

EDITED BY

Magdalena Bexell, Kristina Jönsson,
and Anders Uhlin

LEGITIMATION AND DELEGITIMATION IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

PRACTICES, JUSTIFICATIONS, AND AUDIENCES



OXFORD

Legitimation and Delegitimation in Global Governance

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Practices, Justifications, and Audiences

Edited by

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Book Series Preface

Legitimacy appears crucial if global governance is to deliver on the many challenges confronting contemporary society: climate change, economic development, health pandemics, and more. Yet current trends suggest that the legitimacy of global governance may be increasingly contested. Britain's decision to leave the European Union, disillusionment with United Nations climate negotiations, pushback against the World Health Organization's handling of COVID-19, and the general rise of anti-globalist populism all signal substantial discontent with global governance institutions. An important research agenda therefore arises concerning legitimacy, legitimation, and contestation in global governance.

This book series seeks to advance that agenda. The three volumes explore to what degree, why, how, and with what consequences global governance institutions are regarded as legitimate. The books address this question through three complementary themes: (1) sources of legitimacy for global governance institutions; (2) processes of legitimation and delegitimation around global governance institutions; and (3) consequences of legitimacy for the operations of global governance institutions.

The series presents the combined theoretical, methodological, empirical, and policy takeaways of the Legitimacy in Global Governance (LegGov) program. LegGov is a six-year endeavor (2016–2021) involving 16 researchers at Stockholm, Lund, and Gothenburg Universities. The program is funded by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond and is coordinated by Jonas Tallberg at Stockholm University. LegGov has previously published the volume *Legitimacy in Global Governance: Sources, Processes, and Consequences* with Oxford University Press in 2018. Whereas that work set out LegGov's agenda and strategy, this series presents the program's extensive findings in three integrated books.

The first book, *Citizens, Elites, and the Legitimacy of Global Governance*, is co-authored by Lisa Dellmuth, Jan Aart Scholte, Jonas Tallberg, and Soetkin Verhaegen. This volume addresses patterns and sources of legitimacy in global governance: how far, and why, do citizens and elites around the world regard global governance to be legitimate? The book offers the first full comparative study of citizen and elite legitimacy beliefs toward global governance, covering multiple international organizations, countries, and sectors of society. The analysis builds on two parallel surveys of citizen and elite opinion, which enables a unique comparison between levels and drivers of legitimacy beliefs in the two groups. The book identifies a consistent gap between elite and citizen assessments

of global governance, and attributes this divide to systematic differences between elites and citizens in terms of socioeconomic status, political values, identity, and institutional trust.

The second book, *Legitimation and Delegitimation in Global Governance: Practices, Justifications, and Audiences*, is co-edited by Magdalena Bexell, Kristina Jönsson, and Anders Uhlin, with additional chapter contributions from Karin Bäckstrand, Farsan Ghassim, Catia Gregoratti, Nora Stappert, Fredrik Söderbaum, and Soetkin Verhaegen. This book addresses processes of legitimation and delegitimation in global governance: through what dynamics do global governance institutions obtain or lose legitimacy? The volume offers a uniquely comprehensive analysis of such processes through its coverage of three features: the practices that actors use to boost or challenge the legitimacy of global governance institutions; the normative justifications they draw on when engaging in such practices; and the audiences that are influenced by and react to these practices and justifications.

The third book, *Global Legitimacy Crises: Decline and Revival in Multilateral Governance*, is co-authored by Thomas Sommerer, Hans Agné, Fariborz Zelli, and Bart Bes. This volume addresses the consequences of legitimacy in global governance, in particular asking: when and how do legitimacy crises affect the operation of international organizations? The book offers a novel theoretical framework and a comparative focus on legitimacy's effects for a large number of international organizations. Specifically, the analysis combines a statistical examination of more than 30 international organizations with in-depth case studies of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the World Trade Organization. The book demonstrates that legitimacy crises develop in trajectories that are unique for each international organization, and that such crises can yield positive as well as negative effects.

Taken together, the volumes make three major contributions. First, the series offers the most comprehensive treatment so far of legitimacy in global governance, covering sources, processes, and consequences in one collective endeavor. Second, the collection is theoretically innovative, further developing a sociological approach to legitimacy through new conceptualizations and explanations. Third, the books pursue an ambitious comparative approach, examining legitimacy in global governance across countries, organizations, issue areas, and the elite-citizen divide. In addition to their own rich content, the three books are accompanied by supplementary data and analyses, available online at <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/leggov>.

As detailed in acknowledgments in each of the three volumes, the LegGov program has benefited tremendously from stimulating internal discussions among the participants, as well as generous input from a large group of external colleagues, including the program's International Scientific Advisory Group. We thank you all. For indispensable assistance with the program and the book series, we are

indebted to Karin Sundström and Sofie Trosell at Stockholm University. We also extend our thanks to Matthew Collins for language editing of the three volumes.

We are most grateful to senior editor Dominic Byatt and the publishing team at Oxford University Press for their continuous support and professional handling of the book series. Three anonymous reviewers for OUP challenged us to further clarify theoretical standpoints, coherence in research designs, and the volumes' contributions to debates on legitimacy in global governance.

Finally, we extend great gratitude to Riksbankens Jubileumsfond for the generous funding that made LegGov and this book series possible, and we thank Fredrik Lundmark at RJ for valuable advice in the program's execution.

Jonas Tallberg, Karin Bäckstrand, and Jan Aart Scholte
Book Series Editors

Acknowledgement

This book explores processes of legitimation and delegitimation of global governance institutions at a time when international cooperation is greatly needed but faces formidable challenges across policy fields. It is the result of research collaboration within the research program Legitimacy in Global Governance (LegGov). We above all thank the LegGov chapter contributors for their dedicated work and constructive discussions throughout the program: Karin Bäckstrand, Farsan Ghassim, Catia Gregoratti, Nora Stappert, Fredrik Söderbaum, and Soetkin Verhaegen. The book has also benefited greatly from comments from other participants in the LegGov program, including the series editors Jonas Tallberg, Karin Bäckstrand, and Jan Art Scholte. Moreover, throughout the program years, we have benefited from external input at numerous workshops and international conferences. We are indebted to Florian Carl and Maksim Zubok for research assistance and to Karin Sundström for editorial assistance. Furthermore, we are grateful to our editor and the publishing team at Oxford University Press for their support. Our gratitude extends to Riksbankens Jubileumsfond for funding the LegGov program over six years, enabling the broad comparative studies that the book builds on.

Lund, Sweden, November 16, 2021
Magdalena Bexell, Kristina Jönsson, and Anders Uhlin

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List of Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSO	civil society organization
ECOSOCC	Economic, Social and Cultural Council
EU	European Union
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
G20	Group of Twenty
G7	Group of Seven
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GGI	global governance institution
ICANN	International Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers
ICC	International Criminal Court
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
KP	Kimberley Process
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
TRIPS	Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

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PART I
INTRODUCTION

1

Introduction

The Comparative Study of (De)legitimation Processes in Global Governance

Magdalena Bexell, Kristina Jönsson, and Anders Uhlin

Global governance institutions (GGIs)—such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the United Nations (UN), and the World Health Organization (WHO)—are influential players in world politics. Such governance arrangements beyond the nation-state are often criticized for being inefficient and undemocratic, and for sustaining or even deepening global injustices. In the present age of populism and nationalism, critique of multilateralism and the liberal world order has intensified. In parallel, we have seen many acts of endorsement and support for global institutions, as well as calls by experts and global leaders alike to revitalize the multilateral system. Acts of contestation and support in relation to GGIs often feed into each other in complex struggles around legitimacy. Illustratively, former President Trump's decision to cut funding and withdraw the United States from the WHO in 2020 was a much noted practice of delegitimation. For its part, the WHO sought to convince a broad range of audiences across the world that it was able to effectively respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Another example is provided by recurrent protests in many parts of the world against the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) austerity policies, for example, in Greece in the wake of the Euro crisis, whereas the exercise of authority of this GGI is strongly defended by certain political and economic elites. Nongovernmental and hybrid GGIs are also challenged, as exemplified by Greenpeace International's decision to terminate its membership of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) in 2018, while other civil society organizations and companies continued to support its certification standards. This polarized landscape is where the politics of legitimation and delegitimation plays out; it is a landscape that stretches from the headquarters of intergovernmental organizations to people's everyday experiences across the world, from the military domain to social issues, from state to non-state forums, and from public to private realms.

The trends and tensions described above highlight the key role of legitimacy in contemporary global governance. With increasing authority, GGIs seek to convince various groups that they have the right to rule and try to enhance the perception that they exercise such a right appropriately (Zürn et al. 2021). Equally important are other state and non-state actors who engage in practices that might boost or challenge beliefs in the legitimacy of GGIs (Stephen and Zürn 2019). Such legitimacy beliefs can have positive or negative consequences for the effectiveness of global governance (Sommerer et al. 2022). How the legitimacy of GGIs is gained, maintained, or undermined through processes of legitimation and delegitimation is an essential question for research on legitimacy in global governance and, more broadly, for understanding world politics in the 21st century. While *legitimation* refers to processes that may reinforce beliefs that the rule of a political institution is rightful and exercised appropriately, *delegitimation* denotes processes that challenge beliefs in the rightfulness and appropriateness of a political institution's exercise of authority. These processes do not exist independently in isolation of each other. Thus, the co-existence of and interplay between delegitimation and legitimation is a central empirical concern of this book. Hence, rather than examining how GGIs conform to certain normatively decided yardsticks, we empirically study processes that may reinforce or challenge beliefs in the legitimacy of GGIs. In doing so, our aim is to contribute to the evolving empirical study of legitimacy in global governance in line with the two other books in this series of three volumes; Dellmuth et al. (2022) focusing on legitimacy beliefs among citizens and elites, and Sommerer et al. (2022) exploring the consequences of legitimacy crises.

A process perspective on legitimacy in the global setting requires that research on global contestation is integrated with studies of international cooperation and global governance. In order to do this, the book highlights three main interlinked elements of the politics of legitimation and delegitimation—which, for the sake of simplicity, we will sometimes refer to as “(de)legitimation”—in global governance: (1) the varied *practices* employed by different state and non-state agents that may boost or challenge the legitimacy of GGIs; (2) the normative *justifications* that these agents draw on when engaging in legitimation and delegitimation practices; and (3) the different *audiences* that may be impacted by legitimation and delegitimation. Together, these elements enable us to examine a wide range of challenges against GGI legitimacy, as well as attempts to secure such legitimacy in a turbulent world.

There is great variation in the types of GGIs, that is, institutions with global rule-making power. Studying such variation is important in order to better understand processes of legitimation and delegitimation in global governance. GGIs range from formal intergovernmental organizations (such as the UN and the WHO with large secretariats) to more informal “club models” with rotating chairs from member states (such as the Group of Seven/G7 and the Group of Twenty/G20) to

transnational arrangements that include combinations of governmental and non-governmental actors (so called hybrid GGIs) or only nongovernmental actors. Examples of hybrid GGIs are the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the World Commission on Dams, and the Kimberley Process. Examples of nongovernmental GGIs are the Global Reporting Initiative and the FSC, which involve actors such as businesses, industry associations, civil society organizations, and private foundations. Hybrid and nongovernmental GGIs are sometimes called multistakeholder GGIs. Moreover, there are regional governance institutions whose mandates are similar to global institutions but with different geographical reach. GGIs may be multipurpose or task-specific in their scope and mandate. They also vary in the extent of their authority and the degree to which they are politicized. Given this diversity, we need to explore how legitimation and delegitimation vary across different GGIs in order to advance knowledge of such processes. Previous research on legitimacy and (de)legitimation has mainly focused on the most well-known intergovernmental organizations, especially in the field of economic policy, and the European Union (EU) (see the section “State of the Art” below). Research on the (de)legitimation of other regional international organizations is less common. While there are studies of the politics of (de)legitimation in relation to nongovernmental and hybrid GGIs, this book offers a broader comparative approach.

The contested nature of GGIs and their diverse characteristics raise intriguing questions for the study of legitimation and delegitimation: *How, why, and with what impact on audiences, are GGIs legitimated and delegitimated?* This overarching question provides the basis for more specific research questions that are addressed in the three main parts of the book. Focusing on *practices*, we ask: What types of (de)legitimation practices vis-à-vis GGIs are used? How and why does the use of (de)legitimation practices vary across GGIs and across agents of (de)legitimation? Concerning *justifications*, we address the following questions: What norms do agents invoke in the politics of the (de)legitimation of GGIs? How and why do these normative justifications vary across GGIs, agents of (de)legitimation, and over time? In relation to *audiences*, we ask: How and why do audiences of (de)legitimation vary across GGIs and across agents of (de)legitimation? What are the effects of (de)legitimation on the composition of audiences and on audiences’ legitimacy beliefs, and how can these effects be explained? These questions ultimately concern power and rule beyond the nation-state and whose voice is heard in the attempts to defend and contest such rule.

Having introduced the topic and specified the research questions, the rest of this introductory chapter is organized as follows: We first discuss extant research and identify our contributions. We then move to a brief summary of our theoretical starting points, to be further elaborated in Chapter 2. We continue by presenting the overall research design that applies to the book as a whole, while more specific

methods are discussed in the respective chapters in which they are applied. The chapter concludes by presenting the three thematic sections of the book, including the principal arguments and contributions of individual chapters.

State of the Art

Since the early 2000s a number of studies have addressed selected aspects of (de)legitimation processes related to intergovernmental organizations, mainly in the form of separate case studies or paired comparisons (Zaum ed. 2013; Hurrelmann and Schneider 2015; Gronau and Schmidtke 2016; Dingwerth et al. 2019). We build on insights from these pioneering studies and develop a comprehensive theoretical framework for studying processes of (de)legitimation in global governance in order to compare a broader set of GGIs and different policy fields, over time and with comparative case studies in each chapter. As noted above, processes of (de)legitimation in global governance consist of *practices* that different agents employ in order to boost or challenge the political authority of GGIs, the normative *justifications* that they draw on, and the different *audiences* that may be impacted by legitimation and delegitimation. Previous research has tended to focus on one or two of these essential aspects of (de)legitimation while the chapters in the present book collectively demonstrate that understanding them as linked parts provides a richer theoretical and empirical account that better captures the politics of legitimation and delegitimation that is inherent in such processes.

Regarding practices, an extensive literature suggests that establishing, maintaining, and countering legitimacy is first and foremost a discursive phenomenon (Steffek 2003; Schneider et al. 2007; Halliday et al. 2010; Gronau 2016; Dingwerth et al. 2019; Dingwerth et al. 2020). The methodological implications are that discourse analysis and text-analytical approaches dominate the empirical study of the (de)legitimation of GGIs (Halliday et al. 2010; Gronau 2016; Ecker-Ehrhardt 2018). For its part, institutional self-legitimation by GGIs has received increasing interest in recent years (Zaum ed. 2013), and a growing body of scholarship is analyzing how GGIs have sought to improve their legitimacy through institutional and administrative reforms, for example, by opening up to civil society and other non-state actors and the general public (Grigorescu 2007; Scholte 2011; Tallberg et al. 2013). While most previous scholarship focuses on such self-legitimizing institutional practices by GGIs, recent research shows that institutional practices may also serve as delegitimation in relation to other institutions and actors, as in the case of the establishment of new competing institutions that challenge the dominance of established GGIs (Uhlin 2019). Moreover, scholars have begun to explore behavioral (de)legitimation in terms of civil society mobilization and protest against GGIs (O'Brien et al. 2000; Della Porta and Tarrow

2005; Haunss 2007; Gregoratti and Uhlín 2018). This volume is the first to analyze discursive, institutional, and behavioral (de)legitimation practices within a single framework (cf. Bäckstrand and Söderbaum 2018), as well as the interplay between legitimation and delegitimation.

Regarding justifications, extant research has employed concepts such as legitimacy sources or narratives in order to examine various normative standards of legitimacy, mainly related to democracy, efficiency/technocracy, fairness, and law (Scholte and Tallberg 2018; Zürn 2018; Dingwerth et al. 2020). Some studies focus on the normative appropriateness of a GGI for understanding support and demands for reforms (Lenz and Viola 2017) or point to the role of historically specific norms for how the legitimacy of a GGI is evaluated within a wider social context (Zaum ed. 2013; Tussie 2018; Stephen and Zürn 2019)—including the importance of geographies, such as differences between (de)legitimation dynamics in the Global North vis-à-vis the Global South (Bernstein 2011: 34–35). However, few studies have explicitly attempted to link justificatory norms to both (de)legitimation practices and audiences in light of policy field and type of GGI (cf. Bernstein 2011, 2018; Dingwerth 2017). By stressing the normative resonance between GGIs and their supporters, as well as a lack of consensus between GGIs and their critics in the politics of (de)legitimation, this volume advances previous research by analyzing the variety of normative justifications that are employed to motivate both legitimation and delegitimation practices.

Regarding audiences, although recent research has noted an increasing heterogeneity of addressees of (de)legitimation practices (Symons 2011; Zaum ed. 2013; Bexell and Jönsson 2018; Dingwerth et al. 2019), previous research usually presupposes that citizens and governments are the main audiences of the (de)legitimation of GGIs. Consequently, other societal actors such as civil society organizations, media, academia/research, or the business sector have not received sufficient attention. Most previous research has taken a narrower view, focusing on how GGIs try to legitimate themselves vis-à-vis internal and external audiences, through practices known as *self-legitimation* (Gronau and Schmidtke 2016; Ecker-Ehrhardt 2018, 2020; von Billerbeck 2020). More empirical studies are needed to determine which audiences are relevant in a given (de)legitimation process and to explain how these audiences vary between different (de)legitimation settings. Thus far, only limited empirical research has examined the extent to which the targets of GGI legitimation practices vary in relation to the institutional form or the policy field of global governance, even if we can assume that this matters for variation. Likewise, there has been minimal focus on how and when GGIs strategically select specific audiences and when they direct legitimation practices at multiple audiences simultaneously. Thus, a focus on the dynamic interplay between different agents and audiences constitutes an essential aspect of our contribution.

In short, a core contribution of this book is that it explores the interplay between how GGIs legitimate themselves and how they are delegitimated (and sometimes

legitimated) by other actors. It goes beyond pre-existing work that either focuses on GGI self-legitimation (Gronau and Schmidtke 2016; Ecker-Ehrhardt 2020; von Billerbeck 2020) or on the delegitimation of GGIs by other actors (O'Brien et al. 2000; Haunss 2007; Copelovitch and Pevehouse 2019; Stephen and Zürn 2019). Unlike most previous research, it also includes less familiar GGIs (see chapters in Zaum ed. 2013; Uhlin 2019; Lenz and Schmidtke 2020 for studies of other less well-known GGIs) and offers a broader comparative case selection of nongovernmental and hybrid GGIs than previous studies of the politics of (de)legitimation (e.g., Bernstein and Cashore 2007; Dingwerth 2007, 2017; Bernstein 2011). Moreover, extant research has tended to focus on either practices, justifications, or audiences of (de)legitimation, whereas this volume offers a combined analysis of these three central aspects of the politics of (de)legitimation, enabling us to provide a more comprehensive account of how processes of legitimation and delegitimation are constituted.

Contributions of the Book

This volume makes theoretical, methodological, and empirical contributions in advancing research on the politics of legitimation and delegitimation in global governance. *Theoretically*, we develop a process-oriented framework centered on practices, justifications, and audiences. Compared to previous research in this field, the framework stands out due to its systematic inclusion of discursive, behavioral, and institutional practices, a broad range of normative justifications, and societal as well as state audiences. Moreover, the framework moves beyond agency-centered accounts of (de)legitimation to also examine how legitimation and delegitimation processes are shaped by institutional set-ups, policy field characteristics, and social structures. The framework also provides a basis for the elaboration of explanations of variation in (de)legitimation practices, justifications, and audiences across different types of GGIs and policy fields. In sum, we offer a comprehensive theoretical framework for the study of the politics of legitimation and delegitimation in global governance, and in the concluding chapter we begin to theorize the interplay between legitimation and delegitimation.

Methodologically, we propose a research design for the study of the politics of (de)legitimation in global governance that takes advantage of the strengths of different methods and datasets. We combine systematic comparisons across a relatively large number of GGIs using different quantitative and qualitative methods and datasets on the one hand, and more in-depth structured focused comparisons across carefully selected sets of two or three GGIs on the other. We draw on a uniquely broad set of data ranging from an elite survey, a survey experiment, and Twitter data, to annual reports and other types of documents produced by GGIs and other actors, qualitative interviews, as well as observations at GGI

summits and other events. By combining such different kinds of datasets within and between chapters, we are able to offer a wider account of the politics of (de)legitimation than previous research, using the strengths of different data types to overcome the weaknesses of other sources.

Empirically, we provide new findings on (de)legitimation dynamics related to both global and regional intergovernmental organizations, hybrid global organizations, and additional forms of global governance mechanisms across policy field and over time. The GGIs selected for in-depth investigation in this volume are more diverse than in previous studies, including intergovernmental organizations such as the African Union (AU), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the World Bank, the WHO, the WTO, the International Criminal Court (ICC), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the transgovernmental network G20, as well as multistakeholder initiatives such as the FSC and the Kimberley Process. We will return below to the selection of GGIs.

Theory Overview

The theoretical framework advanced in Chapter 2, this volume, conceptualizes legitimation and delegitimation *processes*, their *agents* (i.e., the actors initiating (de)legitimation) and *objects* (i.e., that which is being legitimated or delegitimated), and how such processes relate to broader *structural contexts*. The three core elements of our theoretical framework are: the *practices* enacted by agents of (de)legitimation to (de)legitimate GGIs, the normative *justifications* upon which these practices are based, and the *audiences* of such (de)legitimation practices. A focus on the dynamic interplay between different agents and audiences within broader institutional and social structures constitutes an essential aspect in our analysis. In brief, an *agent* of (de)legitimation initiates a *practice* of (de)legitimation, underpinned by one or more *justifications* that positively or negatively evaluate the *object* of (de)legitimation. This practice and its justification may be targeted towards certain *audiences*, or reach unintended audiences, or lack a specified recipient. Self-appointed audiences may react to the practice or the practice may be further transmitted by intermediary audiences, depending on how the justifications resonate with the audiences. The legitimacy beliefs of targeted or self-appointed audiences may be affected in a positive or negative direction by this attempt at (de)legitimation, or remain unaffected. In turn, audiences may (proactively) respond to (de)legitimation practices, turning into agents of (de)legitimation and affecting the course of continued dynamic (de)legitimation processes.

Chapter 2 further elaborates our understanding of (de)legitimation processes in terms of structured agency, identifying three main categories of institutional

and structural contexts, namely, institutional set-up, policy field characteristics, and social structures. In brief, *institutional setup* refers to characteristics of GGIs that we expect to be important for the politics of (de)legitimation, that is, their degree of authority, non-state involvement, and geographical scope. Such differences in institutional set-up may explain the variation in (de)legitimation practices and justifications, as well as the composition of audiences in relation to a GGI. With regard to *policy field*, we develop theoretical expectations related to a field's characteristics in terms of its constellation of actors, interests, and prevalent norms. Certain policy fields involve a more central role for non-state actors than other fields, as well as different types of knowledge that privilege participation by some actors at the expense of others. Finally, *social structures* entail material and ideational elements that provide the underlying parameters of processes of legitimation and delegitimation. Structures of social stratification shape economic, political, and social power relations that influence the repertoire of (de)legitimation practices that is available to different actors and the audiences that are key to the legitimacy of GGIs. Ideational structures of norms, ideas, and discourses determine the (de)legitimation justifications that are available and how well various normative justifications resonate with different audiences.

Research Design

Case Selection and Comparative Design

We have already pointed to the great diversity of GGIs and stated that this variation needs to be investigated in order to advance generalizability in the study of legitimation and delegitimation in global governance. Our sample of sixteen GGIs is based on three main considerations:

First, our case selection is designed to capture variation across policy fields. In our sample of sixteen GGIs, we include institutions from the policy fields of economic affairs (trade, finance, standardization), sustainable development (environment, health), peace and security (international conflict regulation, international criminal justice), as well as multipurpose GGIs, in order to capture a broad scope of variation. In *economic governance*, we include the IMF, a global institution for macroeconomic policy. We also cover the WTO, a global organization tasked with liberalizing and regulating commerce across borders. Our third economic institution is the G20, which brings together twenty of the most powerful governments in the world. Fourth, we include the World Bank, the primary multilateral development bank. Finally, we include the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), a private governance institution regulating the global Internet architecture. In the policy field of *sustainable development governance*, we examine the UNFCCC, the main multilateral forum for

negotiations on combating climate change. We also study the WHO, which coordinates global health efforts such as the handling of transborder pandemics. Finally, we study the FSC, a nongovernmental market-driven GGI issuing certification of timber products. In the policy field of *security governance*, we include the UN Security Council (UNSC), a leading intergovernmental body with the mandate to maintain peace and security. A second institution is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the transatlantic military alliance, and the third is the ICC, set up to prosecute those most responsible for grave crimes of concern to the international community. Finally, we examine the Kimberley Process, a hybrid GGI seeking to stop trade in “conflict diamonds.” We also include four multipurpose institutions. These are the UN, a major global institution, and three principal multipurpose regional institutions in Europe, Africa, and Southeast Asia: the EU, AU, and ASEAN.

Second, our sample covers different types of GGIs at both ends of the intergovernmental-nongovernmental continuum (cf. Grigorescu 2020). Previous research indicates that legitimacy dynamics may differ between intergovernmental and nongovernmental/hybrid institutions (Bernstein and Cashore 2007; Bernstein 2011; Take 2012). Thus, as already listed, in each policy field we have selected both intergovernmental organizations and a nongovernmental or hybrid GGI, enabling us to make comparisons not previously explored.

Third, we have included three institutions with regional as opposed to global membership, which enables us to assess whether (de)legitimation processes are different in regional as opposed to global arenas. Compared to GGIs with global membership, regional organizations tend to be more homogenous because of the more limited number of members. As there is no overlap in membership between our regional GGIs, we also expect greater normative variation among these institutions than among the global GGIs (Lenz and Schmidtke 2020: 2).

In addition to these three main selection criteria, we have limited our sample to GGIs that are reasonably well-known to the affected citizens and elites and that possess extensive political authority. The politics of legitimation becomes an issue when the institution in question exercises substantial authority, possibly at the expense of domestic democratic decision-making. Within our sample there is variation in the degree of authority, but all selected GGIs have sufficient authority to raise questions about their legitimacy. The EU, IMF, AU, and World Bank score high on measures of delegated international authority (i.e., authority delegated from national decision-making bodies to the GGI), while the UN, ICC, ASEAN, and NATO score lower (Hooghe and Marks 2015). According to the International Authority Database, which measures GGI autonomy and the bindingness of GGI rules, the EU, UN, IMF, World Bank, AU, ICC, WHO, and WTO all rank high in the stated order, while NATO and the ASEAN rank lower (Zürn et al. 2021). While comparable data are not available for the nongovernmental/hybrid GGIs included in our sample, we posit that these GGIs (the FSC, ICANN, and Kimberley Process)

hold lower degrees of authority than intergovernmental GGIs with regard to delegated powers and the extent to which their (typically voluntary-based) rules are binding.

These sixteen GGIs are included in at least one of our main datasets (presented below) and many of them are included in all our datasets. Furthermore, we maintain the same diversity in our selection for comparative case study analyses, including more in-depth coverage of the following ten GGIs in at least one chapter: the ASEAN, AU, FSC, G20, ICC, Kimberley Process, UNFCCC, WHO, World Bank, and WTO. Hence, we have a uniquely broad coverage of different types of GGIs, including but also moving beyond the most well-studied GGIs.

Data Sources and Mixed-Methods Design

In this section, we present our mixed-methods research design that combines quantitative and qualitative empirical data. As we have collected different kinds of new empirical material, this enables us to answer comparative research questions that previous studies have not been able to address. It enables a combination of broader comparative overviews across a relatively large set of GGIs with more in-depth structured and focused comparisons. In terms of methods and data sources, we combine three main research traditions in the literature on legitimacy and (de)legitimation in global governance. *Surveys and survey experiments* have been used to measure legitimacy beliefs, whereas data on *political communication* and *political behavior* have been used to capture legitimation and delegitimation processes (cf. [Schmidtke and Schneider 2012](#); [Tallberg and Zürn 2019](#)). Each approach has its own advantages and limitations. In this book, we combine these data sources in order to leverage their strengths while overcoming the challenges and limitations of each specific method and data source when applied separately. Below we elaborate on the design and research questions addressed in the different datasets. More details are provided in chapters drawing on the respective data.

First, we argue that *surveys* and *survey experiments* are useful not only for measuring legitimacy beliefs, but also for identifying (de)legitimation practices and for exploring their effects on legitimacy beliefs. We draw on the LegGov Elite Survey 2017–2019, including 860 political and societal elites in order to explore discursive and behavioral (de)legitimation practices, as well as the diverse audiences targeted by these practices ([Verhaegen et al. 2019](#)). While most studies of (de)legitimation mainly focus on self-legitimation by GGIs, this survey covers partisan-political, bureaucratic, media, civil society, business and research elites, on the premise that actors in different sectors may engage in (de)legitimation practices. The interviewed elites are part of a six-country sample (Brazil, Germany, Russia, South Africa, the Philippines, and the USA) and one global sample comprising state delegates to GGIs and permanent officials of GGIs, alongside elites in globally

active business, civil society, research, and media organizations. The elites were asked about the frequency with which they use different types of legitimation and delegitimation practices toward the institution with which they most frequently interacted. More detailed information on the used quota, selection procedures, and processing of the data is available in the technical report of the survey (Verhaegen et al. 2019). This data provides unique insight into how respondents in different sectors and countries combine the use of various (de)legitimation practices, how they target different audiences, and how this varies across GGIs. The elite survey data are used in Chapter 3 to study behavioral practices of legitimation and delegitimation and in Chapter 9 to explore the composition of audiences. In addition, in order to analyze the impact of (de)legitimation practices on citizens' legitimacy beliefs, we also conduct a survey experiment in ten countries worldwide. The overarching dependent variable of the survey experiment is citizens' belief in the legitimacy of GGIs. We concentrate on three relatively well-known but diverse intergovernmental GGIs with different functional specializations: the UN, the WHO, and the World Bank. The survey data are used in Chapter 11 to answer questions on the impact of legitimation, delegitimation, and their interaction on individuals' legitimacy beliefs. The design of the survey experiment is further elaborated in Chapter 11.

Second, we use multiple data sources to explore *political communication* and analyze it both qualitatively and quantitatively. Political communication data, in the form of written and oral communications produced by GGIs and their supporters and critics, are an important type of material for qualitative analysis in our comparative case studies. The specific qualitative material for each case study will be presented at the start of chapters that draw on such material. This section presents two datasets that are used in several chapters. To answer questions on discursive (de)legitimation practices, we analyze social media, more specifically Twitter communication. We use a dataset containing all tweets in English¹ issued by and on the sixteen GGIs in our sample throughout 2019 and 2020. As mentioned, the dataset includes global and regional organizations, intergovernmental organizations, as well as a transgovernmental network, and nongovernmental/hybrid institutions, and multipurpose and task-specific GGIs in different policy fields. By collecting tweets during a full calendar year, we avoid bias in terms of seasonal differences and ensure that we cover the period that includes a GGI's annual meeting, when Twitter communication is likely to be more intense. We draw on the Twitter data to analyze discursive (de)legitimation practices in Chapter 3 and the audiences of these practices in Chapter 9. Moreover, Chapter 7 uses Twitter data from 2020 to study normative justifications in the

¹ For practical reasons (limited number of languages used by the web-platform collecting tweets and the difficulties of identifying GGI-related tweets in several languages) we decided to limit our search to tweets in English. While English is by far the most frequently used language on Twitter, this limitation imposes a bias in the data that has to be considered when assessing the findings.

cases of the WHO and the WTO, as that year is particularly interesting from a legitimacy perspective due to the governance challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to social media, political communication by GGIs includes a lot of other written output such as policy documents, annual reports, and accounts of best practices. Among such texts, we have singled out annual reports as particularly useful for comparative analysis of self-legitimation across GGIs. Hence, we have created a database of GGI annual reports in which we have manually coded legitimation statements. More specifically, we conducted a content analysis of annual reports published by nine GGIs between 1985 and 2017.² Annual reports are a particularly rewarding empirical resource to study how an organization seeks to legitimate itself to multiple audiences: donors, the media, experts, and the wider public. Organizations can present themselves as a coherent entity through the reports, speaking with one voice (Zaum ed. 2013). Normatively significant institutional practices and reforms can be highlighted in these texts, together with missions, challenges, and other achievements (Gronau 2016; Dingwerth et al. 2020). Chapter 3 draws on annual report data to examine questions on broader patterns of institutional legitimation practices, whereas Chapter 6, and to some extent Chapter 7, uses such data to advance knowledge on patterns of justifications found in GGI self-legitimation.

Third, data capturing *political behavior* include semi-structured interviews with representatives of GGIs and central (de)legitimation agents and audiences, observations at annual meetings and other GGI events, and media reports on (de)legitimation practices, such as institutional reforms of GGIs, and protests against GGIs. We also use the above-mentioned elite survey to capture behavioral (de)legitimation practices. Both this survey and the qualitative interviews mainly target elites. The rationale for focusing on elites is their assumed greater knowledge of GGIs compared to the general public. While the interviews followed a joint overall interview guide, the questions were tailored to the research problem and GGIs in focus in the different chapters. Hence, in addition to the datasets presented earlier, our empirical contributions also stem from a set of interviews that underpin the analysis of several chapters, providing more empirical detail and nuance than allowed for by surveys and social media.

To sum up, we use a mixed-methods approach including a plurality of quantitative and qualitative data sources and methods in order to answer questions on practices, justifications, and audiences of legitimation and delegitimation. An elite survey targeting political and societal elites allows us to analyze how actors other than the GGI in question use discursive and behavioral (de)legitimation

² These are: the WTO, IMF, World Bank, UNSC, ICC, ASEAN, EU, FSC, and ICANN. This means we include global and regional institutions, intergovernmental organizations and nongovernmental and hybrid governance arrangements, multipurpose and task-specific GGIs in policy fields ranging from economy and security to the environment and Internet governance.

practices and how they target different audiences. A survey experiment conducted in 2021 helps us answer crucial questions about the effects of (de)legitimation on audiences' legitimacy beliefs. Twitter data collected since the beginning of 2019, including all tweets in English by and on sixteen GGIs, enable us to perform a content analysis of discursive (de)legitimation practices, justifications, and audiences. Systematic qualitative coding of selected parts of annual reports of nine GGIs between 1985 and 2017 provides the basis for analyses of discursive and institutional self-legitimation and normative justifications across GGIs and over time. Last, but not least, content analysis of policy documents, semi-structured interviews, and notes from participatory observations provide a rich basis for comparative case studies. Clearly, there are a number of methodological challenges when working with these data sources and these will be identified and discussed in the individual chapters.

Outline and Arguments of the Book

This section outlines the key content and findings of each chapter in this volume, including a brief summary of the overall messages of the thematic parts of the book. After this introductory Chapter 1 and the ensuing Chapter 2, which advances the theoretical framework (summarized above), the book comprises three main thematic parts. Each of these parts focuses on one of the key elements of the theoretical framework: practices, justifications, and audiences. Whereas the first chapter in each of the three thematic parts of the book provides a broad comparative overview, which, thus far, has been lacking in the literature on (de)legitimation processes in global governance, the two following chapters in each part provide more in-depth comparative analyses across types of GGIs or policy fields. These comparisons develop specific aspects of the general theoretical framework. Table 1.1 provides an overview of the analytical focus and purpose of each chapter, the rationale for case selection, the GGIs covered, as well as data sources.

The first thematic part provides a systematic analysis of the types of legitimation and delegitimation practices used across GGIs, with a focus on discursive, institutional, and behavioral practices. Overall, the first thematic part demonstrates the diversity of not only discursive but also institutional and behavioral practices in the politics of the (de)legitimation of GGIs.

Chapter 3, by Anders Uhlén and Soetkin Verhaegen, provides an overview of patterns of discursive, behavioral, and institutional (de)legitimation practices across policy fields and types of GGIs. Focusing on a sample of nine GGIs and drawing on three datasets (annual reports, Twitter, and elite survey), the chapter demonstrates how different types of data can be used to capture institutional, discursive, and behavioral (de)legitimation, respectively. The chapter

Table 1.1 Overview of chapters

#	Part	Analytical focus	Purpose	Case selection rationale	GGIs	Data
3	Practices	Patterns of discursive, behavioral and institutional (de)legitimation practices	Map variation across policy field and type of GGIs	Variation in policy field and type of GGI	ASEAN, EU, FSC, ICANN, ICC, IMF, UNSC, World Bank, WTO	Annual reports, Twitter, elite survey
4	Practices	Diversity of discursive, behavioral and institutional (de)legitimation practices	Explain diversity of practices; explanatory factors related to policy field and institutional set-up	Same type of GGI, variation in policy field	AU, UNFCCC	Documents, interviews
5	Practices	Interplay between one behavioral delegitimation practice (protest) and GGI legitimation practices	Explain when and how civil society protest leads to legitimation practices by GGIs; explanatory factors related to type of protest and degree of recognition of protesters	Same policy field, variation in type of GGI; different degree of recognition of protesters	ASEAN, G20, World Bank	Documents, interviews
6	Justifications	Patterns of justifications related to normative substance in GGI self-legitimation	Map variation across policy field and type of GGIs	Variation in policy field and type of GGI	ASEAN, EU, FSC, ICANN, ICC, IMF, UNSC, World Bank, WTO	Annual reports
7	Justifications	Normative substance in legitimation and delegitimation	Explain variation in justifications; explanatory factors related to policy field and structural context	Same type of GGI, variation in policy field	WHO, WTO	Documents, annual reports, Twitter, interviews

8	Justifications	Normative substance in delegitimation	Explain variation in justifications; explanatory factors related to type of GGI and structural context	Same policy field, variation in type of GGI	AU, ICC, Kimberley Process	Documents, interviews
9	Audiences	Patterns of targeted and self-appointed (de)legitimation audiences	Map variation across policy field and type of GGIs	Variation in policy field and type of GGI	ASEAN, AU, EU, FSC, G20, ICANN, ICC, IMF, Kimberley Process, NATO, UN, UNFCCC, UNSC, World Bank, WHO, WTO	Twitter, elite survey
10	Audiences	Composition of targeted and self-appointed (de)legitimation audiences	Explain how and why (de)legitimation influence the composition of audiences; explanatory factors related to type of GGI—institutional set-up—and structural context—democratic norms and politicization	Same policy field, variation in type of GGI	FSC, UNFCCC	Documents, interviews
11	Audiences	Effects of legitimation and delegitimation on citizens' legitimacy beliefs	Explain effects of (de)legitimation on citizens' legitimacy beliefs; explanatory factors related to nature of (de)legitimation process	Same type of GGI, variation in policy field	UN, World Bank, WHO	Survey experiment

finds a higher intensity of (de)legitimation practices related to intergovernmental GGIs as compared to the nongovernmental and hybrid GGIs in the sample, but the types of (de)legitimation practices are similar across governmental and nongovernmental/hybrid GGIs. The regional organizations in the sample—the EU and ASEAN—do not display markedly different patterns of (de)legitimation practices as compared to the global GGIs. Instead, the chapter finds significant differences between these two regional GGIs, which can be attributed to their different positions in global power relations. Regarding policy field, the chapter finds that economic GGIs, as compared to GGIs in other policy fields, tend to more frequently use and be targeted by a diversity of (de)legitimation practices.

Chapter 4, by Karin Bäckstrand and Fredrik Söderbaum, explains the diversity of discursive, behavioral, and institutional (de)legitimation practices with reference to factors related to policy field and transnational actor access. It achieves this through comparative case studies of two intergovernmental GGIs during a legitimacy crisis, one operating in the environmental policy field, the UNFCCC, the other being a multipurpose regional organization, the AU. In an in-depth analysis based on documents and qualitative interviews, the chapter sheds light on how different state and non-state actors operate in the institutional structural context of the GGIs. The chapter shows that the UNFCCC displays a higher degree of diversity and frequency of both legitimation and delegitimation practices compared to the AU due to its focus on a global collective action problem, while legitimation practices in the AU are strongly shaped by its focus on community-building, achieving Pan-Africanism, and moving towards the African agenda across multiple policy fields. In the case of the UNFCCC, high access explains the higher degree of diversity of different (de)legitimation practices directed towards state and non-state audiences. In the case of the AU, the access and involvement of transnational actors are undermined by a range of exclusionary measures, such as restrictions on participating in AU institutions and meetings.

Chapter 5, by Catia Gregoratti and Anders Uhlin, zooms in on the interplay between one behavioral delegitimation practice—civil society protest—and GGI legitimation practices. More specifically, it demonstrates how the type of protest (diffuse or specific) and the extent to which protesters are recognized by the targeted GGI determine when and how civil society protest triggers legitimation practices by GGIs. It investigates civil society protests against three different types of GGIs active in the field of economic policy: the regional intergovernmental organization ASEAN, the World Bank as a global intergovernmental organization, and the transgovernmental network, G20. Drawing on multiple sources, including documents and qualitative interviews, the chapter shows that diffuse protests, challenging the overall authority of the G20, led to symbolic legitimation when the chair (Australia) recognized protesters as a relevant audience but ignored them when the successive chair (Turkey) did not recognize civil society protesters.

Protests against specific policies of the World Bank led to substantial legitimation in the form of real policy change as this particular GGI recognized protesters as significant actors, whereas specific protests against the ASEAN, which did not grant the same recognition to civil society protesters, were ignored.

The second thematic part (Part III) offers insights into normative justifications invoked to give reasons for diverse sets of legitimation and delegitimation practices across GGIs. Taken together, the chapters show that agents of (de)legitimation draw on a wide range of normative justifications that can be policy specific or overlapping between policy fields and type of GGI. Some of these justifications are stable over time while others change in line with dominant norms and current social structures.

Accordingly, Chapter 6, by Nora Stappert and Catia Gregoratti, provides an overview of patterns of justifications related to purpose, procedure, and performance in GGI self-legitimation across policy fields and types of GGIs. Focusing on a sample of nine GGIs, it draws on a content analysis of GGI annual reports, finding that the communicated purpose of the nine GGIs has remained remarkably stable over time. The main exceptions are economic GGIs: the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO. These have adapted their missions and goals since the 1990s toward greater inclusion of norms related to sustainability. Economic and regional GGIs tend to use technocratic norms to justify the quality of their institutional characteristics, whereas security and multistakeholder GGIs tend to rely on democratic norms. In contrast, the chapter observes wider normative ebbs and flows when GGIs self-legitimize by referring to their procedures and performance. For some of the most authoritative GGIs, democratic self-legitimation increases following periods of politicization, but then subsides after a few years.

Chapter 7, by Kristina Jönsson and Catia Gregoratti, also analyzes justifications related to purpose, procedure, and performance of GGIs but includes both legitimation and delegitimation, and explains variation in justifications with reference to factors related to policy field and structural context. The empirical focus is two major intergovernmental GGIs in different policy fields: the WHO and the WTO. Making use of GGI documents, annual reports, Twitter communication, and qualitative interviews, the chapter covers two timeframes: 1995 to 2000 and 2019 to 2021. While technocratic justifications are the most prevalent for self-legitimation in both cases over time, justifications related to fairness are common for both legitimation and delegitimation, albeit in different ways depending on policy field and time specific normative structures. The chapter demonstrates how justifications used by state and non-state agents of (de)legitimation have been embedded in a structural context of neoliberalism and, increasingly, of nationalism—the latter epitomized by the WTO deadlock and the COVID-19 pandemic. It also illustrates how issues that transcend several policy fields influence normative justifications in individual fields through spill-over effects between fields.

Chapter 8, by Catia Gregoratti, Nora Stappert, and Fredrik Söderbaum, focuses on delegitimation and explains variation in justifications with reference to factors related to type of GGI. It examines how African states and non-state actors use normative justifications in delegitimation practices vis-à-vis three different types of GGIs: the AU (a regional intergovernmental organization), the ICC (a global court), and the Kimberley Process (a hybrid GGI). The comparative case studies draw on various types of documents and qualitative interviews. The analysis confirms that agents of delegitimation, institutional set-up, and struggles over social hierarchies, in this case in the context of a legacy of colonialism, play an important role in justifications of delegitimation practices. However, in the case of the AU, key state actors have delegitimated the institution based on efficiency criteria to disassociate themselves financially from former colonial powers and enhance African states' ownership of the AU. In the case of the ICC, the justifications, particularly by African states, center on impartiality and fairness. In relation to the Kimberley Process, civil society has been the main agent of delegitimation. Civil society's critique has primarily been directed toward the Kimberley Process' narrow conflict diamond definition and the institutional and structural unfairness of the process toward both mining communities and consumers.

The third thematic part of the book (Part IV) turns to examining the audiences of (de)legitimation, showing that not only do the views of citizens and member state representatives on GGIs matter to agents of (de)legitimation, but also the views of non-state actors in global governance, depending on the GGI at hand. Moreover, the impact of (de)legitimation on individuals' legitimacy beliefs depends on the dynamics between legitimation and delegitimation processes and on the identity of the agent of (de)legitimation.

Chapter 9, by Magdalena Bexell, Farsan Ghassim, and Soetkin Verhaegen, offers a comparative overview of the composition of audiences across policy fields and types of GGIs for the book's sample of sixteen GGIs, using new data sources. On the basis of the LegGov Elite Survey, the chapter finds that the most frequently targeted audience by various elites is not a constituency but civil society actors, confirming the importance of this type of audience for legitimation processes. The chapter also finds a significant association between elites engaging in behavioral legitimation practices linked to the functioning of GGIs and targeting member states and GGI staff. In contrast, engaging in discursive legitimation and delegitimation practices is more strongly associated with targeting the general public and civil society. Next, in order to study self-appointed audiences who react to (de)legitimation on their own initiative, the chapter uses data collected from Twitter. This analysis shows that across GGIs, a relative majority of self-appointed audiences are citizens. While elites are disproportionately represented audiences in GGI legitimacy debates, citizens generally constitute a larger proportion of the self-appointed audiences. Citizens are an especially dominant self-appointed

audience group in legitimacy debates on economic GGIs, but less so in the case of sustainable development GGIs.

Chapter 10, by Magdalena Bexell and Karin Bäckstrand, deepens the previous chapter's study of the composition of targeted and self-appointed (de)legitimation audiences by comparing the UNFCCC, a universal intergovernmental GGI, to the FSC, a nongovernmental market-driven GGI. Drawing on multiple qualitative sources, the comparison shows that for both types of GGIs, factors related to institutional structures and governance mandates contribute significantly to explaining the composition of audiences. Over the last decade, explanations related to global and domestic democratic norms appear to have become more key to the composition of audiences of the UNFCCC than for the FSC. Politicization stands out as an important factor for explaining the activation of self-appointed audiences in the case of the UNFCCC, but it does not appear decisive for who was targeted by UNFCCC self-legitimation. In comparison, in the case of the FSC, politicization has not led to a similarly broad increase in self-appointed audiences, while attempts to counter critique stand out as a particularly important explanation for who is being targeted by the FSC.

Chapter 11, by Farsan Ghassim, examines the effects of (de)legitimation on citizens' legitimacy beliefs using unique survey experiments in which respondents from ten countries worldwide—the Americas (Canada and Colombia), Europe (France and Hungary), Africa and the Middle East (Kenya, Egypt, and Turkey), Asia (Indonesia and South Korea), and Australia—are exposed to different treatments involving GGI, state, and citizen legitimation and delegitimation. By focusing on the UN, the World Bank, and the WHO, the chapter finds that the delegitimation of GGIs by governments and citizen protests has some limited effectiveness, depending on the GGI in question. GGI self-legitimation statements by themselves do not boost public belief in GGIs' legitimacy. However, GGI self-legitimation is effective at counteracting delegitimation attempts by governments and citizen protests. While GGIs are somewhat vulnerable to delegitimation by hostile governments and citizen protests, the experimental results demonstrate that they can effectively defend themselves against such attacks and at least neutralize them through self-legitimation.

Finally, Chapter 12, by Kristina Jönsson and Anders Uhlén, summarizes the findings by offering elaborate answers to the volume's overall research question: How, why, and with what impact on audiences, are GGIs legitimated and delegitimated? The chapter also provides conclusions for the volume as a whole by theorizing the interplay between legitimation and delegitimation. It does so in three stages: First, it identifies key aspects of legitimation and delegitimation processes, respectively, and compares legitimation with delegitimation. Second, it analyzes how legitimation and delegitimation feed into each other. Third, it develops expectations regarding the conditions under which legitimation is likely to lead to delegitimation, and vice versa. Finally, the chapter discusses the

broader implications of the findings, addressing three fields: (de)legitimation in domestic politics, contestation in global politics, and normative issues in global governance.

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2

The Politics of Legitimation and Delegitimation in Global Governance

A Theoretical Framework

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This book employs an empirical approach to the study of legitimacy in global governance by examining processes of legitimation and delegitimation rather than normatively assessing legitimacy, as explained in Chapter 1. The present chapter advances a theoretical framework for studying how, why, and with what impact on audiences, global governance institutions (GGIs) are legitimated and delegitimated. As states have granted more political authority to GGIs, processes of legitimation and delegitimation have become a key feature of global governance (Zürn 2018; Tallberg and Zürn 2019). GGIs are sites for the contestation of world order, played out through the interaction between rule and resistance in transnational and international politics (Anderl et al. 2019; Stephen and Zürn 2019; Börzel and Zürn 2021). With higher levels of power and authority—along with the hierarchies they entail—comes a demand to actively cultivate beliefs in an institution's legitimacy (Weber 1922/1978; Barker 2001; Zürn 2018). The justification of power to those who are governed is particularly important in the context of global governance because other tools of social control, such as coercion or persuasion, are in short supply (Hurd 2007). Such attempts to justify the exercise of power need recognition by those who are subject to it. Beyond legal legitimacy through adherence to formal rules, the exercise of authority may be justified in line with the broader normative beliefs that are shared at least at a minimal level across society (Beetham 2013). Whereas legitimation and delegitimation have often been studied separately, we maintain that it is not possible to fully understand the politics of the legitimation of GGIs without also taking into account how these institutions are delegitimated and how processes of legitimation and delegitimation feed into and shape each other.

In our theoretical framework, we go beyond a mere discursive understanding of legitimation, which has characterized much previous research, and highlight

how legitimacy is constructed and contested as an ongoing process containing practices, justifications, and audiences of legitimation and delegitimation. In order to achieve this, the chapter proceeds in four steps. We begin by conceptualizing processes of legitimation and delegitimation. For the sake of simplicity, we will at times refer to these jointly as “(de)legitimation.” We then present the three main elements of the theoretical framework in turn: practices, justifications, and audiences of legitimation and delegitimation. More specifically, legitimation *practices* are what different agents engage in when they legitimate or delegitimize GGIs; the *justifications* are the substantive normative content these agents draw on when engaging in such practices; and *audiences* are the actors on the receiving end of these processes. The sub-sections on practices, justifications, and audiences include overall theoretical expectations with regard to variation in the institutional set-up of GGIs, the policy field of which GGIs are part, and the social structures in which they are embedded. The chapter concludes with a brief summary and outlines how the framework is used throughout the volume.

