGOs. Bonn can be seen as a climate hub for UN organizations and climate related IOs. So, was it sheer luck? Yes, and no. To uncover underlying motivations and to find answers to the other questions posed in the Prologue, more research will be needed.