Processes of Legitimation and Delegitimation

This section starts out by conceptualizing legitimation and delegitimation *processes*, their *agents* and *objects*, and then posits that such processes may be shaped by the GGI’s institutional set-up, policy field characteristics, and broader social structures. In this book, we understand legitimacy in global governance to be primarily found in beliefs about the appropriate acquisition and exercise of authority by a governing institution (Weber 1922/1978; Beetham 2013; Tallberg and Zürn 2019). Such beliefs commonly entail either a positive or a critical attitude toward GGIs’ exercise of authority. When such beliefs are not expressed or otherwise acted upon—when they remain as impressions in the mind—they may have little or no political force. It is in and through processes of justifying and questioning the exercise of authority that legitimacy beliefs may emerge, consolidate, or change across audiences. Thus, while (de)legitimation processes have the potential to shape legitimacy beliefs, they are by no means necessarily successful in doing so (Reus-Smit 2007: 159–60). Understanding the consequences of (de)legitimation requires, at least in part, subscribing to a processual understanding of legitimacy that entails grounding (de)legitimation in specific historical and societal contexts, changing societal norms and configurations of power relations (cf. Dingwerth et al. 2019).

We understand *legitimation* as a process that may enhance beliefs in the rule of a political institution being acquired and exercised appropriately, and *delegitimation* as a process that challenges beliefs in the appropriateness of a political institution’s acquisition and exercise of authority. As noted above, these processes do not necessarily affect legitimacy beliefs. Rather, the extent and contexts in

which they do so are open empirical questions (see Chapter 11). Legitimation and delegitimation are contested political processes that include both those who support and those who challenge a political authority (Barker 2001: 24–28). Our framework moves beyond why and how legitimacy claims are supported to also include a focus on why and how legitimacy is contested. Moreover, it opens up for an analysis of the interplay between delegitimation and legitimation. In the context of the increasing politicization of global governance (Zürn et al. 2012), we expect that legitimation and delegitimation processes are closely related and affect each other. Various concepts have been used to highlight the contentious nature of legitimacy dynamics in global governance, for example, “legitimacy games” (Van Rooy 2004), “legitimation contests” (Dingwerth et al. 2019), “battles for legitimacy” (Wajner 2019), and “legitimacy struggles” (Uhlen 2019). While we are inspired by these and similar studies, previous literature tends to focus primarily on legitimation and delegitimation as parallel processes rather than on the ways in which legitimation and delegitimation are linked and shape each other. Hence, our analyses seek to capture the interplay between these two processes.

A core distinction with regard to the actors involved in legitimation and delegitimation processes is between agents and audiences. *Agents of (de)legitimation* are those actors who intentionally or unintentionally affect perceptions of legitimacy. We adopt a comprehensive approach regarding what may constitute an agent of legitimation and delegitimation related to a GGI. These agents can be member states, non-member states (e.g., great powers or donors), GGI staff, other GGIs, business and civil society actors, as well as media and academics.

A focus on the dynamic interplay between different agents and audiences constitutes an essential aspect of our theoretical framework and we return below to how we conceptualize audiences. Most previous research has taken a narrower view, focusing on how GGIs try to legitimate themselves vis-à-vis internal and external audiences, that is, GGIs’ attempts at self-legitimation (Gronau and Schmidtke 2016; Ecker-Ehrhardt 2018, 2020; von Billerbeck 2020).

Thus far, we have referred to legitimation and delegitimation processes as targeting a GGI in general terms. Yet, it is important to distinguish what exactly is being (de)legitimated. We refer to this as the *object* of (de)legitimation. Research on legitimacy in global governance typically follows Easton (1975) in reserving the term *legitimacy* for foundational support directed at political regimes as such, regardless of whether or not specific policies are approved (Gronau and Schmidtke 2016; Hurrelmann 2017). We employ a less restrictive view of the object of legitimation and include the possibility that an individual policy or GGI program may constitute an object of (de)legitimation. This is because we do not ascribe a priori importance to any of these objects of (de)legitimation, as we recognize that a frontal challenge to an institution’s authority may be inconsequential if it does not resonate with important audiences. In contrast, sustained challenges to particular policies may have a major impact on an institution’s overall legitimacy if they

are supported by influential audiences. For example, widespread criticism of the World Bank's funding of oil, gas, and mining projects did not question the overall authority of the GGI, but still had consequences for its legitimacy and triggered policy change, as analyzed in Chapter 5. In our approach, therefore, the object of (de)legitimation can range from the authority of an organization as a whole to more specific departmental units, as well as particular programs, policies, and even decisions (cf. [Gregoratti and Uhlin 2018](#)).

Until now, we have outlined an actor-centered and process-oriented theoretical framework highlighting agents and objects of (de)legitimation. However, processes of (de)legitimation cannot be understood without consideration of how agency is related to social structure ([Scholte 2018](#)). The study of power relations in global politics is often marked by a split concerning the importance accorded to either agents or structures. Such a divide may be evinced in diverging commitments to explaining whether power is expressed in social relations of either interaction or constitution, and in foregrounding the different effects of power on either behavior or identities ([Barnett and Duvall 2005](#)). Legitimation scholarship in global governance, however, sits rather uneasily within the agency/structure dichotomy. For example, while adhering to an interactionist metatheory that privileges agency and the relations between agents, [Dingwerth and colleagues \(2019\)](#) recognize that agency is structured; in other words, it is enabled and constrained by institutional and normative structures. Similarly, [Bernstein's \(2011\)](#) critical theory of legitimacy argues that legitimacy requirements vary across institutional forms and issue areas owing to a double interplay between GGIs and the international (legal and normative) structure, on the one hand, and the communities of actors regulated or affected by the institution, on the other. Our process-oriented theoretical framework builds on such approaches to structured agency as we consider three main categories of sources of variation that shape the elements of (de)legitimation processes. These are institutional set-up, policy field characteristics, and social structures. These categories contain both material and ideational features. While individual chapters specify theoretical expectations on variation as relevant to the research question at hand, we briefly outline here what these categories entail in the context of the present framework.

Institutional set-up refers to the characteristics of GGIs. A rich literature points to the importance of institutional design for the politics of (de)legitimation processes related to GGIs. For our purposes, we focus on their degree of authority, state centeredness, and geographical scope—three of the key institutional characteristics found in previous studies. The degree of authority, or rather changes in authority, is arguably a main driver of legitimation and delegitimation processes in global governance and builds on various institutional resources ([Zürn 2018](#); [Tallberg and Zürn 2019](#)). Another key feature concerns a GGI's degree of state centrism, ranging from intergovernmental GGIs to hybrid GGIs and entirely non-state GGIs. Nongovernmental GGIs exercise considerable rule-making authority

in contemporary global governance but little is known about how they differ from intergovernmental GGIs with regard to processes of (de)legitimation. Moreover, we include institutions with both regional and global membership in order to assess potential variation across such institutions. In essence, differences in institutional set-up may explain the variation in the forms of (de)legitimation practices and justifications, as well as the composition of audiences in relation to a GGI.

Policy field refers to a substantive area in which policy-making actors compete for influence. Each policy field has its own constellation of institutions, actors, interests, and norms affecting the degree of politicization and thereby also the dynamics of legitimation and delegitimation processes (Zürn 2018). Furthermore, policy fields overlap and may be categorized in several ways. As presented in Chapter 1, we include task-specific institutions from the broad policy fields of economic affairs (trade, finance, standardization), sustainable development (environment, health, poverty), peace and security (international conflict regulation, international criminal justice), as well as multipurpose GGIs. Certain policy fields include a more important role for non-state actors than others. Previous research shows that the sustainable development field, particularly environment and health, has been more influenced by a participatory norm than the fields of finance and security (Dingwerth and Pattberg 2009; Steffek 2010; Tallberg et al. 2013; McInnes 2020). There is, moreover, a great need for resources from the non-state realm in the environmental domain, meaning it contains a broader constellation of actors than the fields of security and finance. This means that legitimation and delegitimation processes related to GGIs in the fields of environment and health are likely to involve a greater diversity of practices and audiences than such processes related to GGIs in the fields of finance and security.

Social structures, finally, entail material and ideational elements that set the underlying parameters of the processes of legitimation and delegitimation (Bernstein 2011; Scholte 2018). Structures related to social stratifications shape the economic, political, and social power relations that determine the repertoire of (de)legitimation practices available to different actors and what audiences count as important for the legitimacy of GGIs. Materially, the politics of the (de)legitimation of GGIs plays out in the context of geopolitical power relations and the global capitalist economy (Tussie 2018). Ideational structures refer to the norms, ideas, and discourses that determine which (de)legitimation justifications are available and how well various normative justifications resonate with different audiences. The liberal world order upon which contemporary global governance has been built includes structurally embedded norms on, for example, economic growth, market economy, liberal democracy, human rights, sustainable development, and gender equality (Stephen and Zürn 2019). While these norms are increasingly contested, agents of (de)legitimation in global governance are still constrained to refer to these norms as applicable in different contexts (Scholte 2018: 87).

Next, we elaborate the three core elements of our theoretical framework: the *practices* enacted by agents of (de)legitimation, the normative *justifications* that these practices are based on, and the *audiences* of such practices. At the end of each of these three sub-sections, we outline general theoretical expectations with regard to variation across institutional set-up, policy fields, and social structures. Figure 2.1 illustrates the relationships between the main elements of our process-oriented framework. The arrows do not represent causal claims but illustrate the flow of processes of legitimation or delegitimation.

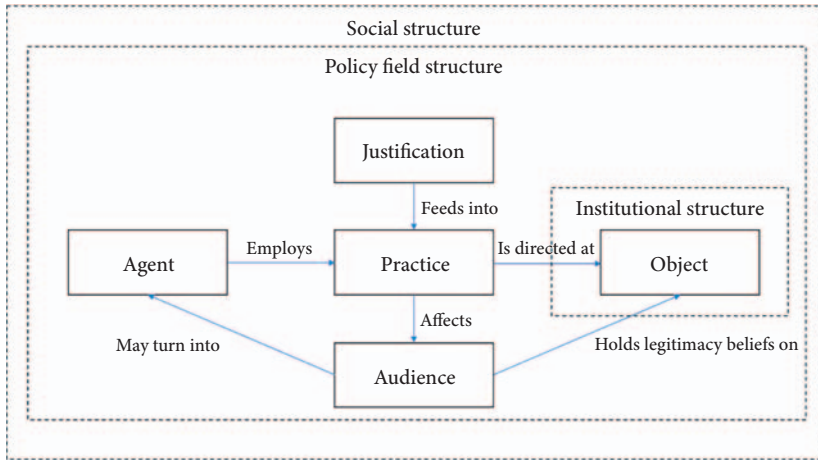


Fig. 2.1 Conceptual map of theoretical framework on the (de)legitimation of GGIs

Practices of Legitimation and Delegitimation

The first of the three key elements of the theoretical framework are the practices of legitimation and delegitimation that are enacted by different agents. We classify practices as discursive, behavioral, or institutional (Bäckstrand and Söderbaum 2018). Before elaborating these practices, it is necessary to differentiate *practice* from strategy. It is common to define (de)legitimation in terms of intentional and goal-oriented strategies (Goddard and Krebs 2015: 15–16; Gronau and Schmidtke 2016: 540; Tallberg and Zürn 2019: 588). By contrast, our understanding of practices goes beyond goal-oriented activities and does not by definition assume intentionality on the part of the agent of (de)legitimation. In our view, the goal-based approach risks missing important practices that shape legitimacy beliefs in global governance that may neither be calculated nor carried out with a predetermined goal in mind. In fact, taking inspiration from Beetham (2013), what matters for legitimacy are actions that publicly express consent irrespective of the goals and

intentions of the actor. Actions that in a certain social context demonstrate consent to an authority are important because the actions as such confer legitimacy. We refer to such actions as *legitimation* practices, while actions that demonstrate a lack of consent in an authority are referred to as *delegitimation* practices. To study social practices beyond goal-based strategy also means approaching practices as embedded within a broader societal context (Van Leeuwen 2008: 5; Adler and Pouliot 2011; Slaughter 2015; cf. Barker 2001). Indeed, some practices may involve a greater element of ritual and symbolism, which may not always be intentional or goal-oriented. In sum, while (de)legitimation practices may certainly include conscious and strategic acts of political performance, we also consider unintentional (de)legitimation practices and their implications for the perceived legitimacy of GGIs.

Previous research on (de)legitimation in global governance approaches the politics of legitimacy primarily as a discursive phenomenon. This results in considerable emphasis on how legitimacy claims and challenges are communicated through discursive practices (Steffek 2003; Schneider et al. 2007; Dingwerth et al. 2019). However, legitimacy implies “acts of recognition, acknowledgement or engagement, from which authorities can derive legitimacy” (Beetham 2013: 267). In our view, such acts cannot be reduced to discursive practices and, as a result, we make a core distinction between *discursive* and *behavioral* practices. In the context of global governance, one subset of behavioral practice stands out as particularly prominent, namely *institutional* practices, and we therefore treat it as a third category.

Discursive (de)legitimation practices transpire as governors and critics establish or contest legitimacy through justifications in claims making and other communicative messages around GGI legitimacy. Discursive practices function in a variety of ways. (De)legitimizing agents often explicitly invoke widely-referenced sources of legitimacy, such as qualities related to democratic, technocratic, and fairness standards of a GGI (Scholte and Tallberg 2018). Discursive practices manifest in a broad variety of texts and speech acts, including, among others, annual reports, public speeches, constitutional documents, mission statements, press releases, social media posts, protest slogans, informal conversations during negotiations. The methodological implications are that discourse analysis and text-analytical approaches have dominated the empirical study of (de)legitimation of GGIs to date (e.g., Halliday et al. 2010; Ecker-Ehrhardt 2018; but see Gronau 2016).

Behavioral practices have received far less scholarly attention. By going beyond discursive speech acts, this category allows us to include a variety of other actions that are usually ignored but may have significant effects on an audience’s legitimacy perceptions. For example, many GGIs try to enhance their legitimacy through public relations, performance reviews, and opinion polls. Some GGIs can be legitimated through external funding, or delegitimated by the withdrawal

of funding. Delegitimation practices can also take the form of protests, such as street demonstrations, walkouts from meetings with GGI representatives, as well as other forms of everyday resistance by social movements (Gregoratti and Uhlin 2018). While GGI staff only rarely delegitimize their own institution (von Billerbeck 2020), its member states may in fact engage in behavioral delegitimation practices, either unilaterally or in tandem with societal actors (Zaum 2013a). Recent examples of member state behavioral delegitimation of GGIs are President Trump's decision to end the US relationship with the World Health Organization and Hungary's attempt in 2021 to legally overturn the European Parliament's decision to scrutinize democratic standards in the country.

Institutional (de)legitimation practices refer to actions that modify organizational arrangements of a GGI in a way that may affect its legitimacy. They have received increasing scholarly attention during the last decade. A growing body of scholarship is analyzing how GGIs have sought to improve their legitimacy through institutional and administrative reforms (Zaum 2013a), for example, by opening up to civil society and other non-state actors and the general public (Grigorescu 2007; Scholte 2011; Tallberg et al. 2013). While most previous scholarship relates to the self-legitimation of GGIs, institutional practices may also serve as delegitimation in relation to other institutions and actors. For example, when the members of one GGI establish another GGI within the same policy area, but with somewhat different purposes and procedures, this might be a case of counter-institutionalization within the context of "contested multilateralism" (Morse and Keohane 2014).

While we use the terms "discursive" and "behavioral" practices as distinct conceptual constructs, empirical observations suggest that they are often combined in practice. For example, an institutional reform announced on Twitter or a protest using specific slogans are also discursive (de)legitimation practices. Thus, exploring how institutional and other behavioral practices are linked to discursive practices is key to our analysis of the politics of (de)legitimation.

On the basis of this distinction between discursive, behavioral, and institutional practices, we develop theoretical expectations with regard to institutional set-up, policy field, and social structures. These are further elaborated in Part II of the book, where Chapters 3–5 study practices of (de)legitimation. With regard to institutional set-up, we expect that the higher the authority of a specific GGI, the more contested it will be and as a result targeted by a wider variety of (de)legitimation practices. Therefore it will also more often use various self-legitimation practices in response (Zürn 2018; Tallberg and Zürn 2019). Moreover, high levels of participation of transnational non-state actors in GGI affairs will trigger a greater diversity of legitimation and delegitimation practices in order to reach out broadly (Tallberg et al. 2013; Dingwerth et al. 2019). With regard to differences between governmental and nongovernmental/hybrid GGIs, we expect intergovernmental GGIs with significant staff resources and dedicated public communications departments to

strategically employ more diverse legitimation practices than less well-resourced nongovernmental GGIs who need to rely on discursive practices (Bäckstrand and Söderbaum 2018: 116).

With regard to policy field, we expect that the nature of the field will influence the choice of (de)legitimation practice. Within the state-centric security field, we expect GGIs and member states to be the main producers as well as targets of (de)legitimation practices. In contrast, policy fields such as the environment, health, and development are less state-centric in their constellation of powerful actors, and we therefore expect not only a larger variety of agents, but also more co-occurrence of different discursive, institutional, and behavioral practices (Bäckstrand and Söderbaum 2018: 115). Global economic governance, for its part, is a highly politicized field in which criticism of neoliberal policies comes from both the anti-capitalist left and the nationalist right. We expect less delegitimation in less politicized policy fields, such as the more technical field of Internet governance. The health policy field is also typically less politicized, but, as illustrated by the COVID-19 pandemic, this may change over time (Chapter 7).

Finally, we expect that material social structures will shape the repertoire of practices available to different agents of (de)legitimation. Major Northern-based intergovernmental GGIs may engage in relatively costly institutional reforms to enhance their legitimacy, while less resourceful Global South and non-state GGIs and civil society actors might have a more limited repertoire of legitimation practices at their disposal. For similar reasons, powerful states are likely to be able to use a wider range of (de)legitimation practices—and more effectively so—compared to states in the Global South. Providing or withdrawing funding, for example, might be impactful (de)legitimation practices for more powerful states and large companies, but not for states and societal actors in the periphery of the capitalist global economy.

Justifications in Legitimation and Delegitimation

Our second theoretical element is justifications. These provide a reservoir of reasons that underpin positive and negative assessments of legitimacy. Agents of (de)legitimation draw on these justifications that support or contest GGI legitimacy, and these justifications need to resonate with an audience in order to have an impact. Justifications thereby serve as an important link between (de)legitimation practices and audiences. It should be noted that whereas the notion of discursive practices focuses on the *act* of (de)legitimation, the concept of justifications implies a focus on the *normative content* or *substance* of (de)legitimation. Moreover, justifications point to the historically specific norms by which the legitimacy of a GGI is evaluated and through which a GGI normatively grounds its role and practices within a wider social context (Zaum 2013a; Stephen and Zürn

2019). Hence, the concept of justifications is useful when studying (de)legitimation dynamics over time. Other authors use concepts such as “legitimacy sources” (Scholte and Tallberg 2018) or “legitimation narratives” (Zürn 2018) to study justificatory norms, but we prefer the concept of justifications as it aligns better with our process perspective.

We suggest that three types of normative justifications are particularly significant in the context of global governance, namely, justifications that refer to the *social purpose*, *procedures*, and *performance* of a GGI. The social purpose concerns the goals the GGI should strive to achieve, or the “essence” of the organization (Suchman 1995: 583; Dingwerth et al. 2020: 722). Justifications linked to procedures relate to the means through which goals are to be achieved. Finally, justifications related to the performance of a GGI refer to how well and effectively it achieves its purpose. Justifications are based on different norms: *democratic norms* related to participation, accountability, and transparency or the protection of rights and democratic process; *technocratic norms* related to efficiency, expertise, problem-solving capacity, or collective gains; and *norms related to fairness* such as impartiality, human dignity, and justice, to name a few (Scholte and Tallberg 2018; Dingwerth et al. 2019; Tallberg and Zürn 2019).

Research on social purpose shows that the normative appropriateness of a GGI is closely related to support and demand for reforms. Normative expectations are decisive for how a GGI is perceived. They can both exert pressure for change and contribute to “stickiness,” that is, prevent change through the accumulation of legitimacy (Lenz and Viola 2017). Other studies focusing on procedures and performance show that demands for change are often related to power relations and unequal representation within decision-making, as well as opportunities to influence the operations of GGIs—or high levels of intrusiveness regarding economic issues or human rights (Zürn et al. 2019). In short, we expect that the purpose of governance is equally as important as the procedure and performance for the composition of justifications.

The importance of justifications in (de)legitimation processes is intimately related to the rise of international authorities, and the constraints—actual or potential—they place on their members (Zürn 2018). As mentioned earlier, the attainment of legitimacy depends on how it resonates with current norms. Up until recently, the rise of democratic justifications deployed by GGIs received the lion’s share of attention (e.g., Dingwerth et al. 2020). However, in line with our empirical approach, we maintain that which justifications are used by agents of legitimation is an empirical question (cf. Schneider et al. 2010). For example, in one of the most comprehensive assessments of how GGIs justify their legitimacy, besides the democratic norm of participation, Zürn (2018: 72–76) identifies the following: legality, fairness, expertise, tradition, and relative gains. Thus, justifications provide important tools to apprehend the norms (or normative benchmarks) that shape legitimacy beliefs at different points in time and their resonance with different audiences.

In empirical research on governance and legitimacy, justifications are often studied through legitimation statements in printed media or various policy documents, such as annual reports. Produced by an agent, each legitimation statement not only contains an object of (de)legitimation, it is also part of a larger “pattern of legitimation” based on normative justifications that support positive or negative assessments of legitimacy (Schmidtke and Nullmeier 2011; Schneider et al. 2010; Gronau 2016). The positive or negative tone in legitimation statements is an important element of normative justifications (Schmidtke 2019; Tallberg and Zürn 2019). However, here we broaden our scope to also include the normative justifications that underpin behavioral practices. As noted above, behavioral practices cover, for example, performance reviews, ranking exercises, opinion polls, campaigns, and decisions on GGI funding, and all of these have normative connotations. They can be studied through texts, pictures, participatory observations, and so on. This also implies that the normative justifications we study can be found in both unintentional and strategic practices, as explained in the section on practices.

Based on our conceptualization of normative justifications, we develop a number of theoretical expectations, which will be further elaborated in Chapters 6–8. Concerning our theoretical expectations related to institutional set-up, we do not expect resources or degree of authority to have a significant influence on which normative justifications are used in (de)legitimation. However, we expect that state-centered GGIs primarily rely on technocratic justificatory norms, while the (de)legitimation of non-state GGIs involves more democratic normative justifications due to a more diverse membership base (Bernstein 2011). Whether the key function of a GGI is primarily legislative, executive, or judicial may also impact which justifications prevail (Scholte and Tallberg 2018: 67). Moreover, we expect that regional GGIs draw on more regionally specific normative justifications compared to global GGIs. For example, Bernstein (2011: 34–35) notes that states in the Global North tend to be interested in performance and transparency, while states in the Global South have been more focused on equity.

We expect policy field to be a major factor in explaining variation in justifications. The social purpose of a GGI and the substantive issues a GGI is focusing on influence which normative justifications are used in processes of (de)legitimation. Normative justifications related to human rights, global justice, solidarity, equality, and protection of the vulnerable are likely to be more common in the policy fields of development, environment, and health, while justifications related to security, law, and notions of the nation-state are likely to be more common in the policy fields of finance, trade, and peace and conflict (cf. Steffek 2010). We expect that task-specific GGIs are exposed to justifications related to their expertise and performance in a specific policy field, while the (de)legitimation of multipurpose GGIs also relies on normative reasons beyond specific issue areas, such as notions of common values and cooperation. We also expect issues that transcend several policy fields, such as climate change and COVID-19, to influence normative

justifications in individual fields through spill-over effects between fields (Faude and Große-Kreul 2020).

Social structures also impact the content and resonance of justifications. We expect that justifications will differ depending on how standards of legitimacy are selected and upheld by agents of (de)legitimation and potential audiences in relation to the broader normative social contexts, including political, economic, and social power structures (Bernstein 2018; Dingwerth et al. 2019). Thus, we expect that the distribution of authority and power in global governance resulting from colonial legacies will play an important role in the justification of delegitimation practices driven by concerns over unequal representation and distributive aspects (Dingwerth et al. 2019; Zürn et al. 2019). We therefore expect that the balance between various (de)legitimation justifications changes over time depending on the prevalent normative structures. Previous research has shown democratic and neoliberal norms to be highly influential in global governance (Grigorescu 2015; Stephen and Zürn 2019; Dingwerth et al. 2020), but in light of political developments in recent years, we also expect that norms related to nationalism and populist notions will influence the composition of normative (de)legitimation justifications (Söderbaum et al. 2021).

Audiences of Legitimation and Delegitimation

Our third and final theoretical element concerns audiences of legitimation and delegitimation processes. (De)legitimation are relational and require (de)legitimizing agents as well as actors granting or withdrawing legitimacy, that is, audiences whose legitimacy beliefs are supposed to be affected by legitimation and delegitimation practices. The concept of audience offers a generic notion to differentiate receivers from agents of legitimation practices. Notably, the concept of audience contains the possibility of interaction, like in a concert, as receivers may not only receive legitimation efforts, but also react to them in various ways (Bexell and Jönsson 2018: 124). Audiences could publicly express their belief in the (il)legitimacy of a GGI or they may not show any reaction. The kind of actors that are agents and audiences depends on the specific (de)legitimation context. Our process-oriented perspective is well suited to highlight the interaction between agents and audiences.

Our framework contains two key distinctions with regard to studying audiences. The first key distinction is between *constituencies* and *non-constituencies*, underlining the political bonds between the governors and the governed as a key axis along which to differentiate between audiences (see also Tallberg and Zürn 2019). We conceive of member state governments as direct constituencies in the case of intergovernmental organizations, whereas citizens are indirect constituencies through chains of political representation. Non-constituencies are a residual

audience category, covering all other actors that are not constituencies. Note that the distinction between constituent and non-constituencies does not imply important vs. non-important audiences, respectively. While member state governments are conventionally seen as the main audiences of (de)legitimation practices in global governance, more recently such audiences have diversified to include, for example, nongovernmental organizations, or funders such as philanthropic foundations (Zaum 2013b: 16–19; Dingwerth et al. 2019: 34). We consider GGI staff to be non-constituencies because staff in the capacity of organizational employees are not part of the political relationship between governors and governed, which is at the heart of the distinction between constituencies and non-constituencies.

The second key distinction is between *targeted* and *self-appointed* audiences, which is helpful for studying how (de)legitimation processes are shaped by patterns of inclusion and exclusion (Bexell and Jönsson 2018: 129). Targeted audiences refer to those groups and institutions that an agent of (de)legitimation intentionally addresses in its (de)legitimation practices. The notion of targeted audiences implies that there may also be unintended audiences who are exposed to legitimation and delegitimation practices. Our above concert metaphor includes people outside of a stadium who hear music from the concert. While many unintended listeners may hear the music but just walk by, self-appointed audiences constitute a subcategory of such unintended audiences. Those who stand outside of the stadium hear the concert and may even react to it by clapping, for example. Self-appointed audiences are those who, on their own initiative, take an interest in (de)legitimation practices. In other words, they are audiences that engage with (de)legitimation practices vis-à-vis the GGI in question without being addressed as a legitimation audience by the agent of (de)legitimation. Self-appointed audiences are therefore the key subcategory for our purposes as they take part in processes of legitimation and delegitimation. Contrary to the term *self-appointed*, which implies actions by the *audience* in question, the *targeting* of audiences involves a choice being made by the (de)legitimizing *agent* among different potential audiences. This thereby involves an implicit strategic or at least intentional element. Furthermore, audiences may be targeted based on the assumption that this audience will persuade other audiences of the institution's (lack of) legitimacy. These are *intermediary* (de)legitimation audiences (Bexell et al. 2021).

Our framework encompasses two main types of impact of (de)legitimation on audiences. The first is the composition of audiences in terms of whether constituencies or non-constituent groups are key and what kinds of targeted and self-appointed audiences predominate. Who is recognized as an audience of legitimation and delegitimation practices is a power-imbued question in itself. The distinction between targeted and self-appointed audiences emphasizes how (de)legitimation practices themselves constitute audiences (Bexell and Jönsson 2018: 129). GGIs and other agents of legitimation may construct target audiences by directing their (de)legitimation practices at groups that they perceive as

important, as is the case, for example, when United Nations organs invite civil society organizations to deliberations on priorities for new global policy agendas. By determining which audiences to target, agents of (de)legitimation exert power, because through this process, some groups are recognized as addressees while others are not. Such decisions matter because the norms, concerns, and beliefs of these addressees are therefore more likely to receive attention compared to other groups (Bexell et al. 2021). In addition, groups may constitute themselves as self-appointed audiences, regardless of whether they are recognized as an audience by the agents of (de)legitimation (Bexell and Jönsson 2018: 129). The second kind of impact concerns audiences' legitimacy beliefs related to GGIs. Audiences may come to find a GGI more or less legitimate as a result of (de)legitimation practices. This is where legitimation and delegitimation ultimately matter and may, in turn, affect the subsequent direction of such processes.

Over time and across (de)legitimation processes, a specific actor group may oscillate between functioning as agent and audience. In brief, an agent of (de)legitimation initiates a practice of (de)legitimation, underpinned by justifications that positively or negatively evaluate the object of (de)legitimation. That practice and its justifications may be targeted towards certain audiences, or—lacking a specified recipient—attract the interest of self-appointed audiences, and be further transmitted by intermediary audiences. The legitimacy beliefs of targeted or self-appointed audiences may be affected in a positive or negative direction by (de)legitimation practices, or remain unaffected. In turn, audiences may (proactively) respond to (de)legitimation practices, turning into agents of (de)legitimation and potentially affecting the course of continued dynamic (de)legitimation processes. As will be further elaborated in Chapter 11, we expect (de)legitimizing agents that are independent of the GGI (the object of (de)legitimation) to have more impact on legitimacy beliefs than GGIs themselves. This is especially the case if the (de)legitimizing agents do not appear to have apparent vested interests in legitimation or delegitimation. These are basic linkages between the elements of a process perspective. Such a process is by no means linear in practice but is influenced by external factors as part of the continuous contestation of authority beyond the state.

With regard to institutional set-up, we expect formal channels of representation and accountability of a GGI to shape who is targeted through legitimation practices by the GGI. Previous research leads us to expect that constituent audiences are more frequently addressed than non-constituent audiences, due to the institutionalized relationship between GGIs, member state governments, and their citizens (Beetham 2013; Zaum 2013a). We expect the attempt to counter critique against a GGI to have greater impact on the composition of audiences in the case of non-state GGIs than for intergovernmental GGIs. This is due to the less institutionalized political mandate of the former, where member categories are very diverse and membership changes more frequently than for intergovernmental

GGIs (Bexell et al. 2021). Compared to intergovernmental GGIs, non-state GGIs require closer links to their audiences because their legitimacy is less established, for example, when they seek to regulate actors who are also subject to market dynamics (Bernstein 2014, 2018: 194). In addition, we assess whether the composition of audiences is different in regional as compared to global institutions. For regional institutions, the findings in previous studies point in different directions, showing that civil society organizations have not been important in relation to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Gregoratti and Uhlin 2018: 146–7), but more so for the European Union (Steffek and Nanz 2008; Kamlage and Nanz 2017).

Moreover, we expect the characteristics of a policy field to impact the composition of audiences. A field's material distributions are likely to impact the composition of (de)legitimation audiences due to functional benefit concerns about obtaining legitimacy among different audiences. For example, in the policy fields of development and health, in which beliefs about the added value of including non-state actors in different programs are widespread among stakeholders, we expect civil society and business actors to be important in the overall audience composition (Jönsson et al. 2012: 126). In the security policy field, by contrast, we expect a less diverse and more state-dominated audience composition due to the less prevalent perception of the functional benefits of non-state actors, reinforced by the reluctance of states to delegate authority to GGIs in this domain (Zürn et al. 2021).

Ideational elements of social structures determine how well various normative justifications resonate with different audiences. We particularly focus on the role of democratic norms because previous research has shown these to be highly influential in global governance (Grigorescu 2015; Dingwerth et al. 2019). On this basis, we expect civil society organizations as transmitters of democratic values to be the most common type of non-constituent targeted audience (Kalm et al. 2019). Moreover, global economic structures involve market actors as participants in global governance, implying that individual companies and large foundations have turned into potential audiences of GGI legitimation and delegitimation (Andonova 2017; Youde 2017).

Concluding Remarks

In this section we recapitulate the key components of our theoretical framework, and then explain how the framework is used throughout the volume. In brief, the first component of the framework concerns the distinction between agents and objects. An agent enacts practices of (de)legitimation, whereas an object of (de)legitimation is what is being (de)legitimated, namely, the GGI or specific policies. The second component is the need to relate agency and structure in order

to study (de)legitimation processes within broader institutional and structural contexts, where we identified institutional set-up, policy field, and social structure as particularly relevant to account for the variation in (de)legitimation across GGIs. The third component of the framework consists of practices, justifications, and audiences. Practices are enacted by agents and are related to GGIs, the object of (de)legitimation. A core distinction was made between discursive and behavioral (de)legitimation practices, with institutional practices as a subset of the latter. When enacting these practices, agents of (de)legitimation draw on normative justifications, supporting or contesting a GGI's legitimacy. Justifications can refer to GGI procedures and performance, and to the substantive purpose of the GGI. Practices need to reach an audience in order to have an impact. Core distinctions were made between, on the one hand, *constituencies* and *non-constituencies* and, on the other, *targeted* and *self-appointed* audiences. We furthermore distinguish between two different kinds of impact of (de)legitimation processes on audiences: first, the impact on the composition of targeted and self-appointed audiences; second, the impact on individuals' legitimacy beliefs.

One core motivation in developing our framework is the need to go beyond why and how legitimacy claims are supported and validated, to also include a focus on why and how legitimacy is contested and on how processes of legitimation and delegitimation interact. Changes in authority levels are likely to prompt legitimation and delegitimation processes through politicization, as are external events that give rise to GGI legitimacy crises, as further studied in *Global Legitimacy Crises* (Sommerer et al. 2022), the third in our LegGov book series. From the viewpoint of the increasing politicization of global governance, it is to be expected that legitimation and delegitimation processes are closely related and affect each other. Hence, on the basis of previous chapters, our concluding chapter seeks to capture the interplay between these two sides of the challenges to the exercise of authority in global governance. We need to empirically interrogate how processes of legitimation and delegitimation occur, relate, and what their potential impact is. For this purpose, we adopt a comprehensive theoretical framework that allows for the inclusion of several agents and structures of (de)legitimation processes without a priori deciding which of them matters most.

While ensuing chapters take the theoretical framework as a whole as their point of departure, each will foreground select aspects of the framework and further expand on the theoretical expectations outlined in this chapter. The volume is divided into three main thematic sections, addressing practices, justifications, and audiences respectively. Each thematic section starts with a comparative overview (Chapters 3, 6, and 9) that provides the broader setting for the other two more specific comparative studies in each section. Taken together, the overview chapters and the subsequent chapters in each section provide a thorough empirical application of our theoretical framework. Compared to previous research in this field, the

volume is notable for its encompassing analysis of discursive, behavioral, and institutional practices, a broad range of normative justifications, and societal as well as state audiences. This broad coverage of types of practices, actors, and institutions allows for a comprehensive analysis of processes of (de)legitimation in global governance, building on a single theoretical framework. We revisit the framework as a whole in the concluding chapter in light of our empirical findings, ensuring a scholarly contribution that moves beyond the contributions of individual chapters.

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PART II
PRACTICES

3

Practices of (De)legitimation in Global Governance

A Comparative Overview

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This and the following two chapters of the book foreground one key aspect of the theoretical framework developed in the previous chapter: practices of legitimation and delegitimation. Research on legitimacy and legitimation in global governance has begun to examine the discursive self-legitimation of global governance institutions (GGIs), as evident in annual reports and other documents (Dingwerth et al. 2019; Dingwerth et al. 2020), discursive (de)legitimation practices in the media (Schmidtke 2019), and United Nations (UN) General Assembly debates (Binder and Heupel 2015; Boehme 2018). Some case studies of selected international organizations have explored institutional reforms as self-legitimation practices (Zaum ed. 2013). A few case studies have analyzed certain behavioral (de)legitimation practices such as protests (Haunss 2007; Gregoratti and Uhlin 2018; Anderl et al. 2019). While this research provides valuable insights into selected aspects of (de)legitimation practices in global governance, we still lack a broader comparative overview of the full range of discursive, institutional, and behavioral practices in relation to different GGIs. In order to fill this research gap, the aim of this chapter is to analyze variation in institutional, discursive, and behavioral (de)legitimation practices across policy field and type of GGI.

This chapter compares (de)legitimation practices in relation to nine GGIs. These include economic intergovernmental GGIs: the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO);¹ intergovernmental GGIs in the field of security: the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the UN Security Council (UNSC); regional intergovernmental organizations: the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the European Union (EU); a nongovernmental GGI: the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC); and a hybrid GGI: the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). This selection enables comparisons across policy field, global/regional, and governmental/nongovernmental types of governance arrangements.

¹ Previously the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

First, the chapter analyzes the use of *institutional* legitimation practices over time through a content analysis of annual reports from 1985–2017 of the nine GGIs. Previous research has used annual reports to explore discursive legitimation (Dingwerth et al. 2019). In contrast, in this chapter we use annual report data to capture institutional legitimation. Annual reports are publications in which GGIs communicate about their institutional set-up and institutional reforms to a general audience. We identify three types of institutional arrangements or reforms used for self-legitimation: (1) cooperation with external actors, (2) establishment of new institutional mechanisms and entities, (3) substantial reform that alters the constitution and/or shifts the decision-making procedures of a GGI. The analysis highlights how these kinds of institutional legitimation practices by GGIs have developed over time and across GGIs.

Second, the chapter explores *discursive* legitimation by the selected GGIs and discursive (de)legitimation by other actors targeting the GGIs through content analyses of Twitter communication. A dataset comprising all tweets in English by and on the nine GGIs over two years (2019–2020) allows for a broad comparative analysis. The analysis comprises comparisons of the frequency and tone of tweets by and on the different GGIs in order to explore the discursive context of (de)legitimation practices vis-à-vis the GGIs, and an analysis of manually coded (de)legitimation statements in randomly selected tweets.

Third, the chapter examines *behavioral* (de)legitimation practices vis-à-vis the GGIs. For this purpose, it draws on a survey of political and societal elites in Brazil, Germany, the Philippines, Russia, South Africa, the USA, and on a global level. The chapter explores the frequency with which different types of elites use seven types of behavioral legitimation and delegitimation practices toward GGIs, including the nine in our sample. The behavioral practices include activities that assist a GGI in making or implementing its policies, organizing or participating in events to support a GGI, providing funding for a GGI, reducing involvement in a GGI, withdrawing funding from a GGI, organizing demonstrations and other protest activities against a GGI, and evaluations through rankings, ratings, and certifications.

This research design, analyzing the same set of GGIs in terms of institutional, discursive, and behavioral legitimation and delegitimation practices, enables a uniquely broad explorative overview of (de)legitimation patterns in global governance. At the same time, the necessity to use different datasets for the three types of (de)legitimation practices imposes limitations on the comparative analysis. The different datasets have different time frames (annual reports from 1985–2017, Twitter data from 2019–2020, and the elite survey conducted from 2017–2019) and therefore do not allow direct comparisons across types of practices. Nevertheless, we can still make interesting observations on how certain GGIs use discursive and institutional legitimation practices, how specific GGIs are targeted by discursive and behavioral (de)legitimation practices, and how this varies across policy field and type of GGI. As specified in Chapter 2, we expect the institutional

set-up of a GGI, such as its available resources and where it can be placed on the governmental-nongovernmental spectrum, to influence the type and frequency of legitimation and delegitimation practices. We also expect the nature of the policy field, such as the degree of state-centeredness and level of polarization, to account for variations in (de)legitimation practices across GGIs.

Institutional Legitimation Practices

As outlined in Chapter 2, institutional arrangements and reforms are one of three major types of legitimation practice. The communication of *change* of institutional arrangements defines them as *practices*. However, references to institutional reforms alone (“we have established a new committee”) is not sufficient for reforms to qualify as practices of institutional legitimation. They have to be combined with an argument that they have secured or enhanced the democratic or technocratic nature of a GGI’s procedures and/or performance. A GGI’s institutional reform becomes a legitimation practice only when it is motivated by some kind of normative justification that may enhance various audiences’ legitimacy beliefs about the GGI.

In our analysis of institutional legitimation practices, we focus on the GGI as the agent of legitimation. A GGI establishes a certain institutional arrangement and refers to it as a way to boost its legitimacy. Whereas the institutional arrangement in question may involve other actors, for example, in agreements on cooperation, consultation processes, or in the case of joint institutional bodies, these other agents could be considered secondary actors. Hence, our analysis focuses on self-legitimation by GGIs. While it should not be ruled out that a GGI could use institutional arrangements and reforms to delegitimize itself, we believe this to be a very unlikely practice and we have not noted any indications of this in our data. Furthermore, we acknowledge that institutional practices by one GGI could be used to delegitimize another, but we have not noted such instances in our data. Hence, our analysis focuses on institutional self-legitimation practices and does not include institutional (self-)delegitimation.

In order to gain an overview of institutional legitimation practices across GGIs and over time, we use a dataset based on the qualitatively coded introductory sections of the annual reports of nine GGIs from 1985 to 2017. Annual reports are ideal for our purpose as they contain GGIs’ own references to institutional features and reforms in the context of self-legitimizing statements. Alternative approaches (such as using existing data on different types of GGI reforms) would not allow us to determine when an institutional practice is used as legitimation as these data would lack information on normative justifications. For details on this dataset, see Chapter 6.²

² The coding scheme and a list of all analyzed annual reports are available at <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/leggov>.

To qualify as an institutional legitimation practice, a description of the practice had to be combined with a normative justification (related to democracy or effectiveness). While we use these justifications to identify legitimation practices, this chapter focuses only on institutional practices. Justifications are analyzed in Chapter 6. Practices were coded into the following three categories of institutional practices: (1) cooperation with external actors, (2) establishment of new institutional mechanisms and entities, and (3) decision-making/constitutional reforms. In a few cases, two codes were assigned to the same annual report extract. When a new institutional mechanism or entity was set up in cooperation with an external actor, such joint initiatives were coded as both cooperation and new mechanism/entities. Table 3.1 provides examples of the different categories of institutional legitimation practices. Table 3.2 displays the data in a table by year and GGI.

From Table 3.2, we can conclude that institutional self-legitimation by GGIs is relatively common in annual reports. For all GGIs in our sample, with the exception of the ICC, we find examples of such self-legitimation in annual reports for most years. GGIs describe their institutional reforms and arrangements and link them to technocratic or democratic justifications. The GGI in our sample that most frequently uses institutional self-legitimation in its annual reports is the ASEAN, followed by the economic GGIs (the World Bank, IMF, and WTO). The fact that we did not find a single case of institutional legitimation by the ICC suggests that it uses its annual reports in a different way than other GGIs, rather than providing evidence of a general lack of institutional legitimation practices by this GGI.

Looking at the different forms of institutional legitimation practices, we find that the broad category of institutional mechanisms and entities is the most common across GGIs and over time. The exception is the ICC, which does not use institutional legitimation at all. The other GGI in the security field, the UNSC, also stands out by using a highly formalized language referring to the establishment of new committees in accordance with certain resolutions.

Cooperation with external actors as a form of legitimation varies significantly across GGIs. This was the main form of institutional legitimation, as described in annual reports, for the ASEAN during the last decade. It was also frequently used by the WTO during the first decade of the 2000s. The IMF, World Bank, and ICANN also refer to cooperation with external actors, but less frequently. It is worth noting the striking difference between the two regional international organizations in our sample. Whereas there is only one case of the EU referring to cooperation as an institutional legitimation practice in its annual reports during this time frame, it is the main type of institutional legitimation practice for the ASEAN. This suggests that regional organizations in the Global South are much more dependent on legitimation through external actors than the more resourceful Northern GGIs.

Table 3.1 Types of institutional legitimization practices

Institutional practice	Specifications	Examples
Cooperation with external actors	Cooperation, partnerships, joint initiatives, ratification of agreements with external actors. Repeated, more or less regular seminars, symposia, workshops, conferences, dialogues, consultations, etc. with external actors.	<p>“As part of our broad efforts at enhancing our assistance to developing countries, the WTO is working closely with international development and financial institutions, with regional banks, as well as with individual donors, to ensure adequate funding and effectiveness of Aid for Trade” (WTO Annual Report 2007: 8).</p> <p>“To ensure the entire community has the opportunity to participate in this critical discussion, a program of external outreach meetings on the work of the PSC [President’s Strategy Committee] is being held around the world” (ICANN Annual Report 2008: 21).</p>
Establishment of new institutional mechanisms and entities	Establishment of new institutional procedures (e.g., for policy review, auditing, etc.), institutional resources, instruments, etc. (e.g., databases, online platforms, etc.), rules, guidelines, policies, and plans <i>for institutional practices</i> , ^a new entities, departments, offices, committees, positions, etc. ^b	<p>“The Bank Group’s groundbreaking Access to Information Policy has set a new standard for transparency among international institutions, and our Open Data Initiative gives access, free of charge, to more than 7000 data sets” (World Bank Annual Report 2011: 4).</p> <p>“The ASEAN Secretariat now has four Deputy Secretaries-General to ensure the effective and efficient operations of the ASEAN Secretariat in supporting ASEAN’s community building efforts” (ASEAN Annual Review 2010, Part 1: 8.)</p>
Decision-making/constitutional reform	Substantial reforms altering the constitution and/or decision-making procedures.	<p>“/I/n the most radical revision of the Treaty of Rome in its 30-year history the Single European Act has also made it possible for the Community to take decisions more efficiently, more rapidly and more democratically” (EU Annual Report 1986: 2).</p>

^a Only policies on the GGI’s own practices (e.g., transparency and consultation policies). Not policies promoted by the GGI to be implemented by member states or other stakeholders (e.g., economic policies, educational policies).

^b Also anniversaries of the establishment of new entities and the reform of existing entities.

Table 3.2 Institutional legitimization practices of nine GGIs 1985–2017

	IMF	World Bank	GATT/ WTO	ICC	UNSC	ASEAN	EU	FSC	ICANN
1985		I	I	-				-	-
1986				-		C,C, CI, CI, I	I, D,D,D,D	-	-
1987		I,I,I,I,I	I	-	C		D	-	-
1988	I,I,I	I,I,I	I	-	I,I,I		D	-	-
1989			I,I,I,I	-	C,C, I,I,I			-	-
1990			I	-	C, I,I,I,I		I	-	-
1991		CI	I	-	CI, I,I			-	-
1992		I,I	I	-	I,I, D			-	-
1993	I	I,I		-			I,I, D	-	-
1994	I	C, I,I,I		-			I, D	-	-
1995		C,C, I,I		-	I,I,I,I,I		I	-	-
1996	I,I	I,I,I,I,I	I	-	I,I,I,I,I,I	C, I,I		-	-
1997	I,I	C,C, I,I,I,I,I,I	I	-	I,I,I,I,I,I	I,I,I,I,I	D	-	-
1998	C, I	I,I,I,I,I,I	C, CI, I	-	I			-	-
1999	CI,I,I,I,I	I,I,I,I,I,I,I,I,I		-		I,I,I,I	I,I,I,I	-	-

2000	C, CI, CI, I	I	C, C, C, I	-	C, I	I	-
2001	I, I, I, I, I, I	C	C, C, I, I, I	-	I, I	I	-
2002	CI, I		C, I	-	C, I, I, I	I, I	I, I
2003	I, I, I, I, I, I		C, C, C, CI, I, I, I, I	-		I	-
2004	CI, CI, I	C, I	C, I, I, I, I		I, I	I	-
2005			C, C, I, I		I	I, I	I
2006	I, I	I			I	I, I	I, I
2007	I		C, C		I, I	C	I, I
2008		I, I, I, I	I, I		I	C, CI, I, I	I, I, I, I
2009		I, I, I	C, C			CI	C, C, I
2010	I	I, I, I, D	C			C, I, I	D
2011	I, I, I, D	C, C, I, I, I, I	I, I			C, C, CI	I
2012	I	I, I				C, C, C, C, CI	I, I, I, I
2013	I, I		C, I		I, I, I, I	C, C, C, C, C, I	C, I, I, I, I
2014	I	I, I, I			I, I, I, I	C, CI	I, I
2015					I, I	C, CI, I, I	C, I
2016		C	I		I, I	C, C, C, C, C, C, CI, CI	I, I
2017	I		C, C		-	I	C, I

Note: C=cooperation with external actors; I=institutional mechanisms and entities; D=decision-making/constitutional reforms.

Major decision-making or constitutional reforms are, as expected, less frequent in the annual reports data. There is one each for the IMF, World Bank, ASEAN, and ICANN. The EU stands out with eleven references to such major reforms in annual report legitimization statements (although several of the statements refer to the same reform—the Single European Act from 1986). This reflects the more frequent substantial changes of this GGI, although it is worth noting that not all constitutional reforms are used for legitimization purposes in annual reports. For instance, the change from GATT to WTO in 1995 did not result in any legitimization at all in the annual reports.

Considering the variation in institutional legitimization practices across policy fields, we find that, over time, the economic GGIs show a similar pattern of relatively frequent legitimization referring to new institutional mechanisms and entities and sometimes cooperation with external actors. In contrast, GGIs operating in the security field do not use institutional legitimization at all in their annual reports (ICC) or refer almost exclusively to a specific form of institutional entity (UNSC). However, there are also significant differences between the three intergovernmental GGIs in the economic policy field. The IMF reached a peak in institutional legitimization at the turn of the century (1999–2004), coinciding with a time of relatively intense civil society protests against it (Rauh and Zürn 2020: 598). Compared to the IMF, the use of institutional legitimization practices by the World Bank is somewhat more frequent, and more evenly distributed over time (although with an unexpected gap in the early 2000s when the World Bank, like the IMF, was particularly targeted by protests). The WTO intensified its institutional legitimization from 2000–2005, following the “Battle of Seattle.”

Looking at the regional multipurpose international organizations in our sample, the differences between the ASEAN and the EU are more striking than the similarities between these two GGIs. The ASEAN has an interesting institutional legitimization pattern over time, with quite intense legitimization in the 1980s and early 1990s, and during the last decade, but relatively infrequent institutional legitimization statements in between. A diversity of types of institutional legitimization is used, with a strong focus on cooperation with external actors from 2012–2016. The EU, in contrast, is not one of the GGIs in our sample that uses institutional legitimization very frequently. For several years, there are no examples of this kind of legitimization in its annual reports. However, when the EU makes such statements, it is often about quite substantial reforms, including changes to its foundational treaties.

Turning to nongovernmental and hybrid GGIs, their institutional legitimization pattern does not differ substantially from the intergovernmental GGIs. The FSC uses institutional legitimization relatively infrequently, and mainly with reference to new institutional mechanisms and entities. The ICANN uses a mix of institutional legitimization practices and it does so more frequently than the FSC.

In conclusion, when comparing across policy fields, institutional legitimization in annual reports occurs much less frequently in the security field. Economic and

multipurpose GGIs have a considerably more intense and diversified pattern of institutional legitimation in their annual reports. Comparing across types of GGIs, we do not find any major differences between governmental and nongovernmental, or global and regional GGIs.

Discursive (De)legitimation Practices

As established in Chapter 2, discursive (de)legitimation practices consist of communication about GGI legitimacy, referring to some kind of normative justification (to be analyzed in more detail in Chapters 6–8). Discursive practices manifest in a wide range of texts and speech acts. Social media has become an important part of the public communication practices of GGIs (Ecker-Ehrhardt 2021). Social media accounts are run by GGI secretariats and other institutional bodies, as well as individual staff members. The delegations of member states to large international organizations tend to have their own accounts (Bjola and Zaiotti 2021: 4). Moreover, various collective actors and individuals globally follow international organizations on social media, commenting on their activities. Hence, the “digital universe” of GGIs also includes a number of external stakeholders, ranging from government representatives to civil society organizations, companies, journalists, academics, and individual citizens globally (Bjola and Zaiotti 2021: 4).

Social media offers an alternative to news media and surveys for researchers interested in exploring citizens’ legitimacy beliefs and (de)legitimation practices toward different organizations. They allow spontaneously expressed opinions and beliefs to be observed, in contrast to the artificial setting of a survey. Through social media, citizens can make their personal assessments public without being limited by the gatekeeping functions of traditional news media (Etter et al. 2018). Some see this as a pluralization, or even a democratization, of public debate (Loader and Mercea 2011) whereas others have pointed to the elitist tendency of much social media communication (Hofferberth 2021). Nevertheless, it is obvious that social media is now an important space for the legitimation and delegitimation of political authorities, as well as the business sector. Moreover, by using social media instead of conventional news data, we are able to compare GGI self-legitimation with other actors’ (de)legitimation of the same GGI, whereas GGI self-legitimation and the views of individual citizens are rarely captured by news data.

In order to compare discursive (de)legitimation practices across policy field and type of GGI, we use Twitter data. Twitter is an influential forum in which proponents of GGIs issue legitimation claims that seek to cultivate confidence in these institutions’ right to rule. Most GGIs are active on Twitter (Ecker-Ehrhardt 2021). Twitter is also a forum in which critics of GGIs make delegitimation claims that aim to undermine beliefs in the rightful authority of these institutions. As

explained in Chapter 1, we compiled a dataset containing all tweets in English issued by and on sixteen GGIs (including the nine GGIs analyzed in this chapter) over two years (2019–2020). By collecting tweets over two years, we avoid bias in terms of seasonal differences and ensure that we cover the period of a GGI’s annual meeting(s), when Twitter communication is likely to be more intense. While English is the major language also on Twitter, the language limitation introduces certain biases into our analysis, which have to be taken into account.

Citizens’ assessments of the legitimacy of different organizations can be measured through a sentiment analysis of social media data (Etter et al. 2018). A sentiment analysis identifies positive and negative sentiments about an object and detects the polarity of sentences. The problem of mixed sentiments, which has been regarded as a major challenge for this kind of analysis, is less pronounced when analyzing Twitter data as tweets comprise short sentences (Etter et al. 2018: 73). Sentiment analyses of large social media datasets have been used to analyze legitimacy, particularly within business studies (e.g., Colleoni 2013; Castelló et al. 2016; Etter et al. 2018).

For data mining and analysis we relied on the web intelligence platform webLyzard. The webLyzard visual analytics dashboard is an advanced information exploration and retrieval interface (WebLyzard 2021). We use the sentiment analysis tool provided by this platform. Sentiment analysis identifies and aggregates polar opinions—that is, positive or negative statements. It requires specific language resources (sentiment lexicons), and a system that is capable of processing grammatical structures and considers the idiosyncrasies of specific language communities. Automated systems have difficulties handling ambiguities, which require domain-specific knowledge and the ability to identify the relationships between semantic concepts. WebLyzard has developed a novel approach to contextualization that has solved many of the problems with ambiguous terms (Scharl et al. 2016). Problems of ambiguity are addressed by detecting ambiguous sentiment terms, collecting context terms for them, and then using these context terms to refine the sentiment analysis (Weichselbraun et al. 2013: 40). However, this works better for some GGIs than others. When manually verifying the accuracy of the sentiment analysis we found a very good match for the FSC and the ASEAN, but we also found that the automated sentiment analysis concerning the ICC and the EU completely failed to capture the tone of tweets. Hence, we excluded the ICC and the EU from this part of the analysis. The remaining GGIs have an average accuracy of 72%. While not impressive, we consider this sufficient for our purpose.³

³ In order to test the accuracy of the sentiment analysis, we compared the sentiment noted in the webLyzard automatic sentiment analysis with our own qualitative coding of a random selection of tweets. As we considered tweets that were neutral in tone to be legitimacy related if there was an *implicit* positive or negative assessment of the GGI linked to some kind of normative justification, we excluded tweets receiving 0 (neutral tone) in the sentiment analysis from our accuracy test. The percentage of tweets that we coded in the same way (positive or negative in tone) as the automated sentiment analysis

Being able to analyze very large datasets—in our case all tweets in English by and on nine GGIs over two years—is a major benefit of the quantitative sentiment analysis approach. However, automated analysis based on machine-learning cannot adequately capture (de)legitimation statements. Identifying such statements with more accuracy requires manual coding. This can only be done on a more limited sample. Thus, we use a mixed methods approach to our social media analysis, following [Schneiker et al. \(2018\)](#). The sentiment analysis was used to explore the general context of Twitter communication on the GGIs in our sample. We then proceeded with an analysis based on manual coding of a random selection of tweets related to these GGIs.

We begin with an exploration of some broad patterns in the general use of Twitter by GGIs and on GGIs. This quantitative analysis focuses on the *frequency* of Twitter communication and the *tone* of tweets (cf. [Schmidtke 2019](#); [Tallberg and Zürn 2019](#)). Frequency simply refers to the number of tweets. Tone refers to the sentiment of tweets, which can be positive, neutral, or negative. This analysis provides some initial insights into the discursive context of (de)legitimation in relation to a GGI. A reasonable interpretation is that a GGI with a large share of negative tweets may face stronger legitimacy challenges than a GGI with a high percentage of tweets that are positive in tone.

Table 3.3 shows the frequency and tone of Twitter communication by the nine GGIs during 2019 and 2020. The global economic GGIs together with the EU are by far the most active on Twitter. The World Bank made 7821 tweets using its official Twitter account during these two years, meaning an average of 10–11 tweets per day. Moreover, many of the World Bank's functional and regional organizational bodies also have Twitter accounts. In our sample, the World Bank is the GGI that is most active on Twitter. This is not surprising as it has a large public communication department and a well-developed social media policy (Interview, World Bank Public Communication employee, March 21, 2019). The EU is second, only counting the EU Commission. Similar to the World Bank, the EU also operates a number of other Twitter accounts. The IMF and WTO are frequent tweeters, too, but unlike the World Bank and the EU, they do not have many accounts. The ICC uses Twitter less frequently but still issued an average of around three tweets per

differed considerably between GGIs. For two of the GGIs, the sentiment analysis performed extremely poorly—only 39% correct for the ICC and 45% correct for the EU. For the remaining GGIs, however, the accuracy was on average 72% (ranging from a high of 91% for the FSC to a low of 62% for the IMF and WTO). Exploring the reasons behind these striking differences between GGIs is beyond the scope of this study, but we note that there are significant linguistic differences depending on policy field. It might not be surprising that the sentiment analysis failed to capture the positive tone of tweets on the ICC, which uses a number of words with negative connotations while praising the ICC for working on these problems. In general, it is obvious that the sentiment analysis failed to correctly capture the tone of tweets that, for example, use irony. However, tweets that we consider incorrectly coded in the webLizard sentiment analysis included both tweets with a negative and with a positive tone so there is no obvious bias. Thus, with the exception of the ICC and the EU, we consider the level of accuracy high enough for our purpose of providing a general overview of the discursive context on Twitter for the selected GGIs.

Table 3.3 Twitter communication by GGIs 2019–2020: Frequency and tone

GGI	Frequency (number of tweets)	Positive tone (% of total number of tweets)	Negative tone (% of total number of tweets)	Difference (positive tone – negative tone)
IMF	5781	32	23	9
World Bank	7821	34	25	9
WTO	5152	36	10	26
ICC	2174	-	-	-
UNSC ^a	-	-	-	-
ASEAN	1530	55	6	49
EU	6505	-	-	-
FSC	381	57	7	50
ICANN	1529	33	5	28

Note: The data in Table 3.3 are limited to one main Twitter account of each GGI (@asean, @eu_commission, @fsc_ic, @icann, @intlcrimcourt, @imfnews, @worldbank, @wto). Some GGIs (particularly the EU, FSC, and World Bank) operate multiple Twitter accounts, which are specialized in terms of purpose and/or institutional body. In these cases we have selected the main official account of the GGI as a whole (and in the case of the EU, the European Commission, as it is the key supranational institution).

^a The UNSC stopped tweeting in 2017.

day during these two years. The nongovernmental and hybrid GGIs in our sample together with the regional international organization ASEAN are the least frequent tweeters, reflecting that they have less organizational resources to spend on social media. However, the ICANN and ASEAN still issued an average of around two tweets per day from 2019–2020. The FSC stands out as being much less active on Twitter than any of the other GGIs in our sample, but this is somewhat misleading as the FSC also uses country-specific accounts, which are not included here. In sum, Twitter appears to be a relevant communication channel for all GGIs in our sample, except for the UNSC. It is not surprising that the large global GGIs and the EU are the most active tweeters, given their greater resources.

Turning to the general tone of tweets, as displayed in Table 3.3, the share of tweets with a positive tone is larger than the share with a negative tone. Assuming that GGIs use Twitter to promote a positive image of their work, this is an expected pattern. The most interesting result of the analysis of the tone of tweets by the GGIs is the difference in average tone across different types of GGIs. The ASEAN, FSC, and (to a lesser extent) ICANN have significant differences between a large share of positive and a very small share of negative tweets. Tweets by the economic intergovernmental GGIs, while still more positive than negative in tone, do not display this dramatic difference in average tone.

Turning to Twitter communication on the GGIs (Table 3.4), the most intense tweeting is on the EU, followed by the global GGIs. There are significantly fewer

Table 3.4 Twitter communication on GGIs 2019–2020: Frequency and tone

GGI	Frequency (number of tweets)	Positive tone (% of total number of tweets)	Negative tone (% of total number of tweets)	Difference (% positive tone – negative tone)
IMF	2 693 100	27	38	–11
World Bank	1 824 400	30	32	–2
WTO	2 823 000	34	33	1
ICC	2 259 200	-	-	-
UNSC	2 345 900	30	39	–9
ASEAN	843 000	44	17	27
EU	4 691 000	-	-	-
FSC	145 900	49	15	34
ICANN	72 931	23	26	–3

Note: Tweets about GGIs, excluding the GGIs' own Twitter accounts, identified by manually reviewing a list of sources of tweets on the respective GGI. The excluded accounts are @asean, @aseanfoundation, @eu_commission, @euatun, @eu_near, @euclimateaction, @eupasifika, @euinIsrael, @fsc_ic, @fscuk, @fsc_us, @fsc_korea, @fscdems, @fscpublications, @fsc_canada, @fscAustralia, @icann, @icannatlarge, @icann_president, @intlcrimcourt, @icc_jobs, @imfnews, @imfcapdev, @worldbank, @worldbankafrica, @wbg_climate, @worldbankkenya, @wb_asiapacific, @worldbankmena, @wbg_cities, @worldbanklive, @wbg_education, @wbpubs, @wbg_gov, @worldbankdata, @worldbankwater, @worldbanksasia, @wbg_ida, @wb_research, @worldbankindia, @worldbank_ieg, @wbg_health, @wbg_energy, @wbg_poverty, @worldbankeca, @wbmaldives, @wbTanzania, @wto.

tweets on the ASEAN and particularly the nongovernmental and hybrid GGIs. There is a larger share of negative than positive tweets related to the global intergovernmental organizations (except for the WTO, which has an almost equal share of positive and negative tweets). In contrast, tweets on the FSC and ASEAN are much more frequently positive in tone. The “Twitter universe” of the FSC and ASEAN appears to be much more positive compared to the other GGIs.

When comparing the results from Tables 3.3 and 3.4, we find a consistent pattern of a more positive tone of tweets by a GGI. The pattern that GGIs generally use a more positive tone when tweeting compared to a more negative tone when others tweet about them is expected and is an indication that the admittedly rough measurement of sentiments still captures something.

In sum, the frequency and tone of Twitter communication vary considerably across policy field and type of GGI. The global GGIs together with the EU experience much more intense Twitter communication than the ASEAN and the nongovernmental and hybrid GGIs in our sample. The tone of tweets differs significantly across GGIs. The ASEAN and the nongovernmental and hybrid GGIs tend to use a more positive tone when tweeting compared to the intergovernmental GGIs. Moreover, tweets about the FSC and ASEAN generally have a much more positive tone compared to the other GGIs in the sample, indicating a more

favorable discursive context for these GGIs. Thus far, the analysis has provided some insights into the general context in which Twitter-based (de)legitimation practices in relation to GGIs are played out. We now turn to a more specific analysis of discursive (de)legitimation practices on Twitter.

Manual coding of randomly selected tweets from 2019 allows us to identify (de)legitimation statements. For each of the GGIs, coding was conducted until at least one hundred tweets had been coded as legitimacy related. These tweets were then coded as being positive in tone (legitimation) or negative in tone (delegitimation). See Chapter 9 for details on the coding. Table 3.5 shows that overall, the intensity of the (de)legitimation of GGIs on Twitter is high. As explained in Chapter 9, we have opted for a relatively inclusive coding approach, also coding implicit (de)legitimation in linguistically neutral statements. Nevertheless, our findings suggest that Twitter is indeed an important communication channel for discursive (de)legitimation in global governance. Furthermore, the intensity of (de)legitimation, measured as the percentage of tweets that are legitimacy related, varies between GGIs. Whereas almost all tweets on the FSC and ICC contain (de)legitimation, only 66% of tweets on the ASEAN are legitimacy related.

Regarding tone, the FSC and ASEAN stand out with a very high share of legitimation tweets (positive tone), 93% and 92% respectively. This confirms the pattern found in the previous analysis of general Twitter communication. We found more discursive legitimation than delegitimation on Twitter for all GGIs in our sample, with the exception of the EU. 57% of coded (de)legitimation tweets on the EU have a negative tone. Hence, we can conclude that the EU experiences more discursive delegitimation on Twitter than any of the other GGIs in our sample.

Table 3.5 Discursive (de)legitimation practices on Twitter: Intensity and tone of (de)legitimation tweets on GGIs in 2019

GGI	Intensity (tweets containing (de)legitimation as a % of all tweets on GGIs)	Tone (% of all (de)legitimation tweets on GGIs)	
		Positive	Negative
IMF	88	52	47
World Bank	85	63	36
WTO	77	66	34
ICC	97	58	42
UNSC	90	52	45
ASEAN	66	92	8
EU	78	43	57
FSC	99	93	7
ICANN	84	57	43

Note: Based on manual coding of randomly selected tweets. See Chapter 9.

In sum, the analysis of discursive (de)legitimation on Twitter has shown that discursive (de)legitimation practices are very common on Twitter, that legitimation is more common than delegitimation, with the important exception of the EU, and that two GGIs in our sample—one regional (ASEAN) and one nongovernmental (FSC)—experience very little delegitimation.

Behavioral (De)legitimation Practices

Our inclusion of behavioral (de)legitimation practices is based on the conviction that non-linguistic practices may also affect an audience's legitimacy perceptions. Behavioral (de)legitimation practices are more difficult to study empirically than discursive and institutional practices. Whereas discursive practices can be traced in written and oral communications, and institutional practices typically are highlighted in documents produced by GGIs (such as the annual reports analyzed above), a variety of behavioral (de)legitimation practices conducted by diverse actors seldom leave traces that can be systematically analyzed. For this reason, we surveyed certain agents of (de)legitimation about the (de)legitimation practices in which they engage. The surveyed individuals are elites, that is people in high level positions in organizations that strive to be politically influential (for further information on the sample and the survey, see [Verhaegen et al. 2019](#)).⁴ Political and societal elites are important for the legitimacy of GGIs as they are in a position that gives them more opportunities to influence GGIs than other individuals. Moreover, their public acts of support can affect a GGI's ability to secure funding, its policy influence, and its effectiveness ([Bes et al. 2019](#)). Furthermore, through cueing mechanisms, elites influence public opinion about GGIs ([Dellmuth and Tallberg 2021](#); [Dellmuth et al. 2022](#)). Elite practices related to GGIs can therefore be assumed to impact legitimacy beliefs toward GGIs more broadly.

We study a set of practices that are expected to have positive or negative effects on certain audiences' legitimacy beliefs vis-à-vis a GGI. Specifically, we inquire how frequently these practices are used by a broad set of political and societal elites. In line with the theoretical framework in Chapter 2, we assume that normative justifications typically feed into both behavioral and discursive (de)legitimation practices. However, such justifications cannot be captured in our survey data. Thus, unlike the analyses of institutional and discursive (de)legitimation practices above, we study the use of behavioral practices regardless of whether these practices are accompanied by any explicit normative justification.

A broad variety of actors engages with GGIs. Central to most GGIs are member state representatives, which include both partisan-political elites and government bureaucrats. In some GGIs, civil society, business, and research elites assume

⁴ The LegGov Elite Survey dataset is available at <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/leggov>.

formal roles in the policy-making process as well, while for other GGIs they are informally consulted, or they try to influence a GGI's policy-making agenda and processes from the outside. The media reports on actions and processes relating to GGIs.

One type of behavioral (de)legitimation practice is related to funding. Providing funding to a GGI, as well as withdrawing it, can be seen as an expression of support or lack of support for a GGI. This might influence other actors' beliefs in the GGI's rightful exercise of authority (Bäckstrand and Söderbaum 2018: 112). Political, bureaucratic, and business elites may engage in this practice as part of their professional role representing states, GGIs, and companies. It is less likely that civil society, media, and research elites would engage in funding (or the withdrawal of funding from) GGIs.

Other types of behavioral (de)legitimation practices are part of the broad category of activities that assist a GGI in making or implementing its policies, and the opposite—reducing or completely withdrawing such involvement (cf. von Borzyskowski and Vabulas 2019). GGIs often rely on support from members and external actors to implement their policies. The broad involvement of different kinds of elite actors can enhance the legitimacy of a GGI and when such involvement is withdrawn this may challenge a GGI's legitimacy. These are forms of behavioral (de)legitimation practices that state elites (political and bureaucratic) can be expected to be involved in as representatives of member states of a GGI. As most GGIs are somewhat open to the participation of non-state actors, business and civil society elites can also be expected to engage in such activities. Civil society elites, in particular, play an important role in implementing policies of certain GGIs, particularly in the field of development. Research elites may provide important input to GGI policies in the form of expert advice on economic, health, environmental, security, and other issues.

Yet another type of behavioral (de)legitimation practice is organizing or participating in events to support a GGI, and the opposite, organizing demonstrations and other protest activities against a GGI (Haunss 2007; Gregoratti and Uhlin 2018). Street demonstrations are closely associated with the activities of civil society elites and other elites are unlikely to engage in this kind of practice. When it comes to organizing or participating in events to support a GGI, however, this is something that could be expected to be practiced by a wider set of elites. Examples include participation in GGI organized events to celebrate an anniversary of the establishment of a GGI or to inaugurate a new institutional entity or major policy of a GGI.

Finally, evaluations through rankings, ratings, and certifications can be seen as another type of behavioral (de)legitimation practice. This phenomenon has become increasingly common in global governance (Davis et al. 2012), and merits attention in the analysis of the elite (de)legitimation of GGIs. Such external evaluations are conducted by state agencies and GGIs, as well as private

companies, civil society organizations, and research institutes, and possibly even the media. Hence, it is a type of (de)legitimation that we expect to be practiced by all kinds of elites.

To sum up, some behavioral practices—providing funding for a GGI, activities that assist a GGI in making or implementing its policies, and organizing or participating in events to support it—are clear examples of activities that demonstrate belief in the GGI's exercise of authority as rightful and might also enhance the legitimacy beliefs of other audiences vis-à-vis the GGI. These are the *legitimation* practices that we examine. Mirroring these legitimation practices are the *delegitimation* practices of withdrawing funding, reducing involvement, and organizing demonstrations and other protest activities against a GGI. There are also *(de)legitimation* practices that cannot easily be classified as either legitimation or delegitimation. Examples include various kinds of evaluations through rankings, ratings, and certifications. Depending on the degree to which evaluations are positive or negative regarding a GGI, these practices can be both legitimating and delegitimizing.

We use data from the LegGov Elite Survey from 2017–2019. As described in Chapter 1, the survey includes 860 political and societal elites from six countries (see also Verhaegen et al. 2019). The respondents were asked to indicate the GGI with which they most frequently interacted during the last 12 months from a list of 20 global and regional GGIs. Regarding this GGI, they were asked how frequently they engaged in different types of (de)legitimation practices. While the nine focal GGIs were part of this list, it was only for the EU, ASEAN, and the World Bank that a sufficient number of respondents answered the questions on (de)legitimation with these GGIs in mind to enable GGI-specific analyses. A total of 119 respondents reported on their (de)legitimation towards the EU, 62 towards the ASEAN, and 46 towards the World Bank. Our analyses do not report on the IMF (23 respondents), ICC (13 respondents), UNSC (9 respondents), ICANN (7 respondents), and FSC (2 respondents). Instead, the analyses also include the UN (187 respondents), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (35 respondents), and the World Health Organization (WHO) (30 respondents).

If we first look at the overall pattern of the frequency of different behavioral legitimation and delegitimation practices (Table 3.6), we note that elites report using legitimation practices much more frequently than delegitimation practices. Almost one third of the respondents state that they have engaged in activities that assist the GGI in making or implementing its policies on a daily or weekly basis during the last year and only 14% answer that they have never done so. Almost two thirds of the elites participating in the survey report organizing or participating in events to support the GGI at least once. As the respondents were selected because of their elite status in different national contexts—not because of any known professional relationship with the GGIs—we believe that these figures are

Table 3.6 Behavioral legitimation and delegitimation practices, all elites and the six GGIs combined

	Daily or weekly	Monthly	Less than monthly	Never	N
<i>Legitimation practices</i>					
Provide funding to the organization	0%	4%	13%	82%	467
Engage in activities that assist the organization in making or implementing its policies	31%	28%	27%	14%	473
Organize or participate in events to support the organization	5%	18%	41%	36%	472
<i>Delegitimation practices</i>					
Withdraw funding	1%	4%	12%	84%	462
Reduce involvement	2%	7%	15%	77%	446
Organize or participate in a demonstration against the organization	0%	1%	6%	93%	474
<i>(De)legitimation practices</i>					
Evaluate through rankings, ratings, or certification	3%	9%	21%	68%	467

Source: LegGov Elite Survey. (See note 4.)

Note: The figures indicate the percentage of respondents who indicated that they engaged in a practice with a certain level of frequency, and the number of observations (N).

rather high. Our findings suggest that elites' behavioral legitimation practices must be taken into account when analyzing the politics of (de)legitimation in global governance. Delegitimation practices are much less frequently employed by the elites in our sample. As many as 84% have never withdrawn funding, 77% have never reduced their involvement in the GGI, and 93% have never organized or participated in demonstrations against the GGI during the last year. Whereas the results for withdrawing funding are about the same as for providing funding, the two other behavioral practices that we identified as potential delegitimation practices are much less frequently used than the mirroring legitimation practices. Hence, our data suggest that behavioral legitimation is more common than behavioral delegitimation among elites. It should also be noted that a behavioral practice that could be either legitimating or delegitimizing—evaluation through rankings, ratings, or certifications—is much more frequently used by elites than any of the behavioral delegitimation practices covered here. Clearly, this practice deserves more attention in research on legitimacy in global governance.

When breaking down the data by GGI (Table 3.7), we first note that the use of the most common behavioral legitimation practice—engaging in activities that assist the GGI in making or implementing its policies—is more or less equally

Table 3.7 Behavioral legitimization and delegitimation practices by institution, all elites combined

	% ever engaged in a practice					
	ASEAN	EU	World Bank	UN	UNFCCC	WHO
<i>Legitimation practices</i>						
Provide funding to the organization	29%	11%	20%	18%	12%	26%
Engage in activities that assist the organization in making or implementing its policies	84%	86%	89%	87%	83%	83%
Organize or participate in events to support the organization	75%	73%	47%	58%	71%	69%
<i>Delegitimation practices</i>						
Withdraw funding	7%	20%	31%	19%	0%	4%
Reduce involvement	41%	10%	40%	20%	23%	38%
Organize or participate in a demonstration against the organization	11%	5%	7%	6%	6%	14%
<i>(De)legitimation practices</i>						
Evaluate through rankings, ratings, or certification	57%	23%	27%	30%	40%	36%

Source: LegGov Elite Survey. (See note 4.)

Note: The figures indicate the percentage of respondents who indicated that they had engaged in each practice at least once during the past year.

common for the six GGIs with which most respondents reported interacting. When it comes to the provision and withdrawal of funding, we find clear differences across GGIs. Whereas more elites reported providing funding than withdrawing funding in the cases of the ASEAN, UNFCCC, and WHO, more elites stated that they had withdrawn funding from the EU and the World Bank. Our data suggest that funding might be an important factor in the politics of (de)legitimation in global governance, but that the extent to which a GGI benefits or suffers from elites' funding decisions varies.

If we look more closely at the three GGIs in our focal group, we find some interesting results for the ASEAN. Engaging in evaluations through rankings, ratings, or certification is much more common among elites that interact with the ASEAN compared to any of the other GGIs covered here. The practice of demonstrating against a GGI is not common among elites engaging with any of the GGIs in our sample, but the ASEAN (together with the WHO) have somewhat more elites reporting that they have engaged in this practice during the last year. Civil society protests against the ASEAN will be further analyzed in Chapter 5. The EU

has the lowest score for providing funding and one of the highest scores for withdrawing funding. In contrast, very few of the respondents interacting with the EU state that they have reduced their involvement. Withdrawing funding appears to be a more common elite delegitimation practice than reducing involvement in relation to the EU. Concerning the behavioral legitimation practice of organizing or participating in events to support the GGI, this kind of practice is more common among elites interacting with the EU and the ASEAN than other GGIs. This may be because anniversaries and other symbolic events to promote a sense of community are more frequently organized by regional intergovernmental organizations than global task-specific institutions. Hence, there would be more opportunities for elites to participate in such events in relation to this kind of GGI. The results for the World Bank support this interpretation as only 47% of respondents report participating in such events, which is far less than for the ASEAN (75%) and the EU (73%). It can also be noted that almost one third of the elites in our sample state that they have used the practice of withdrawing funding from the World Bank. This confirms that funding issues are of central concern for this type of GGI and this finding is in line with what we know about the often politicized processes of replenishment at the World Bank (cf. Pallas 2013).

Let us finally look at the distribution of (de)legitimation practices across types of elites (Table 3.8). As could be expected, it is mainly party-political and bureaucratic elites who are involved in the provision and withdrawal of funding. However, it should be noted that as many as 25% of the civil society elites in our sample report engaging in the practice of withdrawing funding to a GGI. This might include lobbying for the withdrawal of funding rather than direct participation in funding decisions.⁵ Unsurprisingly, the practice of organizing or participating in demonstrations is closely associated with civil society elites. 22% of civil society elites state that they have engaged in this activity compared to 5% or less for other types of elites. However, it should be noted that nearly all of the civil society elites (94%) report that they have engaged in activities that assist the GGI in making or implementing policies. Civil society elites, like elites from other sectors, engage much more in the legitimation than the delegitimation of GGIs. Behavioral (de)legitimation practices are generally less common among media elites compared to other types of elites. Given their professional role, media elites can be expected to mainly use discursive rather than behavioral (de)legitimation practices.

To sum up, behavioral (de)legitimation practices are more difficult to study than discursive and institutional practices. Most research on (de)legitimation in global governance has focused on discursive and, to some extent, institutional practices.

⁵ However, this finding should be interpreted with caution. There is a possibility that some respondents could have misinterpreted the question about withdrawing funding from the GGI to mean accepting funding from the GGI.

Table 3.8 Behavioral legitimization and delegitimation practices by elite sector, all GGIs combined

	% ever engaged in a practice					
	Party-politics	Bureau-crats	Civil society	Media	Business	Research
<i>Legitimation practices</i>						
Provide funding to the organization	24%	29%	11%	4%	16%	7%
Engage in activities that assist the organization in making or implementing its policies	86%	91%	94%	51%	93%	83%
Organize or participate in events to support the organization	73%	61%	71%	38%	72%	61%
<i>Delegitimation practices</i>						
Withdraw funding	16%	19%	25%	2%	16%	10%
Reduce involvement	26%	21%	23%	31%	27%	17%
Organize or participate in a demonstration against the organization	4%	4%	22%	0%	5%	4%
<i>(De)legitimation practices</i>						
Evaluate through rankings, ratings, or certification	25%	28%	39%	30%	30%	31%

Source: LegGov Elite Survey. (See note 4.)

Note: The figures indicate the percentage of respondents who indicated that they had engaged in each practice at least once during the past year.

To help fill this research gap, we have suggested the use of an elite survey as a way to explore patterns of behavioral (de)legitimation of GGIs. Our findings indicate that elites much more frequently engage in legitimization practices compared to delegitimation practices vis-à-vis GGIs. Whereas most survey respondents stated that they have used common behavioral legitimization practices such as engaging in activities that assist a GGI and participating in events to support a GGI, only a small minority of elites in our sample reported that they had engaged in any behavioral delegitimation practice. The use of many of the (de)legitimation practices differs considerably across GGIs and elites from different sectors, indicating a need for more context-sensitive case studies.

Conclusion

Research on (de)legitimation practices in global governance has largely been limited to discursive practices. This chapter has identified a broad range of

institutional and behavioral (de)legitimation practices, in addition to discursive (de)legitimation practices, and explored the patterns of variation in forms of (de)legitimation practices across type of GGI and policy field. It has demonstrated how different types of data can be used to capture institutional, discursive, and behavioral (de)legitimation, respectively. While not capturing all aspects of (de)legitimation practices, the chapter offers a uniquely broad overview.

Regarding the institutional set-up of GGIs, we find that intergovernmental GGIs, compared to nongovernmental and hybrid GGIs, tend to more frequently use institutional legitimation practices (as referred to in annual reports). They also use Twitter, which is an important channel for discursive (de)legitimation, much more frequently than nongovernmental GGIs. There is also much more Twitter communication on intergovernmental GGIs compared to nongovernmental and hybrid GGIs, suggesting that they are more frequently subject to discursive (de)legitimation practices by other actors. On average, intergovernmental GGIs, compared to nongovernmental and hybrid GGIs, tend to be more actively engaged in self-legitimation and more frequently targeted by the (de)legitimation practices of others. This is probably not because of the state-non-state distinction per se, but is rather related to two other features of the institutional set-up: authority and resources. Intergovernmental GGIs tend to have more authority, which provides a reason for delegitimation and a need for legitimation. They also have more institutional resources, in terms of staff and funding, to engage in self-legitimation practices. Even if the *intensity* of (de)legitimation practices tends to be higher for intergovernmental GGIs than for nongovernmental GGIs in our sample, we do not find any major differences concerning *types* of (de)legitimation practices. Nongovernmental and hybrid GGIs display similar patterns of (de)legitimation practices to intergovernmental GGIs.

In terms of global versus regional scope, it is hard to see any consistent patterns in our data. The regional organizations in our sample—the EU and the ASEAN—do not display markedly different patterns of (de)legitimation practices compared to the global GGIs. Instead, there are significant differences between the two regional GGIs. Whereas the ASEAN has been a particularly frequent user of institutional legitimation in its annual reports, but less active on Twitter, we find the opposite pattern for the EU. More specifically, the ASEAN largely relies on cooperation with external actors as an institutional legitimation practice, whereas the EU almost never refers to such cooperation in its legitimation practices. This reflects broader power structures along the North-South divide. Whereas discursive (de)legitimation practices on Twitter are predominantly positive in tone for the ASEAN, the EU faces more delegitimation practices on Twitter. For behavioral (de)legitimation practices, too, we find very different patterns. Regarding the ASEAN, more respondents indicated that they provided funding than withdrew funding. The opposite was observed for the EU. For the other delegitimation practices, we observed a markedly lower use in relation to the EU than the ASEAN.

Regarding policy field, we find that GGIs active in the economic policy field tend to more frequently use institutional legitimization practices (as referred to in annual reports). They are also much more active on Twitter, which is an important channel for discursive legitimization practices. When exploring how other actors target GGIs using (de)legitimation practices, GGIs in the economic policy field are among those experiencing the most (de)legitimation. Overall, the findings in this chapter suggest that the relatively strong focus on global economic GGIs in previous research is justified as much of the politics of (de)legitimation in global governance relate to these GGIs. However, the analyses in this chapter have also shown that a variety of (de)legitimation practices also occur in relation to nongovernmental and hybrid GGIs and in other policy fields than economic governance; these therefore merit further study.

The explorative analyses in this chapter provide a broad comparative overview of (de)legitimation practices in global governance. The following two chapters will use structured and focused comparative case studies to explain the diversity of discursive, behavioral, and institutional (de)legitimation practices (Chapter 4) and when and how the behavioral delegitimation practice of protest by civil society actors results in GGI legitimization practices (Chapter 5).

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4

Explaining Variation in Legitimation and Delegitimation Practices

Policy Field and Institutional Access

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Whereas the previous chapter provides an overview of discursive, institutional, and behavioral legitimation and delegitimation practices across nine global governance institutions (GGIs), this chapter aims to explain variation in such practices. Theoretically, it develops and refines the framework introduced in Chapter 2 by developing theoretical expectations about why legitimation and delegitimation practices vary, which are then probed through a structured, focused comparison of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the African Union (AU). By comparing a global and task-specific organization (UNFCCC) with a regional and multipurpose organization (AU), we seek to explain variation in legitimation and delegitimation practices across two inter-governmental GGIs that operate in different policy fields and with different geographical scope.

(De)legitimation practices vary in several ways, such as over time, frequency, strength, and intensity, as well as within and between different types of practices (i.e., discursive, institutional, and behavioral). We seek to explain the variation in discursive, institutional, and behavioral legitimation and delegitimation practices. The theoretical framework in this volume (Chapter 2) highlights two broad categories that are essential for explaining legitimation and delegitimation processes—policy field and institutional set-up. This chapter contributes to theory building on these explanatory factors by developing more precise expectations about the variation in legitimation and delegitimation practices when comparing the UNFCCC and the AU (Bäckstrand and Söderbaum 2018). Regarding the nature of the policy field, we should expect a diversity of legitimation and delegitimation practices in complex policy fields such as climate change (UNFCCC), as well as in GGIs that operate in several policy fields simultaneously and that have community-building ambitions (AU) (Hasenclever et al. 1997; Zaum 2013; Krösche et al. 2021). Our study provides only partial support for this expectation, since it shows a considerably higher degree of diversity of (de)legitimation practices in the case of the UNFCCC compared to the AU. Concerning theoretical expectations associated

with institutional set-up, we focus specifically on the norms and procedures for the access and participation of non-state actors. The general expectation is that greater “openness” and high levels of participation of transnational non-state actors will trigger a diversity of legitimation and delegitimation practices (Tallberg et al. 2013; Dingwerth et al. 2019). Compared to other GGIs, few are as “open” and inclusive to non-state actors as the UNFCCC, which explains the rich diversity of legitimation and delegitimation practices by a range of actors in this case. Although the AU has tried to construct an organizational identity as a people-driven union, it did not succeed, which explains the much lower variation in legitimation and delegitimation.

The research design is based on explaining variation in (de)legitimation practices in conjunction with “legitimacy crises.” This is motivated by a scholarship that argues that (de)legitimation will be triggered by such crises (Reus-Smith 2007; Gronau 2016; Sommerer et al. 2022). We use legitimacy crises as entry points, regardless of whether they are caused by external triggering events, such as financial crises, or whether (de)legitimation are intensified as a consequence of the crises themselves. Zooming in on legitimacy crises has the advantage that they are temporally delineated while at the same time allowing us to make comparisons with practices before and after the crisis. For methodological reasons, we concentrate on a specific legitimacy crisis that emerged at a similar period of time in both cases. The UNFCCC’s legitimacy crisis was precipitated by the failure to reach a post-Kyoto agreement at the Copenhagen climate summit in 2009. The AU’s legitimacy crisis intensified in 2008 and was related, *inter alia*, to the failed attempts to establish the “United States of Africa” and the turmoil arising from Muammar Gaddafi’s fierce promotion of himself as “President.”

We conduct a structured, focused comparison with the intention of generating empirical findings about variation in discursive, behavioral, and institutional legitimation and delegitimation practices in the two cases (see George and Bennett 2005). Departing from the theoretical expectations, the empirical analysis identifies and compares the main practices during and immediately after the legitimacy crises. The comparative analysis is based on novel empirical material comprising of statements, official documents, and reports from the GGIs and other involved actors, participant observations, semi-structured interviews¹, news and media sources, as well as secondary literature.

The remainder of this chapter is organized in six sections. In the next section, we outline the theoretical expectations related to the nature of the policy field and the norms and procedures for the participation and access of non-state actors. In the subsequent two sections, we describe the legitimacy crises and map the

¹ Around 50 interviews were conducted with civil servants at the UNFCCC secretariat, non-state actors, and delegates at the COP between 2013 and 2021 at the COPs. In the case of the AU, since 2014 about 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted with AU representatives, member states, donor officials, think tanks, and civil society actors.

legitimation and delegitimation practices in the two cases. In the two sections after that, we compare the UNFCCC and the AU in light of the two explanations. The conclusion summarizes the main messages and considers the broader implications of the study.

Theoretical Expectations on the Variation in (De)legitimation Practices

While there is a growing literature on discursive self-legitimation by GGIs and their member states, there is still a lack of research on (non-discursive) behavioral and institutional practices, and how different practices are combined across different types of GGIs. Whereas Chapter 2 presents general theoretical propositions regarding how the policy field and institutional set-up shape legitimation and delegitimation processes, in this section we develop theoretical expectations that are of specific relevance to the UNFCCC and the AU.

Nature of the Policy Field

Although the literature on the nature of the policy field is diverse, we can expect a rich diversity of legitimation and delegitimation practices in both the policy field of climate change (UNFCCC) and in cases in which GGIs operate in multiple policy fields and have community-building ambitions (AU). With regard to climate change, previous research emphasizes that the problem structure (Ritberger and Zürn 1991; Hasenclever et al. 1997) or the situation structure (Zürn 1993) varies across different policy fields (cf. Acharya 2016). A key concern in this literature is the extent to which a certain “problem” (value-based, interest-based) or “game” (asymmetrical, coordination) gets regulated. It is anticipated that value-based and asymmetrical problems will generate political contestation, which is expected to trigger a diversity of legitimation and delegitimation practices. A related distinction is made between “benign” and “malign” problem (or situation) structures (Miles et al. 2002). Policy fields that entail a global collective action problem and a malign problem structure—such as climate change, pandemics or humanitarian aid—require coordinated action not only by states but also by domestic and international non-state actors in order to avoid free-riding and the “tragedy of the commons.” Thus, in the policy field of climate change, we would expect a varied combination of legitimation and delegitimation practices (discursive, institutional, and behavioral practices) resulting from pluralistic actor constellations.

We would expect a lower variation in policy fields with different problem and situation structures. For example, peace and security (a main concern of the AU)

is generally dominated by a state-centric logic that is expected to reduce the diversity of legitimation and delegitimation (cf. [Zaum 2013](#)). Economic development generally falls between a more state-led practice in the security realm and a more diversified legitimation dynamic in policy fields such as the environment, climate change, and development. Hence, we can expect variation across the different policy fields under the AU's mandate. However, we must consider that the AU covers a range of policy fields, which is expected to trigger a diversity of practices ([Krösche et al. 2021](#)). Most of these multipurpose GGIs are often politicized, and have community-building ambitions, which is expected to increase the diversity of legitimation and delegitimation ([Scholte and Tallberg 2018](#); [Dingwerth et al. 2019](#)). In sum, the theoretical expectations are that we would expect both the UNFCCC and the AU to be characterized by a high diversity of legitimation practices, albeit for different reasons.

Institutional Set-Up: Norms and Procedures for Participation and Access

There is a comprehensive literature on the “opening up” of international organizations to transnational actors and how domestic norms of democratic participation have diffused to international institutions ([Tallberg et al. 2013](#)). A common belief is that opening up will increase the diversity of legitimation and delegitimation practices ([Dingwerth et al. 2019](#): 21). Although many intergovernmental GGIs target member states as their main constituency, there is a general trend for them to legitimate themselves towards a broader set of audiences, particularly citizens and various types of non-state actors ([Gronau and Schmidtke 2016](#); [Stephen and Zürn 2019](#)). Under such conditions, we can expect legitimation through the application of democratic norms, including norms of transparency and accountability, as well as participation and inclusion. Furthermore, a significant literature emphasizes that the increased access and participation of non-state actors beyond member states lead to politicization and contestation, which, in turn, are expected to increase the diversity of legitimation and delegitimation practices ([Van Rooy 2004](#); [Symons 2011](#); [Zürn 2014](#)).

As far as the UNFCCC is concerned, few other intergovernmental GGIs are as open and inclusive, and we should therefore expect a great diversity of legitimation and delegitimation. This expectation is strengthened by the UNFCCC's inclusive criteria for the accreditation and participation of different types of non-state actors, such as civil society actors, business actors, researchers, as well as local governments ([Bäckstrand et al. 2021](#)). We expect this actor pluralism to increase the diversity of legitimation and delegitimation practices.

Regarding the AU, there is an extensive literature that emphasizes the influence of democratic legitimation standards in regional, multipurpose organizations

for explaining the diversity of legitimation practices in many of these institutions (Scholte and Tallberg 2018; Dingwerth et al. 2019). A rise of democratic standards and norms of opening up are often associated with the increased access and participation of civil society and private actors, which is also expected to further increase the diversity of legitimation. However, recent literature problematizes the proliferation of democratic norms and institutions, emphasizing that these are sometimes “empty shells” or instrumentalized by state actors in order to comply with universal democratic norms (Schimmelfennig et al. 2021). Under such circumstances, we should expect that a failure to open up will constrain legitimation and delegitimation practices.

Legitimation Practices during the UNFCCC’s Legitimacy Crisis

Legitimacy Crisis at the UN Climate Summit in Copenhagen

The UNFCCC is responsible for putting the issue of anthropogenic global warming on the global agenda and for the negotiation of greenhouse gas emission reductions. The Framework Convention on Climate Change was adopted in 1992, and subsequently the Kyoto Protocol was adopted in 1997 followed by the Paris Agreement in 2015. The UNFCCC is an implementing body of a global climate agreement with limited executive powers. The member states through the Conference of Parties (COPs) constitutes the decision-making body of the UNFCCC. The UNFCCC secretariat was established in Bonn in 1996, and its main task is to provide information, as well as coordinate and support the global climate regime.

The UN climate summit or the 15th COP in Copenhagen in Denmark in 2009 marked a turning point in global climate politics and has been framed as a legitimacy crisis for the UNFCCC. The multilateral negotiations between 193 states were replaced by bilateral bargaining between China and the US on the last day of the conference in order to secure a political agreement. The legitimacy crisis stems from the perceptions that the UNFCCC failed to broker a new legally binding agreement to replace the Kyoto Protocol and the chaotic accreditation process that severely limited participation by civil society (Bäckstrand 2011). The Copenhagen Accord has been harshly judged by both activists and scholars. The procedural legitimacy of the process was reduced as a group of member states hammered out the Copenhagen Accord in small, closed negotiation groups. Key powerful member states and top carbon emitters in the world (US and the BASIC coalition comprising Brazil, South Africa, India and China) crafted a two-page political agreement—the Copenhagen Accord—that changed the logic of climate governance from top-down, legally binding targets and timetables for emissions reduction to voluntary, bottom-up pledges by states. The Copenhagen Accord was

a precursor to the Paris Agreement adopted six years later, consolidating a model of voluntary pledges by states to reduce carbon emissions.

Mapping of the Practices

Since its inception in 1992, the UNFCCC has employed a broad portfolio of discursive, institutional, and behavioral legitimation practices. Conversely, the UNFCCC has historically been targeted by delegitimation by member states, business, and civil society. However, the legitimacy crisis in Copenhagen 2009 precipitated the diversity of different (de)legitimation practices. After the Copenhagen summit, the UNFCCC employed discursive and institutional legitimation practices that targeted state and non-state audiences to restore its legitimacy as the main GGI for global climate change (Interview, senior manager, UNFCCC secretariat, May 15, 2017; Interview, negotiator Swedish Delegation, May 24, 2021). The UNFCCC, in turn, was heavily targeted by delegitimation attempts from environmental non-governmental organizations (NGO), indigenous people, and developing countries for its failure to secure a legally binding treaty to replace the Kyoto Protocol (Interviews, climate justice activist, June 10, 2015; Environmental NGO, December 7, 2015).

Because of the multilateral gridlock that defined the summit in Copenhagen, the UNFCCC tried to circumvent the lack of consensus among member states to adopt a binding future climate treaty (Interviews, Women NGO, December 7, 2015; senior official, UNFCCC secretariat, November 9, 2016). The legitimacy crisis for the UNFCCC in Copenhagen resulted in a plethora of institutional legitimation practices by the UNFCCC directed at a diverse set of audiences such as government networks, other GGIs, and non-state actors in order to secure support for climate action (Interview, senior official, UNFCCC secretariat, May 20, 2021).

Discursive legitimation is manifest in a wide range of speeches, rhetorical devices, and public information through which the UNFCCC secretariat justifies its own activities. Since the Copenhagen summit, the UNFCCC and its Executive Secretariat has intensified its public outreach and engaged in public communication with accredited non-state observer groups at climate summits (Interviews, senior official, UNFCCC secretariat, November 9, 2016; senior manager, UNFCCC secretariat, May 15, 2017). The interactive and refurbished website of the UNFCCC with its negotiator app is viewed as innovative and accessible for state and non-state actors alike. While being a major site for self-legitimation with its extensive social media activity, the website also links to the newsletters of the most fervent critics of the UNFCCC, such as Friends of the Earth. Since 2011, *Momentum for Change* has been the climate secretariat's initiative to showcase climate activities across the globe in areas such as planetary health, urban poverty reduction, and women's participation. The UNFCCC secretariat calls for

the annual nomination of Lighthouse activities that can generate transformative and climate-resilient solutions. It is a self-legitimation practice using celebrities, such as Mark Ruffalo, to ramp up climate action, not least in the field of gender and climate change, which is gaining ascendancy in the UNFCCC (UNFCCC 2011; Interviews, senior manager, UNFCCC secretariat, May 15, 2017; senior official, UNFCCC secretariat, May 20, 2021).

The legitimacy crisis in Copenhagen led to a rift between developing and industrialized countries characterized by discursive delegitimation by key member states in the Global South, as well as the global climate movement (Allan 2020). Many small developing countries argued that the UNFCCC had failed to secure procedural legitimacy in the negotiations by side-lining standard multilateral norms and procedures that were replaced by a bargaining process between China and the US. Sudan's verbal attack (on behalf of the African group) on the Copenhagen Accord, calling it a suicide pact and comparing its effect with the perils of the Holocaust, was an instance of discursive delegitimation by a member state (Bäckstrand 2011). However, use of the term Holocaust was controversial and heavily criticized by state and non-state actors alike.

The *Momentum for Change* was a major discursive legitimation that coalesced into an institutional legitimation practice with the Lima-Paris Action Agenda (LPAA) (Bäckstrand et al. 2017; Interview, senior manager, UNFCCC secretariat, May 15, 2017; Interview, senior official, UNFCCC secretariat, May 20, 2021) established in the negotiation process of the Paris Agreement. It represents a major institutional mechanism to coordinate, ramp up, and mobilize voluntary climate commitments by state and non-state actors to implement the goals of the Paris Agreement and put the world on track for de-carbonization (Bäckstrand et al. 2017). After the legitimacy crisis in Copenhagen, the UNFCCC secretariat has assumed the role as an “entrepreneur” (Well et al. 2020) or “orchestrator” of non-state and sub-state action to catalyze and mobilize business, cities, investors, and civil society (Hickmann et al. 2021; cf. Interview, women NGO, December 7, 2015).

Institutional delegitimation emerged after the crisis in Copenhagen by major emitters in the form of counter-institutionalization through the establishment of alternative and competing networks, institutions, or agreements consisting of major emitter countries—such as the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Climate Change (McGee 2015). As the UNFCCC was under attack for its failure to secure a global climate agreement, this “minilateralism” and climate club approach questions the effectiveness of the UNFCCC in what has been framed as “competitive regime creation” in an era of “contested multilateralism” (Eckersley 2012; Morse and Keohane 2014). Recalcitrant states contested the international authority of the UNFCCC and thereby avoided national climate commitments. The consequence of this delegitimation was a proliferation and fragmentation of climate institutions, climate clubs, and forum shopping.

While civil society and many developing countries delegitimated the UNFCCC due to its failure to broker a legally binding intergovernmental agreement, carbon market actors such as the International Emission Trading Association engaged in behavioral legitimation calling for a market-based climate agreement (Bernstein et al. 2010). With no universal legally binding agreement in Copenhagen, business and carbon market actors participated in carbon pricing schemes and carbon trading that was a key element of the Kyoto Protocol.

An example of behavioral delegitimation by civil society is represented by the global climate justice movement mobilizing protests, demonstrations, alternative summits, and campaigns, which took place at the Copenhagen summit (Bond 2012; Hadden 2015; Allan 2020). The UNFCCC was heavily criticized for being heavily influenced by major carbon-emitting states (US and China), which violated norms of inclusive multilateralism. At the Copenhagen summit, the demonstrations involved more than 60,000 people marching through central Copenhagen (Bäckstrand 2011). The climate justice movement planned to storm the center during the summit in a protest, but as the plans were revealed, large segments of civil society were barred from the meeting (Fisher 2010; Interview, climate justice activist, June 10, 2015). However, the target of delegitimation was the member states, not the UNFCCC secretariat nor the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The slogan for the demonstrations and the parallel civil society forum was “system change not climate change” (Bond 2012).

In sum, the 2009 Copenhagen Accord paved the way for a legitimacy crisis for the UNFCCC that triggered a plethora of discursive, behavioral, and institutional (de)legitimation practices among both state and non-state actors, who claimed that the UNFCCC had lost its relevance as the key GGI for regulating global climate change. It spurred institutional legitimation by the UNFCCC to include more non-state actors, but also discursive and behavioral delegitimation by civil society that protested against the purported ineffectiveness of the Copenhagen Accord. Member states from developing countries engaged in discursive delegitimation of the UNFCCC. Furthermore, business actors participated in carbon markets, thereby engaging in behavioral legitimation, pushing the UNFCCC to integrate market-based mechanisms such as carbon pricing and emissions trading schemes.

Legitimation Practices during the AU’s Legitimacy Crisis

The Legitimacy Crisis

Following its establishment in 2002, the AU emerged as the main driver behind the foundational change from Afro-pessimism to Afro-optimism manifested in pan-African ideas and mechanisms such as the “African Renaissance,” the New

Partnership for Africa's Development, and the African Peace and Security Architecture. After the initial euphoria, however, criticism gradually emerged when the AU failed to deliver on major policy issues, such as economic development (e.g., the New Partnership for Africa's Development), governance, and also in the field of peace and security, which was conceived as being its most important policy field. Critique of the AU's performance coincided with growing contestations among member states about how to develop the organization beyond its Constitutive Act. This debate had become centered on the vision of a United States of Africa and a Union Government, but the deadlock in reaching an agreement undermined the credibility and confidence in the organization (Murithi 2008; Laporte and Mackie 2010). The AU's legitimacy deteriorated also as a result of the increasing influence of illegitimate autocrats within the AU, particularly Libya's President Muammar Gaddafi, who had switched to pan-Africanism after his failure to be recognized as a leader of pan-Arabism. Although Gaddafi had tried to promote the United States of Africa throughout much of the 2000s, he was finally elected by the AU Assembly as the AU Chairperson for 2009. By the end of the 2000s, it had become difficult to detect the difference between the AU and the "Club of Dictators" during the Organization of African Unity (OAU) era. While the debate about United States of Africa ended with Gaddafi's death in 2011, the AU's legitimacy continued to be compromised by its controversial role in the Arab Spring and in the Darfur conflict (see Chapter 8). The AU was not able to regain its legitimacy until after the OAU/AU 50th Golden Jubilee in 2013 and the subsequent adoption of Agenda 2063.

Mapping of the Practices

After the AU's establishment, it quickly garnered significant support from a wide range of state and non-state actors from within the African continent and beyond. The high levels of legitimacy for the AU were not simply a result of self-legitimation by the AU Commission (AUC) and its member states, but also derived from a variety of discursive, behavioral, and institutional legitimation practices from numerous other actors, such as civil society, elites and intellectuals, diaspora members, other GGIs, and donors.

In contrast, the variation in (de)legitimation practices within the AU was dramatically reduced during the AU's legitimacy crisis. Although the debate about the United States of Africa and the quest for a Union Government concerned institutional reform, it was predominantly a discursive legitimation struggle between member states representing the "maximalists" and the "gradualists" (Murithi 2008; Laporte and Mackie 2010). The maximalists embraced the vision of an immediate supranational Union Government, and Gaddafi and Senegal's

President—Abdoulaye Wade—were leading proponents of this group. The gradualists preferred an incremental approach, whereby the first step toward African political integration would be achieved through the regional economic communities. Its most influential leaders were Thabo Mbeki (South Africa), Yoweri Museveni (Uganda), and Olusegun Obasanjo (Nigeria). A third group, the “skeptics,” were positioned in between the two main groups, and comprised member states who had not yet taken a stance or who were not ready to reveal their position publicly. As a result, the skeptics were passive in terms of legitimation.

The legitimation struggle between the maximalists and the gradualists played out in conjunction with the intergovernmental summits, ministerial meetings, and other meetings within the AU, but also in the media and on the international diplomatic stage. In official documents and speeches, the African heads of state and their leading ministers discursively justified their own position, and sometimes also delegitimated their opponents’ positions. To a lesser extent, the discursive strategies were backed up by rituals and other behavioral legitimation attempts. Gaddafi’s theatrics and behavioral performances during AU summits and in public diplomacy more broadly (for instance, in the UN) are striking examples. One well-known example is Gaddafi’s game plan in 2008, in which he was crowned as the “King of Kings.” Apart from the behavioral theatrics, this was a legitimation attempt by Gaddafi to create a “grassroots movement” of traditional leaders, chiefs, sultans, sheiks, and Muslim leaders to pressurize political leaders in Africa to sign up to his vision of a United States of Africa with himself as the President (BBC News, Gaddafi: Africa’s “king of kings,” August 29, 2008).

The AU has established several mechanisms and institutions to engage civil society and other non-state actors (AFRODAD et al. 2007; Adejumobi 2009). However, these participatory mechanisms are controlled and “invited spaces,” making them predisposed toward discursive pro-AU legitimation and biased against critique. Furthermore, the AU and its member states have created a range of measures and regulations that have significantly reduced meaningful participation by civil society within the AU (Interview, regional director, International IDEA, May 9, 2017). These measures have also significantly reduced the ability of civil society actors to carry out legitimation and delegitimation practices within the AU’s different bodies and in the wider community (see more below, cf. Chapter 8).

The AU Commission was not simply subsumed under an intergovernmental logic. Its predominantly discursive legitimation claims targeted multiple audiences in both Africa and in the international community (i.e., member states, citizens, elites, civil societies, African institutions, donors) (Interview, Director, Dep. of Political Affairs, AU Commission, May 10, 2017). The AUC’s engagement in critique and delegitimation deserves mentioning. The Chairperson of the AUC (2008–2012)—Jean Ping—voiced quite a substantial discursive critique against the

AU's failure to implement, the problem of not doing enough or doing the wrong things (AUC 2008; cf. Witt 2019: 159). The AU member states were the main target of this critique since they did not commit to implementing policies nor providing sufficient funding to the AU.

Similar to the AUC, several major donors focused their discursive legitimation (and delegitimation) strategies on sound financial management and policy implementation (Interview, senior official, EU Directorate-General for International Development Cooperation and Development, May 25, 2016). Furthermore, the substantial financial contributions by major donors such as the European Union (EU), US, Germany, Canada, the UK, and the Nordics can be understood as behavioral legitimation of the AU. However, even if the donors were clearly involved in the game of legitimation and delegitimation, they also had a constraining effect on the diversity of legitimation. As noted by an official working within the AU Commission, the AU's overreliance on external funding simultaneously "served to significantly constrain the legitimation efforts of the AU, as the organization is required to gain and maintain the legitimacy of both its member states and of external partners" (Lotze 2013: 123).

In sum, there was a limited variation in legitimation and delegitimation practices during the AU's legitimation crisis. Discursive practices were most common, and most agents were predisposed towards legitimation instead of delegitimation. Heads of states and leading ministers were the most significant agents. However, other actors such as the AUC, civil society organizations (CSOs), and donors were also involved. While many agents called for institutional reform, "talk" dominated and only a few institutional legitimation practices were actually carried out during the period of investigation. Some behavioral legitimation practices were displayed, for example, theatrics and bribery by Muammar Gaddafi, as well as considerable donor funding of the AU.

Accounting for Variation: Nature of the Policy Field

UNFCCC

Climate change constitutes a classic collective action problem in which "greenhouse gases emitted anywhere yield impacts everywhere" (Acharya 2016: 24). The Stern Review on climate change (2006) noted that global climate change is the largest global collective action problem and one of the greatest market failures ever. The nature of global climate change as a global collective action problem has implications for its regulation. While the UNFCCC is a global organization mandated to regulate a specific task, climate change is a complex and multilevel problem area that involves a large number of actors and that cuts across the sectors of economy

and finance, fossil fuel production, energy security, food and agricultural production, consumption, poverty alleviation, and transport from the local to the global level. As a “super-wicked” problem (Levin et al. 2012), the global and national regulation of climate change is thereby a very politicized issue with high stakes, challenging power structures between stronger and weaker states, fossil fuel interests, and involving long-term horizons with huge economic interests linked to core sectors such as transport, energy, and industry. Transformation to a fossil-free world constitutes an all-encompassing socioeconomic challenge that requires climate action across all levels and sectors of society. In line with the complex problem structure of climate change, the UNFCCC displays an extremely rich variety and complex interplay of agents that enact discursive, institutional, and behavioral (de)legitimation practices relating to both effectiveness and procedural legitimacy.

AU

The AU’s general aim is to establish an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa, to promote political, economic, and social integration on the African continent, and to represent African voices globally. It is mandated to foster community building and governance across a broad range of policy fields, and its sheer size automatically creates a certain legitimation dynamic of its own. Nevertheless, patterns of legitimation and delegitimation within the AU are strongly shaped by an intergovernmental logic. This logic has been reinforced during the AU’s legitimacy crisis because it entailed that legitimation became strongly dominated by a rather limited number of heads of state and state representatives who relied on discursive and, to a lesser degree, behavioral legitimation practices related to the notion of the United States of Africa and the future of the AU’s leadership. The AU’s implementation gap served to further reinforce discursive legitimation by member state representatives.

The Grand Debate on the Union Government was centered on the member states and they largely failed to involve civil society actors and citizens. The fact that the AU covered many policy fields simultaneously also reinforced the top-down and intergovernmentalist logic. While it should be acknowledged that the AU had created some mechanisms to involve civil society actors in specific policy fields, such as economic development, governance as well as peace and security, the engagement with civil society in the different policy fields was usually rather superficial (Southern Africa Trust 2007). As will be further elaborated in the next section, the top-down and intergovernmental logic reduced the role of civil society in legitimation and delegitimation.

The AUC was to some extent an autonomous actor. Its legitimation practices were also predominantly discursive and focused on performance and delivery

across a broad range of policy fields (AU Commission 2008). The AUC targeted multiple audiences in both Africa and in the international community, and tried to avoid the heated intergovernmental debates between the maximalists and the gradualists, particularly the turmoil and confusion that was associated with Gaddafi. Yet, its role in legitimation was constrained by the AU's legitimacy crisis.

There were no major changes in donor funding to the AU (i.e., behavioral legitimation) during the period of investigation (Söderbaum and Stapel 2022). Although the donors continued to engage also in discursive legitimation and delegitimation, they generally kept a rather low profile during the AU's legitimacy crisis. The AU's coverage of many policy fields did not appear to be a triggering factor, and the donors played a larger role in legitimation and delegitimation processes both before and after the crisis.

Comparison

Despite the fact that the UNFCCC is a task-specific organization, the extremely complex problem structure of climate change explains the rich variety and multiple combinations of discursive, institutional, and behavioral legitimation and delegitimation practices. Climate change, as a multi-actor, multi-level, and multi-sector policy challenge, generates conflict and contestation among state, market, and civil society actors (Bäckstrand et al. 2021). In contrast to the AU's state-centric logic, legitimation and delegitimation in the UNFCCC were driven by a diversity of public and private actors, such as secretariat staff, business actors, member states, and civil society actors that targeted the effectiveness of the Copenhagen Accord and the procedural legitimacy of the UNFCCC (Interview, negotiator Swedish Delegation, May 24, 2021).

The nature of the policy field has much less explanatory value in the case of the AU. Despite being a multipurpose GGI operating in a range of policy fields, we observe much less diversity and fewer combinations of discursive, institutional, and behavioral legitimation and delegitimation practices in the case of the AU compared to the UNFCCC. Even if Gaddafi's theatrics and rituals displayed a behavioral logic, legitimation was predominantly discursive and dominated by the heads of state and other state representatives who participated in debates on the United States of Africa. Other agents engaging in (de)legitimation—such as the AU Commission, the most powerful donors, and certain civil society actors—had rather limited effect or were subsumed by the intergovernmental logic. Just like the member states, these other actors primarily engaged in discursive practices. Donor funding constitutes the main exception, which served as a behavioral tool to legitimate the AU from the outside.

Accounting for Variation: Norms and Procedures for Participation and Access

UNFCCC

Global climate politics has been characterized by a high degree of civil society participation and access ever since the Rio Summit in 1992 (Betsill and Corell 2008; Allan 2020). The widespread use of multi stakeholder diplomacy beyond member states and the growing sphere of non-state and societal actors in global climate governance is important in order to understand the legitimation dynamics of the UNFCCC. Compared to the policy issues of security, trade, and finance, the UNFCCC has been a pioneering force in enhancing the accreditation, access, and inclusion of non-state actors through a range of deliberative and participatory mechanisms (Interviews, indigenous NGO, June 10, 2015; negotiator Swedish Delegation, May 24, 2021). Following the Copenhagen summit, the range of roles available to non-state observers expanded, along with their ability to exercise authority in the international climate regime (Green 2014). The annual COPs attract an average of 10,000 delegates including parties from almost 200 countries and observers from around 2,200 accredited non-state and inter-governmental organizations, as well as the media (Bäckstrand et al. 2017). The secretariat employs more than 500 staff from around 100 countries. Although it is a relatively small bureaucracy compared to many other global GGIs, it is effective in facilitating, supporting, and coordinating the negotiations that gather a large number of parties and observers, compared to multilateral negotiations in many other policy fields (Hickmann et al. 2021).

The UN climate summit in Copenhagen 2009 accredited 30,000 participants. The non-state actors are grouped into nine UNFCCC constituencies: (i) environmental NGOs, (ii) cities/local governments, (iii) business, (iv) farmers, (v) indigenous people, (vi) science, (vii) trade unions, (viii) women's groups, and (ix) youth organizations. Many of these are internally divided. Through the rise of the climate justice movement, climate activism has gained new impetus and involved new social groups and networks in global climate politics (Fisher 2010; Hadden 2015; Allan 2020). The mobilization for climate justice was prominent during the Copenhagen summit, and was a catalyst for numerous climate protests, demonstrations, and marches across the global North and South (Interview, environmental NGO, December 7, 2015).

The legitimacy crisis in Copenhagen marked the transition from the top-down and regulated Kyoto Protocol to the bottom-up Paris Agreement, which has opened up a “groundswell” of climate action in the treaty-based regime of the UNFCCC (Streck 2020). The pluralization and diversification of actors is a result of the legitimacy crisis in Copenhagen 2009 in which states failed to reach an agreement that replaced the Kyoto Protocol. This only happened six years later

with the Paris Agreement, which reaffirmed the importance of the UNFCCC as the legitimate GGI for regulating climate change. Years of multilateral gridlock forced the emergence of new modes of public, private, and hybrid transnational climate governance (Bäckstrand et al. 2017). This has led to the growing importance of non-state actors, both outside and inside the UNFCCC (Green 2014; Interview, senior official, UNFCCC secretariat, November 9, 2016).

AU

It is inscribed in the Constitutive Act of the AU that it should commit itself “to build a partnership between governments and all segments of civil society” and to promote the “participation of the African peoples in the activities of the Union.” The AU’s official image and organizational identity as a people-centered union contrasts sharply with the organization’s past as a “Club of Dictators” during the OAU era. For this purpose, the AU has defined a series of political and legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms to advance popular and civil society participation, such as the AU Civil Society Forum, the African Citizens’ Directorate, the Economic, Social, and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, and the Pan-African Parliament (AFRODAD et al. 2007; Akokpari et al. 2008; Interview, Director, Dep. of Political Affairs, AU Commission, May 10, 2017).

While these and similar frameworks within the AU are signs that the Union has tried to open up and intensify its engagement with civil society and non-state actors, there is a foundational gap between rhetoric and practice. As stated by one analyst, “there is little to cheer about as the AU institutions and organs remain essentially statist, with little inclusivity and participation by the African people” (Adejumobi 2009: 413; cf. Witt 2019). Some obstacles to civil society participation are directly related to the limited capacity of the AU, as well as within civil society itself (Interviews, Regional Director: Africa, International IDEA, May 9, 2017; Director, Dep. of Political Affairs, AU Commission, May 10, 2017). For example, the ECOSOCC is still “learning to stand on its feet” (AFRODAD et al. 2007; Southern African Trust 2007: 7). Furthermore, it is also extremely difficult for civil society actors to obtain background material for meetings or accurate information on how to engage with and gain access to AU institutions.

There are also a range of deliberate strategies by the AU and its member states that are intended to restrict and control civil society participation (Interview, Regional Director: Africa, International IDEA, May 9, 2017). Most of the AU’s mechanisms for engaging civil society actors are invited spaces; controlled and regulated by the AU and its member states (Southern Africa Trust 2007: 8). For example, even though the ECOSOCC (an advisory body to the AU Assembly) comprises 150 representatives from a wide range of different CSOs, it “tends to

be obsessed with regulation and control more than the participation of CSOs” (Adejumobi 2009: 413). Potential members must comply with a special Code of Conduct in order to be members of the ECOSOCC, and CSOs that are not membership based (or have a critical orientation) are almost completely disqualified from participation. Other restrictions serve similar purposes, such as exclusionary procedures and rules to gain accreditation to summits and other meetings, stringent visa restrictions, and host government obstruction. There is a strong perception among civil society actors that the AUC has a “closed stance,” in which the majority of its staff “think and operate under the OAU mode” (Southern Africa Trust 2007: 7; cf. AFRODAD et al. 2007; Murithi 2012: 667). From the viewpoint of the AU’s member states, and to a lesser extent the AUC, civil society actors are often seen as representing foreign rather than African interests or “dismissed for interfering too much into politically delicate territory” (Witt 2019: 118).

There are some exceptions. For instance, women’s organizations are often referred to as successful examples of AU-CSO engagement (AFRODAD et al. 2007: 32). There are also a limited number of high-profile and specialized CSOs and think tanks that interact on technical committees and working groups within the AU Commission in various policy fields, such as peace and security. However, these think tanks and CSOs rarely contest the AU’s official position, at least not in public, and their role in legitimation is quite limited.

In sum, in spite of its official identity as a people-driven union, civil society actors have largely been excluded and marginalized within the AU or portrayed as threatening member states’ primary powers over the AU’s policy making and implementation process. The top-down and state-centered logic, which was reinforced during the AU’s legitimacy crisis, is essential for explaining the limited diversity of legitimation and delegitimation.

Comparison

The comparative analysis confirms the importance of the access of non-state actors to GGIs for explaining the variation in (de)legitimation practices. In the case of the UNFCCC, the high degree of openness explains the high diversity, whereas, conversely, the AU’s lack of openness accounts for the variation in legitimation. More specifically, the UNFCCC has a long tradition of having generous rules for the accreditation of non-state actors. More than 10,000 participants from observer organizations were accredited to COP15, many of which also participated in the parallel alternative forum’s protests and demonstrations. Non-state actors such as NGOs, business, trade unions, and indigenous people engaged in various roles as activists, experts, and diplomats (Betsill and Corell 2008). The rich pluralism of non-state actors within the UNFCCC explains the variation in institutional,

discursive, and behavioral (de)legitimation practices. The AU has built an organizational identity that is people-based and it has created a series of mechanisms for involving civil society and diaspora actors. However, there is a mismatch between rhetoric and practice, which increased further during the AU's legitimacy crisis. While many obstacles to civil society participation are related to capacity constraints on both AU institutions and CSOs, the strategic manipulation of democratic standards by the AU and member states helps to explain the low degree of diversity of legitimation and delegitimation in the case of the AU.

The two GGIs respond in sharply different ways to critique and delegitimation by civil society and grassroots movements. In the UNFCCC, grassroots activists, such as the climate justice movement, engaged in discursive and behavioral delegitimation both inside the negotiation venue and outside in protest at the parallel civil society forum and major demonstrations in Copenhagen. In contrast, the AU is predisposed toward support, and most critical CSOs were excluded from the AU on the basis that these actors serve foreign interests.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to explain variation in practices of legitimation and delegitimation. To this end we have conducted a structured, focused comparison of the UNFCCC and the AU during a period of legitimacy crises, as we expect legitimation and delegitimation practices to intensify during such crises.

On the basis of previous research and the theoretical framework adopted in this volume, we focused our attention on two explanations that we considered most promising in previous research: the nature of the policy field and the institutional set-up. Regarding the latter, we emphasized one particular dimension that has been widely discussed in previous literature, namely, the norms and procedures for the access and participation of non-state actors. On the basis of our comparison, we offer three main contributions to the study of legitimation. The first two are related to the two explanations, while the third concerns legitimacy crises.

First, theoretical propositions on the nature of the policy field suggest that we should expect a diversity of legitimation practices in both our cases, but for different reasons. However, the comparative analysis only provides support for the first of these expectations. More specifically, climate change is a global collective action problem *per excellence*. The multi-level, multi-actor, and cross-sectoral nature of global climate change makes it a highly politicized policy field with high stakes for the top carbon emitters in the world (China and the US), the fossil fuel industry, and low-lying vulnerable island states threatened by rising sea levels and extreme weather events. In line with theoretical expectations, state and non-state actors adopted a diversity of discursive, institutional, and behavioral legitimation

practices in different combinations in order to restore the UNFCCC's legitimacy and relevance after the legitimacy crisis in 2009. Conversely, after the climate summit, a range of CSOs and other agents from the Global South intensified their behavioral and discursive delegitimation of the UNFCCC and the Copenhagen Accord.

Existing theoretical accounts suggest that the AU's role as a multipurpose organization—with strong community-building ambitions and governing across a range of policy fields—would give rise to a diversity of legitimation and delegitimation practices. However, the empirical analysis does not lend support to this expectation. While there are certain differences across the AU's policy fields, legitimation and delegitimation were dominated by a few African heads of states who represented the maximalists or the gradualists in the debate about the United States of Africa. The proponents of the two groups relied heavily on discursive and, to a lesser extent, behavioral legitimation practices. Although legitimation practices by other actors (AU Commission, CSOs, and donors) could be identified, they were often rather limited or subsumed by the dominant intergovernmental logic. Future research ought to draw on these insights and develop new hypotheses to gain more robust knowledge about the conditions under which different types of GGIs experience more or less variation in legitimation and delegitimation practices.

Second, we find relatively strong support for the theoretical expectations that generous accreditation schemes and institutional measures to enhance the participation of non-state actors generate greater variation in legitimation and delegitimation practices. This expectation is supported in both the positive (UNFCCC) and the negative sense (AU). The UNFCCC involves almost 200 states and provides institutionalized accreditation and access for actors from more than 2,200 observer organizations, such as businesses, local governments, and indigenous movements. The plurality of actors explains the varied combinations of institutional, discursive, and behavioral legitimation and delegitimation practices directed at state and non-state audiences within the UNFCCC.

Even if the AU has officially attempted to construct an organizational identity as a people-centered and people-driven organization, the access and involvement of transnational actors is profoundly undermined by a lack of capacity and a number of restrictions that limit civil society participation and accreditation within the AU framework. Hence, the AU's failure to open up has hindered the diversity of legitimation and delegitimation practices.

Third, our last finding is that the diversity of legitimation and delegitimation increased after the UNFCCC's legitimacy crisis. In contrast, during the AU's legitimacy crisis we observed a reduction in the diversity of (de)legitimation practices among most agents. In fact, there was a greater diversity of legitimation and delegitimation both before and after the AU's legitimacy crisis in the late 2000s. Future research ought to develop new hypotheses for gaining new knowledge about the

conditions under which legitimacy crises result in higher or lower diversity of legitimation and delegitimation.

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The Interplay between Delegitimation and Legitimation

Civil Society Protest and the Responses of Global Governance Institutions

Catia Gregoratti and Anders Uhlin

Whereas the previous two chapters covered the full spectrum of (de)legitimation practices, this chapter highlights a specific behavioral delegitimation practice, namely, civil society protest against global governance institutions (GGIs). We explore the possible interplay between such practice and legitimation practices by the targeted GGIs. Our analysis is guided by the following research question: When and how does civil society protest result in legitimation practices by GGIs?

We first distinguish between protests that may challenge the overall authority of a GGI (diffuse protests) and specific practices, bodies, or policies of a GGI (specific protests). Second, we consider whether civil society protesters are recognized by the targeted GGI as significant audiences. We argue that the type of protest and degree of recognition of protesters are likely to shape the legitimation response of a GGI. The response may be substantial legitimation (seriously addressing the concerns of protesters through policy change or institutional reform) or symbolic legitimation (legitimation practices that do not seriously address the main concerns of protesters, instead attempting to justify GGI legitimacy in other ways), or there might be no response from the GGI at all.

Much civil society protest against GGIs has challenged neoliberal economic policies. In particular, major economic GGIs such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and World Trade Organization (WTO) have been frequently targeted by mass demonstrations (O'Brien et al. 2000; Bandy and Smith 2005; Rauh and Zürn 2020). Large protests against regional international organizations, especially the European Union (EU) (Pianta and Gerbaudo 2015), have also mainly focused on its economic policies as have protests against the Group of Twenty (G20) (Slaughter 2013, 2015). The alter-globalization movement challenges the negative effects of economic globalization in which major GGIs play a key role (Smith 2008). In varying degrees, the GGIs selected for this study are active in a broad economic policy field and have been repeatedly targeted

by anti-neoliberal civil society protesters. The chapter compares protests waged against the G20, the World Bank, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The selection of GGIs active within the same policy field aims to capture variation in legitimization responses to protest (or lack thereof) by type of GGI. The G20 is an informal transgovernmental network with a temporary secretariat managed by an annually rotating chair; the World Bank is a global intergovernmental organization; whereas, the ASEAN is a regional intergovernmental organization. The key rationale for our case selection, however, is the variation displayed by the three GGIs in relation to our key independent variable—degree of recognition of protesters—which will be further elaborated below.

Following this introduction, the chapter proceeds by developing an analytical framework and research design for the study of protest and GGI legitimization. Next, we provide a brief historical overview of protest against the G20, the World Bank, and ASEAN. In the chapter's main analytical sections, we then trace the processes of delegitimation and legitimization related to selected protests against the G20, World Bank, and ASEAN. The analysis focuses on the diffuse or specific nature of protests, as well as the extent to which protesters were recognized by a GGI as significant audiences. We explore the outcome of protests in terms of responses issued by a GGI. Finally, we conclude the chapter by assessing the analytical framework and suggesting directions for further research.

Protest and Legitimation: Analytical Framework and Research Design

Much research on legitimacy and (de)legitimation in global governance has highlighted the role of state actors, but civil society actors have emerged as increasingly relevant agents of (de)legitimation. Since the 1990s, there has been a dramatic increase in civil society and other non-state engagement with most GGIs (Tallberg et al. 2013). Such engagement commonly entails a number of discursive and behavioral practices consequential to the legitimacy and functioning of GGIs. (De)legitimation exercised by civil society actors vis-à-vis GGIs range from inside activities that support a GGI in formulating policies via participation in a consultation process to outside protest activities. In this chapter we focus specifically on civil society protest as a distinct delegitimation practice (see also Chapter 2). Protest against GGIs may take many different forms, including one-off mass protests, as well as more mundane everyday acts of resistance; they could be peaceful or violent; they could take place near a GGI's headquarters or summit venues, at a distance, or even in cyberspace.

In our previous work we attempted to answer the question of when protest matters to GGI legitimacy using a parsimonious analytical model (Gregoratti and Uhlín 2018). We suggested that two factors are particularly important to consider.

First, whether protests have a diffuse or specific nature. Whereas the former contests the overall authority of a GGI, the latter targets aspects of a GGI, such as policies and particular institutional practices. Second, the degree of recognition that GGIs grant to civil society protesters. Some GGIs recognize civil society actors in general, even those involved in protest activities, as legitimate interlocutors even if a GGI's leadership may disagree with their criticisms and demands. Other GGIs have a much more skeptical attitude towards civil society organizations (CSOs) in general and do not recognize protesters at all. Our combined conceptualizations of different types of protest (diffuse and specific) with different types of protesting agents (recognized and unrecognized by the GGI) helped us develop four different scenarios (Gregoratti and Uhlin 2018: 143).

In this study we use these conceptual distinctions to analyze the interplay between protest and GGI legitimation (cf. Anderl et al. 2019: 50). Hence, we use a slightly revised version of the model, distinguishing between symbolic and substantial legitimation as a response to protest (cf. Zürn 2018: 99). By *symbolic legitimation* we mean legitimation practices that address the main concerns of protesters in limited and superficial ways, through “status quo-oriented responses” that may not appease protesters. We conceptualize *substantial legitimation* as legitimation practices that seriously address the main concerns of protesters, for example, through institutional reform or policy change that go far beyond mere rhetoric to include meaningful adjustments that address key concerns of the protesters (Park 2019). Everything else equal, we expect GGIs to be more responsive to specific protests than to diffuse protests that challenge their overall authority and existence. Protests against specific policies or practices can, in principle, be addressed by policy change and reform, whereas there is not much a GGI can do to satisfy protesters who claim that its exercise of authority is fundamentally illegitimate. However, we also assume that a GGI's response to protest depends on how it views the protesters. GGIs that recognize civil society actors as important audiences are more likely to respond to protests. GGIs that do not consider civil society actors in general and protesters in particular as legitimate audiences are likely to just ignore protests. They can afford to continue with “business as usual” as long as they are seen as legitimate by other more powerful constituencies (cf. Zürn 2018: 99). Hence, our conceptualization of a GGI's recognition of protesters

Table 5.1 Protest and GGI legitimation response

	Protesters recognized by a GGI as significant	Protesters not recognized by a GGI as significant
Diffuse protest	Symbolic legitimation	Protest ignored
Specific protest	Substantial legitimation	Protest ignored

as significant is grounded in an analysis of the power relations prevailing in the institution in question, which, in turn, reflects broader societal structures. Based on these expectations, we arrive at an analytical model with four types of outcomes in terms of a GGI's legitimation response to protest (Table 5.1):

1. Diffuse protest against a GGI is likely to result in symbolic legitimation when the protesters are recognized as significant.
2. Diffuse protest against a GGI is likely to be ignored when protesters are not recognized as significant.
3. Specific protest against a GGI is likely to result in substantial legitimation when protesters are recognized as significant.
4. Specific protest against a GGI is likely to be ignored when protesters are not recognized as significant.

In order to empirically apply and assess our model, we compare four cases of protest and GGI legitimation. We focus on protest against the G20, the World Bank, and the ASEAN because these three GGIs differ in terms of how much recognition they typically grant to civil society protesters (O'Brien et al. 2000; Uhlín 2016; Park 2019; Slaughter 2019). As will be shown below, the ASEAN does not recognize civil society protesters as significant audiences. The World Bank, by contrast, does recognize civil society protesters as significant audiences, at least since the 1980s (Wade 2004). The G20's engagement with and recognition of civil society protesters as significant audiences has varied from summit to summit, depending on the host. In line with the model, we also need to include both diffuse and specific protests. Based on an historical overview of protests against these three GGIs (presented in the following section), we have purposefully selected one case (which may include several protests) for each combination in our analytical model:

1. Diffuse protests by protesters recognized as significant: G20 meeting in Australia 2014.
2. Diffuse protests by protesters not recognized as significant: G20 meeting in Turkey 2015.
3. Specific protests by protesters recognized as significant: Protests against the World Bank's funding of oil, gas, and mining projects.
4. Specific protests by protesters not recognized as significant: Protests against the ASEAN's failure to act on human rights abuses in Myanmar.

The analysis will show whether the expectations in our model hold, that is, we explore whether the protests are ignored by a GGI or result in symbolic or substantial legitimation. To achieve this, we draw on a number of different sources, ranging from news, videos, and archived websites to interviews and secondary

literature. Noting that there are stark differences in how the media reports on protests (cf. [Rauh and Zürn 2020](#)), we triangulated the data as much as possible. We identify protests as either diffuse or specific. This is a straightforward distinction when protesters, on the one hand, contest a GGI in very general terms, for example, demanding that the institution is abolished or, on the other hand, focus on a specific policy. However, certain cases are more ambiguous, for example, when different participants in a protest event use different slogans, some of which are of a diffuse nature, whereas others are more specific. In such cases, we have tried to identify the dominant tendency of a protest. This means that a protest may qualify as diffuse even if more specific but distinctively fewer demands are voiced. And another protest may count as specific when focusing on a particular policy or practice although occasional demonstration banners may also demand the abolishment of a GGI.

A GGI's recognition of civil society protesters as a legitimate audience is evident in official documents, engagement activities, as well as ways in which GGI representatives refer to civil society in general and protesters in particular. A striking example of the non-recognition of civil society protest is a statement by a Russian presidential spokesperson speaking about the 2017 Hamburg protest against the G20 in these terms: "Such disorderly behavior does take place sometimes. I did not see people there in Hamburg who could explain clearly what they do not like and what they urge the heads of state and government to do. Since I did not see that I regarded that as *pure hooliganism*" ([Russian News Agency 2017](#)). GGI recognition of protesters can be identified (1) in general statements on civil society in GGI public communication and policy documents; (2) GGI practices of listening to or ignoring protesters at public demonstrations in general, as well as related to the specific protests under study; and (3) GGI public statements about protests and demonstrations in general, as well as related to the specific protests under study.

By response to protest in the form of legitimation we refer to discursive, institutional, or behavioral legitimation practices by a GGI explicitly or implicitly associated with civil society protest. To count as a response to protest, a legitimation practice by a GGI has to (1) occur after a protest event and (2) include references to the protest in legitimation statements or (3) address issues raised by the protesters. In order to determine whether a legitimation response has taken place and its type, we draw on a mix of data sources, including GGI websites and other documents and public statements, media reports, qualitative interviews, and secondary literature. We consider a legitimation practice to be symbolic legitimation when the practice does not seriously address the main concerns of protesters, instead attempting to justify GGI legitimacy in other ways, typically through discursive practices or cosmetic institutional changes. We classify a practice as substantial legitimation when the practice seriously addresses the main concerns of protesters, for example, through institutional reform or policy change.

Civil Society Protests against the G20, the World Bank, and the ASEAN

We have collected data on protests taking place before and during the summits of the ASEAN, the G20, and the World Bank through newswires in the Lexis-Nexis database, web searches (e.g., “protest against [GGI],” “demonstration against [GGI]”), archival web research through the WayBack Machine, selected interviews with CSO and GGI representatives, as well as previous research on the three GGIs. We did this so that we could tell a brief story of the history of protest against the three GGIs—not provide an exhaustive inventory of protests.

Protests against the G20 have been common, yet the history of protests against the forum is not as linear as one would expect. The first protests date back to the early 2000s, when the G20 primarily consisted of annual meetings between finance ministers and central bank governors. During the first protests that took place in Montreal (2000) and Ottawa (2001), the G20 was primarily criticized for its lack of democratic legitimacy and its neoliberal economic policies. The G20 enjoyed a rather quiet life up until the Melbourne summit in 2006. A turning point, however, occurred in conjunction with the 2008 global financial crisis when state leaders started to convene as part of the G20 and only a year later rebranded the group as the premier forum for international economic cooperation. After 2008, all state leaders’ summits have been met by large or small protests criticizing the G20, its policies, or its leaders. Mass protests and alternative summits have been common and widely reported whenever G20 summits have been hosted by democratic states. Smaller protests have occurred in conjunction with the summits that took place in St. Petersburg (2013) and in Antalya, Turkey (2015), whereas in Hangzhou (2016), all protest activities were banned and activists who attempted to organize protest activities were immediately arrested. Even though most protesters demonstrate peacefully, most summits have witnessed clashes with the police and arrests.

As the leading multilateral development bank providing loans and grants to governments for development projects across the world, the World Bank¹ is one of the GGIs that is most frequently targeted by civil society protest, as well as more moderate forms of civil society lobbying and advocacy (Ebrahim and Herz 2011). Communities negatively affected by large dam constructions and other projects funded by World Bank loans have protested against the GGI at least since the 1970s. In 1981, mass demonstrations by indigenous people succeeded

¹ The World Bank Group comprises five organizations: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the International Development Association, the International Finance Corporation, the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, and the International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes. Most public debate on the World Bank tends to focus on the activities of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Development Association.

in stopping the Chico River Dam Project in the Philippines (Gray 1998: 270). Civil society protest against the World Bank continued during the 1980s (Fox and Brown 1998). In the 1990s, transnational advocacy networks challenged the negative social and environmental impacts of World Bank projects (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Wade 2004), as epitomized by the Fifty Years is Enough campaign. In the same decade, civil society demands on the World Bank also centered on the need for transparency and citizen-driven accountability mechanisms (Park 2019). Protests against the World Bank peaked in the mid-1990s–early 2000s, as described by one long-term World Bank employee:

When I first joined the World Bank I used to see a lot of demonstrations. [...] They still protest. During the spring and annual meetings, we have CSOs who will create campaigns and they want to protest, which is fine. [...] They are free to do that

(Interview, March 21, 2019).

As the above quote shows, protests against the World Bank have continued and have become something that is accepted, at least by some representatives of this GGI.

The regional organization ASEAN has often not been considered important enough to be targeted with public displays of discontent. During the first decades after its establishment in 1967, there was very little civil society interaction. The first civil society protests against the ASEAN occurred in the mid-1990s and focused on the organization's acceptance of Myanmar as a new member. However, it was not before the wake of the 1997–98 Asian economic crisis that CSOs more generally found the ASEAN to be a relevant institution to target (Uhlin 2016: 90). The economic crisis not only challenged the legitimacy of the governments of the most severely affected states (Indonesia in particular), but also of the ASEAN as a regional organization. The post-crisis policies of the ASEAN focused on strengthening economic integration and trade liberalization and this was contrary to the interests of many CSOs in the region, which were more concerned about socioeconomic equality, human rights, and environmental problems. Civil society protests against the ASEAN have rarely questioned the overall authority of the regional organization. Rather, the focus has been on specific policies, such as the mistreatment of migrant workers, trade agreements, and neoliberal policies in general (Uhlin 2016: 105). Most protests, however, have focused specifically on human rights abuses in Myanmar and the ASEAN's failure to act on these. Most protests, and particularly the larger demonstrations, have taken place in post-authoritarian ASEAN member states. Protests against the ASEAN have typically been peaceful. The exception is the 2009 storming of the summit venue in Pattaya by "Red Shirt" activists, but this event must be understood in the context of a domestic political

conflict in Thailand and was only marginally related to the ASEAN even if it was the ASEAN summit that was targeted.

Having provided this brief overview of protests against the three GGIs, we now turn to a focused analysis of specific protest cases representing different combinations of protest type and degree of recognition of protesters in our analytical model.

Diffuse Protests against the G20: Australia 2014 and Turkey 2015

This first empirical section analyses two cases of diffuse protest against the G20, namely, the protests that took place in Australia in 2014 and in Turkey in 2015. Despite their temporal contiguity, coordination between Australian and Turkish activists ([Workers BushTelegraph 2014](#)), as well as commitments by the Australian and Turkish chairs to engage in outreach activities with civil society, the protest activities prompted different legitimation responses: a symbolic response in Australia and no response in Turkey. At the 2014 G20 summit in Brisbane, a number of demonstrations supporting and opposing the G20 took place even though heavy restrictions were placed on protest activities ([Kampmark 2017](#)). Groups of citizens organized by the Australian Taxpayers' Alliance rallied in support of the G20, while some gathered to show support for Russian president Vladimir Putin. Smaller groups of protesters took to the streets of Brisbane to oppose Putin or protest against the Australian border and asylum policies, while aboriginal groups marched and set up a camp calling for "decolonization before profit." However, the largest group of demonstrators was a 3000-strong People's March. The march was the culmination of a week-long People's Summit organized by the Brisbane Community Action Network Group (BrisCAN-G20) in collaboration with the hosts of the Brisbane Aboriginal Sovereign Embassy First Nations meetings and "Genocidal20." Echoing a slogan popularized by the Occupy movement, the main message to the G20 was "The G20 serves the 1%" and was thus diffuse in character. As one of the coordinators of BrisCAN-G20 recounts in a personal reflection: "With its focus of bolstering the 'growth economy,' the G20 perpetuates political and economic systems based on violence and inequality. The leaders of the 20 largest global economies gathered for their own agendas—not ours" ([Taubenfeld 2015](#): 12). Protesters marched *for* "equality and justice for all" and alternatives to the current economic system, which are demands that are also commonly articulated in the context of protest activity against previous G20 summits, the United Nations (UN), and other major economic GGIs ([Hajnal 2014](#); [Harris Rimmer 2015](#)). They also called on leaders to take action on the Ebola crisis in West Africa. However, according to [Tourangbam \(2014\)](#), climate change and criticism of Australia's lack of action on the topic "topped the list of protesters' priorities"—a message that was

amplified by the media attention accorded to the Climate Guardians who marched in Brisbane dressed as angels.

The second case of diffuse protest considered in this chapter are the demonstrations against the G20 that took place in Turkey in 2015. These were organized in a much more hostile climate compared to the previous year, as the Turkish chair placed a ban on protest activities in Antalya and did not offer media accreditation to a wide number of Turkish journalists and media organizations. Despite such restrictions, in Antalya, Istanbul, and Izmir, groups of young activists, left-wing collectives, and trade unions organized peaceful protests. In Antalya, some protests were organized specifically against G20 leaders and their policies. For example, the demonstrators from the Youth Union of Turkey stated: “We are here to protest Obama and say that we want him to get out of Turkey and our region” ([AP Archive 2015](#)). Members of Turkey’s ethnic Uighur community also gathered to protest against Chinese President Xi Jinping and China’s treatment of the Muslim minority. When addressing the G20 as a whole, the Antalya Labor and Democracy Forces denounced the G20 with the much-photographed slogan “Killer, colonialist, imperialist war organization G20 get out!.” Like the march held in Brisbane, the main message issued to the G20 by Turkish protesters was diffuse in character but was framed in more antagonistic terms. In response to a police attack against the protest organized by the Antalya Labor and Democracy Forces, community centers, student collectives, and High School Young Hope broke the police barricade stating that: “The imperialist criminal organization G20 will be disbanded” ([Halkevleri 2015](#)).

While the 2014 and 2015 protests pointed to the continuous fragility of the legitimacy of the G20, the G20 recognized the problem and attempted to overcome it by establishing outreach strategies, which refer to diplomatic meetings and communications strategies of information and consultation by the host state with relevant members of the international community and their own citizens ([Harris Rimmer 2015](#)). As also stated in documentation published by the 2015 summit chair: “We believe that outreach efforts are particularly important to enhance the legitimacy of the G20 as the premier forum for global economic policy cooperation” ([G20 Turkey 2015](#): 12). Informal dialogue between members of civil society and the G20 can be traced back to the Ottawa summit in 2001 and continued when the leaders began meeting in 2009 and 2010. However, the creation of a formal mechanism for civil society engagement, the so-called “C20,” occurred only in 2013 during Russia’s hosting of the G20. Russia’s presidency marked a profound change in the way in which the leaders and the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) interacted, enabling considerably more communication with the summit preparatory process and oversight of the summit outcomes ([Koch 2016](#)). Historically, the C20 has maintained links with outside protesters, while also attempting to influence the G20 process from the inside ([Chodor 2020](#)). For example, in the specific context of the G20 in Brisbane, signatories of the People’s Summit

Statement in response to the G20 also participated in the C20 and its summit. Even if the C20 may act as a mediator between outside protesters and G20 leaders, parallel summits have also directly communicated recommendations to G20 officials engaging in what Hajnal (2014: 96) calls “a form of consultation.” Alternatively, when protesters choose not to engage in dialogue with the G20 “they can still demand the rectification of harmful effects of the G8 and G20 action or inaction” (Hajnal 2014: 94).

Both Australia and Turkey made commitments to outreach, engagement with civil society, and other G20 engagement groups. In an interview with the Australian Institute for International Affairs, Sherpa Heather Smith spoke about engagement with groups outside government as a key characteristic of the Australian approach to the summit: “These are important opportunities to increase our understanding of how policies affect others and to help ensure broad political support for G20 outcomes” (Smith 2014). Similarly, the Turkish G20 presidential priorities promised extensive outreach efforts domestically and internationally to countries, international organizations, civil society representatives, trade unions, and other NGOs: “G20 engagement groups such as Business-20, Think-20, Civil-20, Labor20 and Youth-20 also have an important role in conveying us the views of various stakeholders and hence enriching and deepening our discussions. With this in mind, we are going to ensure an effective dialogue with those groups” (G20 Turkey 2015: 12). Moreover, both chairs either managed or facilitated the appointment of the C20 Steering Committee (Koch 2016) and restricted, in different ways, protest activities outside the summit venue.

However, despite similar commitments to sustaining dialogue with recognized engagement groups, the G20 legitimization responses to civil society protest varied. While G20 communiqués of 2014 and 2015 do not speak to or about protests directly, policies forwarded by the C20 resonated with the final communiqués in both 2014 and 2015. Though as Slaughter (2019) and the C20 itself stress (cf. C20 Turkey 2015: 2), it is important to note that the C20 did not have an independent role in ensuring the uptake of particular policy commitments. In Brisbane, there were also a few thematic overlaps between the People’s Summit Statement and the G20 final communiqué, particularly around issues of gender equality, climate change, fossil fuels, and food security, which were among the policy priorities of member states such as China and the US (Harris Rimer 2015). The G20 communiqué, however, discursively resignifies these in less demanding and more market-oriented ways. For example, while protesters stated that “ways of eliminating the patriarchy should be embraced and progressively built upon” (Workers BushTelegraph 2014), the G20 committed to bringing more than 100 million women into the labor force (G20 Australia 2014). More radical demands for greater social ownership of resources, production, and finances or the development of an economic system that did not hinge upon growth were ignored. In short, in addressing issues politicized by the C20 and at the

People's Summit, the 2014 G20 summit responded to the C20 and the “tightly managed” civil society summit and march (Kampmark 2017) through symbolic legitimation.

In contrast, the 2015 summit displayed a clearer tendency to “divide and rule” (Anderl et al. 2019), engaging with moderate civil society critics belonging to the C20 while disavowing the more radical and antagonistic critiques emanating from outside protesters. As C20 Steering Committee member Meryem Aslan recounts: “Civil 20 (C20) Turkey has overseen a dramatic improvement in the level of meaningful engagement of civil society organizations with the G20,” further adding that the buy in and support for the C20 communique, with its 36 policy recommendations, was unprecedented (Aslan 2015; see also C20 Turkey 2015). Meanwhile, radical, outside anti-capitalist protesters who rallied despite large scale security measures and the prohibition of freedom of expression, delegitimated the G20 in ways that did not warrant any legitimation response. As Slaughter notes, G20 processes are “predisposed towards those civil society actors who are involved in pragmatically challenging and reforming the political ideas on the G20 agenda, not those who seek to totally reject the G20 or global capitalism” (Slaughter 2019: 40).

In sum, the two cases of protests against the G20, in Australia in 2014 and Turkey in 2015, are in line with our theoretical expectations. Both protests had a largely diffuse nature, challenging the overall authority of the G20, but the cases differ in the degree of recognition granted to protesters. Whereas the Australian government allowed protests and at least implicitly acknowledged protesters as relevant actors, the Turkish government adopted a more restrictive approach. As expected, the outcome in terms of G20 legitimation response was symbolic legitimation in the Australian case, while the protests in Turkey did not result in any legitimation response at all.

Protests against the World Bank's Funding of Oil, Gas, and Mining Projects

On April 16, 2000, activists converged on Washington DC to disrupt the meeting of the IMF and the World Bank. “A16” was the subsequent major action after the anti-WTO demonstration in Seattle in 1999. As in Seattle, voices ranged from radical anarchists who sought to abolish the institutions to more moderate reformers who called for more democratic institutions and fairer economic policies. Inaugurating a week of action towards “A16” and coinciding with the World Bank's Energy Week Conference, two activists from Friends of the Earth and Ozone Action locked themselves to the undercarriage of a 17-foot truck displaying the banner “World Bank plunders the planet—No more \$\$\$ for oil, gas and mining.” The two-person protest was associated with a much larger platform consisting of

200 CSOs from fifty-five countries campaigning for the World Bank to phase out the funding of oil, gas, and mining projects. The platform accused the World Bank of fostering an unsustainable model of development that had caused significant environmental damage and consistently failed the world's poor. However, rather than calling for abolishment of the institution, it specifically urged the World Bank to terminate its financial support for extractive modes of development and expand its lending to existing projects that are socially and environmentally sustainable, such as renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and efficient water distribution. The campaign also asked the World Bank to take full responsibility for damage already inflicted on populations and their environment through reparations. Thus, the protest was specific in character. It did not fundamentally question the GGI's authority but insisted that the World Bank should refashion its lending policies "through environmentally and socially sustainable development" ([Friends of the Earth 2000](#)).

More than many other GGIs, the World Bank has recognized civil society actors as legitimate audiences. Extant research has indicated substantial civil society influence on the Bank's policy reforms. Under the leadership of James D. Wolfensohn (1995–2005), the World Bank implemented a number of new environmental and social safeguard policies ([Ebrahim and Herz 2011](#): 68). Many of these reforms were implemented as a result of sustained pressure from civil society actors ([Clark et al. 2003](#); [Ebrahim and Herz 2011](#); [Pallas 2013](#)). As argued by Park (2019: 29), "Over a decade the World Bank would shift from ignoring, then rejecting, to accepting their role in contributing to environmental and social harm." In relation to the protests and campaign to stop the funding of oil, gas, and mining projects in poor nations, Friends of the Earth activists engaged with the World Bank while simultaneously staging peaceful protests to ensure that the realities of communities affected by large-scale oil and mining projects were communicated to the wider public ([Friends of the Earth 2004](#)). Wolfensohn's leadership was key to ensuring the recognition of civil society protesters through dialogue, as Friends of the Earth activist Ricardo Navaro said: "In 2000, convinced that this vicious cycle needs to stop, I confronted World Bank President James Wolfensohn, on behalf of Friends of the Earth International, with the tragic impacts of the Bank's investments in oil, mining and gas. He responded that he would assess whether the Bank should have a future role in the sectors" ([Friends of the Earth 2003](#): 3). The World Bank is now extensively engaged with civil society, a notable example of which is the Civil Society Policy Forum. Having said that, "not everyone in the Bank is open to the idea of engaging with civil society" (Interview, World Bank employee, March 21, 2019). Even if the Bank prefers to interact with less radical CSOs through its own institutional framework and consultation processes, it also acknowledges the legitimacy of civil society protests. Commenting on protests against the World Bank, a representative of the institution said "pushing us to do more, [...] I think that is the role of CSOs. To hold us accountable and to kind of be the voice of the other

population who are unable to you know make their voice heard” (Interview, March 21, 2019). Even if you do not agree with the protesters, “at least you can listen to what their concerns are” (Interview, March 21, 2019).

Protests against the World Bank have often resulted in legitimization responses. [Buntaine \(2015\)](#) has shown that civil society complaints concerning the environmental impact of World Bank funded projects have altered lending decisions. The World Bank’s “reinvention” as a “global knowledge bank” in the 1990s came as a response to growing criticism, including major civil society protests, against its neoliberal policies ([Plehwe 2007](#)). This is confirmed by representatives of the World Bank who acknowledge that its transparency reforms in the 1990s were driven by pressure from civil society (Interview, March 21, 2019). The protests and campaign to stop the funding of oil, gas, and mining projects in poor nations also resulted in substantive legitimization. The most immediate legitimization response came at the World Bank’s Annual General Meeting in Prague in 2000, when the Bank agreed to support an independent assessment of its activities in the extractive industry, called the Extractive Industries Review. Provided with a modest budget, Emil Salim, former Minister for Population and Environment in Indonesia, was the eminent person entrusted to lead the review process from 2001 until 2003. The EIR comprised processes of regional consultations with different stakeholders, site visits, commissioned research, reviews of existing research, and dialogue with World Bank officers ([World Bank 2003](#); [McKay 2004](#)). The final report of the Extractive Industries Review echoed a number of important concerns of the anti-extractive campaigners such as the phasing out of investment in oil and coal by 2008. The report also recommended that investment in extractive projects should take place in stable regions with the consent of and to the benefit of local communities ([World Bank 2003](#)). The World Bank responded to the review promising and later effecting selective investments in pro-poor and sustainable extractive projects, assistance to governments in creating policy and regulatory frameworks, greater investments in renewable energy and clean fuels, and a major update of the IFC’s safeguards known as the Policy and Performance Standards for Environmental and Social Sustainability ([World Bank 2004](#)). While these rejoinders do not reflect all the recommendations of the EIR or the specific demands of civil society, they triggered far-reaching institutional changes to the World Bank’s approach to the extractive industries ([Weidner 2010](#); [Weidner 2013](#)), indicating that this clearly is a case of substantial legitimization responding to protests. What protesters set in motion in the early 2000s culminated in the historical decision conveyed at the One Planet Summit in 2017 in which the Bank sought to align itself with the goals of the Paris Agreement, pledging not to finance upstream oil and gas after 2019 ([Anderl 2018](#)).

In sum, the case of protests against the World Bank’s funding of oil, gas, and mining projects demonstrates how specific protests by protesters who are to some extent recognized by the GGI as relevant actors can result in substantial

legitimation responses, in the form of genuine (if not complete) policy change, although with a considerable time lag.

Protests against the ASEAN's (Lack of) Myanmar Policy

Most protests targeting the ASEAN have related to human rights abuses in Myanmar. These are clearly specific protests in which protesters display their discontent with the ASEAN's failure to act on severe human rights abuses in one of its member states, but they do not appear to challenge the organization's overall authority. Protests targeting the ASEAN concerning its relationship to Myanmar began in the mid-1990s with demands that the ASEAN should not accept the military dictatorship as a member. After Myanmar became a member of the ASEAN in 1997, protests focused on human rights abuses in the country. The killing of pro-democracy activists in 2007 provoked a number of demonstrations outside Myanmar embassies and near the ASEAN summit venue. Protesters demanded that the ASEAN should pressure Myanmar to implement democratic reforms and that the organization should take tougher action against Myanmar for its human rights abuses and even cancel its membership. In 2011, there were protests against the ASEAN's decision to allow Myanmar to chair the organization.

Political reforms controlled by the military, which resulted in electoral gains for the democratic opposition led by Aung San Suu Kyi, did not end the military atrocities. Following a prolonged history of discrimination and abuses against the Rohingyas, one of Myanmar's many ethnic minorities, military attacks in 2012 resulted in hundreds of deaths and the displacement of more than 100,000 people. The violence escalated into a major refugee crisis in what has been referred to by the UN as ethnic cleansing or even genocide. Despite strong pressure on the ASEAN to act, the organization has done little to resolve the crisis (Heijmans 2019).

On February 1, 2021, the Myanmar military seized power in a coup. Several thousand people were arbitrarily arrested and by mid-April more than 700 people had been killed when troops opened fire on peaceful demonstrators. Reactions from the ASEAN were lame. Statements failed to refer to the Myanmar crisis as a coup and did not condemn the brutality of the military junta. Neither did the ASEAN support economic sanctions against Myanmar's military that had been imposed by other states and international organizations (FORUM-ASIA 2021). When the ASEAN finally held a Ministerial Level Conference in Jakarta on 24 April to discuss the crisis in Myanmar, protesters demonstrated outside the ASEAN Secretariat where the political leaders met. Police forced the demonstrators to disperse and at least nine activists were arrested. The protesters condemned the ASEAN for inviting the military junta instead of the legitimate government of Myanmar and demanded that the military end the violence against peaceful

protesters (CNN Indonesia, April 24, 2021). Prior to the special summit, individuals, and CSOs in Myanmar and other countries signed an open letter to ASEAN leaders calling for the suspension of Myanmar's membership of the ASEAN and a joint strategy with the UN Security Council, the UN Human Rights Council, and the International Criminal Court to address "the illegitimate and brutal coup and atrocity crimes committed by the military junta in Myanmar" (FORUM-ASIA et al. 2021).

In the case of the ASEAN, there is a clear lack of recognition of civil society protesters and civil society more generally. As noted by Uhlin (2016: 85), "ASEAN's 'people-oriented' rhetoric has meant some limited acknowledgement of CSOs as significant actors, but a norm on civil society participation has not developed." The relatively undemocratic nature of the ASEAN means that legitimacy challenges from societal groups are less substantive than in the case of international organizations dominated by more democratic countries (Ba 2013: 141). The situation is deteriorating as civil society activists in Southeast Asia are facing an increasingly hostile context (Interview, civil society activist, June 28, 2019). ASEAN's approach to engagement with civil society is described as "tokenistic" with limited resources to facilitate CSO participation and packed agendas to restrict meaningful dialogue (Interview, human rights activist, July 2, 2019). At occasional interface meetings between CSO representatives and political leaders at ASEAN summits, there have been explicit displays of the lack of recognition of independent CSOs as some governments refused to recognize the CSO representative from their country (Interviews, organizers of ASEAN Civil Society Conferences, June 16, 2019, July 2, 2019). The ASEAN's relative lack of recognition of civil society in general means that more critical civil society activists who engage in protest activities remain completely unrecognized. In none of the cases of Myanmar-related protests against the ASEAN analyzed here could we find any indication that protesters were recognized by the ASEAN as significant actors.

Civil society protests against the ASEAN's failure to act on severe human rights abuses in one of its member states are clear examples of specific protests by protesters not recognized as significant by the targeted GGI. According to our analytical model, we expect the ASEAN to ignore the protests. This has also been the case. The fact that the ASEAN has done almost nothing to address the Rohingya crisis is perceived by many human rights activists and others as a legitimacy crisis for the organization (Interview, human rights activist, October 24, 2018). In the words of one prominent human rights activist, "what makes me feel that ASEAN lost its legitimacy is not only because of their resounding silence, but because of how Myanmar is constantly using ASEAN as their shield" (Interview, July 2, 2019). The reasons for the ASEAN's lack of response are clear, in the view of many civil society activists. The non-interference principle, the consensus decision-making, and the tendency to prioritize economic issues—not human

rights—are the key problems of the ASEAN (Interview, human rights activist, July 2, 2019).

After the ASEAN special summit on the Myanmar crisis in April 2021, there were no indications that the organization would take a tougher stance on the military junta in Myanmar. On the contrary, the general behind the coup was legitimated by the ASEAN as the representative of Myanmar, instead of the elected government.² The ASEAN failed to demand the release of political prisoners or call for economic sanctions against the military junta. Civil society protests were ignored. It has not been possible to find any reference to the protests by the ASEAN or its political leaders.

In sum, the case of protests against the ASEAN's handling of human rights abuses in Myanmar is in line with our theoretical expectations as the specific protests by protesters who were not recognized by the GGI as relevant actors were ignored, and did not lead to any legitimation response by the ASEAN.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have situated civil society protest within an enduring politics of delegitimation of GGIs and asked: When and how does civil society protest result in legitimation practices by GGIs? Our answer to this question was guided by an analytical model suggesting that legitimation responses by GGIs depend on the type of protest—conceptualized as diffuse when the GGI's authority is questioned and specific when policies and institutional practices are criticized—and the recognition accorded by the GGI to protesters. To validate this analytical model, we selected three different GGIs with varying degrees of recognition of civil society protest and four cases of protest. While diffuse protest may often be conceived as the hallmark of civil society protest against GGIs, as illustrated by the two cases of protest against the G20 in 2014 and 2015, these may not always be recognized as significant or even prompt a legitimation response. In 2014, the G20 issued an indirect and largely symbolic legitimation response, while in 2015, radical protesters were ignored as Turkey, the G20 chair, favored more sustained engagement with moderate civil society insiders belonging to the C20. Similarly, the cases of specific protests against the World Bank and the ASEAN suggest that even when the object of delegitimation is not the GGI's authority but more specific policies or practices, a legitimation response is far from guaranteed. The World Bank recognized protesters as relevant actors and responded with policy change

² In October 2021 the ASEAN decided to block representatives of Myanmar's military junta from attending the ASEAN summit. While this tougher stance on Myanmar was in line with demands from civil society protesters, more research is needed in order to understand the possible role of sustained protest behind this change of policy in the context of pressure from Western powers, threatened trade interests, and concerns about increasing numbers of refugees from Myanmar (Littner 2021).

that we interpret as substantial legitimation. The ASEAN, by contrast, does not recognize protesters in general, and in this particular case, protests did not provoke any legitimation response.

While the case studies confirm our analytical model, they are also able to point to institutional features and mechanisms that may or may not induce a legitimation response to protest. Symbolic and substantive legitimation responses have occurred in cases when GGIs have provided either formal or informal opportunities for civil society engagement and when the critiques of protesters resonated with the priorities and concerns of GGI leaders and powerful member states. Conversely, the disavowal of protest appears to occur in institutions that have either not developed a norm of engagement with civil society, such as the ASEAN, or that have strategically empowered civil society insiders to silence more radical opposition to their authority, as discussed in relation to the case of the G20 in Turkey. Thus, the different outcomes in our case studies can be associated with the different types of GGI. The G20 is an informal transgovernmental network with an annually rotating chair, and it is natural that responses to protest differ depending on the government responsible for a specific summit. As a global GGI with headquarters in Washington DC, the World Bank has to relate to the prevailing norm regarding civil society participation. The ASEAN, as a regional intergovernmental organization in a region in which governments are generally much more skeptical towards civil society and tend to repress protest activities, is not incentivized to respond to protests.

Overall, our findings suggest that the interplay between civil society protest and legitimation practices of a GGI is complex. Delegitimation by civil society protesters may not always result in a legitimation response, and when it does it may be important to differentiate between the type of legitimation responses issued by the GGI. While symbolic responses may not appease protesters and may even prompt new rounds of protest, substantive legitimation responses can set in motion normative and institutional changes that alter the parameters or even the target of delegitimation.

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PART III
JUSTIFICATIONS

6

The Self-legitimation of Global Governance Institutions

A Comparative Overview of Normative Justifications

Nora Stappert and Catia Gregoratti

A global governance institution's (GGI's) legitimacy is secured and contested through continuous justifications, that is, the public statements through which GGIs give *reasons* for their right to rule so as to conform to the norms, values, and standards of constituencies and relevant audiences (see Chapter 2). Building on this theoretical premise, this chapter opens the volume's second section by offering an overview of justifications voiced by GGIs as part of their public communication. Subsequent chapters in the section further deepen and expand this approach by using qualitative case studies not only to analyze justifications used in self-legitimation, but also the justifications on which both legitimating and delegitimizing practices by other actors are based.

The chapter expands on recent methodological debates that suggest that normative justifications can be observed empirically by studying the statements and announcements published by GGIs (Tallberg and Zürn 2019; Stephen and Zürn 2019; Dingwerth et al. 2020; Lenz et al. 2020; Lenz and Schmidtke 2021). Specifically, the chapter is based on a comprehensive and systematic content analysis of annual reports published between 1985 and 2017 by nine different GGIs stretching across the fields of economic, sustainability, security, and regional governance. As in Chapter 3, the GGIs considered in this chapter are: the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), the World Bank, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the International Criminal Court (ICC), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the European Union (EU). Based on this empirical material, the chapter contributes to a nascent, comparative research agenda on the substantive content of GGI self-legitimation through qualitative analysis and descriptive statistics (e.g., Zürn 2018; Rauh and Zürn 2020). By doing so, and through its focus on normative justifications, the chapter deepens the analysis presented in Chapter 3 on the practices used to legitimize and delegitimize GGIs.

Regarding the chapter's time frame, the three decades captured by the annual reports this study focuses on reflect important shifts in the distribution of power in the liberal world order and its institutions. Newly empowered constituencies such as Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (i.e., BRICS), competing institutional arrangements, and an increasing inclusion of civil society audiences have contributed to expanding the pool of justifications based on which the legitimacy of GGIs is assessed. BRICS countries and civil society actors, for example, have been found to assess the legitimacy of GGIs based on fairness, emphasizing the partiality of GGIs' procedure and the detrimental effects of global policy-making (Scholte and Tallberg 2018; Stephen and Zürn 2019). To the extent that GGIs are increasingly concerned with their legitimacy and look to their constituencies and broader environment when deciding which norms to adopt (Bernstein 2011; Dingwerth and Witt 2019; Rauh and Zürn 2020; Tallberg et al. 2020), we expect this normative heterogeneity to be reflected—either reactively or proactively—in the reservoir of arguments that GGIs use to communicate their purpose, procedures, and performance. The chapter thus asks: Which normative justifications have GGIs used in self-legitimation? And have these justifications changed over time?

As answers to these questions, we find that the communicated purpose of the nine GGIs under consideration has remained remarkably stable over time. Three main exceptions are the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO, which have adapted their missions and goals since the 1990s to serve the people and the environment through norms that Tallberg et al. (2020) identified as inherent to “social liberalism.” When considering more closely which norms GGIs use to justify the quality of their institutional features, in turn, we find that economic and regional GGIs tend to use technocratic norms, whereas security and multistakeholder GGIs tend to rely on democratic norms. In contrast to the stability identified in purpose-based legitimation, when GGIs self-legitimize by referring to their procedures and performance—or reforms related to these—wider normative ebbs and flows can be observed. For some of the most authoritative GGIs, such as the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO, democratic self-legitimation increases following periods of crises and intense politicization, but then decreases after a few years.

To map the substantive content of self-legitimation across GGIs and over the course of the past three decades, the chapter proceeds in four steps. We begin with a theoretical discussion on the normative underpinnings of legitimation grounded in the purpose, procedures, and performance of an institution, after which we turn to an outline of our methodological approach. The chapter then turns to a discussion of how GGIs communicate their core purpose via annual reports. As a last step, the chapter maps the justifications used in GGIs' self-legitimation of procedure and performance.

Legitimation and Justifications

The questions of how power relations are justified in terms of people's beliefs (Beetham 2013: 17), and if and how such justifications change over time, have been pivotal to understanding domestic political systems. Translating this approach into the context of global governance, Steffek (2003: 250, 2009) argues that “[g]overnance beyond the nation-state might receive legitimacy and support through the use of good justifications.” Such a need arises because GGIs are a rational form of societal steering, whose decisions are not based on personal discretion but on explicit reasoning (Steffek 2003, 2009). As Max Weber (1922/1978: 979) originally argued, “a system of rationally debatable ‘reasons’ stands behind every act of bureaucratic administration, namely, either subsumption under norms, or a weighing of ends and means.” Steffek (2003: 261) consequently points out that a bureaucracy has a “duty to give rational reasons for every single act,” and it has to be possible to assess these reasons through public discourse in which participants justify, or contest, normative criteria for the attribution of legitimacy and their underlying value basis. In other words, justifications of a GGI's appropriate exercise and acquisition of authority, and the normative criteria such justifications evoke, are central to a GGI's self-legitimation.

Beetham (2013) provides one of the most sophisticated heuristic discussions on the construction of normative justifications as part of his theory on legitimate power. In his view, justifications depend on beliefs on the rightful source of authority, the qualities of those who exercise power, and some conceptions of shared interest among those who are dominant and subordinate (Beetham 2013: 17). According to Beetham (2013: xiii–xiv, 16), legality is thus a *prima facie* element of legitimacy, which in itself has normative value. Applied to global governance, the first ground that GGIs consequently may use to signal legitimacy is legality, thereby basing its authority on state consent (Bodansky 1999). However, legality as a *prima facie* element of legitimacy needs to be substantiated by justifications that highlight a normatively desirable, societally shared purpose (Beetham 2013: xiii–xiv, 16–17). In the context of global governance, while the formal rules established in treaties, contracts, agreements, and conventions provide an initial ground upon which legitimacy rests, in themselves they are often thought to be insufficient to gain legitimacy (see also Chapter 2; Bodansky 1999; Bernstein 2011; Beetham 2013). As a result, within international relations literature on legitimacy in global governance and its sources, discussions of legality have at times tended to be reduced to a side-note (as acknowledged by, e.g., Scholte and Tallberg 2018: 64).

Instead, broadly mirroring Scharpf's (1999) distinction between input and output legitimacy, recent international relations scholarship has commonly focused on the normative justifications surrounding the quality of governance

arrangements, particularly the quality of decision-making *procedures* and the outputs of policy-making, or, differently put, the institution's *performance* (cf. Tallberg and Zürn 2019). However, to the extent that an institution's legitimacy hinges on a consensus on the goals that it should strive towards, we maintain that the *purpose* of governance—a dimension tied to an institution's constitutive functions as well as a basis of common interest—is equally central. For Adams (2020: 294), for example, an institution's purpose “is an organizing principle that is required to make sense of any collection of norms as being bound together in such a way as to contribute to the constitution of an institution.” In more empirical research, some have even argued that GGIs' legitimacy is mostly assessed based on their purpose and performance (Dingwerth et al. 2020: 728, referring to Oates 2017).

In this chapter, we therefore focus on GGIs' procedures, performance, and purpose as the bundles of institutional features that are used to reflect and shape legitimacy beliefs (Steffek 2003; Lenz and Viola 2017; Lenz et al. 2020). However, the specific norms that underpin justificatory statements are more difficult to determine a priori, as they are dependent on the issue area and the problem that a governance arrangement is designed to tackle (Steffek 2003: 315; Bernstein 2011; Dingwerth and Witt 2019: 49). To begin with, the norms expressed through justificatory statements relate to a GGI's main *purpose*. While discussions on world order trace the founding of GGIs established in the aftermath of World War II to American liberal hegemony and the pursuit of an institutional order “built around ‘free world’ social purposes” (Ikenberry 2018: 9), the communicated purpose of newer or non-Western GGIs has not been subject to extensive consideration (but see Lenz and Schmidtke 2021). In line with Beetham's (2013) approach, we maintain that the purpose of a GGI arises from, and is shaped by, the statutes, treaties, agreements, and conventions upon which GGIs are founded. In this context, Adams (2020: 294) observes that “the constitutive functions of an institution are those ... without which it could not undertake its defining purpose.” Specifically with regard to self-legitimation that highlights an institution's core purpose, we propose that such self-legitimation has two main elements, both of which are observable within our data: a) the GGI's legality, in the sense that its exercise of power remains within its legally delegated mandate; and b) the normative desirability of its core delegated purpose itself.

Legality as the first of these two elements thus emphasizes stability, as it requires statements indicating that the GGI has remained within its legal mandate. Thus, reiterating normative commitments as found in GGIs' founding treaties is not the only way to communicate GGIs' core purpose. Instead, it is the second element—that is, the normative desirability of the purpose itself—that places the possibility of change center stage. In general terms, in the field of sustainable development, for example, the purpose of GGIs is broadly communicated and underwritten by a dominant Western norm of “liberal environmentalism” (Bernstein 2011). Similarly, in the realm of global economic governance, political

authority is oriented towards deepening the liberal economic order (Rauh and Zürn 2020). In recent decades, the normative contests around the purpose of GGIs in such a policy field have centered around political conflicts on the type of liberalism promoted by GGIs, particularly the extent to which the liberal purpose of GGIs has been perceived to exclusively promote economic rights or encroach on state sovereignty (Stephen and Zürn 2019). As sociological institutionalists have argued, while shifts in the purpose of governance—whether rhetorical or substantive—may result from contestation, they are more significantly related to the fit of proposals for change with underlying shifts in the normative structures within which organizations are embedded (Bernstein 2002; Tallberg et al. 2020). But even if such change may be historically specific and hence rare, frequent communication of a GGI's purpose may still be significant. As previous studies have shown, such communication can either be used to proactively bolster an institution's legitimacy or act as a powerful mechanism to discipline recalcitrant audiences' "mistaken" legitimacy beliefs (Steffek 2003; Anderl et al. 2019).

Regarding the GGIs' *procedures* and *performance*, extant research has indicated that the legitimacy of governance arrangements may be justified through technocratic norms, democratic norms, and norms related to fairness (Scholte and Tallberg 2018). Historically, international organizations have legitimized themselves in a technocratic manner, showing how mutual gains could be achieved through "impartial coordination and unbiased expertise" (Rauh and Zürn 2020: 587). Zürn (2018: 10, 77–84), for example, outlines a distinct technocratic bias in patterns of GGIs' legitimation. Yet, technocratic norms are no longer the only and, by some accounts, not even the most significant set of justifications found in global governance. Since the end of the Cold War, GGIs have increasingly resorted to democratic norms to legitimize their procedures (Bernstein 2011; Dingwerth et al. 2020; Tallberg and Zürn 2019). These are commonly related to liberal democratic norms of participation of members in decision-making, deliberation, and transparency and accountability (Binder and Heupel 2015; Dingwerth 2017). Typically, explanations on the rise of democratic self-legitimation center on the type of institution and its level of authority. In the case of authoritative international organizations, democratic justifications have emerged in the aftermath of societal politicization or state contestation against institutionalized inequalities (Zürn 2018). In comparison, more recent private and/or multistakeholder institutions have been found to rely more strongly on democratic norms to gain legitimacy in the first place (Dingwerth 2017). However, an increase in democratic justifications has not been found to be necessarily long-lasting (Rauh and Zürn 2020).

Based on these considerations and drawing on existing research, we derive two sets of broad expectations regarding the normative justifications that GGIs use in their self-legitimation, and how these justifications have changed over time. To begin with, we expect to see variation in the norms invoked by GGIs in the justifications of their legitimacy across the *institutional set-up* of different GGIs

(see Chapter 2). When referring to its core purpose, recent research by Tobias Lenz et al. (2020) suggests that regional organizations in particular frequently invoke communitarian norms, including national sovereignty and regional community. In addition, as multi-purpose organizations, the ASEAN and the EU are also expected to refer to a wider variety of purposes compared to single-purpose institutions (Lenz and Schmidtke 2021). On procedure and performance, and based on Dingwerth's (2017) work, the FSC and ICANN as more recently established multistakeholder institutions are expected to rely more on democratic norms when justifying their legitimacy compared to intergovernmental organizations, and thereby all other GGIs included in our study.

Second, we also expect normative justifications to mirror the specific *policy fields* that GGIs are situated in, along with the structurally embedded norms that shape distinct fields as underlying *social structures*. After all, rather than applying across all issue areas and organizational environments, legitimacy standards depend on, and are shaped and assessed by, a community of those that hold legitimacy beliefs (Moschella 2010; Bernstein 2011; Dingwerth and Witt 2019). Consequently, GGIs are expected to take both their broader environment as well as their constituencies into account when determining which norms to highlight in their self-legitimation (Bernstein 2011; Dingwerth and Witt 2019; Lenz and Schmidtke 2021; Rauh and Zürn 2020; Tallberg et al. 2020). As a result, one can expect similarities between the normative criteria used by GGIs embedded within the same policy field, such as the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO as international economic institutions. In this context, Rauh and Zürn (2020) have pointed towards a comparatively high use of technocratic narratives of global economic governance institutions. Conversely, change in normative justifications communicated in GGIs' public communication are expected to be responses to contestation or change of the structurally embedded norms of the broader environment within which GGIs operate (Bernstein 2002; Tallberg et al. 2020).

Data and Methods

Political communication by GGIs leaves numerous written traces in the form of policy documents, reports, and even social media (see Chapters 3, 7, and 9). Among such texts, annual reports have been singled out as being particularly useful for comparative and historical analysis across GGIs (Dingwerth et al. 2020: 722; Lenz et al. 2020: 14–15). Through annual reports, organizations present themselves as coherent “corporate entities,” meaning that the organization as a whole speaks with one voice (Zaum 2013: 13, 2016: 1118). Annual reports are a particularly insightful empirical resource to study how an organization seeks to legitimate itself to multiple audiences—donors, the media, experts, and even interested members of the public. However, who these audiences are may not always

be directly inferred (Anderl et al. 2019). Typically, these texts highlight missions, challenges, achievements, normatively significant institutional practices, as well as reforms (Gronau 2016). Consequently, they are expected to contain a particularly high number of self-legitimation statements.

In this study, we conducted a content analysis of annual reports published by nine GGIs between 1985 and 2017. Specifically, we selected those sections of each report that introduced the organization and the report itself, as these introductions are the parts that are intended to be most widely consulted, cited in the printed media or social media, or read in their entirety. The units of analysis were self-legitimation statements related to the GGIs' purpose and normative qualities ascribed to its procedures and performance, or reforms to the GGIs' procedures and performance. Consequently, our coding units were individual sentences or, if applicable, two sentences if they were linked through a referent. Each annual report was coded using the data analysis software MAXQDA. The coding was carried out on the basis of a common coding scheme by two out of three trained coders,¹ including the authors of this chapter, with all disagreements being reviewed and resolved jointly. We allowed for sentences to be double-coded in cases in which a GGI would, for example, refer to its decision-making procedure with reference to both democratic and technocratic norms.

We included three overarching types of code: normative justifications related to performance, procedure, and purpose, for which we combined inductive and deductive approaches. The literature on justifications used by GGIs to legitimize themselves is split between inductive approaches that seek to find normative justifications in the empirical data (Dingwerth and Witt 2019: 42) and typologies that list what kind of norms are expected to be found in legitimation (Schneider et al. 2010; Scholte and Tallberg 2018: 62–65). Our approach used elements of both deduction (on performance and procedures) and induction (on purpose). To begin with, in order to capture the *purpose* of a GGI that has been the focus of little extant research, we utilized a broad, inductive approach. Specifically, we coded the sentences of the reports outlining a GGI's overarching purpose or mission, the GGI's vision for its own future, the main problem the GGI seeks to solve, and/or its mandate. This approach allowed us to determine if there was variation in the social purpose of different GGIs, and how frequently such a purpose was communicated.

In turn, in our approach to studying the normative attributes ascribed to *performance* and *procedures*, we departed from Scholte and Tallberg's (2018: 62–65) typology of democratic, technocratic, and fairness-based norms as a main starting point. However, a pilot study of annual reports across GGIs for a selected year

¹ The coding scheme and a list of all analyzed annual reports are available at <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/leggov>.

We would like to express our gratitude to Florian Carl who provided great assistance in the coding of the reports.

suggested that fairness-based self-legitimation statements related to procedure or performance were few or non-existent. No statement explicitly stressed procedural norms such as non-discrimination, proportionality, or performance based on notions of human dignity and distributive justice (Scholte and Tallberg 2018: 63–64). Consequently, and drawing on Scholte and Tallberg’s (2018: 63) remaining categories, we added subcodes to our procedure and performance codes on democratic norms (emphasizing participation, deliberation, accountability, and transparency, as well as the promotion of democracy in wider society) and technocratic norms (highlighting expertise and expediency, as well as effectiveness and efficiency).

More specifically, for our procedure and performance codes, we followed the legitimation grammar originally developed by Schneider et al. (2010: 41–44) to empirically study legitimation statements in the printed media. Produced by an agent, each legitimation statement contains an object of (de)legitimation, a positive or negative tone, and a pattern of legitimation. It is in the pattern of legitimation that the reservoir of normative justifications that supports positive or negative assessments of legitimacy can be found (Schmidtke and Nullmeier 2011; cf. Gronau 2016: 112–13). Thus, in self-legitimation by GGIs, the grammar of legitimation implies the following construction:

- Agent of self-legitimation: the GGI
- The object(s) of legitimation: the procedures, performance, or institutional reforms related to either performance or procedure
- A tone: which, in the case of self-legitimation, is positive or self-reflective
- A pattern of legitimation: the normative reasons that are given by an organization to be recognized as legitimate, which may refer to democratic criteria or non-democratic-based issues, for example the effectiveness of the GGI (Schmidtke and Nullmeier 2011: 136).

The legitimation grammar rules out descriptive sentences such as “we initiated a series of dialogues with civil society organizations” as it only considers statements that are accompanied by an explicit justification. An example of a self-legitimation statement coded in the FSC 2011 annual report is the following: “What distinguishes FSC from other competing forest certification systems is its transparency” (FSC 2011: 3). In this statement, the agent of legitimation is the FSC, the object(s) of legitimation are its procedures, the tone is positive, and the pattern of legitimation is indicated in the democratic self-ascription of being transparent. However, we added to the original account of the legitimation grammar by including several subcodes. Specifically, for our performance and procedure codes, we coded sentences with normatively significant references to the future (e.g., “as we look to the future”) (Gregoratti and Stappert 2019). Furthermore, we coded statements that describe a policy or reform in terms of its future intended

effects, such as the goal of increasing effectiveness or enhancing equal participation of member states or relevant stakeholders (see Chapter 3).

Purpose-Based Self-Legitimation

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, GGIs' communicated core purpose has received relatively little systematic attention in the literature on GGI self-legitimation. However, in their annual reports, the GGIs we studied tend to emphasize their purpose, mission, or vision of themselves in their public communication via annual reports. Consequently, this emphasis underlines the value of including purpose statements in the study of GGI self-legitimation. Among the annual reports we analyzed, it is noticeable that purpose statements are often located in such a prominent position that they are likely one of the first aspects to catch the readers' attention. This is even the case in the introductions to annual reports that were the focus of our analysis. For example, since 2006, the IMF has consistently included a description of the fund's main purpose and mission on the first page of its annual report (IMF 2006: ii, 2007: ii, 2008: ii, 2009: ii, 2010: ii, 2011: ii, 2012: ii, 2013: ii, 2014: ii, 2015: 4, 2016: 2, 2017: 2). Similarly, the ICANN's annual reports, since their inception, have included one or more purpose statements at the beginning, at times as part of a more formulistic account of the institution's mission or of its introductory messages from its CEO (ICANN 2006: 6, 2007: 6, 2008: 16, 2009: 14, 2010: 4, 2011: 3–4, 2012: 2, 2013: 2, 2014: 4, 2015: 3, 2016: 3, 2017: 3). It should be noted, however, that this general observation of a heightened prominence of purpose statements did not apply to all the GGIs included in the study. The ICC's annual reports in particular diverge from this general pattern, with purpose statements amounting to a total of a mere four statements between 2004 and 2017 (ICC 2004: 1, 2014: 1 (two statements), 2017: 2).

Regarding the range of purposes referred to by each GGI, the two regional organizations, namely the EU and ASEAN as multi-purpose institutions, refer to the greatest range of stated purposes, as expected (cf. Lenz and Schmidtke 2021). In the case of the EU, purposes cited in its annual reports ranged from "the objective of strengthening the Union's role as a global player" (EU 2006: 14) over "stand[ing] up for its values of openness, freedom, tolerance and solidarity," (EU 2016: 7) to "secur[ing] lasting stability and peace throughout Europe" (EU 1994: 6). In the case of the ASEAN, purpose statements included in its annual reports included references to the "ASEAN's efforts to promote peace and stability in the Southeast Asian region" (ASEAN 1990: para. 97), "regional solidarity" (ASEAN 1993: 1) and "promo[ting] economic integration to enhance the region's economic competitiveness" (ASEAN 2002: 4). In line with findings by [Lenz and Schmidtke \(2021\)](#), both the EU and ASEAN as regional organizations gave particular prominence to communitarian norms in their annual reports, in addition

to technocratic justifications. Notably, the ASEAN introduced itself as a “people-oriented organisation” (ASEAN 2008: 1, 2009: 4, 8, 2011: 3, 2014: 3, 2015: 1–3, 2016: 3, 2017: 4). Furthermore, it frequently highlighted its goal to “becom[e] one ASEAN” and to engage in “community-building efforts” (ASEAN 2005: 5, 2006: 1, 2007: 1, 2008: 1–2, 2009: 1, 6–7, 2014: 2–3, 2015: 2–3, 2016: 3, 2017: 4). And among a range of different stated purposes, the EU’s annual reports over the years keep highlighting solidarity (EU 1988: 26, 1991: 4, 1992: 7, 1995: 1, 2001: 6, 2005: 9, 2007: 11, 2008: 15, 2011: 5, 2013: 4, 2016: 7). At the same time, the regional, multi-purpose GGIs included in the analysis were not necessarily the ones with the highest number of purpose statements overall (EU: 119; ASEAN: 97). Instead, an even higher number of purpose statements was included in the annual reports of the WTO (131) and the World Bank (187). Furthermore, it should be noted that even though for the ICANN as a younger institution, only eleven annual reports were included (in comparison to thirty-two for the WTO and the World Bank), the analysis identified sixty-two purpose statements as a comparatively high number.

For GGIs apart from the ASEAN and the EU, the annual reports generally exhibited little change over time in how the GGIs’ core purpose was framed. Instead, purpose statements repeatedly used explicit references back to the GGIs’ founding documents, which demonstrates the importance of such constitutional statutes and thereby legality as a *prima facie* element of legitimacy (Beetham 2013: xiii–xiv, 16). Through these explicit references, these statements underline a GGI’s claim to its legal legitimacy, as they imply that the institution’s exercise of authority has remained within its mandate, thus highlighting stability. Such references are arguably least surprising for the ICC as a legal institution, which explicitly cites the goals of “end[ing] impunity” and “contribute to the prevention of [international] crimes” stated in the Preamble to the Rome Statute (ICC 2014: 1, 2017: 2). In its formulaic purpose statements, the UNSC repeatedly refers to the United Nations (UN) Charter, repeating the phrase that the “Security Council continued to engage in a comprehensive and wide-reaching agenda under the principles and objectives enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations” year after year (UNSC 2012: 1, 2013: 10, 2014: 10, 2015: 10, 2016: 9). What is more, the UNSC’s annual reports repeatedly and often partly in verbatim use the language of the Charter to refer to its purpose, namely, Art. 24(1) of the Charter, which provides the UNSC with the “primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.”

Such explicit and implicit references to GGIs’ constitutional documents also occurred outside the field of security governance. The ICANN included a summary of its mission as outlined by Art. 1(1) of its Bylaws (version September 2009) from its initial annual report in 2006 until 2009 (ICANN 2006: 6, 2007: 6, 2008: 16, 2009: 14). This statement included the overarching outline of the ICANN’s mission “to coordinate, at the overall level, the global Internet’s systems of unique identifiers, and in particular to ensure the stable and secure operation of

the Internet's unique identifier systems" (Art. 1, Section 1 of the ICANN Bylaws, version September 2009). In addition, almost all annual reports frequently refer to the ICANN's "core values" included in Art. 1, Section 2 of its Bylaws (September 2009), namely, to "enhanc[e] the operational stability, reliability, security, and global interoperability of the Internet" (ICANN 2005–06: 6, 9, 2007: 6, 2008: 16, 19, 2009: 4, 19, 2010: 4, 6, 2012: 2, 2013: 2, 2014: 4, 2015: 3, 2016: 3, 2017: 3). Similarly, the IMF's annual reports from 1989 until 1999 consistently included an outline of the IMF's mission that is a verbatim reproduction of Art. 1 of the Articles of Agreement of the IMF, the IMF's founding treaty (IMF 1989: ii, 1990: ii, 1991: ii, 1992: ii, 1993: ii, 1994: ii, 1995: ii, 1996: ii, 1998: ii, 1999: ii). Art. 1 of the Articles of Agreement of the IMF explicitly outlines the Fund's purposes, which include "[t]o promote international monetary cooperation," "facilitate the expansion and balanced growth of international trade," and to "promote exchange stability." In both the cases of the IMF and ICANN, additional justifications are included in their respective annual reports over the years. In the case of the ICANN, references are made to "the effectiveness of ICANN's multi-stakeholder model" and "the value of [its] bottom-up, consultative process" (ICANN 2005–06: 9, see also similarly ICANN 2010: 6, 2012: 2, 2013: 4). However, it is noticeable that when referring to its core purpose, verbatim reproductions of the exact phrasing of the GGI's respective purpose in its founding documents reoccur frequently across annual reports.

As a result, the way in which GGIs referred to their core purpose in their annual reports has generally remained stable over time. Given the way in which GGIs often present their purpose and mission to readers by either explicitly or implicitly citing their founding treaties, one may even conclude that it is this very stability through which GGIs claim (legal) legitimacy. After all, it highlights the institution's communicated commitment to its purposes as originally delegated, in line with what we proposed as a first element of a GGI's communicated purpose. Moreover, when it occurred, change within the institution's communicated purpose was sometimes associated with changes in its legal set-up: in his introductory message to the annual report, ICANN's then-CEO Rod Beckstrom referred to its "maturation as a global organization serving the public interest" as one of its goals, which, in itself, resulted from a gradual change in its legal set-up away from its links to the US Department of Commerce (ICANN 2011: 4). Similarly, in 1997, the IMF's Board of Governors supported the suggestion to add capital account liberalization to its purposes by amending its Articles of Agreement, a development that the IMF then explained in its annual report (IMF 1997: 1).

Despite a pattern of stability, there were three instances in which the description of the core purposes of the institution changed over time, all in regard to the three international economic institutions. All of these changes follow broader shifts in the structurally embedded norms within this policy field toward an inclusion of sustainability norms, echoing what Tallberg et al. (2020) have referred to as norms

inherent to “social liberalism.” These changes thus concern what we proposed as the second element of GGIs’ communicated purpose, that is, the normative desirability of the purpose itself. To begin with, the WTO began by depicting itself as “a powerful bulwark against protectionist pressures” (WTO 1998: 4) and described its “core business” as “liberalizing access to markets” and “bringing down trade barriers” (WTO 2002: 3). In 2010, however, the WTO’s annual reports started to add the caveat that the “WTO is not just about opening markets, and in some circumstances its rules support maintaining trade barriers—for example, to protect consumers or prevent the spread of disease” (WTO 2010: 2, 2011: 2, 2012: 2, 2013: 2, 2015: 4, 2016: 4, 2017: 4). It is noticeable that such a caveat was again introduced in a formulaic way, and was subsequently repeated verbatim year after year.

Second, while the purpose statements included in the IMF’s annual reports remained the same year after year as well, one main change occurred around 2004. Until 1999, the IMF’s annual reports had included a verbatim reproduction of Art. 1 of the Articles of Agreement of the IMF outlining the institution’s purpose. After 2004, however, the IMF’s annual reports began to include a new, shorter summary of its purpose, alongside new references to poverty reduction as the “main objective” of the fund (IMF 2004: iii (main text), ii (cover), see also IMF 2005: ii, 2006: ii). It is again noticeable, however, that reducing poverty is not one of the purposes listed in Art. 1 of the Articles of Agreement of the IMF. Instead of explicitly referring to poverty reduction as it did in its 2006 annual report, the IMF subsequently began to include a statement highlighting the goal of contributing to “achieving sustainable economic growth and raising living standards,” which is then repeated every year until 2017 (IMF 2007: ii; 2008: ii; 2009: ii; 2010: ii; 2011: ii; 2012: ii; 2013: ii; 2014: ii; 2015: 4; 2016: 2; 2017: 2). Again, references to sustainable economic growth and a commitment to raising living standards is not a goal included in either earlier annual reports or the IMF’s Articles of Agreement.²

Third, the World Bank highlights “help[ing to] raise standards of living in developing countries” as a main goal in its annual reports from 1985, which, by 1991, is reformulated as “reducing poverty” (World Bank 1985: 3, 1991: 11). However, starting in 1998, the World Bank’s annual reports add that this goal is to be achieved “through sustainable growth and investment in people” (World Bank 1998: 1). In annual reports published in subsequent years, sustainable development is repeatedly referred to as part of its purpose statements (World Bank 2004: 8, 2005: 8, 2006: 8, 2008: 9, 2009: 9, 2010: ii, 2014: 3, 2015: 7, 2016: 7, 2017: 7).³

All three international economic institutions have therefore undergone a shift in how they communicate their core purpose, and, as discussed in the next section,

² Note, however, that Art. 1(ii) of the IMF’s Articles of Agreement refers to the “promotion and maintenance of high levels of employment and real income [...] as primary objectives of economic policy.”

³ Initially regarding the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), after 2014 with regard to the entire World Bank Group.

also in the justifications used to highlight the normative qualities of their procedures and performance. In the case of the World Bank and the IMF, and due to their closer ties to the UN as international organizations that form part of the “UN Family,” such a change toward highlighting sustainability norms is arguably at least partly associated with the introduction of the UN Millennium Development Goals, intended to end poverty by 2015, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, adopted in 2015. Thus, a stronger focus on sustainability norms reflects a broader normative change in the wider institutional cluster and field within which both organizations are embedded. At the same time, it should be noted that at both the World Bank and the IMF, the shift towards emphasizing sustainability norms considerably pre-dates the formal introduction of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Regarding all three GGIs, changes in the communicated purpose not only reflect a change toward sustainability norms within the broader policy field, but also increased contestation of neoliberal norms and the Washington consensus, with increasing criticism mounted against global economic institutions in the 1980s and 1990s (O’Brien et al. 2000; Seabrooke 2007; see also Chapter 5). Compared to the international economic institutions, the FSC as a comparatively young multistakeholder institution has also experienced considerable pressure in recent years, arguably amounting to a crisis of its legitimacy, as a number of previously supportive environmental nongovernmental organizations, including Greenpeace International, decided to leave it (e.g., Moog et al. 2015). However, the core purpose that the FSC has communicated via its annual reports since its inception does not seem to have changed as a result. Instead, since its first annual report published in 2002, it repeats, in slightly amended versions, the statement that its core purpose is to “promote environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world’s forests” (FSC 2002: 1). Undoubtedly, compared to the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO, the FSC is a younger institution, so that change within the communicated purpose might not have occurred yet. However, at the FSC, it also seems like critique was directed more at the implementation of the FSC’s goals, rather than the appropriateness of its goals in the first place (unlike, for example, the WTO’s goal of reducing trade barriers). Therefore, compared to the international economic institutions discussed above, the normative desirability of the FSC’s core purpose does not seem to have been challenged to the same extent.

Democratic or Technocratic Justifications?

As noted in the previous section, the ways in which GGIs self-legitimize through the communication of their purpose has been remarkably stable over time, with the exception of the three economic institutions, which, starting with the World Bank in 1998, aligned their functional purpose with social and environmental

norms, as encapsulated in the goal of promoting “sustainable growth.” In this section the chapter moves on to a closer inspection of self-legitimation statements that refer to institutional procedures, performance, or statements highlighting and normatively justifying actions that modify institutional arrangements. In the introductory parts of the annual reports, these statements commonly appear after the communication of a GGI’s mission, goals, and mandate. They can be found in forewords, executive summaries, messages from a GGI’s executives (i.e., chairs of the board of directors, managing directors, chief operating officers, presidents, directors), but also in sections called “introduction,” as in the case of the more standardized, more bureaucratic, and less glossy reports issued by the ICC and UNSC. However, even if they may not always be the first self-legitimation statements reaching the readers of the reports, they tend to be much higher in number in comparison to the previously discussed purpose-based self-legitimation. Out of a total of 3211 self-legitimation statements coded for all nine GGIs over a period of three decades, 75% refer to GGIs’ procedures and performance in the past, present, or future. In comparison, only 25% of all self-legitimation statements referred to GGIs’ purpose.

Independently of the institutional features highlighted in self-legitimation statements, of interest to this chapter is the normative content they convey. As Table 6.1 shows, when disaggregating all procedure and performance-related self-legitimation by type of norm, differences among GGIs appear to emerge. Regional institutions and economic institutions have legitimated themselves by conveying their ability to enhance the welfare of a given constituency through specific laws, reforms, policies, and programs and in line with their purpose. Despite the communitarian rhetoric of a “people-oriented ASEAN” present in the ASEAN’s annual

Table 6.1 Democratic and technocratic justifications 1985–2017, total

	Democratic justifications	% of total	Technocratic justifications	% of total	Total
ASEAN	183	38%	301	62%	484
EU	114	37%	195	63%	309
IMF	112	29%	271	71%	383
World Bank	100	27%	271	73%	371
GATT/WTO	117	41%	173	59%	290
UNSC	131	59%	90	41%	221
ICC	21	75%	7	25%	28
ICANN	110	57%	84	43%	194
FSC	78	55%	63	45%	141

Note: The WTO replaced the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1995.

reports since 1996, the regional organization stands out as the organization resorting the most to technocratic self-legitimation, consistently signaling its capacity to foster regional economic integration, boost the international competitiveness of Southeast Asia, and maintain the peace and stability of the region. The same emphasis on technocratic performance is present in the EU's annual reports, which have consistently communicated the measures taken to strengthen the common economic area, the pursuit of economic growth, institutional effectiveness, budgetary discipline, and a common foreign and security policy. Given the broad mandate of regional organizations, successful technocratic performance is communicated across multiple policy domains. Our aggregate findings also suggest that economic GGIs such as the World Bank and the IMF (and, to a lesser extent, the WTO) have mainly resorted to technocratic justifications in self-legitimation (cf. Zürn 2018), at times even referring to joint initiatives between the World Bank and the IMF. In all three cases, as originally suggested by Rauh and Zürn (2020: 593), legitimation by economic GGIs has primarily hinged on communicating the “effective management of exchange of economic resources across national borders.”

On the other hand, security institutions and multistakeholder institutions, which include nongovernmental and hybrid GGIs, have mainly signaled their legitimacy through democratic justifications. In the case of the UNSC, democratic self-legitimation is evinced in statements in which the GGI either communicated a commitment to, or the full restoration of, democratic institutions in post-conflict societies captured in statements such as: “The holding of elections in Sierra Leone in May 2002, with important United Nations assistance, marked a significant step in the return of that country to normal life” (UNSC 2002: 1), and, to a more limited extent, indicating efforts to improve transparency and the openness of meetings and consultations (UNSC 1995: 19, 1996: 17, 22, 1997: 1, 1998: 1, 1999: 1, 2000: 1, 2001: 1). While not as extensively as the UNSC, the ICC also taps into democratic justifications to self-legitimize. Specifically, the court emphasizes its role in efforts to administer justice, and the democratic norm of transparency and enhanced “awareness and understanding” of the Court among states and the broader public (ICC 2006: 4, 2007: 2, 2014: 3).

Multistakeholder initiatives are comparatively new vis-à-vis other intergovernmental and regional organizations considered in this chapter. However, like security GGIs such as the UNSC and the ICC, they have also resorted to democratic justifications to gain legitimacy (cf. Dingwerth 2017). The ICANN, for example, has placed significant emphasis on communicating how its procedures are based on participation by all interested stakeholders, inclusive and open deliberations, transparency, and accountability, which closely correspond to the democratic norms enshrined in the core values resulting from discussions with the “Internet community” (ICANN 2005–6: 6, 2008: 16, 2009: 14). Similarly, the FSC has signaled its democratic credentials, resorting to norms of inclusiveness,

transparency, and deliberations including “the most affected,” such as indigenous people and representatives from the Global South (FSC 2009: 4, 2010: 2–5, 2017: 7), which correspond to the values of “democracy, equity and transparency” upon which the FSC was founded (FSC 2012: 11). Significantly, since 2010, the FSC started to acknowledge a close relation between the democratic quality of its procedures and its performance, where the former is seen as a catalyst for the latter. In 2010, for example, the FSC states: “The significance of this participatory structure and democratic approach is now evident in our shared achievements and growing success” (FSC 2010: 3), whereas two years later, the democratic, multi-stakeholder model of the FSC is described as “a recipe for unprecedented success” (FSC 2012: 7).

What we have just presented is a rather superficial picture of self-legitimation, aggregating justifications communicated across three decades (Table 6.1). More nuanced observations arise when considering justificatory patterns over time. The plots presented in Figure 6.1 show the co-occurrence of democratic and technocratic legitimation for all nine GGIs. Such co-occurrence is particularly evident in the self-legitimation of regional organizations from the 1990s onwards. With the exception of the IMF, which appears to have consistently self-legitimated through technocratic justifications communicating its effectiveness in overseeing the international monetary system, lending, and knowledge sharing, all other GGIs have variously tapped into both democratic and technocratic justifications. An extreme example is the case of the World Bank in 1999, which displays the highest frequency of both technocratic and democratic justifications. High self-legitimation went hand in hand with the communication of a significant reorientation of the bank’s development thinking, which culminated in the announcement of the Comprehensive Development Framework. Premised on a “holistic development agenda,” the framework set in motion procedural changes that hinged on partnerships and country ownership to enhance the effectiveness of its operations (World Bank 1999: i).

There are distinctively fewer peaks indicating a prevalence in the use of democratic justification. Mirroring the preceding discussion, temporally bound peaks can be observed in the cases of security and multistakeholder GGIs. ICANN stands out as confirming previous studies on multistakeholder initiatives, which suggest that first movers need to show how democratic they are in order to be accepted. Our material is not able to draw similarly robust conclusions from the case of the FSC, as it only started publishing annual reports seven years after it was established, but it is able to capture a decline in democratic justification as the organization matured (Dingwerth 2017). The cases of the World Bank, the IMF, and WTO, in turn, show a distinct “rise and fall” in the use of democratic justifications, and in line with changes to their communicated purpose discussed above. For the three economic GGIs, democratic self-legitimation appears to have acquired significance in the late 1990s—a period marked by the Asian financial

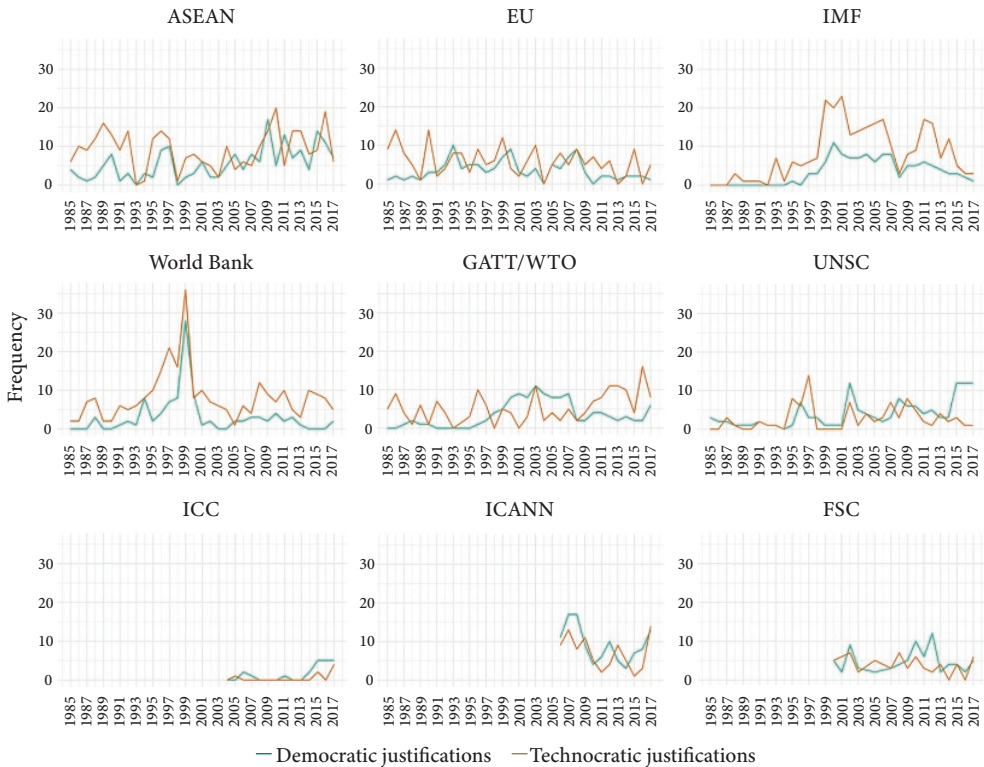


Fig. 6.1 Democratic and technocratic justifications, 1985–2017

Note: The plots are made in R ver. 4.0.3 using ggplot2 package.

crisis and intense politicization stemming from the alter-globalization movement, which targeted these institutions together in critiques against the “Unholy Trinity.” Yet, as others have also observed (cf. [Rauh and Zürn, 2020](#); [Anderl et al. 2019](#)), democratic self-legitimation neither became the main justification nor did it last for very long.

Conclusions

This chapter opened the volume’s second section on legitimacy justifications by providing an overview of the normative justifications that GGIs have used in their self-legitimation, and whether these justifications have changed over time. To answer these questions, the chapter drew on a comprehensive content analysis of introductions to annual reports from 1985 to 2017 of nine GGIs across the fields of economic, sustainability, security, and regional governance. As a main finding, our analysis showed that the main purpose communicated by GGIs has remained

remarkably stable over time. We found repeated references and often even verbatim repetition of a GGI's purpose as outlined in the institution's foundational documents, thereby emphasizing the role of legal legitimacy within purpose-based self-legitimation. However, in the case of global economic governance institutions, their initially delegated purpose itself had been challenged and ceased to be in line with changing normative structures, leading to an adjustment of the communicated purpose of these GGIs to include sustainability norms.

In addition to highlighting the role of legal legitimacy, our study of normative justifications of GGI self-legitimation provided several further findings. As expected, and in line with existing research (Lenz et al. 2020; Lenz and Schmidtke 2021), the chapter showed that, when outlining their core purpose, multi-purpose organizations such as the ASEAN and the EU refer to a broader range of missions, the main problems they seek to solve, and visions of themselves, compared to single-purpose institutions. As regional organizations, the ASEAN and the EU also frequently referred to communitarian norms. Regarding the norms that underpin GGIs' justifications of their procedures and performance, our analysis shows that technocratic norms are more prevalent among economic and regional GGIs. As expected, based on previous research, multistakeholder institutions (e.g., Dingwerth 2017), as well as the ICC and the UNSC as security institutions, were comparatively more likely to invoke democratic norms. Among the most authoritative GGIs, democratic self-legitimation also increased in the wake of intensified contestation, even though we observed such changes to be short-lived (Anderl et al. 2019; cf. Rauh and Zürn 2020).

Two main implications follow from these findings. First, our analysis emphasizes the centrality of legality to normative justifications of self-legitimation. While often acknowledged as important, especially within legal scholarship (see also Scholte 2011: 115), typologies developed within International Relations research on legitimacy sources and legitimation narratives tends to subsume legality under other categories (e.g., Scholte and Tallberg 2018: 62–65). The main exceptions are what Zürn (2018: 72–73) referred to as *legal legitimation narratives*, which, in his view, address human rights and the rule of law. However, our analysis calls for additional research into legality as a normative justification of (de)legitimation that points toward the lawful acquisition and exercise of authority as a main reason for their right to rule. Due to the backward-looking nature of legal interpretation (Stappert 2020) in which GGIs thus argue that their actions have remained within the realm of their delegated authority, such justifications are likely to highlight stability over change, an aspect that requires additional attention.

Second, even though GGIs' self-legitimation attempts are not necessarily successful (cf. Chapter 11), as this chapter indicates, an analysis of self-legitimation can provide crucial insights into how GGIs respond to contestation and change within broader structural norms and the environment into which these institutions are embedded. To do so, annual reports are particularly valuable for

historical comparative analyses. However, they are only one of several communication channels through which GGIs try to convince their audiences of their legitimacy. As GGIs have turned to social media, including Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, to reach their audiences in recent years (e.g., Bexell et al. 2021; see also Chapters 3 and 7), an analysis of annual reports may be fruitfully complemented by research focusing on a broader range of communication channels and visual material (e.g., Gronau 2016). In this context, our analysis showed that the ICC and the UNSC in particular seem to use their annual reports in a slightly different way compared to other GGIs, as their reports are more technical and contain comparatively few (ICC) and often formulaic (UNSC) legitimization statements. Consequently, further research could investigate variations in how GGIs use different communication channels, and whether, for example, the technical layout and focus of some annual reports might serve to highlight the technocratic expertise of the issuing institution.

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Justifications in the (De)legitimation of Global Health Governance and Global Trade Governance

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This chapter explores the justifications used in the legitimation and delegitimation of global governance institutions (GGIs). Hence, it complements and moves beyond the focus on self-legitimation in the previous chapter and on delegitimation in the chapter to follow. As pointed out in Chapter 2, when legitimation and delegitimation are communicated, justifications provide a reservoir of reasons on which positive or negative assessments of legitimacy can be based. Moreover, these justifications also point to historically specific values and norms by which the legitimacy of a GGI is evaluated (Zaum 2013; Stephen and Zürn 2019). At the same time, policy field-specific justifications are likely to play a significant role as GGIs address societal problems in different ways depending on the issue at hand, involving different sets of (de)legitimation agents, objects, and audiences. Our focus is on the substantive content that underpins positive and negative evaluations of GGIs, rather than on the act of justification itself, which constitutes a legitimation practice. The chapter explores whether justifications supporting or opposing the legitimacy of GGIs differ across policy fields and, if so, why. In times of global crises such as climate change and pandemics, this topic becomes particularly pertinent as tensions related to how to justify the exercise of authority in different policy fields may hinder the formulation of common solutions. Consequently, the chapter focuses on the justifications mobilized in two global policy fields—global health and trade governance—and how these have changed over time. In order to investigate if and how normative justifications are issue-specific and how they relate to broader social structures, we compare two GGIs with considerable authority in their respective fields, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Both GGIs are task-specific, making it possible to identify and compare justifications pertaining to different policy fields. They are intergovernmental organizations with nearly universal membership, making them comparable in terms of potentially

competing visions of the common good used to oppose and legitimate existing power structures (Pouliot and Thérien 2018). These GGIs have also been exposed to significant internal and external contestation, facilitating the study of both legitimation and delegitimation. The chapter sets out to answer the following questions: What justifications are used to legitimate and delegitimize the WHO and the WTO? What are the main differences and similarities across the two cases? What explains variation in normative justifications across the cases as well as over time?

In order to capture the historical specificity of the norms by which the legitimacy of a GGI is assessed, we study changes over time by selecting two periods of intense politicization characterized by distinct efforts of both legitimation and delegitimation (cf. Zürn et al. 2012; Sommerer et al. 2022). The first part of the chapter focuses on justifications during the second half of the 1990s. The WTO was created in 1995 to replace the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). However, the optimism associated with the birth of a new organization was soon overshadowed by the first mass protest in 1998, which was followed a year later by the Battle of Seattle. Around the same time, in 1996, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) was created, seriously challenging the authority of the WHO. At the time, the WHO faced intensified competition and increasingly had to justify its position in global health governance. The second part of the chapter focuses on the present day. Currently, both the WTO and the WHO are back in the limelight, particularly because of repeated threats by the United States (US) to leave the organizations under the President Trump administration, but also because of one of the largest health challenges in recent times, the COVID-19 pandemic, which puts the legitimacy of global governance arrangements to the test (Narlikar 2021; Yang 2021). The WHO is obviously at the center of attention in this respect, but the WTO has also attracted interest because of the pandemic's effects on trade, including on trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights agreements (TRIPS) and access to vaccines. That said, a major criticism against the WTO concerns its dispute settlement mechanism, which was a highly charged issue even before the pandemic. By focusing on the policy field as a key factor of variation in normative justifications, we contribute to the body of research that addresses the substantive content of legitimation and delegitimation (see e.g., Tussie 2018: 201; Zürn 2018; Dingwerth et al. 2020; Yang 2021).

The chapter is structured as follows: First, it presents theoretical expectations on how normative justifications may vary by policy field, followed by a presentation of method and material. Thereafter, the chapter compares the normative justifications used to legitimate and delegitimize the WHO and the WTO. The chapter ends with a discussion on the relationship between policy field and normative justifications in light of the volume's theoretical framework.

(De)Legitimation and Justifications: Concepts and Theoretical Expectations

Our key concept of *justification* is used to capture the normative substantive content of legitimation and delegitimation practices. We deliberately use the term *normative* justifications as justifications contain normative criteria for the valuation of political regimes (Schmidtke and Nullmeier 2011: 136). These capture an important aspect of the process perspective highlighted in this book, explicitly linking the variety of legitimation and delegitimation practices to different objects and types of audiences. Our analytical framework builds on previous research that identifies different types of normative justifications used by GGIs, such as justifications related to democracy, legality, fairness, expertise, and effectiveness (Zürn 2018; Dingwerth et al. 2020). Such research shows that most intergovernmental organizations use technocratic justifications (Zürn 2018: 10; see also Chapter 6), including the WHO and the WTO, but we also assume that legitimation and delegitimation may differ depending on the scope, composition of actors, institutions, and knowledge within a given policy field, even if in practice this may be difficult to investigate due to overlaps between fields (Faude and Große-Kreul 2020; McInnes et al. 2020). In other words, we assume that justifications used by GGIs and other (de)legitimation agents resonate with different legitimation audiences such as states and societal actors relevant to their specific field of interest. To exemplify, Zürn (2018: 63) maintains that the technocratic bias in the justification of authority makes a GGI vulnerable to delegitimation efforts. Our assumption is therefore that some normative justifications resonate better with the legitimacy beliefs of certain legitimation audiences than others, or that technocratic justifications are not perceived to be enough to sustain legitimate authority.

In order to identify the normative justifications used in legitimation and delegitimation processes, we focus on the *social purpose*, *procedures* and *performance* of our two GGIs. Social purpose concerns substantive matters, the mandate of a GGI—or “the essence” of a GGI (Suchman 1995: 583; Dingwerth et al. 2019: 59). For example, legitimation can be made with reference to global common goods, such as global health and the eradication of pandemics (Zürn 2018: 27), or, as in the case of trade governance, it could be about highlighting the benefits to be reaped from trade liberalization. The categories of procedures and performance concern how to achieve the social purpose of a GGI. Such justifications are commonly underpinned by either democratic and technocratic norms, or norms concerned with fairness (Scholte and Tallberg 2018). Justifications related to procedures typically include democratic norms such as participation, transparency, accountability, or technocratic norms of expertise and efficiency, while performance-related justifications include virtues of problem-solving capacity, and collective gains in the wider society (ibid.; also see Chapter 6).

On the basis of previous research, we expect that policy fields matter for which norms underpin legitimation and delegitimation (Zürn 2018; Dingwerth et al. 2020). In the field of global health, we expect normative justifications to be related to technocratic norms such as medical expertise and problem solving but also to fairness in terms of human dignity, such as the right to good health and access to health services for all individuals (Cueto et al. 2019). In global trade governance, we expect technocratic norms such as efficiency and legal predictability to predominate, and to a more limited extent norms related to democracy (Dingwerth 2019) and fairness. In the case of trade, fairness may relate to the (im)partiality of trade rules and their distributional effects on poverty, debt relief, social equality, and environmental protection (Rauh and Zürn 2019; Stephen 2019). Moreover, we expect that normative justifications will vary over time, being judged in relation to the social structure and dominant norms at the time, with democratic legitimation having expanded in importance over the past decades (Tussie 2018; Dingwerth et al. 2020).

Methods and Material

In contrast to the previous chapter, which is primarily based on GGIs' annual reports, this chapter draws on diverse empirical sources. Investigating normative justifications in terms of both legitimation and delegitimation calls for the study of statements, speeches, Twitter data, and different kinds of policy documents produced by GGIs and by other (de)legitimation agents, such as member states, the media, nongovernmental organizations, and social movements (Dingwerth 2019; Stephen 2019). The selection of our empirical material is guided by the time frames under consideration. Twitter did not exist in the second half of the 1990s but has become an important part of the public communication practices of GGIs and others that may act as agents of (de)legitimation (Bjola and Zaiotti 2021; also see Chapter 9). We have conducted a limited set of interviews with WHO staff and experts and participated in the WTO Public Forum in 2018 in order to facilitate the contextualization of our findings.

We trace issue-specific justificatory norms related to the WHO and the WTO using both deductive and inductive methods. To identify normative justifications used by the GGIs in the 1990s, we have used annual reports, partially building on the dataset presented in Chapter 6 that covers purpose, democratic norms, and technocratic norms, in addition to policy-related material and secondary sources. In the case of the WHO's annual reports, norms related to fairness were also identified. Annual reports are particularly useful in studying justifications as they often serve as important self-legitimation platforms. In line with Chapter 6, we conducted content analyses of the introductory parts of the reports. In order to identify justifications used to delegitimize the WTO, we coded statements by

member states and observers delivered at the 1999 Seattle Ministerial Meeting, and the websites of nongovernmental organizations singled out by the WTO itself as typifying civil society challenges to its legitimacy. In the case of the WHO, we have not identified and coded similar delegitimation statements, as the delegitimation was part of a long multifaceted process extending beyond the confines of the World Health Assembly. It was not a prominent issue in the media, either (Sommerer et al. 2022). Instead, we have relied on secondary sources that summarize the main sentiments at the time.

Capturing the contemporary era—in addition to speeches and newswires—Twitter data have been analyzed inductively to capture a broad range of normative justifications issued by our two GGIs and other agents. Whereas much of the academic literature focuses on (de)legitimation by states and nongovernmental organizations (e.g., Dingwerth 2019; Stephen 2019), Twitter additionally captures the statements through which the legitimacy beliefs of citizens are expressed. In our material, in regard to the WTO, more than two thirds of the tweet authors were citizens, and in the case of the WHO, more than half of the authors in 2019 were citizens (see Chapters 3 and 9). The WTO uses Twitter frequently through one official account, whereas the WHO also issues tweets through the accounts of regional and national offices.

We used the web intelligence platform [WebLyzard \(2021\)](#) to collect all tweets in English on the WHO and the WTO during 2019 and 2020 (see Chapters 1, 3, and 9). Our analysis of justifications draws on a random sample of 400 legitimacy-related tweets connected to the WTO and the WHO for the years 2019 and 2020 (see Chapter 9).¹ These tweets were coded as positive in tone (legitimation) or negative in tone (delegitimation), and the justifications given for positive and negative assessments of legitimacy were noted. As broader categories, we first coded the institutional features as procedures (i.e., input) or performance (i.e., output) highlighted in the tweets. Each tweet was then assigned specific norms such as democratic procedures, expertise, competence, performance, procedural, and distributional (un)fairness. We acknowledge that normative justifications can be implicit and therefore very difficult to study empirically. Examples of implicit normative justifications can be assumptions in tweets and other statements that are embedded in the broader normative environment (cf. Bernstein 2018: 196). For example, we interpreted retweets of recommendations, health information, trade statistics, and rulings produced by the organizations as conveying trust in the expertise of the two GGIs. In sum, our approach is interpretative and explorative and does not claim to offer a complete picture of normative justifications related to the WHO and the WTO.

¹ In line with the ethical guidelines of the Association of Internet Research (<https://aoir.org/ethics/>), in our analysis we exclusively refer to and provide the links to tweets that are public, those issued by organizations, politicians, philanthropists, and celebrities.

The 1990s: The End of the Cold War and the Dominance of (Neo)Liberal Norms

Our material shows that in the mid to late 1990s, both the WHO and the WTO were evaluated within a context of neoliberalism and norms related to market effectiveness, and in a context of tensions between countries from the South and major Western powers. In the case of the WHO, this implied delegitimation by member states and a shift towards market-based solutions. Justifications shifted from an emphasis on health expertise and aiding the vulnerable, to technocratic norms more explicitly related to procedure and how to efficiently achieve the purpose of the organization. In the case of the WTO, self-legitimation hinged on its purpose and performance, while democratic norms were employed to justify its institutional procedures. In contrast to the WHO, norms related to fairness concerned the WTO's partiality and the unequal distribution of benefits were voiced by member states, plus a wide range of other delegitimation agents, including through mass protests.

WHO

The 1990s was a decade of great change because of the end of the Cold War, and the revitalization of multilateralism and international cooperation. It was also a decade characterized by economic globalization and the dominance of neoliberal policies, which were also supported by the UN (Chorev 2013; Cueto et al. 2019: 1; Benatar et al. 2020). In the field of health, this implied health sector reforms advocated by the World Bank and major donor countries emphasizing cost-effective solutions and with a focus on vertical programs fighting infectious diseases through vaccines and other treatments rather than pursuing a broader health-for-all approach. Public-private partnership mushroomed in parallel with the influence of philanthropic foundations (Lee 2004). The establishment of competing private and public organizations was facilitated by discontent among the increasing number of WHO member states and other actors that had emerged since the end of the 1980s. The 1990s has been described as one of the most difficult periods in the WHO's history characterized by poor leadership, competing organizations, and serious budgetary constraints undermining the authority of the organization (Walt 1993; Cueto et al. 2019). A complicating factor was that the purpose of the WHO contains two perspectives, one socio-medical perspective and one technocratic, biomedical perspective, existing in parallel and communicated to different audiences (Cueto et al. 2019: 2). The internal discontent of the US and other powerful Western member states and disagreements over the handling of the HIV/AIDS epidemic is an example of this tension, which eventually contributed "to a sense that WHO was not equipped to lead the fight against such a 'modern'

disease with its need for a complex multifaceted response [...]” (Lidén 2014: 142). Zürn (2018: 172) argues that the creation of the UNAIDS² was a prime example of counter-institutionalization, which implies serious delegitimation of a GGI through the creation of new organizations with similar tasks, thereby undermining its authority. In addition, other GGIs, such as the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the World Bank, had already initiated their own programs on HIV/AIDS, effectively competing with the WHO (Cueto et al. 2019: 217).

The annual WHO World health reports during the time frame from 1995 to 2000 provide some interesting insights into self-legitimation. In general, all the reports suggest that the WHO could help identify problems, progress, and solutions to health challenges with an emphasis on helping the poor and vulnerable. We interpret this as an implicit indication of “expertise” guided by the WHO’s mandate and normative framework. Expertise is commonly part of a process of knowledge construction and also an outcome/performance, as in supplying knowledge. This is also a reflection of the social purpose of the WHO. According to its constitution, the WHO is tasked with providing leadership in global health and supporting its member states to attain the highest possible level of health and well-being of their citizens. In order to achieve the goals of the organization, the WHO provides technical support and proposes agreements, regulations, policies, and recommendations with respect to international health matters. Its activities also cover research, the promotion of teaching and training standards, and information to the public. However, what is interesting is the change in 1999. The first four annual reports have a stronger emphasis on values such as fairness and solidarity, even if fairness remains a value invoked with little evidence that the WHO has contributed to delivering fair outcomes. It is reiterated that it is important that “everyone has an equal chance of good health” (WHO 1995: v), that “it is about people, particularly those whose plight is most desperate, and whose needs are greatest” (WHO 1995: vi), to show “global solidarity” (WHO 1996: vi), to acknowledge differences in the ability to address ill-health (WHO 1997), and a need to “build a new international partnership for health, based on social justice, equity and solidarity” (WHO 1998: vi). Also, the first four annual reports make few explicit references to the purpose of the organization compared to the 1999 report, which makes several, for example, to its role as a leader and a provider of advice (WHO 1999: xvi–xvii). Another notable shift is an increasing number of justifications referring to procedure and performance in the latter two reports at the same time as there are fewer references to problems and solutions (WHO 1999; WHO 2000). These differences can largely be explained by a change of leadership. The

² The UNAIDS was established by a resolution of the UN Economic and Social Council. The WHO was one of the initial co-sponsors together with the UNDP, UNICEF, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the World Bank.

first four annual reports under scrutiny were produced under the leadership of Director-General Hiroshi Nakajima (1988–1998), and the subsequent two under Director-General Gro Harlem Brundtland (1999–2003). To meet the persistent critique under Nakajima, Brundtland proposed a corporate strategy that would make the WHO more focused, effective, impact oriented, and innovative, and she argued for the need for partnerships with the private sector and civil society (WHO 1999: x–xi; Hanrieder 2015). Brundtland strived to put health at the center of high-level debates about globalization and development through a strategy that focused on fewer issues and health as “good economics” (Lee 2004), more in line with the current neoliberal norms favored by new donors and major Western member states. Nakajima was primarily supported by countries from the South, which had grown substantially in number since the inception of the organization. The 1999 report also contains the first (and only) reference to the legitimacy crisis during the previous years: “[i]n many countries, national governments have tended to look to other agencies for advice” (WHO 1999: xiv). Brundtland promised reforms but also called for reasonable expectations (WHO 1999: xi), underlining the challenges of restoring confidence in the WHO (cf. Hanrieder 2015). Democratic norms related to either procedure or performance were not deployed in any of the reports, with one exception in the 1999 report.

WTO

While the WHO (founded in 1948) persevered over the years, GATT (founded in 1947) was incorporated into and superseded by the WTO in 1995. The WTO’s goal is to further the free trade regime. To achieve this, the WTO facilitates multi-lateral trade negotiations among its member states, provides mechanisms for the resolution of trade conflicts, and oversees how its members implement trade policies through periodic reviews. Particularly in its early years, the WTO appeared to reflect the principles and distribution of power of the world order in which it was established, as Western powers continued to frame the WTO’s rules to suit their own needs (Stephen 2019). The protest in Geneva in 1998 followed by the Battle of Seattle voiced discontent with the procedures and free trade agenda pursued by the WTO. In Geneva and Seattle, labor unions, Third World solidarity organizations, and environmental organizations delegitimated the WTO as a symbol of neoliberal capitalism (Strange 2013). While more radical protesters wanted the WTO to be disbanded, a broad democratic yardstick came to define how the WTO was evaluated by civil society protesters and member states (Dingwerth 2019: 85). According to Bernstein (2018: 196), the legitimacy crisis that struck the WTO in the late 1990s was the result of a mismatch between the WTO’s practices and its legitimacy claims, and the broader normative expectations around GGIs in the 1990s. The WTO’s self-perception as a largely legal, rule-based organization did

not match the normative expectations around democratic procedures and fairness, as perceived by member states and affected publics. The WTO also had more power than its predecessor, GATT, understood as the recognized capacity to make and enforce legal instruments internationally, which could be felt domestically. With the establishment of a dispute settlement body in 1995, the WTO has often been recognized as one of the most legalized international organizations in the world. This stands in contrast to the WHO. Even if the WHO could adopt conventions or agreements with respect to any matter within the WHO's competence, the use of non-binding instruments (soft law) and voluntary commitments are commonplace (Ooms and Hammonds 2016).

The annual reports and statements we have studied provide more specific insights into the justifications used in the legitimation and delegitimation of the WTO from 1995 to 2000. In the first five years since its establishment, the WTO legitimated itself by articulating a social purpose centered on growth, development, and stability for the global trading system through multilateral rules (WTO 1996a, 1996b, 1998, 2000). This social purpose was widely shared among elites: "all the leaders present saw the multilateral trading system as indispensable to growth and stability in our interdependent world" (WTO 1998: 3). However, during this five-year period, much of the WTO's self-legitimation was based on technocratic norms that showed the effectiveness of a rule-based system seeking to push for trade liberalization. The WTO's effectiveness is demonstrated in commitments by developing and developed countries alike to trade liberalization dubbed as a "revolution" in global trade policy (WTO 1997: 3), the expansion of multilateral rules, and the effectiveness of the dispute settlement machinery (WTO 1996b, 1997, 1998: 4). At the Seattle Ministerial Meeting in 1999, developing countries unanimously reaffirmed their commitment to the WTO but also insisted that the WTO should be made to work for them through the continuous improvement of its procedures and performance. Critiques of unequal participation and unfairness were articulated in statements such as "developing countries have not been able to participate and benefit equally from the rule-based system of the WTO" (WTO Nigeria 1999: 2), and "the WTO must not be an instrument in the hands of the more powerful by which they impose their own law" (WTO Mali 1999: 2). Although at times the claims of developing countries and civil society protesters overlapped, protesters also denounced the WTO's partiality, which favored corporate interests, and the incompatibility between free trade and sustainable and equitable development, particularly in poorer countries (Global Exchange 1999).

Democratic norms were seldom deployed in the WTO's self-legitimation, but they clearly began to gain more traction from 1998. In the 1998 annual report, the WTO highlights a number of measures to improve the participation of developing countries in the WTO and intensified dialogues with civil society. This was also the year in which the WTO's Director-General announced a package of measures

“to improve WTO transparency and openness” (WTO 1998: 3). In Seattle, democratic norms were voiced in demands for the equal participation of developing countries together with demands for transparency and engagement with civil society. For example, inside the ministerial meeting, member states claimed that “By making the WTO more open to civil society and making its procedures more transparent, all the parties concerned can together lay down the bases of more equitable and more human trade” (WTO Tunisia 1999: 2) and “we must ensure that the WTO becomes an organization where the world’s citizens feel at home” (WTO Canada 1999: 2) while outside, in the streets of Seattle, protesters accused the WTO of being secretive and non-democratic (Global Exchange 1999). The rise of democratic norms in the WTO’s self-legitimation culminated in 2000, when it started to actively deploy the term *democratic legitimacy* in its annual report: “One positive story from Seattle that passed largely unnoticed was the first ever meeting of parliamentarians from various WTO members, convened on that occasion by Senator Roth, the Chairman of the US Senate Finance Committee. These links are important not only in securing support for the WTO’s work, but also for demonstrating *the truth* that the WTO is firmly based in democratic legitimacy” (WTO 2000: 8, emphasis added).

Comparison

The (de)legitimation of the WHO and the WTO took place within a context of neoliberalism and norms related to the effectiveness of the market and the increase of private actors in governance arrangements. A growing membership of countries from the South challenged the dominance of Western powers in both organizations (Walt 1993; Strange 2013). In the case of the WHO, this implied delegitimation by dissatisfied member states, which started to engage with what they perceived as more efficient organizations in the same policy field. In order to restore legitimacy and better comply with current norms, the WHO shifted towards market-based solutions and a marketing strategy that clarified the purpose of the organization. Justifications thus shifted from the identification of health problems and solutions, with an emphasis on health expertise and fairness, to technocratic norms more explicitly related to efficient and effective achievement of the GGI purpose. In the case of the WTO, the late 1990s were also marked by justifications based on the purpose of the organization, but at the same time democratic norms served to question existing institutional procedures while norms related to fairness put a spotlight on the WTO’s partiality and unequal distribution of the benefits of free trade. Whereas the WHO was primarily delegitimated by member states, the WTO was critiqued by member states and a wide range of delegitimation agents including labor unions, Third World solidarity organizations, and environmental organizations.

The Present Time: the COVID-19 Pandemic and Mounting Nationalism

Today, we note, again, both similarities and differences across policy fields. Our analysis shows that in addition to increasing nationalist tendencies, the legitimation and delegitimation dynamics have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, but clearly more so for the WHO than the WTO. Our Twitter material shows that in the case of the WHO prior to the pandemic, an overwhelming number of tweets supported the WHO's performance. In 2020 the result was more or less an equal split between procedural and performance-related justifications, and between support and criticism, commonly related to the US decision to halt funding and then leave the WHO. Similarly, the 2019 tweets signaled generally favorable legitimacy beliefs towards the WTO related to the performance of the institution, while in 2020 the number of negative statements towards the WTO increased in conjunction with the US election. The most common WTO justification for both years was economic performance as in the economic benefits and costs of trading under WTO rules. However, in contrast to 2019, the second most important institutional referent of legitimation and delegitimation statements relates to procedural fairness, as in the impartial treatment of all member states.

WHO

As mentioned in the introduction, during the President Trump era, both the WHO and the WTO shared the fate of being threatened by US exit. Despite the delegitimation attempts by President Trump and his supporters, several studies show a high level of confidence in the WHO among many professional groups (Interview, former senior official, WHO, May 10, 2019; Bexell et al. 2020; [Dellmuth et al. 2022](#)). Like former Director-General Gro Harlem Brundtland, the current Director-General, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, has attempted to put health on the global agenda through high-level meetings and corporate strategies to strengthen the legitimacy of the WHO. Several of our interviewees also underline the convening power of the WHO, and the fact that many academics and experts actively support the organization through pro bono work (Interview, unit leader, WHO, Nov. 21, 2017; Interview, health expert, May 13, 2019; cf. [Lidén 2014](#): 143). Its overall purpose to improve health and well-being has not been the main object of delegitimation over the years. However, how to achieve this goal, and what health issues to prioritize, have been a source of continuous contestation and subsequent legitimation ([Jönsson 2014](#); [Cueto et al. 2019](#)) that draw primarily on justifications related to expertise but also to problem-solving capacity. This can, to some extent, be explained by a mismatch between expectations and what the WHO actually can achieve considering its mandate and resources—including a decentralized

organizational structure and donors' influence over the budget due to the high proportion of voluntary and earmarked contributions (Interview, communication officer, WHO, Dec. 12, 2017; cf. [Beigbeder 2018](#): 172). Yet, the technocratic norms that underpin the expert role of the WHO are strong and leave the organization with few competitors of equal status, especially considering the renewed interest in universal health care and resilient public health systems ([Benatar et al. 2020](#)). Our interviewees confirm that the most important legitimation justifications concern expertise and the provision of evidence-based information and research, norms and standards of technical support and advice (often the messages from the WHO are very technical), but also to promote humanitarianism and the right to health and well-being for all (Interview, strategic desk officer, WHO, Nov. 10, 2017; Interview, technical officer, WHO, Nov. 21, 2017; Interview, technical officer, WHO, Dec. 8, 2017).

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the WHO to unprecedented attention. Besides featuring in the media (see [Sommerer et al. 2022](#)), our Twitter data show a much higher number of tweets on the WHO in 2020 compared to 2019—also in relation to the WTO, which was the target of many more tweets than the WHO in 2019. Yet, compared to the WTO, the WHO still has more tweet authors other than citizens, such as experts, academics, civil society organizations, etc. (see Chapter 9). Interestingly, our Twitter data on the WHO from 2019 contain very few delegitimation statements. Instead, the majority of the tweets convey trust in the expertise of the WHO through retweeting recommendations and health information produced by the organization (cf. [Dingwerth et al. 2020](#): 721). This should be compared to 2020, when the number of negative statements rose significantly constituting slightly more than half of all the tweets we assessed. Many tweets concern President Trump's discontent with the WHO. President Trump announced the freezing of WHO funding on April 14, 2020 and, not long after, on May 29, he declared that the US was terminating its relationship with the WHO ([Chorev 2020](#): 378). He justified the decisions by accusing the WHO of incompetence and partiality with China. For example, one of President Trump's administrative accounts tweeted: "We are terminating our relationship with the World Health Organization, which acts at the behest of China" (The White House 45 Archived 2020).

Despite delegitimation attempts by President Trump and his followers, the WHO has also received solid support during the pandemic using justifications found in retweeted messages such as this one from Bill [Gates \(2020\)](#): "Halting funding for the World Health Organization during a world health crisis is as dangerous as it sounds. Their work is slowing the spread of COVID-19 and if that work is stopped no other organization can replace them. The world needs @WHO now more than ever." In addition to several government protests against the US' decision, more than 1000 organizations and individuals worldwide wrote to the White House stating: "WHO is the only organization with the technical

capacity and global mandate to support the public health response of all countries during this critical time” (Atwood 2020). Notably, after the 2020 election, the new administration with President Joe Biden withdrew the WHO exit application during Biden’s first day in office proclaiming overwhelming support for the organization. Looking at the norms that underpin the justifications, expertise is by far the most common for both 2019 and 2020. In second place comes effectiveness, that is, technocratic norms are the most prevalent norms. Impartiality, independence, and self-determination also occur.

WTO

During the President Trump administration, the US abandoned its commitment to multilateralism and a rules-based trading system (Hopewell 2020). Unilateralism and protectionism have been reflected in the crisis of the WTO’s Appellate Body as a result of the US’ refusal to appoint new members. Other member states such as Brazil, South Africa, India, and China have critiqued the selectivity and bias of the WTO’s trade rules (Stephen 2019). This is part and parcel of North-South confrontations over the extent of liberalization and sector-specific conflicts that have paralyzed the WTO’s core negotiating function since 2008 (Hopewell 2020: 8).

Similar to the case of the WHO, many of the WTO related tweets include references to President Trump and China. Also, “a no deal Brexit” is prominent, and more marginally the appointment of a new Director-General. In 2019, within a structural context of rising nationalism and the UK’s exit from the EU, tweets generally signaled favorable legitimacy beliefs toward the WTO. Positive sentiments toward the WTO were mostly expressed in relation to a Brexit trade deal with the EU, with messages suggesting that leaving on WTO terms is the only “true Brexit,” “the best way to leave,” or “what people voted for,” whereas negative sentiments often highlighted the escalating costs that leaving on WTO terms would entail. In the same year, albeit to a smaller extent, the legitimation contest around the WTO also took place between President Trump supporters and opponents. Unlike Brexiters’ univocal support for the WTO, President Trump supporters expressed negative sentiments toward the WTO in relation to China’s developing country status within the organization, and positive sentiments whenever the WTO ruled in favor of the US, as in the case of the victory of a dispute over EU subsidies to Airbus.

In 2020, however, the number of negative statements toward the WTO increased, which can be partly explained by the US election and President Trump supporters echoing his anti-WTO and anti-China stance. A popular tweet attributed to a speech by President Trump (2020) reads: “The WTO, as far as I am concerned, was created to suck money and jobs out of the US to the benefit

of China and other countries.” Several tweets went a step further, blaming the democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden and former president Bill Clinton for supporting China’s accession to the WTO. One of the most radical tweets, attributed to American conservative activist and talk show host Charlie Kirk, urged American voters to defund some major GGIs including the WHO and WTO. Throughout the year, positive sentiments towards the WTO continued to be expressed by Brexiteers but also by supporters of the candidacy of Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala for the position of WTO Director-General. In our small sample of tweets, only five expressed positive and negative sentiments in relation to the WTO’s handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. The *Business Standard* (2020) legitimated the GGI when reporting that: “Member nations of the WTO have eliminated custom duties on over 84 per cent of medical products for 2020.” Moreover, the *WTO* (2020) published a self-legitimation statement indicating positive action and concern for the impact of the pandemic on developing countries: “Today, WTO members agreed to develop an addendum to the Aid for Trade work programme to reflect the impact of the #COVID19 pandemic on the trade-related needs of developing countries.” Negative sentiments were expressed in tweets pointing to “wealthy countries” blocking a COVID-19 drugs rights waiver and South Africa and India pushing for a COVID-19 patent ban.

In terms of the normative justifications used for positive and negative tones of tweets, in 2019, the main institutional referent invoked in the tweets pertains to the performance of the institution. A closer look at the tweets suggests that the WTO is normatively evaluated in terms of economic performance, or the perceived economic benefits and costs it brings. The same norm also continues to be widely employed in legitimation statements in 2020. However, in contrast to the previous year, the WTO is also evaluated in terms of its procedural fairness, or the fair and impartial treatment of all of its members, and the competence of its leaders and bureaucrats. Throughout the year, President Trump and his supporters were particularly vocal in pointing to the WTO’s discrimination in favor of China. Second, the leadership vacuum that emerged after former Director-General Roberto Alzavedo’s early departure ignited an intense debate on the qualities and competence of prospective Director-Generals. In both years, the majority of tweets originate from the Anglo-American world, from Brexit supporters, Remain supporters, Scottish independence supporters, President Trump supporters, and Democrats, but this may not be entirely surprising considering that we only analyzed tweets in English.

Interestingly, while the tweets of 2020 contained very little about the COVID-19 pandemic, WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, also a former chair of GAVI, The Vaccine Alliance, focused much of her time as a new director in 2021 on addressing the uneven access to COVID-19 vaccines, including in her tweets. “It’s time for @wto members to sit down together and draft a pragmatic approach to vaccine equity—including resolution of the TRIPS waiver request,

coupled with incentives to protect research and innovation” (Okonjo-Iweala 2021). This can be viewed as an example of how negative spill-overs in one policy field may shape justifications in another (Faude and Große-Kreul 2020; cf. McInnes et al. 2020). The WTO needed to justify its regulations of intellectual property rights against the backdrop of public health concerns. COVID-19 has been called the “inequality virus” as it affects the most vulnerable the hardest, and the WHO has repeatedly urged for effective and fair use of COVID-19 vaccines. The uneven access to COVID-19 vaccines globally coined the term “vaccine nationalism,” and critical campaigns against the WTO’s actions in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic by 200 civil society organizations is one example of delegitimation (Public Citizen 2021). In response, the WTO tweeted “WHO-WTO dialogue steps up efforts for increased COVID-19 vaccine production and equitable access” (WTO 2021). Celebrities such as Lady Gaga and climate activist Greta Thunberg have acted as agents of legitimation by raising money for the WHO and the purchase of COVID-19 vaccines (WHO 2020; WHO 2021). These are other examples of how a policy issue may broadly engage audiences.

Comparison

While the social purpose of the WHO and the WTO has remained unaltered since the second half of the 1990s, the optimism surrounding global governance since the end of the Cold War seems to have waned in current global politics. Democratization processes have turned into a backlash of autocratization, and global liberalization has given way to increasing nationalism. For the WTO, the democratic self-legitimation apparent in the late 1990s neither rose nor stuck to the same levels later on (see Chapter 6; Gill and Cutler 2014; Anderl et al. 2019). The geopolitical landscape has also changed with the rise of new powers, in particular, increasing China’s dominance, and leaders such as former President Trump wanting to show off their power. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the legitimation and delegitimation dynamics quite significantly, leading to an emphasis on normative justifications related to expertise but also to fairness, impartiality, and justice. In the case of the WTO, justifications related to economic performance dominated. However, many of these justifications stemmed from a context of rising nationalism and geopolitical rivalries. This contributed to commonalities between the tweets that targeted the WTO and the WHO, as President Trump and his quest against China clearly colored many of those tweets, effectively questioning the legitimacy of the two organizations. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic is a good example of how an overlapping policy issue can both challenge and strengthen the legitimacy of different GGIs through spill-over effects.

Concluding Discussion

This chapter set out to answer the following questions: What justifications are used to legitimate and delegitimize the WHO and the WTO? What are the main differences and similarities across the two cases? And what explains variations across these cases? The short answer to the first question is predominantly technocratic justifications but also justifications related to fairness. Democratic justifications have been deployed to a much lesser extent than expected considering that democratic legitimation has become increasingly important over the years. Moving to the second question, our findings display a number of significant differences, continuities, and similarities between the cases and the time frames under consideration (see Table 7.1). In the late 1990s, both organizations deployed technocratic norms to self-legitimize. However, for the WHO, self-legitimation was primarily about expertise, whereas for the WTO, technocratic self-legitimation was performance related, showing the resonance of trade liberalization among its member states, even in times of acute economic crises, such as the Asian financial crisis. These differences underscore the normative specificities of the policy fields within which the organizations are embedded.

The late 1990s also display differences in terms of how the two GGIs adapted to the challenges that were shored up by neoliberal globalization. In the case of the WHO, the GGI was primarily delegitimized by a few Western member states that provided major funding to the organization, pointing to its inefficiency and inability to address new and increasingly complex health challenges such as HIV/AIDS.

Table 7.1 Summary of (de)legitimation justifications over time

	WHO 1990s	WTO 1990s	WHO 2020	WTO 2020
Legitimation	Technocratic expertise. Fairness (1995–1998). Purpose and procedure (1999–2000) in response to declining legitimacy.	Economic performance. Democratic procedures after delegitimation (1998–2000).	Technocratic expertise. Fair performance.	Economic performance. Competence of leaders. Fair adjudication.
Delegitimation	Inefficiency. Incompetence of leadership. Lack of capacity in a changing world.	Democratic procedures. Partiality of procedures. Unfair performance.	Partiality. Inefficiency.	Economic performance. Partiality of procedures.

In contrast, the WTO was faced by delegitimation that criticized its undemocratic procedures and distributional unfairness, especially from the vantage point of developing countries and civil society protesters. Two decades later, in an era marked by nationalism, intersecting crises, and China-US competition for global hegemony, the two organizations continue to be legitimated and delegitimated by the same technocratic standards used in the 1990s, along with an even more pronounced emphasis on procedural and distributional fairness. In both cases, the legitimation contest on Twitter was propelled by President Trump's threats to withdraw from both organizations, which he accused of favoring China at the expense of American interests.

Overall, we find support for our theoretical expectation that policy field and structural context matter for variation in normative justifications. At the same time our analysis underlines that institutional structure, including legal instruments and funding mechanisms, color justifications. The fields of health and trade have their own characteristics related to a GGI's purpose, such as providing expert advice on how to improve health and providing a negotiation platform and legal framework to secure and advance free trade, which serve as point of departure for legitimation and delegitimation justifications. For example, the many voluntary agreements in the case of the WHO invite in a focus on technocratic norms related to expertise, while the legalized WTO leads to a focus on norms related to fairness as in (im)partiality. The societal context at the time clearly provides the norms against which GGIs are evaluated, albeit with different consequences for GGIs in different policy fields. The WHO faced extreme delegitimation attempts during our selected time frames, but while the organization had difficulties restoring its legitimacy in the 1990s in spite of reforms ([Hanrieder 2015](#)), today, the WHO scores high on legitimacy beliefs compared to other large GGIs ([Dellmuth et al. 2022](#))—at least before the COVID-19 outbreak. In an age of (new) global pandemics, the manifest expert role of the WHO leaves the organization with few competitors. The WTO was created at the height of neoliberal globalization but failed to live up to expectations of fairness and democratic procedures. Today, the WTO is not challenged on grounds of democracy but on grounds of fairness in a context of increasing nationalism, paralyzing the organization. Even so, studies show that the WTO also scores relatively high on legitimacy beliefs ([Dellmuth et al. 2022](#)). The fact that both GGIs fare well in terms of legitimacy beliefs, despite severe delegitimation attempts, indicates that neither of these organizations face any critical legitimacy threats.

Moreover, the chapter illustrates the interplay between delegitimation and legitimation. In the 1990s, the WTO responded to demands for more democratic practices, while the WHO engaged in reforms in line with prevalent economic thinking. In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, President Trump's attack on the WHO led to legitimation of the organization by a range of agents. This is in line

with Chapters 5 and 11, both of which show how legitimation and delegitimation tend to counterbalance each other. The chapter also shows that behavioral practices are underpinned by discursive practices, as in withdrawing GGI funding, and that normative resonance matters for which audiences are activated (as in tweets). This points to the links between practices, justifications, and audiences. Our analysis also shows that normative justifications in one policy field have spill-over effects on justifications in other policy fields through overlapping policy issues, such as the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic (Faude and Große-Kreul 2020; Trommer 2021).

We finish with a caveat; our material has its limitations. While the 1990s is well researched and we were able to corroborate our analysis of annual reports and delegitimation by member states and civil society protesters with published scholarship, recent trends in legitimation and delegitimation in global health and trade governance have not been extensively documented. Hence, this is an important area for future research. As Sommerer et al. (2022) point out, the legitimacy crisis of the WTO in the late 1990s and the WHO in 2020 are quite exceptional compared with other GGIs, at least as reflected in media coverage. For example, the fact that the US and other member states have withheld funding to the WHO several times over the years is not captured in our analysis (Chorev 2013). Thus, studies covering longer time frames would create a more nuanced picture. Another aspect that deserves more attention is the fact that the vast majority of the tweet authors and re-tweeters were citizens and not “elites” representing GGIs or other organizations. This testifies to the reach of social media and the impact that powerful agents of (de)legitimation like President Trump may have, if only for a short period of time and with justifications that resonate with a specific audience. This finding should be contrasted by research using other types of material, capturing the resonance of normative justifications between other agents and audiences of legitimation and delegitimation.

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Justifying Delegitimation

African Critiques of Global Governance Institutions

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This chapter examines the justifications that are employed in attempts to delegitimize global governance institutions (GGIs), with a specific regional focus on the normative justifications used by African states and civil society organizations (CSOs) as agents of delegitimation. It compares the justifications to delegitimize the African Union (AU), the International Criminal Court (ICC), and the Kimberley Process (KP). These are three GGIs with different institutional set-ups—the AU is a regional international organization, the ICC an international court, and the KP a hybrid transnational arrangement primarily steered by member states—and situated in the policy field of security, broadly understood. At the same time, all three GGIs have also received considerable criticism from African states and CSOs in recent years, making them particularly suitable candidates for a comparative analysis of justifications of delegitimation practices. The chapter asks: How have African state and civil society actors challenged the legitimacy of GGIs with different institutional set-ups?

In this volume, this chapter focuses on the justifications used to delegitimize GGIs. It therefore expands on our previous overview of normative justifications employed by GGIs to self-legitimize (Chapter 6), and the preceding chapter on the justificatory discourses that underpin legitimation and delegitimation practices in global health and trade governance (Chapter 7). Furthermore, while research on legitimacy in global governance has tended to focus on the European Union (EU) and prominent, established global international organizations—such as the United Nations (UN) and the World Trade Organization (WTO)—this chapter speaks to a growing literature on the legitimacy and legitimation of regional organizations beyond Europe (Zaum 2013; Witt 2019; Lenz et al. 2020; Schimmelfennig et al. 2020). However, rather than just concentrating on regional organizations (such as the AU), the chapter also zooms in on regional dynamics that shape justifications of delegitimation in two global but completely different GGIs, namely, the ICC and the KP. While doing so, the chapter specifically concentrates on the justifications used by African states and civil society actors when challenging these GGIs.

There are two main reasons that motivate such a focus. First, it allows us to examine regional dynamics within delegitimation practices and their justifications, and how non-Western, African agency is enacted through them (Brown 2012; Lee 2013). After all, non-Western states have been key architects of regional and international organizations—including our three cases—and contestation by such states has been crucial in shaping major GGIs, as well as the broader normative environment in which they are embedded (from a historical perspective, e.g., Ravndal 2020). Furthermore, both regional organizations and regional groups have been found to play a prominent role in the (de)legitimation practices of other (global and regional) GGIs (Brown 2012). The chapter therefore analyses instances in which delegitimation practices are driven by African states and CSOs across different types of GGIs and examines the normative justifications that such practices draw on.

Second, the chapter's focus on delegitimation justifications of African states and civil society actors resonates with a call for Global International Relations and the suggestion to examine the role of regions as part of core International Relations concerns in particular (Acharya 2014; Hurrell 2016). Specifically, in this chapter, we attempt to provide a preliminary response to Mumford's (2020: 1) recent call to "take seriously the lived experiences and agencies of the peoples that actually shape their regions," including in research on legitimacy in global governance. We furthermore seek to inquire further into, and engage with, Hurd's (2019) critique of the "folk theory" of legitimacy research that assumes that delegitimation can and should be averted by increased (self-)legitimation, and his suggestion to instead approach legitimacy from the perspective of those who might disagree with the existing distribution of authority and power in global governance—including as a result of colonial legacies.

The remainder of this chapter proceeds in three steps. We begin with a discussion of the theoretical expectations that inform our analysis. Building on the institutionalist and structuralist literature on legitimacy and delegitimation in global governance, we develop two contrasting expectations: the first expectation suggests that the substantive content of delegitimation varies depending on a GGI's institutional set-up, whereas the alternative expectation suggests that the justifications that underpin delegitimation are primarily marked by struggles over hierarchies—among states and social groups—which, in the context of our three cases, are shaped by a legacy of colonialism. We then proceed with a discussion on case selection and material. In the third step, we examine the normative justifications underlying delegitimation practices that challenge the AU, the ICC, and the KP in turn. Our analysis finds that institutional expectations are supported in the cases of the ICC and the KP, where, despite differences in the agents of delegitimation, critique is largely based on unfairness. Surprisingly, the case of the AU lends least support to institutional expectations, as delegitimation by states is mostly based on technocratic criteria, while democratic critiques by CSOs are

marginal. We find support for structuralist expectations across the three cases, but also important synergies between institutionalist and structuralist expectations, particularly in the cases of the ICC and the KP.

Theoretical Expectations on the Normative Basis of Delegitimation

To inquire into how the legitimacy of the AU, the ICC, and the KP is challenged by African states and CSOs, we concentrate on the normative content upon which such criticism is based. Specifically, for the purposes of this chapter, we contrast two competing theoretical expectations outlined in the theory chapter (Chapter 2) that are particularly applicable to our cases: varying institutional set-up and a shared history of colonialism resulting in continuing power hierarchies. Indirectly, a focus on the normative justifications used in delegitimation shines a light on those who voice such critique, that is, agents of delegitimation. Previous research has often tended to focus on states and international organizations as agents of (de)legitimation (Chapter 2). In this chapter, we specifically take a regional focus, as we concentrate on diverse groupings of African states and CSOs as distinct and often vocal agents of delegitimation in and of GGIs (Brown 2012). Moreover, we focus on how delegitimation may be enacted “internally” by constituent member states and CSOs with varying levels of access to these GGIs.

To begin with, we expect the justifications for delegitimation practices to differ across institutional set-ups (see also Chapters 2 and 5). Scholte and Tallberg (2018: 66–68) propose that one key theoretical expectation relates to the characteristics of the authority of the governing body in question. They develop expectations that distinguish between GGIs with different levels of authority, issue orientation, functional orientation, and constitutional form. In their view, multipurpose GGIs that address a wide range of societal problems and draw on a sense of regional community are most likely to be judged based on democratic criteria (Scholte and Tallberg 2018: 67). As a treaty-based, regional multipurpose GGI guided by a general vision of integration, prosperity, and peace, one may conclude that the AU will be judged according to such criteria (see also Witt 2019; Schimmelfennig et al. 2020). As a judicial institution, the ICC, in turn, is expected to receive scrutiny on procedural aspects, including its ability to be impartial, fair, and make decisions based on legal expertise rather than political considerations and self-interest (e.g., Alter 2008; Langvatn and Squatrito 2017; Scholte and Tallberg 2018: 67). Finally, task-specific institutions that focus on discrete societal problems are most likely to be assessed according to technocratic and fairness standards (Scholte and Tallberg 2018: 67). This expectation is particularly relevant for the KP as a GGI with a narrow policy scope that specifically aims to regulate the trade in conflict diamonds. However, as a hybrid institution, the quality of its democratic procedures

may also feature as part of the repertoire of justifications used in delegitimation practices (Scholte and Tallberg 2018: 68).

As an alternative structural expectation, the normative basis of justifications for delegitimation practices may reflect a shared history and enduring legacy of colonialism and is therefore more likely to be driven by concerns over the dominance of hegemonic states and the distributional outcomes of global and regional policy-making. Specifically, it has been argued that in the contemporary world order, actors in the Global South are likely to ascribe greater value to concerns surrounding equity and fairness (Helleiner 2014; Fehl and Freistein 2020), challenging hegemonic institutions from within rather than exiting them or challenging them from without in a potentially more fundamental way (Golub 2013). Existing literature also suggests that when engaging in global governance, African states have made claims and supported practices based on a collectivist worldview with its roots in a relational—as opposed to a unitary—understanding of the person (Odoom and Andrews 2017). Collectivism, in turn, has fostered preferences toward consensual decision-making and group thinking, and helped generate a Pan-African solidarity norm. Consequently, an alternative expectation would be that the critique voiced by African states within all three GGIs examined in this chapter gives prominence to equity, fairness, and (regional) solidarity. Similarly, critiques concerning the structural inequalities that GGIs may reproduce also emanate from CSOs (Scholte 2018: 96). However, unlike the critiques mounted by African states, we expect CSOs to delegitimize GGIs in relation to their performance vis-à-vis structurally disadvantaged groups that CSOs seek to represent.

In sum, our expectation is that the normative basis of the delegitimation of these three GGIs varies depending on their institutional set-ups. These justifications of delegitimation practices, however, operate within a broader structure of global governance shaped by the material and epistemic legacy of colonialism. Thus, we alternatively consider the expectation that the normative basis of delegitimation is similar across our three cases due to a shared position of structural inequality within the global order.

Case Selection and Material

This chapter examines the normative justifications used by African states and CSOs to delegitimize three GGIs with fundamentally different institutional set-ups, but which have received considerable critique from African states and CSOs. The AU is an intergovernmental regional organization dominated by state actors, and containing an intergovernmental decision-making apparatus supported by a secretariat. While the AU was created in 2002, it draws on a longer institutional history as the successor of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The ICC,

in comparison, is an international court with global membership, which started its work in 2002 when the Rome Statute of the ICC entered into force. The KP, also created in 2002 and which entered into force in 2003, is a certification scheme for the trade of diamonds. It is state driven, even though the diamond industry and CSOs act as official observers and actively contribute to its governance and development.¹ While all three GGIs therefore differ regarding their institutional set-up, they share two characteristics that are crucial to this chapter. All three GGIs are exclusively constituted by, or comprise, a significant number of African member states. Equally importantly, they have received considerable critique from African states and CSOs between 2015 and 2020, the time frame for our analysis. Consequently, all three cases are “contested institutions,” with African states and CSOs having clearly articulated what they deem problematic about the GGI (Peters 2013: 14).

The OAU/AU has historically faced relatively limited critique from African member states and civil society because it was seen as the manifestation of Pan-Africanism and African unity (cf. Chapter 4). Whereas external critics have often accused the OAU/AU of being a “Club of Dictators” or of underperforming, African-based critique, due to the importance of Pan-Africanism, has centered on specific leaders or reform programs rather than the social purpose of the organization as a whole. Such a picture changed significantly from the mid-2010s, as African actors began to critique the general direction and performance of the institution, as well as its official image as a people-oriented organization. The ICC, in turn, is arguably the GGI among our three cases that has received the strongest opposition from African states. Such critique has revolved around claims of bias against Africans, and the accusation that the ICC Prosecutor unfairly focused on African situations. Such critique peaked in 2016, when Burundi, South Africa, and Gambia announced their decision to withdraw from the court. Whereas South Africa and Gambia later reversed their decision, Burundi has since left the court. Finally, in the case of the KP, a slightly different picture emerges, as the critique that has been voiced has most notably emanated from CSOs rather than African states. Around a decade after the KP’s inception, delegitimation occurred when the KP Civil Society Coalition boycotted the 2011 KP plenary meeting, which was followed by the departure of a founding nongovernmental organization, Global Witness, from the KP (Global Witness 2011). In 2016, the coalition boycotted the plenary meeting in opposition to the chairmanship of the United Arab Emirates, and a second founding nongovernmental organization, the Canadian Impact (formerly Partnership Africa Canada), also permanently left the KP in 2017 (IMPACT 2017). Since then, the strongest opposition to the KP has been led by the KP Civil Society Coalition, with all but one of the CSOs belonging to this group being African.

¹ Other observers include the Diamond Development Initiative and the African Diamond Producers Association.

For each of the three institutions, we analyzed the legitimation and delegitimation statements by African states and CSOs between 2015 and 2020, using our theoretical expectations as a starting point for our coding. However, we added to these codes inductively to capture statements that seemed to deviate from these expectations. Regarding the AU, an important caveat applies, as the material is somewhat restricted. Once Agenda 2063 had been adopted in 2015, African state actors have voiced most of their critique behind closed doors in inter-state meetings. Civil society actors are often excluded from AU frameworks, and frequently harassed by authoritarian governments. In fact, officially criticizing authoritarian leaders may even be a dangerous activity for civil society actors. Thus, as opposed to justificatory statements of legitimation, material on delegitimation by civil society actors is limited. The analysis of the AU draws on statements and official reports by member states and civil society actors, news and media sources, a limited set of semi-structured interviews, and extensive secondary literature. For the ICC, we conducted a qualitative analysis of 102 statements by African member states and CSOs that were delivered at the general debate of the annual Assembly of States Parties between 2014 and 2020.² While this analysis only captures statements by African member states, alongside a relatively small number of African CSOs, these statements are crucial, as they were used by withdrawing member states to justify their decisions. This analysis is supplemented by extensive secondary literature, including on critiques voiced by both African member and non-member states at UN General Assembly debates (Boehme 2018). Finally, since the KP does not commonly record or make public the proceedings of its plenary meetings, the data used regarding the KP comprise statements made by African states at the UN General Assembly (particularly between 2015 and 2020), reports and speeches made available on the websites of the KP Civil Society Coalition³ and its members, news items sourced from AllAfrica.com, and extensive secondary literature. In brief, while the material we use differs across our cases, it enables us to capture the key normative justifications used to delegitimize the three GGIs and probe our theoretical expectations.

Justifying Delegitimation

AU

In line with our institutional expectation, we would expect delegitimation to be primarily based on democratic norms. However, for state actors, there is rather low support for this expectation during the time frame under investigation. Since

² As deposited online at: <https://asp.icc-cpi.int/sessions> (accessed April 19, 2022).

³ The website of the KP Civil Society Coalition is available at: <https://www.kpcivilsociety.org/>

the adoption of the AU's Agenda 2063, the most important normative critique by African state actors is based on criteria related to performance. A particularly pronounced example is a widely discussed report—*The Imperative to Strengthen Our Union*—delivered by Rwandan President, Paul Kagame, to the AU Assembly in January 2017. In a key section of this report, Kagame (2017: 7–8) states:

The Assembly has adopted more than 1,500 resolutions... By consistently failing to follow up on the implementation of the decisions we have made, the signal has been sent that they don't matter. As a result, we have a dysfunctional organisation in which member states see limited value, global partners find little credibility, and our citizens have no trust.

The Kagame report effectively challenges the AU's existing mode of operation, outlining a “counter-vision” built on performance, effectiveness, and prudent financial management. To deliver on its goals, the AU has to be made “fit for purpose” (Kagame 2017: 4). This type of delegitimation diverges from the democratic and community-based critique that we would expect for regional, multipurpose GGIs. Instead, the strong focus on performance, delivery, and technocratic efficiency corresponds to the type of delegitimation that we would expect for executive and task-specific institutions.

Although some African leaders, particularly from Southern Africa, were critical of the emphasis on performance and technocratic efficiency, the fit for purpose approach gradually gained support from a considerable number of AU member states, leading representatives of the AU Commission, as well as key African-based institutions, such as the African Development Bank and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (Turianskyi and Gruzd 2019; Interview, advisory committee member, AU Institutional Reforms Unit, October 25, 2018).⁴ In spite of Kagame's sharp criticism of the AU, he was elected by the AU Assembly as the AU Chairperson for 2018. He was also appointed to lead the AU's institutional reforms process, which has emerged as the AU's main trademark alongside Agenda 2063. Apart from a somewhat marginal discussion about the AU's decision-making procedures, critique by state actors was rarely based on democratic justifications (Amani 2017; Turianskyi and Gruzd 2019).

In contrast to the delegitimation justifications by African states, the normative critique voiced by civil society actors is more in line with the theoretical expectations related to institutional set-up, which emphasize democratic criteria as particularly important. Although some African civil society actors have delegitimated the AU based on performance, highlighting in particular its poor

⁴ For instance, whereas the Communiqué of the 37th Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Summit (2017) raised an important critique against the fit for purpose approach, it was officially endorsed by the next SADC Summit in 2018.

record of compliance and implementation (Ojigbo 2016), the most profound critique by civil society actors has been geared toward the AU's failure to follow through on the promise of adopting people-centered norms and the involvement of non-state actors (Witt 2019; Interview, Regional Director, International IDEA, May 9, 2017).

Civil society actors base their critique on three main foundations (also cf. Chapter 4). The first type of critique emphasizes that the AU merely serves African heads of state as it allows them to self-legitimate—mainly among their peers—for a preferred form of state-led, often authoritarian, and intergovernmental political order (Finizio 2018: 313; Turianskyi 2019). Second, a range of civil society actors criticize what they conceive as attempts by the AU and African leaders to co-opt CSOs and make them loyal agents of legitimation, which serves the dual purpose of fostering support and preventing critique (Finizio 2018: 314–15; Turianskyi and Gruzd 2019; Gelot and Söderbaum 2021). Third, a wide-ranging critique is that the AU has designed a range of measures that effectively prevent civil society actors from participating within the AU framework (Finizio 2018: 314–16; Turianskyi and Gruzd 2019: 11–12). African states frequently delegitimize their own CSOs by fiercely criticizing them for serving foreign interests. A range of civil society actors respond by protesting against the AU through meetings, conferences, and alternative platforms outside the AU structure (Chawapiwa 2015; Gelot and Söderbaum 2021). Overall, however, the relative weakness of civil society in Africa implies that the delegitimation of the AU according to democratic norms remains quite limited (Amani 2017: 8).

While a rich literature supports the notion that structural factors are essential in justifying the legitimation of the AU, our analysis shows that these factors also account for delegitimation by states, as well as civil society actors. While pushing for a reform agenda, Kagame and his fellow African leaders justified their critique based on two types of perceived structural asymmetries: the unequal relationship between the AU and “international development partners,” on the one hand, and the unequal relationship between AU member states, on the other. Regarding the first asymmetry, the AU's dependence on donor funding is well known: the donors are responsible for around 75% of the AU's operating budget, and more than 90% of its program budget (Kagame 2017: 24; also see Engel 2020). Kagame and his followers fiercely objected to these imbalances, claiming that the overreliance on donor funding reinforces external control over the AU at the expense of African ownership (Kagame 2017: 24–26). Subsequently, this type of critique against donor influence has become widely accepted among African member states.

Regarding the second asymmetry, the critique emphasizes the lack of equitable burden-sharing of the financial contributions of AU member states (AU 2020: 4). As far as specifically African financial contributions are concerned, in 2015 only a handful of countries (e.g., Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria, and South Africa) collectively contributed 65%, while nearly half of all African member states contributed very

little or nothing at all (Engel 2020: 22–23). The call for a revised financing formula was justified based on fairness and Pan-African solidarity (Kagame 2017: 24–25; Turianskyi and Gruzd 2019: 13–15; Interview, advisory committee member, AU Institutional Reforms Unit, October 25, 2018). For example, the Institutional Reforms Unit even publicly disclosed the payment records of different member states to reveal the asymmetries (Turianskyi 2019). However, changing the financing model on the grounds of fairness and solidarity has proved to be more difficult. Several African states criticized the new financing formula on similar grounds, namely, for damaging Pan-African solidarity, for not being fair, or for undermining the AU’s Constitutive Act (Turianskyi and Gruzd 2019: 16–17). Thus, what constitutes Pan-African ideals and values remains contested among African states.

There is also some support for the structuralist explanation among civil society actors. Large parts of civil society regard the AU as the rightful representative of its people and as the appropriate governance mechanism for the African continent in an unequal world shaped by neocolonial legacies (Akokpari et al. 2008; Witt 2019). Clearly, a range of pro-AU CSOs and diaspora actors give their support and engage with the AU because it is considered the institutional foundation of Pan-African unity. However, some civil society actors and intellectuals delegitimize the AU on the basis that African leaders have betrayed Pan-African ideals and are out of touch with the Pan-Africanist movement (Gelot and Söderbaum 2021). For example, as stated in the flagship publication of Fahamu, a Pan-African network for social justice, the Kagame-led reform agenda represents a “denial of Pan-Africanism” (Makori 2017). Similarly, former South African president Thabo Mbeki fiercely contests the institutional reform of the AU due to its ideological irreconcilability with Pan-African values (Mbeki 2018). In fact, it is common for CSOs that criticize the AU for being elitist, state-centric, and exclusionary against civil society actors to also criticize the AU and its member states for failing to live up to Pan-African ideals and values (Turianskyi and Gruzd 2019: 11–12; cf. Finizio 2018). Hence, as far as these CSOs are concerned, institutionalist and structuralist accounts support each other.

In sum, regarding the institutionalist expectation, the most important delegitimation by states is based on performance, delivery, and technocratic efficiency along the lines that can be expected in task-specific institutions rather than regional, multipurpose GGIs. In contrast, the most profound critique by civil society actors has been geared towards democratic norms and the AU’s failure to open up, which is in line with theoretical expectations according to the institutionalist set-up. Our analysis also provides support for the structuralist theoretical expectation. As far as states are concerned, Kagame and his followers criticized the excessive foreign influence and urgently called on African states to take back control from foreign actors by increasing the relative amount of African funding. A more equitable burden sharing among African states is part of the same type of

critique. With regard to civil society actors, critically-oriented CSOs justify much of their critique on the grounds that their leaders and the AU are elitist and out of touch with Pan-Africanist ideals and values and, in these cases, the institutionalist and structuralist expectations are mutually supportive.

ICC

Unlike the AU as a regional organization, the ICC is an international court with global, albeit not universal, membership. With thirty-three member states, African States Parties form the largest regional group, and at times deliver joint statements at the annual Assembly of States Parties. Historically, they have been strong supporters of the court (e.g., [Jalloh 2009](#): 446–7; [Gissel 2018](#): 727), a point that member states frequently emphasize at the Assembly of States Parties (e.g., [Ghana 2016](#): 1–2; [South Africa 2016](#): 2; [Kenya 2017](#): 1; [Senegal 2019](#): 2). Investigations into situations in four African states—Uganda (2003), the Democratic Republic of Congo (2004), the Central African Republic (2004 and 2014), and Mali (2012)—followed self-referrals by the respective governments.

However, the strong initial relationship between the court and many African member states has deteriorated in recent years. At an extraordinary summit in 2013, the AU considered the possibility of a collective withdrawal from the court (see also [AU 2017](#)). While not acted upon collectively, in late 2016, Burundi, Gambia, and South Africa decided to leave the court. While Gambia and South Africa later reversed their decisions to withdraw following the Gambian election and a South African High Court judgment, respectively, Burundi left the court in 2017. Such a strained relationship had followed repeated critiques of a focus on Africa, as until 2016, all open court investigations were into situations within the continent. Another main point of contention was the immunity of heads of non-member states from investigations following a referral from the UN Security Council, which came to the fore in the context of the ICC's 2009/10 arrest warrants for Sudan's then-President al-Bashir ([Mills 2012](#)). ICC investigations in Libya and Kenya, which included indictments against Kenya's current President, Uhuru Kenyatta, and Deputy President, William Ruto, led to further tensions (see e.g., [Kendall 2014](#)).

While our structural expectation suggests that delegitimation would draw on fairness, equity, and regional collectivism, our institutional expectation indicated delegitimation, based on the court's promise to remain independent from politics and base its decisions on legal expertise. Different from the AU as discussed above, in the case of the ICC, institutional and structural expectations partially overlap, as they share a focus on fairness. However, a critique that challenges the ICC based on its institutional set-up is arguably narrower and concentrates on the lack of living up to the legal standards of the court, such as judicial independence and

legal expertise. Nevertheless, concerns around impartiality, that is, treating like cases alike without discrimination, may relate to both broader fairness concerns and a key legal standard of judicial institutions.

Among African states, the most forceful critique of the court concerns questions of impartiality, equity, and fairness (Vilmer 2016; see also Gissel 2018: 728). In its initial decision to withdraw from the court, South Africa explicitly cited “perceptions of inequality and unfairness in the practice of the ICC that do not only emanate from the Court’s relationship with the Security Council, but also by the perceived focus of the ICC on African states, notwithstanding clear evidence of violations by others” (Depositary Notification: 1–2). Even within the diplomatic, and thus more muted, context of the Assembly of States Parties, several African member states referred to this critique and urged the court to address it. For example, speaking on behalf of the African States Parties, Lesotho (2014a: 4) emphasized “the need for international justice to be conducted in a transparent and fair manner, in order to avoid any perception of double standards” (also e.g., Sierra Leone 2014: 3; Ethiopia 2015: 3–4). At the Assembly of States Parties, such critique is typically expressed alongside legitimation statements, even in the speeches of highly critical states. For example, while voicing critique of the court, Kenya (2015: 1, 2016: 5, 2017: 1, 2018: 2) nevertheless repeatedly referred to the “noble objectives” of the court, and thus its purpose. Furthermore, fairness-related criticisms overlap with a critique of another GGI, namely, the UN Security Council and its handling of referrals to the court (e.g., Tanzania 2014: 3). Similarly, in her analysis of critique of the ICC voiced by states at the UN General Assembly, Boehme (2018: 433) found that almost a fifth of such critiques were directed at the UN Security Council and not the court itself. When African states raised objections against the involvement of the UN Security Council during the Rome Statute negotiations, they were also linked to concerns about inequality between members and non-members of the UN Security Council (Gissel 2018: 742–3; see also AU 2017 paras. 3–4).

Regarding our institutional expectation, challenges to the court’s independence from politics and its legal expertise overlap with broader questions of fairness and equity. As Gissel (2018: 737–8) showed, the ICC’s independence was one of the concerns regarded as particularly important by African states at its inception (again, partially concerning the UN Security Council). This concern continued to be voiced at the Assembly of States Parties, as African state representatives called for the court’s independence to be assured, without, however, necessarily accusing the court of failing to be independent (e.g., Ghana 2014: 2; Lesotho 2014b: 4; but for a more direct critique, see e.g., Burundi 2015: 3). Moreover, there are several persisting legal debates, particularly surrounding the immunity of heads of non-member states, who may be investigated by the court following a UN Security Council referral. At least at first sight, such debates can be linked to questions about legal expertise, and disagreements on the ICC’s interpretation of the

applicable law could be understood as a challenge to its legal expertise. However, it might be better to understand these debates as genuine legal disagreements, rather than attempts to question the court's right to rule (see also [Madsen et al. 2018: 202–3](#)). Indeed, this legal question has also resulted in considerable academic debate (e.g., [Akande 2004](#); relatedly [Plessis et al. 2011](#)). [Beresford and Wand \(2020: 547–548\)](#) argued that South Africa's diverging legal interpretations played a significant role in its decision not to extradite al-Bashir (see also [South Africa 2016: 2](#)). As [Malawi's \(2014: 2\)](#) representative put it, questions surrounding immunity of heads of states can be best understood as “intrinsic legal issues [that are not yet] properly resolved.”

Beyond our institutional and structural expectations, questions of fairness, impartiality, independence, and legal expertise were not the only concerns raised by African states. Noteworthy are performance-related criticisms that ICC investigations and its pursuit of retributive justice may undermine ongoing peace processes. Such concerns were voiced by South Africa regarding the execution of the arrest warrant for al-Bashir ([South Africa 2016: 3, 2017: 3–4](#); see also [Beresford and Wand 2020](#)). A similar critique was strongly expressed by [Kenya \(2014: 5\)](#) in the context of ICC investigations into the 2007 post-election violence.

Beyond state actors, civil society, including African civil society, has generally played a strong role at the ICC since its inception (e.g., [Glasius 2006](#); [Jalloh 2009: 450–1](#)). CSOs have even assumed crucial responsibilities for the court, including evidence gathering, providing information about the court, and organizing side events at the Assembly of States Parties (e.g., [De Silva 2017](#)). The Hague-based Coalition for the ICC—an umbrella organization for around 2500 CSOs globally with the goal to support the court—has played a key role, to the extent that it is even in charge of accreditation at the Assembly of States Parties for CSOs without Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOC) Special Consultative Status, an arrangement that has been criticized by African CSOs ([Lohne 2017: 466](#)). While the number of CSOs that deliver statements at the Assembly of State Parties is limited, among those African CSOs that do, many are domestic CSOs that mirror the Coalition for the ICC's mission (e.g., [Lohne 2017: 458](#)). These statements by African CSOs are typically supportive of the court, and at times even directly respond to, and defend, the court from critique voiced by governments (e.g., [KPTJ 2014: 1–2](#)). When African CSOs do voice criticism at the Assembly of States Parties, and unlike our expectations, they referred to the length of the proceedings ([ICICC 2016: 1](#); [CIVICC 2017: 3](#); [NCICC 2018: 1](#); [ANICJ 2019: 2](#); [ANICJ 2020: 2](#)) and, partially as a result, the insufficient impact on victims ([KPTJ 2014: 2](#); [ICICC 2016: 1](#); [CIVICC 2017: 3](#); [LFJL 2019: 2](#)). Due to the limited number of (African) CSO statements, however, Assembly of States Parties general debate contributions can only provide a partial picture, at best.

In sum, in the case of the ICC, our institutional and structural expectations overlap, particularly regarding the fairness, equity, and impartiality concerns that

were prominently raised by African states. Like the case of the AU, however, delegitimation justifications by African states differed markedly from the critique voiced by African CSOs at the Assembly of State Parties. The AU also played a prominent role in the criticism voiced against the court. Consequently, the ICC case study underlines the added benefit of using a regional lens to examine (de)legitimation practices and their justifications.

KP

Supported by a landmark UN General Assembly resolution (A/RES/55/56), the KP was established to eliminate conflict diamonds, which had fueled deadly and protracted wars in countries such as Angola, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). This voluntary agreement is far reaching as it regulates around 99% of the global trade in rough diamonds. But what is often considered unique about the KP is its tripartite structure, which brings together states and, in the capacity of observers, the diamond industry and civil society. Under the KP, states undertake to trade in diamonds only with each other and commit to minimum standards for the trade and the certification of rough diamonds enacted through national legislation. States also commit to “cooperation, transparency, and monitoring processes” among each other (Kantz 2011: 303). The diamond industry is represented by the World Diamond Council and strengthens the process through a voluntary System of Warranties that encourages companies to declare finished diamonds to be conflict free (Winetroub 2013). Civil society is represented by a Civil Society Coalition formed in 2007. CSOs have played a key role in the establishment of the scheme (Smillie 2014) and, once integrated in the KP governance structure, they have played the triple role of legitimation agent, development expert, and watchdog of both states and the diamond industry (Bieri 2010).

Out of the fifty-five states and the European Union that participate in the KP, twenty-one are African states. South Africa, Botswana, and Namibia played a significant role in initiating the negotiations that led to the establishment of the KP. South Africa took on the chairmanship of the negotiations that led to the establishment of the scheme between 2000 and 2002 and has consistently been a key supporter of the institution. In a study of UN General Assembly debates on the KP, particularly between 2000 and 2003, South Africa was found to be most vocal in its support of the KP tripartite structure, the degree of national discretion left to participants in the adoption of the KP minimum requirements, and the peer monitoring mechanism (Coni-Zimmer et al. 2019). Beyond the well-documented case of South Africa, UN General Assembly proceedings between 2000 and 2003 also indicate that strong support for the KP was extended by Angola, Botswana, and Egypt, which considered the initiative to be a key contributor to peace, security,

and economic development in Africa. In the time frame considered in this chapter, besides South Africa and Botswana, Angola, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have all issued statements expressing their strong support for the KP. Thus, in contrast to the ICC, African states have been key agents of legitimation of the KP.

In UN General Assembly debates between 2015 and 2020, what African states have primarily underscored is the KP's effectiveness more than its inclusive tripartite structure. Sierra Leone stated that: "For all intents and purposes, the Kimberley process has proved to be an effective mechanism for conflict prevention by reducing the flow of conflict diamonds over the years" (UN General Assembly 2019: 8). Similarly, Botswana praised the KP's effectiveness by pointing to the fact that "[s]ince its establishment, in 2003, conflict diamonds have dropped from 15 per cent to less than 1 per cent as a proportion of the global trade in rough diamonds" (UN General Assembly 2019: 5), further adding that earnings from diamond sales contribute to the implementation of successive national development plans and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, it is also important to note that divisions between African states have emerged during the third KP reform cycle, which started in 2016. At UN General Assembly sessions, South Africa and Botswana, more so than other African states, have in recent years explicitly supported a reform process that addresses the governance and scope of the certification scheme (UN General Assembly 2019: 5; cf. also Coni-Zimmer et al. 2019: 319). In contrast, as documented in a recent Human Rights Watch report (2020), Angola and India—key diamond-producing countries—have resisted changes to the scope of the KP, particularly the widening of the conflict diamond definition. However, given the limited number of publicly available sources documenting the position of African states on KP reform, the statements we studied do not provide a sufficient indication of which states may have acted as agents of legitimation or delegitimation.

A key, and consistently vocal, agent of delegitimation has been the KP Civil Society Coalition. As mentioned earlier, the coalition boycotted the 2011 KP plenary meeting, followed by Global Witness's withdrawal from the KP (Bieri 2010; Winetroub 2013). Criticism was primarily directed at the KP's ability to effectively respond to situations in which diamonds were fueling armed violence and gross human rights violation (Global Witness 2011), as epitomized by the Zimbabwean army killings of informal miners at the Marange mines, and the KP's decision to temporarily sanction Zimbabwe instead of suspending it from the process. In the early 2010s, the target of the coalition's delegitimation was primarily the purpose of the KP (Smillie 2014), and the certification scheme's too narrow definition of conflict diamonds, which defines conflict diamonds exclusively as those used by rebel groups to fund armed opposition to legitimate government, causing the Marange diamonds to fall outside the KP's mandate. At the time, efforts to suspend Zimbabwe and redefine the purpose of the KP to include a human rights clause

were blocked by South Africa, Namibia, and the DRC. The support of African states for Zimbabwe and their reluctance to redefine the meaning of conflict diamonds were driven by a “fear of neo-colonial intent” and were further reinforced by the normative idea of “brotherhood” among African states (Bruffaerts 2015: 1096–1097). Charges of neo-colonial ambitions to delegitimize supporters of Zimbabwe’s suspension were also circulated in the media. For example, in an editorial, members of the KP Civil Society Coalition were described as “non constituent entities smuggled into the KPCS [Kimberley Process Certification Scheme] to vociferously undermine the interests of diamond producing countries for the concomitant benefit of the diamond processing imperial countries” (*The Herald* 2011).

The legitimation and delegitimation contest that took place in the early 2010s shows how African states leveraged structural critiques and regional solidarity to delegitimize Western CSOs, but more importantly acts as an important backdrop to underscore the historical continuities between past and more contemporary efforts by the coalition to delegitimize the KP. During the KP third reform cycle, expanding the scope of the KP continued to be the main point of contention of the KP Civil Society Coalition. Like the democratic critiques voiced by African CSOs against the AU, other criticisms pointed to by the coalition highlighted the democratic deficits of the KP, such as the poor quality of and conflict of interests in review visits, the lack of public disclosure of statistical data beneficial to communities, and the lack of multistakeholder governance at the national level (*KP Civil Society Coalition* 2018). However, the scope of the KP was the first item of the opening and closing plenary speeches delivered by the KP Civil Society Coalition in 2018 and 2019, as well as in press releases published in the same years. Speaking at the KP plenary meeting that concluded the three-year reform process, the coordinator of the coalition spoke of a failure to broaden the scope of the certification scheme to capture contemporary conflict challenges and questioned the KP’s relevance to mining communities and consumers (*KP Civil Society Coalition* 2019).

Coalescing around unfairness toward the communities that the KP should serve and its democratic procedures, the coalition’s critiques are aligned with our institutionalist theoretical expectations, but also extend them in important ways, pointing to how delegitimation may not be exclusively directed at a GGI’s procedures and performance (cf. Scholte and Tallberg 2018) but also its core purpose. As discussed in the case of the ICC, fairness is a normative expectation shared by institutionalist and structuralist accounts, while empirically institutional and structural delegitimation based on unfairness may even overlap. In the case of the KP, the continuum between institutional and structural critique can be grasped by considering more closely the agents, staging, and audience of delegitimation. When acting as a united coalition in the KP’s processes and through the coalition’s website, several critiques are directed at its purpose and institutional qualities; but when delegitimizing the KP through individual communication

channels, members of the coalition have been more severe in their critiques of the GGI, connecting the certification scheme to uneven processes of capital accumulation. A case in point, for example, is a blog published by the Centre for Natural Resource Governance, which still critiques the scope of the KP, but goes a step further by suggesting that this narrow scope hides unequal and unjust processes of primitive accumulation, enriching those “not affected by diamond mining” and impoverishing the “communities that host the diamond reserves” (Mlevu 2019).

In sum, the case of the KP, like the case of the ICC, confirms our institutional expectation, as delegitimation by CSOs targets the purpose of the KP and is based on critiques of unfairness. However, like the case of the AU, a secondary set of delegitimation justifications voiced by CSOs are based on democratic norms. As with the other cases discussed in the chapter, the KP also shows how critiques of institutional features may go hand in hand with structural critiques of the social order and hierarchies that the GGI reproduces.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the normative justifications used by African states and CSOs to delegitimize GGIs. The theoretical points of departure were derived from insights developed from institutionalist and structuralist analyses. Institutional analyses expect variation in justifications of delegitimation directed at GGIs that have different institutional set-ups. Structuralist analyses, in comparison, propose that legitimacy beliefs are shaped by the position of agents of delegitimation in a stratified global order shaped by the legacy of colonialism, suggesting similarity rather than variation across our three cases. Our comparative analysis confirmed that both expectations play an important role, including our structural expectation, which is notoriously difficult to trace in research on legitimacy in global governance (see Scholte 2018). However, it also pointed towards unexpected synergies between both expectations. Regarding the ICC and the KP, delegitimation is primarily based on unfairness, and this unfairness is expressed through both institutional and structural critiques. Where the two cases differ is in the agents of delegitimation, which for the ICC are states, while it is a civil society coalition for the KP. The case of the AU, in turn, provides the least support for our institutionalist expectation. Key state actors have delegitimized the institution primarily based on technocratic efficiency criteria, something we would expect in task-specific institutions instead of an organization such as the AU. Although delegitimation by CSOs is predominantly based on democratic criteria, such critique is marginal because the AU is strongly predisposed toward pro-AU actors and loyal agents of legitimation. There is more support for the structuralist explanation because African state actors seek to disassociate themselves from the financial

clutches of former colonial powers—labeled by the AU as “international development partners”—to assume greater ownership of their organization. Conversely, democratic critiques, often infused with Pan-African ideals, are more prominent among (critical) civil society organizations, findings that are in line with theoretical expectations. Consequently, the cases of the KP and the AU are similar in terms of the democratic critiques voiced by civil society (even if this is not the primary critique in any of these organizations). Perhaps unsurprisingly, these findings imply important differences across different agents of delegitimation, an aspect that, while beyond the scope of this chapter, invites further theorization.

These findings have two main implications. First, our analysis demonstrates the value of using a regional focus when examining (de)legitimation practices and their normative justifications. Spanning across regional organizations and regional groups, we deliberately chose such a regional focus to analyze institutions and actors that, despite rare but important exceptions (Zaum 2013; Witt 2019; Lenz et al. 2020), have commonly not been accorded sustained attention in the predominantly Western International Relations literature on legitimacy in global governance. However, Lenz et al. (2020) found a different set of (communitarian) normative justifications of the legitimation of regional GGIs, which raises the expectation that the same norms may play a more prominent role in their delegitimation. Furthermore, as the case of the ICC demonstrated, regional GGIs (i.e., the AU) might themselves become an important platform for delegitimation practices of another global GGI (i.e., the ICC). Consequently, additional research that employs a regional perspective in the study of (de)legitimation in global governance may generate important findings, including in the context of institutional complexity in global governance (see also Chapter 7; Zelli 2018).

Second, this chapter demonstrates the difficulties of disentangling legitimation and delegitimation practices and their justifications (see Chapter 1 and 2). It emphasizes the methodological and theoretical difficulties of separating legitimation and delegitimation practices, to the extent that we opted to include a discussion of justifications of legitimation practices to provide a comprehensive analysis, despite our focus on delegitimation. This is not to imply that the normative justifications that underpin legitimation and delegitimation always need to be in sync. After all, such a theoretical starting point might obscure the content (and extent of) critique that rejects the normative basis on which GGIs base their right to rule (Hurd 2019). From a normative perspective, it may also underestimate the value of such critique as part of an inclusive process of normative contestation (e.g., Orchard and Wiener 2021: 5–6). Future research could seek to account more explicitly for the ethical dimension of researching the normative justifications of delegitimation, potentially inspired by recent research on norms in International Relations (e.g., Wiener 2018).

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PART IV
AUDIENCES

Audiences of (De)Legitimation in Global Governance

A Comparative Overview

Magdalena Bexell, Farsan Ghassim, and Soetkin Verhaegen

This chapter opens the volume's third theme by exploring patterns related to audiences of legitimation and delegitimation in global governance. The concept of audiences of (de)legitimation is introduced in the theoretical framework of Chapter 2 in which we also clarify that this volume covers two main kinds of impact of (de)legitimation on audiences: the composition of targeted and self-appointed audiences and the effects of (de)legitimation on public legitimacy beliefs. The present chapter and Chapter 10 explore the composition of audiences, before Chapter 11 turns to studying the effects on individuals' legitimacy beliefs. As detailed in Chapter 1, previous research has mainly comprised case studies of individual global governance institutions (GGIs), often with a focus on states and GGI bureaucracies, and has not attempted to capture broader patterns. In contrast, this chapter includes a wide range of GGIs and asks: Who are the audiences of GGI (de)legitimation attempts and which audiences predominate? Advancing knowledge on audiences of (de)legitimation is important as legitimacy in our understanding ultimately resides in beliefs about the qualities of authority. Without legitimacy, governance attempts are either likely to have less impact or to depend on threats and compulsion. In brief, legitimacy is both a source of power and a constraint on power. In our conceptualization, audiences are not fully formed ahead of (de)legitimation processes but are generated in the course of such processes.

In order to advance the study of audiences of GGI (de)legitimation, this chapter differentiates between key categories of such audiences and offers two types of comparative analyses based on new data sources. Unlike previous research in which the main empirical focus has been on self-legitimation, our data allow us to study audiences of legitimation and delegitimation by actors other than the GGI in question. First, we deductively study the composition of targeted audiences by exploring the choices made by different kinds of elites when engaging in GGI legitimation and delegitimation. Due to their power and influence, elites from different

societal sectors are key agents of (de)legitimation of GGIs. Previous research shows that elites affect citizens' legitimacy perceptions by offering cognitive shortcuts that allow citizens to form opinions in effective ways (Schmidtke 2019; Dellmuth and Tallberg 2021). Elites are defined in this study as individuals who hold leading positions in organizations that seek to be politically influential (Tallberg and Verhaegen 2020). We use the LegGov Elite Survey of a broad range of national and global elites, which was conducted between 2017 and 2019 (Verhaegen et al. 2019).¹ The survey asked elites who they target when engaging in practices of legitimation and delegitimation of sixteen different GGIs. We find that the most frequently targeted audience is not a constituency but civil society actors, confirming the importance of this type of audience for legitimation processes. Moreover, we observe a significant association between engaging in behavioral legitimation practices linked to the functioning of GGIs (assisting in policy making and providing funding) and targeting member states and GGI staff. In contrast, engaging in discursive legitimation as well as in delegitimation practices is more strongly associated with targeting the general public and civil society organizations.

While the elite survey data allow us to study patterns regarding the audiences targeted by elite agents of (de)legitimation, it does not cover self-appointed audiences who react to (de)legitimation on their own initiative. In the next part of the chapter, we therefore turn to data collected from Twitter, where such audiences react publicly to (de)legitimation attempts concerning GGIs, capturing the diversity of audiences in such (de)legitimation debates exceptionally well. We inductively study self-appointed audience reactions to (de)legitimation on or by GGIs by analyzing Twitter posts from 2019 for the same sixteen GGIs as for the elite survey. We categorize the identities of self-appointed audiences and how they vary between types of GGIs, across policy fields, and between GGIs with different geographical scopes. Our Twitter analyses reveal three principal findings: First, across GGIs, a relative majority of self-appointed audiences are citizens, followed by unknown authors (potentially including many social bots), and various kinds of elites. This shows that while elites are indeed disproportionately represented audiences in GGI legitimacy debates, citizens comprise a higher proportion of the self-appointed audiences than one may imagine in light of the media's usual focus on tweets by public figures. Second, citizens are a particularly dominant self-appointed audience group in the legitimacy debates on economic/financial GGIs, but less so (proportionally) in the case of sustainable development GGIs. Third, business actors are particularly well-represented among the self-appointed audiences of global and nongovernmental GGIs, but less so among regional and governmental institutions.

The chapter proceeds as follows: The next section elaborates our key conceptual distinction and presents the selection of GGIs. We then explore the composition of the targeted audiences followed by our study of the reactions of self-appointed

¹ The LegGov Elite Survey dataset is available at <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/leggov>.

audiences. The conclusion integrates the results from these two data sources in light of the volume's broader theoretical framework.

Audiences of (De)Legitimation: Targeted and Self-Appointed

We use the concept of *audience* to provide a generic notion to distinguish between receivers and initiators (agents) of legitimation practices (Chapter 2). The audience concept contains the possibility of interaction, in which receivers may not only take note of legitimation efforts, but also respond to them in various ways—like a concert audience, applauding or critiquing the performance of actors (Bexell and Jönsson 2018). In the context of global governance, audiences could publicly express their belief in the (il)legitimacy of a GGI, or they may not show any reaction and just absorb the (de)legitimation efforts of others. Our concepts do not presuppose what kind of actor is an agent or an audience in a concrete (de)legitimation setting.

The chapter's key conceptual distinction for our categorization of audiences is between *targeted* audiences (i.e., those constructed by agents of (de)legitimation) and *self-appointed* audiences (i.e., those who take an interest in (de)legitimation on their own initiative). The notion of targeted - i.e., intended - audiences implies that there may also be unintended audiences who are exposed to legitimation and delegitimation. To stick with the metaphor above, think of people walking by outside the stadium and hearing the concert inside. While many people may hear the music and just walk by, self-appointed audiences constitute a subcategory of such unintended audiences: those who stand outside the stadium, listen to the music, and maybe even applaud. For our purposes it is the central subcategory, as self-appointed audiences publicly communicate their views on GGI legitimacy and may therefore affect processes of legitimation and delegitimation. Our categorization highlights how legitimation and delegitimation processes themselves constitute audiences (Bexell et al. 2021). Actors are turned into audiences either by being targeted by agents of legitimation and delegitimation or by reacting to legitimacy debates on their own initiative. Actors can constitute themselves as self-appointed audiences, even when they are not recognized as an audience by agents of (de)legitimation. Legitimacy crises may activate new audiences and trigger institutional change, depending on which audience is most active in issuing public challenges to the GGI (Sommerer et al. 2022). However, identifying an exact level of activity above which an audience turns into an agent of (de)legitimation is difficult, both conceptually and empirically. In this chapter we use a relational approach to solve this issue, which means that an actor is an audience in relation to legitimation and delegitimation by others.

We expect the composition of targeted and self-appointed audiences to vary across policy field, GGI geographical scope, and type of GGI and have therefore selected a diverse set of sixteen GGIs that constitute a joint sample for both parts of

the chapter.² Having the same sample in both sets of data allows us to align the findings of the two parts of the chapter in order to draw broader conclusions regarding this set of GGIs. The broad policy fields we cover are economic/financial (G20, ICANN, IMF, World Bank, WTO), sustainable development (FSC, UNFCCC, WHO), peace/security (ICC, Kimberley Process, NATO, UNSC), and multi-purpose (ASEAN, AU, EU, UN). Earlier research has shown that the policy field of sustainable development is more influenced by a participatory norm than the fields of economy/finance and security (Dingwerth and Pattberg 2009; Tallberg et al. 2013; Bäckstrand et al. 2017; McInnes 2020). This indicates that legitimation and delegitimation related to GGIs in the fields of environment and health may involve a broader range of audiences than in the fields of economy/finance and security. Regarding geographical scope, we distinguish between regional GGIs (ASEAN, AU, EU, NATO) and global GGIs (the other GGIs in our sample). For differences between regional and global institutions, findings in previous studies point in different directions. While some studies show that non-member audiences have not been important in relation to the ASEAN (Gregoratti and Uhlin 2018: 146–7), debates on an EU democratic deficit have given rise to attempts to broaden the range of actors engaged in EU politics, through both organized civil society participation (Steffek and Nanz 2008) and direct citizen dialogues (Kamlage and Nanz 2017). Finally, in terms of type of GGI, we differentiate between nongovernmental/hybrid GGIs (FSC and ICANN) and governmental GGIs (the other GGIs in our sample). Previous research has highlighted that the autonomy from state authority of nongovernmental GGIs leads to higher legitimacy demands with regard to generating political authority, meaning that nonstate GGIs may require tighter links to their audiences because their legitimacy is less of a given (Bernstein 2014, 2018: 195). However, thus far, no broad empirical comparisons of multiple GGIs have been made in this regard.

Targeted Audiences in Elite (De)Legitimation of GGIs

Theoretical Expectations

The elite survey enables us to develop the study of targeted audiences by differentiating between *constituent* and *non-constituent* audiences. Constituent audiences have institutionalized political bonds to a governing authority, being bound by

² This sample comprises the African Union (AU), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), European Union (EU), Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Group of Twenty (G20), International Criminal Court (ICC), International Monetary Fund (IMF), Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), Kimberley Process (KP), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Security Council (UNSC), United Nations (UN), World Bank, World Health Organization (WHO), and World Trade Organization (WTO).

its rules and being responsible for policy implementation, namely, member states of the GGI and the general public of member states. *Non-constituent audiences* lack such a connection and responsibility (Tallberg and Zürn 2019). This latter category includes civil society organizations, companies, staff of other GGIs, private foundations, non-member states, and other actors who are (believed to be) affected by or take an interest in the GGI. GGI staff are classified as non-constituent because they are employees rather than political subjects of the GGIs. These are arguably key actors in contemporary global governance and below we outline theoretically derived expectations on why they may be targeted. We also consider the possibility that (de)legitimation may be undertaken without a specific audience in mind, instead seeking to reach as broad a range of audiences as possible.

Previous research shows that constituencies are frequently addressed in legitimation and delegitimation. One reason why agents of (de)legitimation choose to target GGI constituencies is that the latter are in charge of decision-making and policy implementation and provide the bulk of GGI funding (Symons 2011; Beetham 2013; Gronau and Schmidtke 2016). However, this neglects a range of actors that exercise influence over global governance in various ways (Scholte 2011). Due to the spread of participatory norms, an increasing number of GGIs has institutionalized channels of access for non-constituent actors, primarily civil society organizations (CSOs), foundations, and businesses (Tallberg et al. 2013). And indeed, with the increasing politicization of GGIs, the role of non-constituencies in legitimation and delegitimation processes has increased (Zürn 2018). Yet, previous research has not examined whether constituencies are the primary target audience in contemporary global governance compared to other kinds of audiences. We therefore study whether constituencies or non-constituent audiences are more frequently addressed by agents of (de)legitimation.

We know from previous studies that one type of non-constituent audience has become very significant for legitimacy dynamics in global governance, namely, civil society actors. CSOs are potential targets of legitimation and delegitimation because they assist GGIs in implementing policies in a more effective way (Tallberg et al. 2013) and/or serve as a transmission belt between citizens and GGIs (Steffek and Nanz 2008: 3), giving voice to previously marginalized groups and making GGIs more accountable (Kalm et al. 2019). On this basis, we expect CSOs to be the most common type of non-constituent targeted audience. We will explore this by using our elite survey data. Our ensuing inductive analysis of Twitter data allows us to find out the extent to which CSOs act as self-appointed audiences, compared to other actors.

Among non-constituent audiences we have also included others who are (believed to be) affected by or take an interest in the GGI. Consultations organized before the adoption of the UN 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals strongly indicate a trend in which citizens across the world are invited

to provide views on their priorities for global goal setting (Sémit 2020). Moreover, large private foundations have become important sources of funding in certain issue domains, primarily in health, as epitomized by the well-known Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (Youde 2017). In addition, individual companies increasingly participate in global public-private partnerships with GGIs, providing resources and influencing priorities (Andonova 2017). For their part, staff of GGIs may be targeted by legitimation and delegitimation due to perceptions of international bureaucratic power being strong in global governance, enabling staff to influence international policies (Liese et al. 2021). Taken together, this leads us to expect that non-constituencies may also be important targets of legitimation and delegitimation. Through our data, we are able to uncover the kind of non-constituent audience that is most frequently targeted.

Data and Method

A key methodological challenge in researching audiences of legitimation is how to establish the intended target audience of (de)legitimation practices, as this is not typically made explicit. Relying on survey interviews with elites enables us to study who elite actors intend to target when trying to (de)legitimate GGIs through various practices. The LegGov Elite Survey, which we conducted between October 2017 and August 2019, is the only data source that offers a large-scale systematic account of the intended recipients of (de)legitimation practices towards GGIs (see also Chapters 1 and 3). The survey gathered elite opinions in Brazil, Germany, the Philippines, South Africa, Russia, and the US, and on the global level, covering a total of 860 elite individuals. Our definition of elites relates to individuals who hold high-level positions in organizations that strive to be politically influential, including political elites (partisan-political and bureaucratic), as well as societal elites in business, the media, research, and civil society. The inclusion of a diverse set of countries means that when data are pooled, the sample reflects a broad set of political contexts.

Our survey respondents were selected through a two-step quota sampling procedure, first selecting relevant organizations and then people in leading functions in those organizations (Hoffmann-Lange 2009).³ The survey data provide unique insights on the audiences that the respondents from different sectors target and how this varies across GGIs. Our survey asked questions about a broad range of attitudes toward and experiences of GGIs. Halfway through the survey, the respondents were offered a list of global and regional governance institutions from

³ Constructed in this targeted rather than random fashion—as it is practically impossible to compile a registry of elites from which to draw a random sample—the conclusions of our study cannot be extrapolated to the entire population of political and societal elites in these countries and on the global level.

which they were asked to select the institution with which they had most regularly interacted during the past 12 months.⁴ Next, the respondents were asked how frequently they engage in different types of (de)legitimation practices, previously described, and how frequently they target various audiences when engaging in these (de)legitimation practices. Hence, each respondent answered the questions on practices and audiences of (de)legitimation with one specific GGI in mind, namely, the one with which they interacted most frequently.⁵ Detailed information on the elite survey and its sampling is available in the LegGov Elite Survey technical report (Verhaegen et al. 2019).

Results: Who Are the Targeted Audiences?

This section maps the elites' selection of targeted audiences for GGI (de)legitimation. We first inquire how frequently different audiences are targeted, pooling elites from all sectors and pooling the GGIs concerned by (de)legitimation practices. As explained above, audiences can be grouped into constituencies and non-constituent audiences. Overall, we find that respondents more commonly targeted non-constituent audiences (96% of respondents at least once targeted one non-constituent audience) than constituent audiences (87% of respondents at least once targeted one constituent audience). Thus, our findings suggest that non-constituent audiences are more important audiences for (de)legitimation in global governance than has been acknowledged in previous research, which has focused on GGI self-legitimation and on states and citizen constituencies as central audiences (Zaum 2013; Ecker-Ehrhardt 2018). Our results demonstrate the importance attached to GGI-related legitimacy beliefs of those actors who are not formally subjected to GGI authority.

We now turn our attention to Figure 9.1, zooming in on specific audiences. For each of the potential audiences, the respondents were asked how frequently they had addressed them during the past 12 months when engaging in various (de)legitimation practices. Figure 9.1 presents the proportion of respondents who targeted each audience with a certain frequency in the past 12 months when engaging in (de)legitimation. It is most common for elites to target the various audiences a few times a year ("less than monthly"). We observe that a large majority of the respondents targeted CSOs. Compared to the other audiences, respondents did so with a relatively high frequency. It is also much more common for respondents to address CSOs (86% ever did this) than to address the general public in member

⁴ The number of observations per GGI in the elite survey data is 187 for the UN, 119 for the EU, 62 for the ASEAN, 46 for the World Bank, 35 for the UNFCCC, 30 for the WHO, 23 for the IMF, 20 for the AU, 17 for NATO, 17 for G20, 15 for the WTO, 13 for the ICC, 9 for the UNSC, 7 for the ICANN, 2 for the FSC, and 1 for the Kimberley Process.

⁵ GGI staff were asked to select another GGI than the one that employed them.

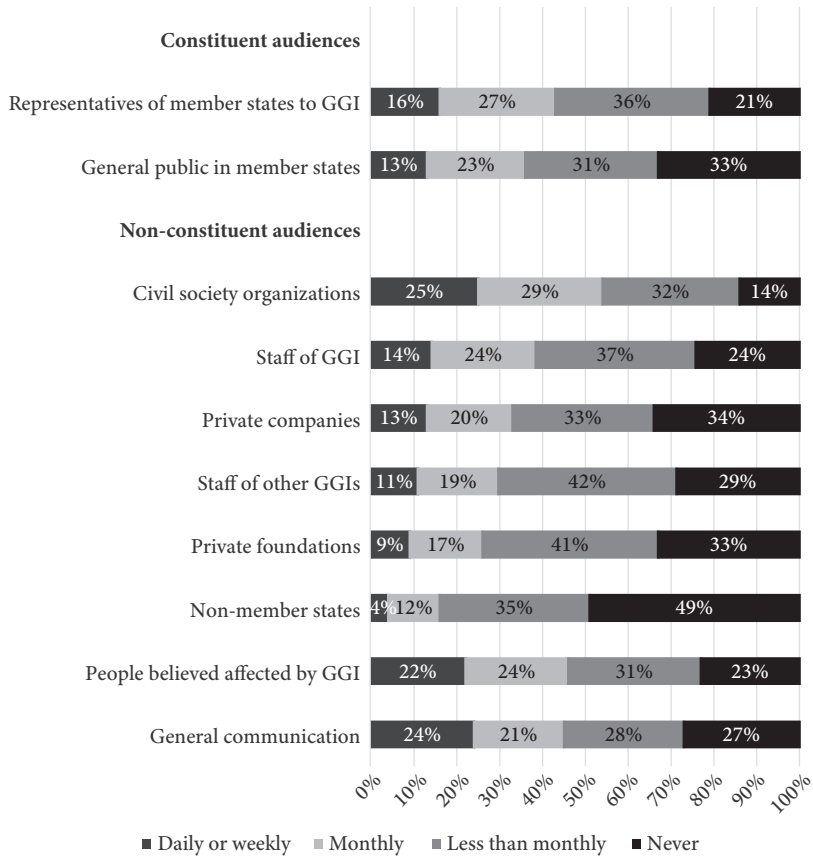


Fig. 9.1 Targeted audiences of (de)legitimation practices, all elites and institutions pooled

Source: LegGov Elite Survey (see note 1).

Note: Numbers indicate the proportion of respondents who targeted an audience with a certain frequency. The GGIs included are: ASEAN, AU, EU, FSC, G20, ICANN, ICC, IMF, Kimberley Process, NATO, UN, UNFCCC, UNSC, WHO, World Bank, WTO.

states (67% ever did this). Furthermore, 77% responded that at some point during the past year they had addressed people believed to be affected by a GGI while 75% of respondents had targeted staff of the GGI at some point. Yet, more respondents targeted affected people with a high frequency than staff of the GGI. For their part, private foundations and companies have been addressed by two thirds of the respondents at least once during the past year. This is less than GGI staff but it still testifies to the importance of the private business sector in contemporary global governance, on the basis of its potential for providing resources and influencing policy choices. In brief, this first analysis provides evidence for the expectation that CSOs are a key audience for (de)legitimation practices, due to

the diverse functions they are expected to fulfill in global governance. It should also be noted that a relatively high percentage of respondents (73%) at times issue general communication on the qualities of GGIs, that is, these respondents do not address a particular target audience but seek to reach out as broadly as possible. A relatively high number of respondents do this on a daily or weekly basis.

The next step of the analysis unpacks the respondents' target audiences of (de)legitimation by GGI. Again, this refers to the GGI chosen as the object of legitimation or delegitimation on the part of the respondent and it does not include self-legitimation. In this step, we have restricted the analysis to the six GGIs that were selected by at least thirty respondents, as this minimum number of observations is required to perform meaningful analyses. Overall, the finding of non-constituencies being more frequently addressed holds across GGIs from different policy fields and geographical scope. Table 9.1 shows that for all GGIs except the EU, non-constituent audiences are more frequently targeted than constituent audiences. Between 91% and 96% of our respondents stated that they had targeted non-constituent audiences when engaging in the (de)legitimation of six major GGIs, whereas the percentage of respondents claiming to have ever targeted constituent audiences in relation to the same GGIs is generally lower (except in the case of the EU - see below). For the UN, World Bank, the WHO,

Table 9.1 Targeted audiences of (de)legitimation practices by institution, all elites pooled

	% ever targeted an audience					
	ASEAN	EU	World Bank	UN	UNFCCC	WHO
Constituencies	83%	95%	84%	81%	88%	82%
Representatives of member states to GGI	80%	94%	64%	72%	79%	71%
General public in member states	67%	68%	59%	67%	74%	71%
Non-constituent audiences	91%	94%	96%	94%	91%	92%
Civil society organizations	89%	86%	71%	88%	85%	81%
Staff of GGI	69%	85%	76%	78%	62%	69%
Private companies	76%	74%	46%	65%	76%	71%
Staff of other GGIs	74%	79%	67%	74%	65%	61%
Private foundations	69%	74%	50%	70%	71%	64%
Non-member states	74%	82%	36%	30%	33%	28%
People believed affected by GGI	83%	79%	62%	76%	82%	79%
General communication	78%	71%	64%	71%	82%	64%

Source: LegGov Elite Survey (see note 1).

Notes: Numbers indicate the proportion of respondents who indicated that they had targeted each audience at least once.

and the ASEAN, we observe that clearly more respondents have ever targeted non-constituent audiences compared to constituencies. This is what we expected regarding (de)legitimation concerning the WHO, as earlier research found that the policy field of health is more influenced by a participatory norm than the field of finance. Moreover, based on previous research, we expected lower importance of non-constituencies in the case of the ASEAN. In particular, in the case of the World Bank, the low number for representatives of member states stands out. For the UNFCCC and EU, the difference between constituent and non-constituent audiences is minimal.

Within those larger categories of audiences, we observe substantial differences. For the two regional GGIs, representatives of member states are clearly more frequently targeted than the general public in such states. Over the past year, 94% of respondents who selected the EU as their primary object of (de)legitimation have targeted representatives of member states, whereas only 68% targeted the general public in EU member states. This hints at elites' priority on targeting other elites, particularly those able to impact decisions made in regional GGIs, rather than addressing the general public in the ASEAN or EU member states. The EU is the only GGI for which the audience targeted by most respondents is representatives of member states. This goes against our expectations and indicates that the legitimacy beliefs of the general public in EU member states are not a key concern of elites, despite—or exemplary of—persistent debates on a democratic deficit in the EU. In contrast, the difference between the two constituency audiences is small for the four global institutions.

With the exception of the EU, we furthermore find in Table 9.1 that a non-constituent audience was the audience most often targeted by the respondents. For the UNFCCC and the WHO, we observe a tendency to more frequently target societal audiences such as civil society and people believed to be affected by these institutions, compared to GGI staff or business actors (foundations and companies). As previously noted, this is most likely due to the policy field characteristics of these two GGIs as the policy fields of environment and health have been shown in earlier research to be strongly influenced by a participatory norm. Differences across categories are relatively small for the EU. As expected, non-member states are more frequently targeted in the case of regional institutions than in the case of global institutions. Nevertheless, the number with regard to addressing non-member states in the case of the UN is surprisingly high as the UN has few non-member states. Respondents who reported on their audiences of (de)legitimation regarding the World Bank targeted most audiences quite infrequently. Compared to respondents who (de)legitimate other GGIs, these respondents clearly targeted private companies and foundations less frequently. In contrast to the other GGIs, staff of the World Bank were more frequently targeted than civil society organizations. This contrasts with the strong focus on civil society in self-legitimation by the World Bank itself (Pallas 2013).

It shows that audiences of self-legitimation cannot be assumed to be identical to audiences of legitimation undertaken by actors other than the GGI in question.

Taken together, we observe that some patterns hold across GGIs. For elites, targeting the legitimacy beliefs of member state representatives or the general public does not stand out as a main priority. Non-constituent audiences are much more important in processes of legitimation and delegitimation than assumed in previous research. Civil society in particular stands out as (among) the most frequently targeted audiences of (de)legitimation practices across GGIs and elite sectors. This testifies to the importance attached by elites to the views of civil society organizations who often hold great normative power and fulfill a broad range of functions in global governance.

Linking Audiences to (De)legitimation Practices

Our survey first asked the respondents about the GGI with which they most frequently interact. They were then asked to indicate—for a variety of (de)legitimation practices—how frequently they engage in them with respect to the selected GGI. Finally, they were asked how frequently they target various audiences when engaging in these (de)legitimation practices. It is important to point out that the respondents were asked about the audiences they target when engaging in these (de)legitimation practices in general and were not asked to list the audiences they target with each single practice.⁶ In this section, we inquire whether elites who more frequently engage in particular practices, systematically target certain audiences more (or less) frequently. On the basis of functional concerns, we expect the two behavioral legitimation practices of assisting in implementation and providing funding to be primarily directed toward member state representatives of the GGI and GGI staff as acts of support (see Chapter 3 for a more elaborate study of patterns of behavioral practices of (de)legitimation). These are mirrored by delegitimizing practices of reducing involvement with the GGI and reducing funding, which we expect to be directed toward the same two audiences. In contrast, the practices of making supportive or critical public communication statements and organizing supportive events or demonstrations against the GGI are likely to target broader audiences. We therefore expect that elites who engage in these practices seek to affect public opinion in the broadest possible way and therefore more often target the public

⁶ This means that we cannot conclude, for instance, that “critical statements are often targeted at people believed to be affected.” We can only state that respondents who more often make such statements, more frequently target people believed to be affected.

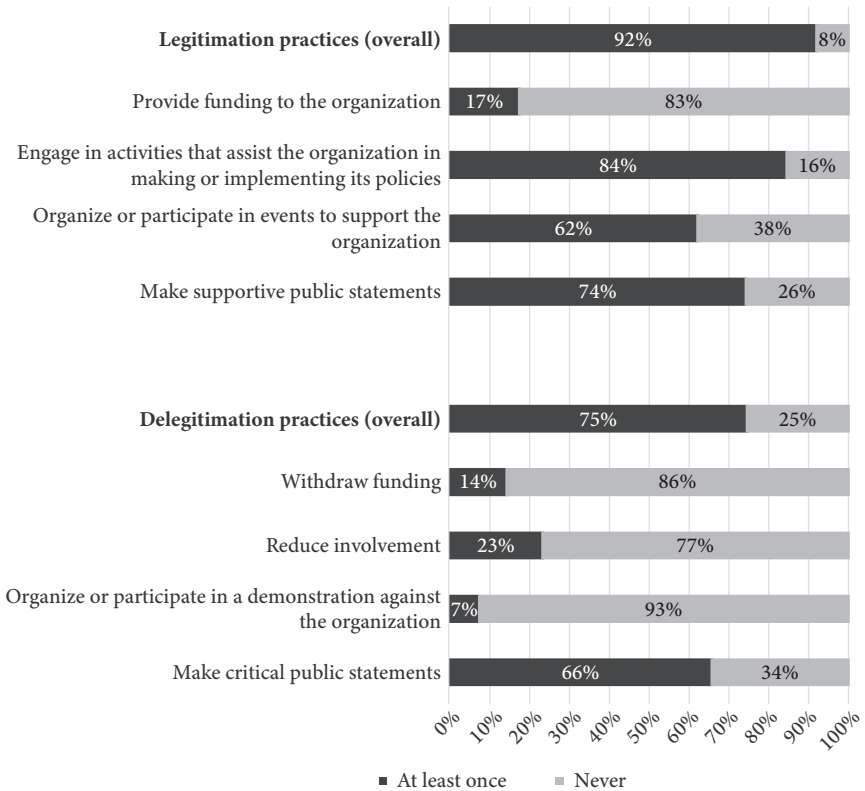


Fig. 9.2 Engagement in (de)legitimation practices

Source: LegGov Elite Survey (see note 1).

in member states, civil society organizations, people believed to be affected by the GGI at hand, and to issue general communication without a specific audience in mind.⁷

Overall, the data in Figure 9.2 show that respondents engage more frequently in legitimation practices than delegitimation practices as 92% engaged at least once in legitimation in the year preceding the survey, and 75% engaged at least once in delegitimation in that period. When inquiring about specific practices, we observe that the surveyed elites much more frequently engage in activities that assist the GGI in making or implementing its policies, make both critical and supportive public statements, and organize or participate in events to support the GGI. They do these more than engaging in (de)legitimation through providing

⁷ The practices as formulated in our survey were: Make critical public statements, reports, tweets, or blogs; make supportive public statements, reports, tweets, or blogs; engage in activities that assist the GGI in making or implementing its policies; reduce involvement with the GGI; evaluate the GGI through rankings, ratings, or certification; organize or participate in demonstrations against the GGI; organize or participate in events to support the GGI; provide funding to the GGI; withdraw funding from the GGI.

or withdrawing funding, reducing their involvement with the GGI, or organizing or participating in demonstrations against the GGI. We also observe that, overall, more discursive than behavioral delegitimation practices are used by the surveyed elites.

Table 9.2 shows that particular audiences are more often targeted by elites who engage in certain practices. As expected, we observe a significant association between engaging in the behavioral *legitimation* practices linked to the functioning of GGIs (assisting in policy-making and providing funding) and targeting member states and staff of the GGI. Organizing or participating in events to support the GGI is most strongly associated with targeting CSOs and member states but not staff of GGIs. Engaging in discursive *legitimation* and *delegitimation* practices (making supportive or critical public statements) is more strongly associated with targeting the general public, people believed to be affected by the GGI, and civil society organizations.

Looking more specifically into delegitimation practices in Table 9.2, we see that the more frequently elites criticize GGIs, the more frequently they address the general public and CSOs. The association between making critical statements and targeting staff of the institution they criticize is very weak. A positive association with targeting certain audiences is also found between organizing or participating in demonstrations against the GGI, and withdrawing funding from the GGI. However, this association is weaker and observed in relation to fewer types of audiences. As demonstrations typically rally the general public and civil society, it is in line with our expectations that these audiences are more frequently targeted by elites who more frequently organize or participate in demonstrations. Finally, we observe that the more respondents have reduced their involvement with a GGI, the less frequently they targeted staff of that GGI with their (de)legitimation practices, which can indeed also be regarded as a way—or consequence—of reducing their involvement with a GGI. We next turn to studying the second main category of audiences in this chapter: self-appointed audiences.

Self-Appointed Audiences: An Inductive Exploration Using Twitter

After deductively studying what we have conceptualized as *targeted* audiences of GGI (de)legitimation, this part of the chapter presents our inductive investigation of *self-appointed* audiences, which we defined as people or organizations that take an interest in a GGI legitimacy discourse even though they are not intended as audiences of (de)legitimation attempts by agents. What kinds of people and/or organizations constitute such self-appointed audiences in GGI legitimacy debates? That is the key research question we explore in this section.

Empirically studying self-appointed audiences is difficult (Bernstein 2018). Part of the problem is that GGI (de)legitimation audiences in general are not

Table 9.2 Bivariate association between the use of (de)legitimation practices and targeted audiences

	Legitimation practices				Delegitimation practices			
	Supportive public communication	Events to support the GGI	Provide funding	Assist GGI policy	Critical public communication	Demonstrations against the GGI	Reduce involvement	Withdraw funding
<i>Constituencies</i>								
Representatives of member states to GGI	0.299***	0.283***	0.175***	0.417***	0.191***	0.005	-0.055	0.083*
General public in member states	0.357***	0.222***	0.095*	0.166***	0.316***	0.091*	0.037	0.074*
<i>Non-constituent audiences</i>								
Civil society organizations	0.354***	0.280***	0.098**	0.311***	0.251***	0.144***	0.046	0.124**
Staff of GGI	0.241***	0.186***	0.160***	0.373***	0.118***	-0.043	-0.085*	0.095*
Private companies	0.238**	0.192***	0.116**	0.274***	0.165***	0.017	0.088*	0.102**
Staff of other GGIs	0.188**	0.155***	0.166***	0.271***	0.113**	-0.002	-0.014	0.070
Private foundations	0.246***	0.227***	0.120**	0.235***	0.196***	0.035	0.062	0.092*
Non-member states	0.219***	0.272***	0.077*	0.209***	0.169***	-0.004	0.015	0.059
People believed affected by GGI	0.345***	0.202***	0.120**	0.2451***	0.269***	0.105**	0.081*	0.074*
General communication	0.288***	0.221***	0.073*	0.175***	0.244***	0.093*	0.087*	0.052

Source: LegGov Elite Survey (see note 1).

Notes: Entries are Kendall's tau-b and significance: ***p<0.001; **p<0.01; *p<0.05. ASEAN, AU, EU, FSC, G20, ICANN, ICC, IMF, Kimberley Process, NATO, UN, UNFCCC, UNSC, WHO, World Bank, WTO. N ranges between 547 and 592.

necessarily publicly known; and this issue would seem to apply *a fortiori* to self-appointed audiences, which are—by definition—not identified by the agent of (de)legitimation. We focus here on self-appointed GGI (de)legitimation audiences who publicly identify as such by reacting to (de)legitimation attempts.⁸ Such audiences are consequential and relevant for our purposes of exploring the (de)legitimation of GGIs because active self-appointed audiences may affect processes of legitimation and delegitimation, thereby ultimately impacting the legitimacy beliefs of other audiences. Having established the importance of examining such self-appointed audiences, we now ask: Who are these self-appointed audiences?

GGI legitimacy is a rather niche area of public discourse: Not every citizen takes an interest. Instead, attention to—and participation in—debates on the legitimacy of GGIs is presumably more heavily concentrated among elites, as indicated by the previous section. These may include partisan-political and bureaucratic elites as well as societal elites in business, media, research, and civil society. However, there are certainly also instances of engagement by the general public. For instance, during events such as the so called Battle of Seattle related to the WTO (Gill 2000), or more recent protests for and against Brexit (Brändle et al. 2018), citizens perceived themselves as relevant audiences and then expressed this position by participating in related protests—thus becoming agents of (de)legitimation themselves (Conway 2016). Moreover, both the line between audiences and agents, and the distinction between citizens and elites can be blurry: Heavily engaged citizens may be defined as activists who, in turn, could be considered a type of elite actor in the context of GGI legitimacy debates, for example, Greta Thunberg in relation to climate change politics.

Data and Methods

In order to explore who the self-appointed audiences of the GGI legitimacy discourse are, we need to focus on a platform on which such audiences react publicly to GGI (de)legitimation attempts. This should also capture the diversity of audiences in the GGI (de)legitimation discourse, including their presumably unequal weights, that is, the assumed bias toward elites rather than “ordinary” citizens. Twitter seems most suitable for this purpose. Theoretically, everyone with an internet connection can access Twitter. However, the platform is not used by the average citizen in the same way as other social media like Facebook and Instagram (Murthy 2013; Burgess and Baym 2020). While the latter are used for digital

⁸ Of course, there may also be *targeted* audiences among those reacting to GGI (de)legitimation. Given that the intended targets of GGI (de)legitimation are seldom revealed, we assumed tweet authors to be self-appointed audiences.

interactions on almost all matters of daily life, Twitter's user base and interactions are more focused on societally and/or politically relevant topics. These emphases on different issues are due to the history and functionality of the different platforms, for example, Instagram with its focus on photos and videos, compared to Twitter with its concentration on very short *texts* (inspired by message size limits on cellphones).

Due to these different emphases, Twitter membership—while theoretically open to anyone with an internet connection—in practice tends to be skewed toward different kinds of elites. As noted above, we define elites as individuals who hold leading positions in organizations that seek to be politically influential. In contrast to other social media platforms, elites with a political purpose are highly engaged on Twitter. Average citizens can also access Twitter, but simply choose to join and use the platform less frequently; consequently, their voices have less impact in debates, for example, due to their lower number of followers. Thus, for the purpose of the present chapter, Twitter is a highly suitable forum to analyze GGI (de)legitimation, including the diversity of self-appointed audiences in GGI legitimacy debates.

We approached the mapping exercise here as follows: First, as mentioned above, we selected a diverse set of sixteen GGIs from different policy fields (i.e., economic, peace and security, sustainable development, and multi-purpose), with different geographical scopes (i.e., regional vs. global), and of different types in terms of membership composition (governmental vs. nongovernmental). Second, we focused on one full year to exclude the effects of seasonal variation. We chose 2019 as it is arguably more representative of the GGI legitimacy discourse in recent times than 2020, in which the COVID-19 pandemic dominated life, news headlines, and social interactions around the world. Third, with the help of the [Weblyzard \(2020\)](#) platform, we scraped tweets in English on Twitter in real time for posts related to the selected GGIs. The posts had to include either the full names or the acronyms of our selected GGIs.⁹ Fourth, for each of our focus GGIs, we drew unweighted random samples of tweets in order to accurately reflect the proportions of self-appointed audiences. Fifth, we reviewed a large number of tweets for each GGI, identifying around one hundred legitimacy-related posts in the debate on each of our target GGIs. We employed a broad conception for deciding which tweets qualified as legitimacy-related due to the very brief nature of these messages, our understanding of how (de)legitimation work in social interactions, and in light of Twitter's impact as compared to other kinds of communication on GGIs (e.g., annual reports, press releases, and opinion pieces). Specifically, a tweet did not necessarily need to contain an explicit normative justification to

⁹ We are well aware that limiting ourselves to tweets in English introduces certain biases into our analysis (for instance, a greater representation of debates in the Anglophone world such as Brexit). Nevertheless, we chose to limit our investigation in this way, given that English is the *de facto* lingua franca (also on Twitter), and for reasons of practicability.

qualify as legitimacy-related. We did not look for predefined search terms but made a qualitative assessment of the overall sentiment of tweets that contained statements on a GGI's procedures, policies, or leaders, in line with our definition of the "object" of (de)legitimation (Chapter 2). For instance, a tweet like "When empty WTO rhetoric actually gets pinned down on a couch ... it ends with the whimper 'I don't know the answer to that.' Everyone should watch this. <https://t.co/8zGQ2LOXqe>" (Galsworthy 2019) was coded as legitimacy-related with a negative sentiment. A tweet like "On #InternationalWomensDay, we salute all women and thank those working to address #climatechange—including in the #UNFCCC process: see this video of #COP24, all about women empowerment!" (UN Climate Change 2019) was coded as legitimacy-related with a positive sentiment. Moreover, due to our inclusive approach, we coded a tweet like "Indonesia supports S Korea-ASEAN cooperation program" (no longer available online) as legitimacy-related with a positive sentiment, while a tweet saying "This is the line of idling cabs outside the UN climate change conference in Madrid, Spain. They sit here all day, ferrying climate warriors to and fro. <https://t.co/OUZ1e5lEND>" (Reid 2019) was coded as legitimacy-related with a negative sentiment. Each tweet that was identified as legitimacy-related was double-checked by a second coder to ensure consistency across GGIs. Sixth, for each of these tweets we coded which kinds of Twitter users issued these legitimation or delegitimation statements regarding a particular GGI. In our conception, Twitter users who made such (de)legitimation statements constitute self-appointed audiences.¹⁰

We categorized Twitter users as *citizens* or different kinds of *elites*, for example, representatives of governments. To this end, we referred to users' self-descriptions on their Twitter profiles. When additional information was needed, we verified a user's category through external sources (e.g., Google). We conducted this categorization inductively in the sense that we did not settle on certain categories of tweet authors *ex ante*, but instead generated these categories based on the data we gathered and then harmonized these data across GGIs. This approach allowed us to create categories that are sufficiently broad and limited in order to constitute sizeable yet relatively homogenous groups of audiences in GGI legitimacy debates.¹¹

¹⁰ At the same time, given that their reactions are public, these Twitter users can be conceived of as *agents* of (de)legitimation in relation to other audiences, even if on a rather small scale at times. However, in the present chapter, we are interested in these authors in their capacity as self-appointed audiences of GGI (de)legitimation.

¹¹ Note that we refrained from harmonizing the audience categories here with our categories in the previous section, for different reasons. First, the main categories of audiences in the previous section—i.e., constituent vs. non-constituent—audiences are often not distinguishable in Twitter data, for example, because many Twitter users do not reveal where they are from. Moreover, the categorizations used in the previous section would, in some cases, be too rough and reduce the level of detail that we deemed informative in analyzing the Twitter data, for instance, distinguishing between individual activists and CSOs.

Let us now explain the different categories of audiences that we mapped here by groups of author types (while the results below are presented in alphabetical order). First, the category of “citizen” refers to Twitter users from all over the world who post in their personal capacity and cannot be considered part of any of the other categories, for example, “activist” or “business.” Second, activists are distinguished from other citizens insofar as they consider themselves, or—by virtue of their activities—may be considered, as individuals who take an active interest in a particular GGI with a specific purpose in mind.¹² Third, the category “CSO” captures the accounts of civil society organizations and think tanks, for instance. Fourth, the category “academic” includes Twitter authors who post on a GGI in their capacity as scholarly researchers, for example, at universities, or official accounts of research institutions. Fifth, the category “artist” comprises individuals who post on Twitter in their capacity as actors, musicians, or similar artistic occupations. Sixth, the category “media” includes official accounts of newspapers, TV channels, magazines, or online news sites, plus the tweets of individual journalists. Seventh, the category “blogger” contains both bloggers and influencers, that is, individuals whose work online consists of posting about certain issues and/or advertising particular products. Eighth, the category “business” refers to individual companies, entrepreneurs, and business associations, posting on Twitter in these capacities. Ninth, the audience category “GGI” includes representatives or the official accounts of GGIs, including the GGI in question. Tenth, the audience category “government” captures tweets from representatives or the official accounts of national governments, as well as the parties or individuals in power. Eleventh, the category “politician” comprises tweets from authors such as the Twitter accounts of political parties and figures who are not currently part of a national government or GGI.

Lastly, one important aspect of analyzing this data is that social media platforms like Twitter not only include genuine accounts of humans or organizations, but also fake accounts or social bots that are used—for example—by authoritarian governments to further their political agendas (cf. [Caldarelli et al. 2020](#)). In order to erase any traces of their illicit activities, such accounts are often quickly deleted. Moreover, Twitter has increasingly taken steps to identify and suspend such accounts ([Twitter 2021](#)). Nonetheless, even if they are eventually deleted, the activities of such fake accounts do have a noticeable impact on Twitter, for example, by increasing the number of retweets of a certain statement. Since Weblyzard’s algorithms scrape Twitter data (almost) live as the tweets are published, our dataset also contains many posts from non-existent or suspended accounts. Given that we cannot presently ascertain which of these accounts were

¹² In a few cases, the line between citizens and activists is blurry. In such instances, we took a conservative approach, labeling users as “activists” if they were actively tweeting about a GGI or its policy domain with a particular purpose, and as “citizens” otherwise.

actually run by social bots, the audience type “unknown” captures the category of tweet authors whose accounts are now non-existent or suspended.

Results and Discussion

Three principal findings emerge from the data: First, across GGIs, a relative majority of self-appointed audiences are citizens, followed by unknown authors and various kinds of elites. This shows that while elites are indeed disproportionately represented audiences in GGI legitimacy debates, citizens make up a higher proportion of the self-appointed audiences than one might imagine. Second, citizens are a particularly dominant self-appointed audience group in legitimacy debates on economic/financial and peace/security-related GGIs, but less so (proportionally) in the case of environmental GGIs. Third, business actors are particularly well represented among the self-appointed audiences of global and nongovernmental GGIs, but less so among regional and governmental institutions. Below we present and discuss these results in greater detail.

Figure 9.3 shows that across all GGIs, around one half of the self-appointed audiences are non-elite citizens (47%), while around one third (29%) are various types of elites, and another fourth (24%) are of unknown type. The predominance of citizens as self-appointed audiences is clearest in the case of the WTO (73%), whereas the unknown category is particularly large in the case of the ICC (45%). For both audience categories, the FSC constitutes an outlier, given that only 11% of its self-appointed audiences are citizens and only 11% are unknown. Conversely, businesses (57%) and artists (2%) are relatively predominant among the FSC’s self-appointed audiences. Academics (7%), GGIs (4%), and media (20%) are particularly well-represented among the self-appointed audiences of the ICANN legitimacy discourse. Activists are a relatively large category (10%) in the AU’s legitimacy debates on Twitter, just like bloggers (5%) at the IMF, CSOs (13%) governments (12%) at the Kimberley Process, as well as politicians at the UNFCCC (2%). Let us now break down these results into different categories of GGIs by policy field.

Figure 9.4 shows the distribution of self-appointed audiences by GGI policy field: multi-purpose (ASEAN, AU, EU, UN), economic/financial (G20, ICANN, IMF, World Bank, WTO), peace and security (ICC, Kimberley Process, NATO, UN Security Council), as well as sustainable development (FSC, UNFCCC, WHO). The figures demonstrate that citizens as self-appointed audiences are particularly prevalent (56%) in the legitimacy debates on economic/financial GGIs, while they are rather low in the case of sustainable development GGIs (38%). Unknown authors are particularly well represented in the discourse on peace/security GGIs (29%) and relatively underrepresented among sustainable

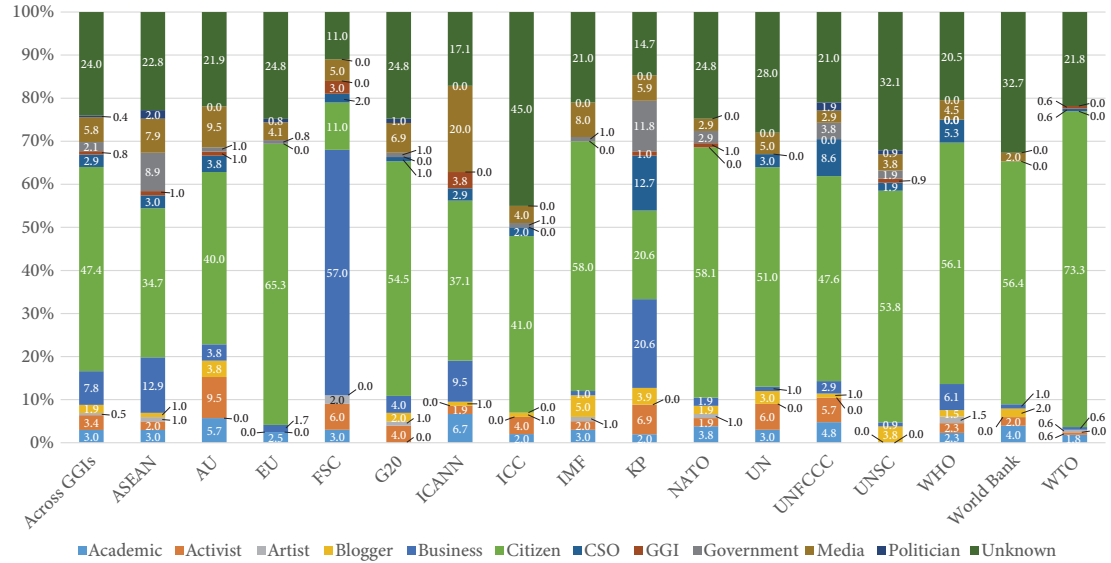


Fig. 9.3 Self-appointed audiences by GGI

Notes: All figures are percentages. The sample sizes (n) are: ASEAN (n=101), AU (n=105), EU (n=121), FSC (n=100), G20 (n=101), ICANN (n=105), ICC (n=100), IMF (n=100), Kimberley Process (KP) (n=102), NATO (n=105), UN (n=100), UNFCCC (n=105), UNSC (n=106), WHO (n=132), World Bank (n=101), and WTO (n=165). Averages across GGIs are based on equal weights given to the tweets on each of the GGIs, i.e., standardizing sample sizes. Deviations from 100% are due to rounding.

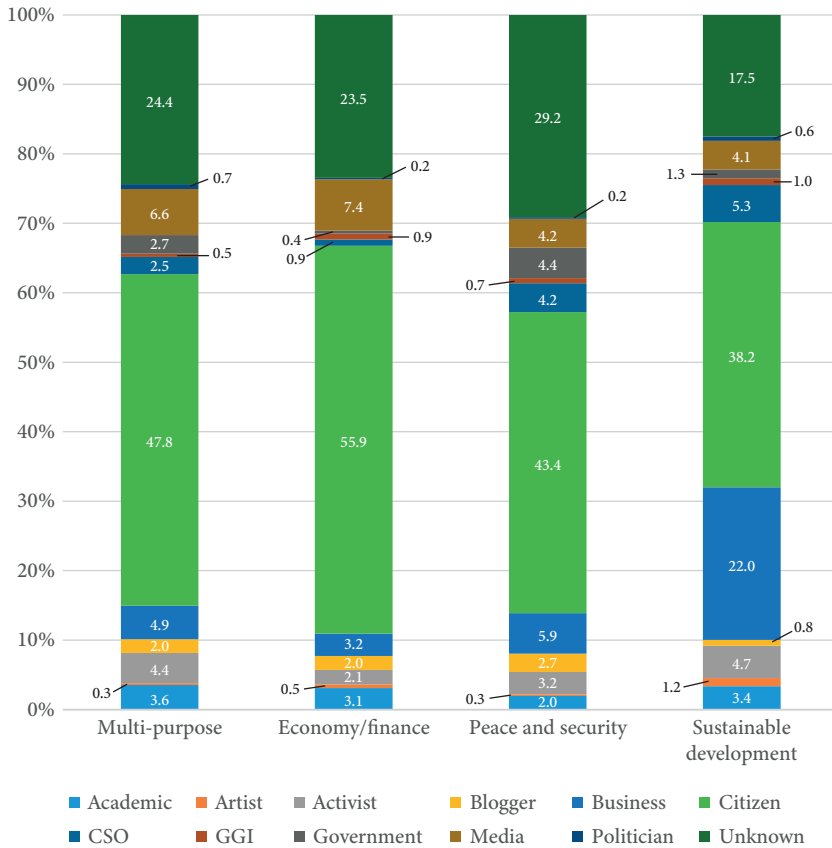


Fig. 9.4 Self-appointed audiences by policy field

Note: See notes below Figure 9.3.

development GGIs (18%). Among multi-purpose GGIs, activists (4%) and governments (3%) are disproportionately well-represented as self-appointed audiences. The same is true of bloggers (3%) on peace and security GGIs, as well as media (7%) as a self-appointed audience category of economic/financial GGIs. Conversely, CSOs (1%) and businesses (3%) have a relatively low representation among the self-appointed audiences of economic/financial GGIs. Businesses are disproportionately represented among the self-appointed audiences of sustainable development GGIs (22%). It should be noted, however, that the high percentage of business audiences in the case of sustainable development GGIs is driven by an exceptionally high percentage of such audiences in the case of the FSC (see Figure 9.3), which—due to the FSC’s main function of providing environmental certifications for consumer products—is perhaps not so surprising. Nonetheless, the discrepancy between business as audiences of sustainable development

GGIs and other types of GGIs is striking, especially given that we would assume economic/financial GGIs to have the greatest relevance for businesses. It may, of course, be that businesses are indeed highly engaged with economic/financial GGIs, albeit not in public fora like Twitter but more covertly through non-public lobbying activities. Now, let us look at the splits of self-appointed audiences by GGIs' geographical scope.

Figure 9.5 shows the data on GGIs by geographical scope: regional (ASEAN, AU, EU, NATO) vs. global (the other GGIs in our sample). The figures demonstrate that the splits of self-appointed audiences across global and regional GGIs are largely similar—with one notable exception: While businesses constitute only 5% of the self-appointed audiences among regional GGIs, they make up 9% of the self-appointed audiences of global GGIs. Finally, let us look at the split of self-appointed audiences by GGI membership composition, that is, governmental vs. nongovernmental.

Figure 9.6 shows the split of self-appointed audiences in GGI legitimacy debates by type of GGI: nongovernmental/hybrid (FSC and ICANN) vs. governmental (the other GGIs in our sample). A few findings are particularly worth noting. First,

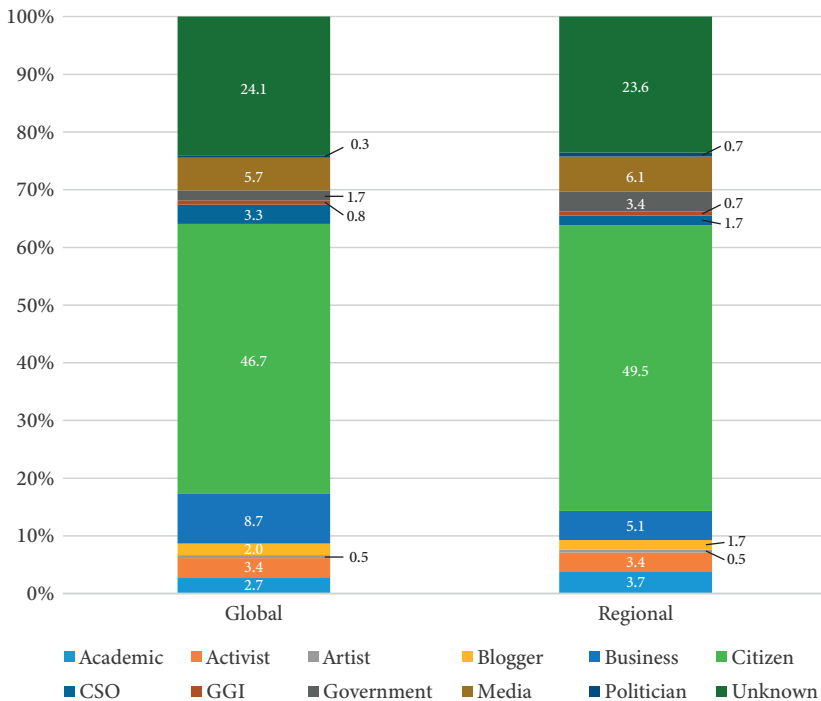


Fig. 9.5 Self-appointed audiences by geographical scope

Note: See notes below Figure 9.3.

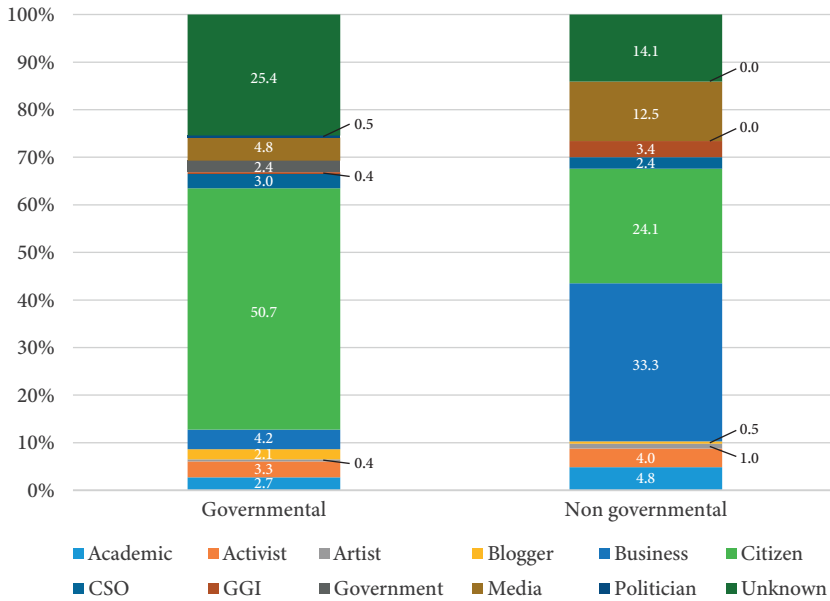


Fig. 9.6 Self-appointed audiences by GGI membership composition

Note: See notes below Figure 9.3.

both citizens (51%) and unknown authors (25%) are particularly prominent in the legitimacy debates on governmental GGIs but are apparently much less interested in nongovernmental/hybrid GGIs for which the figures are 24% and 14%, respectively. This difference may be to do with nongovernmental GGIs attracting less media attention, making them less well known among the general public, and possibly not being influential enough to attract social bots to focus on them. The same applies to bloggers (2%) and governments (2%) in the governmental GGI debates, who hardly feature at all as self-appointed audiences of nongovernmental GGI legitimacy debates. Conversely, businesses (33%), media (13%), academics (5%), and GGIs (3%) are particularly prevalent self-appointed audiences in the case of nongovernmental GGI legitimacy debates, but not so in the discourse on governmental GGIs. This may be due to business audiences taking a greater public interest in GGIs that they can be part of, despite the fact that governmental GGIs may influence them more. As argued above, their engagement with such GGIs may take the form of more covert lobbying activities, rather than publicly visible tweets.¹³

¹³ Once again, though, we should bear in mind that these results are partly driven by the FSC as an outlier (see Figure 9.3).

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the composition of targeted and self-appointed audiences of legitimation and delegitimation related to GGIs. The study of targeted audiences is important because it reveals whose legitimacy beliefs matter in the eyes of elites that are seeking to legitimate or delegitimize GGIs. At the same time, there are channels through which self-appointed audiences can make their voices heard, not least in influential social media where debates on GGI legitimacy increasingly play out. It is therefore also vital to explore who partakes in such debates. This chapter has filled a gap in previous research by studying patterns regarding audiences targeted by elite agents of (de)legitimation, as well as self-appointed audiences who react publicly to (de)legitimation attempts related to GGIs. Ultimately, this provides evidence of inclusion and exclusion in politicized debates around the legitimacy of GGIs, potentially affecting the support for international cooperation across the world.

The LegGov Elite Survey results show that non-constituent audiences are more commonly targeted than constituent audiences. Overall, the finding of non-constituencies being more frequently addressed holds across GGIs of different policy fields and geographical scope. Across GGIs, targeting the legitimacy beliefs of member state representatives or the general public does not seem to be a main priority for elites. Civil society in particular stands out as (among) the most frequently targeted audiences of (de)legitimation practices across GGIs. It is much more common for elite respondents to target CSOs than to target citizens in member states. In contrast, across GGIs, citizens are more prominent among self-appointed audiences as compared to their relative importance as targeted audiences. Citizens are the dominant self-appointed audience group in legitimacy debates on all GGIs. Citizens are particularly dominant as a self-appointed audience in legitimacy debates on economic/financial and peace/security-related GGIs, but less so in the case of sustainable development GGIs. These results should be understood in light of a notable elite-citizen gap in legitimacy beliefs toward global governance. Elites generally hold higher confidence levels toward GGIs relative to citizens at large (Dellmuth et al. 2022). Despite such gaps, addressing the legitimacy beliefs of the general public does not appear to be a key concern of the elites interviewed in the LegGov Elite Survey.

Our results also show that elites regard businesses as being quite important audiences in debates on GGI legitimacy, on par with citizens when looking across all GGIs. Private businesses are relatively more important as targeted audiences than as self-appointed audiences across GGIs. Among elite respondents, 66% answered that they targeted private companies at least monthly while business amounts to only 8% of self-appointed audiences across GGIs. This is likely to be part of a trend in which GGIs reach out for partnerships with the private sector in order to increase GGI resources and efficiency. Businesses are more prevalent

as self-appointed audiences in the case of debates on nongovernmental GGIs, in which they can become formal members or be subjected to (voluntary) GGI regulation.

By connecting our study of audiences to another main element of processes of (de)legitimation, namely, the practices that drive such processes forward (see Chapters 3–5 for a more elaborated account of such practices), we found that there are differences between legitimation and delegitimation with regard to the targeted audiences. There is a significant association between engaging in behavioral *legitimation* practices linked to the functioning of GGIs (assisting in policy-making and providing funding) and targeting member states and staff of the GGI. In contrast, *delegitimation* practices (particularly making critical public statements) are more strongly associated with targeting the general public, people believed to be affected by the GGI, and civil society organizations. A positive association with targeting certain audiences is also found between organizing or participating in demonstrations against the GGI and withdrawing funding from the GGI. Thus, a strength of our elite survey is that it allows for an empirical assertion of associations between two of the key elements of our process-oriented understanding of legitimation and delegitimation. Taken together, the elite survey and our Twitter analyses shed light on targeted and self-appointed audiences in GGI legitimacy debates, preparing the ground for the next two chapters.

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(De)Legitimation and the Composition of Audiences

Comparing Intergovernmental and Nongovernmental Global Governance Institutions

Magdalena Bexell and Karin Bäckstrand

A key topic for the study of legitimacy in global governance concerns the audiences involved in processes of legitimation and delegitimation of global governance institutions (GGIs). Scholarly debates about the legitimacy of GGIs are directly concerned with questions about their constituent powers, that is, the political subjects whose interests and welfare are in focus in the establishment and operation of a political institution and in whom authority ultimately rests (Oates 2017: 205; Grigorescu 2020). The composition of (de)legitimation audiences is important for what gets legitimated, by whom, and on what grounds, as well as for broader normative questions of whose voice should count in global governance. At the same time, GGIs are diverse in terms of their mandate, formal authority, governance structure, and membership. An intergovernmental organization may rely on a chain of constitutive political legitimacy conferred by citizens on governments and in turn by governments on intergovernmental organizations. This is, however, not the case for nongovernmental or hybrid GGIs, which rely on non-electoral sources of legitimacy. Yet, nongovernmental GGIs exercise considerable authority in contemporary global governance and are therefore of interest in the study of audiences of (de)legitimation in such governance. This chapter explores how the composition of audiences varies across type of GGIs, thereby advancing existing research that has paid scant attention to studying the differences between intergovernmental GGIs and nongovernmental GGIs with regard to audiences of (de)legitimation.

The theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2 establishes that this volume covers two main kinds of impact of (de)legitimation on audiences. The first kind of impact is the composition of audiences. GGIs themselves and other agents of legitimation may construct target audiences by aiming their (de)legitimation practices at groups that they deem relevant. In addition, groups may constitute themselves as

self-appointed audiences, even when they are not formally recognized as an audience by the GGI. The second kind of impact is possible changes in individuals' legitimacy beliefs related to GGIs. Whereas Chapter 9 explored broader patterns in the composition of audiences and the present chapter compares the composition of audiences across two types of GGIs, Chapter 11 will focus on the impact of legitimation and delegitimation on individuals' legitimacy beliefs. Our qualitative and comparative approach enables us to conduct a more in-depth study of the composition of audiences for two GGIs. Our central question is: How and why does the composition of audiences vary across type of GGIs?

Theoretically, comparing intergovernmental GGIs to nongovernmental GGIs is fruitful for the study of the multiple audiences of legitimation and delegitimation. Arguably, a crucial difference, for the purpose of studying audiences, between the two forms of GGI is in the construction of their respective ruling mandate, as referred to earlier. In the case of intergovernmental GGIs, members (states) jointly negotiate and decide on rules that they will be bound by themselves, while the members of rule-setting nongovernmental GGIs usually decide on the rules that apply to others on a voluntary basis. This is particularly the case for nongovernmental GGIs that issue certification and standardization schemes such as the Forest Stewardship Council International (FSC), Fairtrade International, the Rainforest Alliance, and the Responsible Jewelry Council. In order to implement their rules, nongovernmental GGIs are dependent on actors, such as consumers, who are not among the GGI's formal constituency or even indirect constituencies. For the purpose of comparing different types of GGI, we hold the policy field constant in this chapter, namely, that of sustainable development. This is a highly diversified field regarding types of governance institutions. Compared to many other policy fields, sustainable development contains a broad range of audiences and its institutions are relatively open to access and participation by nongovernmental actors and rely on scientific and technological expertise. This makes it a suitable field for the comparative study of audiences of (de)legitimation.

We compare two GGIs—the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the FSC, representing a single-purpose universal intergovernmental GGI and a nongovernmental market-driven GGI that relies on private rather than public authority. The UNFCCC has been at the heart of the climate change regime since 1992 after three decades of negotiations on climate change mitigation and adaptation, culminating with the 2015 Paris Agreement. For its part, FSC, created in 1993, has developed into a widespread certification scheme for forest products. Its goal is more sustainable forestry, to be achieved by increasing the percentage of FSC-certified forests across the world. Global climate change and deforestation share key features and problem structure in terms of global collective action problems and ensuing attempts at providing global public

goods. However, in contrast to climate change, forestry lacks a global intergovernmental treaty and relies on private transnational regulation instead. Empirically, we focus more on recent developments covering the past decade than on the early organizational history of these GGIs, which has been well documented in previous research. This delimitation means we cover the United States (US) withdrawal from the Paris Agreement under President Trump's administration, as well as the exit of Greenpeace International from FSC. These were two events of key importance for processes of legitimation and delegitimation around the two GGIs. Our material offers new empirical insights through interviews with GGI representatives and their audiences, as well as participatory observation.¹ The interviews are complemented with policy material that documents institutional developments such as reports, organizational statutes, official statements, strategic policy plans, and media news from the different actors involved in (de)legitimation processes around the two GGIs, as well as secondary literature.

After outlining three alternative theoretical explanations for the composition of audiences of (de)legitimation, the chapter proceeds by looking at the two GGIs through the lens of each explanation in turn. Our comparison between the UNFCCC and FSC shows that for both types of GGIs, factors related to institutional structures and governance mandates, as expected, contribute significantly to explaining the composition of audiences, albeit in different ways. Formal statutes less directly guide who is targeted by the FSC compared to the UNFCCC, where the composition of audiences is determined by United Nations (UN) rules of accreditation of nongovernmental actors. Rather, FSC statutes are subject to continuous revisions, resulting in organizational reform as a legitimation practice directed towards constituencies. Over the past decade, explanations related to global and domestic democratic normative structures appear to have become more central for the composition of audiences of the UNFCCC than for the FSC. Politicization stands out as an important factor for explaining the activation of self-appointed audiences in the UNFCCC, particularly as triggered by the US exit from the Paris Agreement—a strong act of delegitimation. Yet, politicization does not appear to be decisive for who was targeted by the UNFCCC itself. In comparison, in the FSC case, politicization and the exit of Greenpeace International did not lead to a similarly broad increase in self-appointed audiences. Nevertheless, a particularly important explanation for who is targeted by the FSC appears to be attempts at countering critique. The chapter's conclusion summarizes the results and relates these to the broader theoretical framework of this volume.

¹ Empirical data on UNFCCC for the purpose of this chapter were collected at Conference of the Parties (COP) 16 in Marrakech (2016), COP 17 in Bonn (2017), the Global Climate Action Summit in San Francisco (2018), the Climate and Sustainable Development Goals Synergy Conference in Copenhagen (2019), online meetings with briefings by the Swedish delegation to the UNFCCC and the online UN Climate conference in Bonn (in 2021).

The Composition of Audiences: Categories and Theoretical Explanations

Categories of Audiences

How does the composition of audiences vary across type of GGIs? We employ a two-fold conceptual distinction, introduced in the theoretical framework in Chapter 2, to categorize the universe of audiences—state and non-state actors alike—that we empirically observe for our two GGIs. The distinctions concern, on the one hand, constituencies and non-constituencies, on the other hand, targeted and self-appointed audiences. Constituencies are members with the power to negotiate and create the rules of a GGI while non-constituencies lack rule-making authority. Targeted audiences are purposively approached by the agent of (de)legitimation (in this case, often a GGI) while self-appointed audiences react on their own initiative (Bexell et al. 2021). Thus, these distinctions cut across the universe of audiences in two different ways. While the first distinction can be empirically studied through the formal institutional statutes and legal provisions of GGIs, the second requires broader empirical material including interviews, policy documents, strategic organizational decisions, and external communication.

Why does the composition of audiences vary across intergovernmental and nongovernmental GGIs? On the basis of this volume's theoretical framework and connecting to broader theoretical debates on drivers of (de)legitimation processes, we outline a set of expectations on variation across these two types of GGIs, holding the policy field constant. These explanations concern institutional set-up, democratic normative structures, and politicization.

Institutional Set-Up

According to the first explanation, the organizational statutes of GGIs determine who is designated to be formal GGI constituencies, assuming these are prioritized in legitimation practices by the GGI secretariat and/or by GGI members. The underlying rationale for this assumption is both constitutional and functional. Members provide the majority of funding for the organization and their legitimacy beliefs are therefore the most important for the GGI to be able to operate. Due to the lack of enforcement mechanisms in global governance, legitimacy among those subjected to GGI authority may also increase compliance with rules and decisions (Hurd 1999). In both intergovernmental and nongovernmental forms of governance, this explanation points toward constituent members as primary audiences of GGI self-legitimation. In the case of intergovernmental GGIs, this means governments as direct constituencies and citizens in their capacity of being indirect constituencies. In the case of nongovernmental GGIs, it entails the actors—for

example, the business sector and civil society—which are GGI members and decide on rules, policies, and funding.

Yet, in the case of intergovernmental GGIs, members (states) decide on rules that they will be collectively bound by, while the members of nongovernmental rule-setting GGIs decide on rules that usually apply to other actors who choose to sign up on a voluntary basis (e.g., certification, standardization). This is a key institutional difference. The political authority of intergovernmental GGIs resides in the recognized public authority of states, delegated by agreement to the organization as states commit themselves to address collective problems (Bernstein 2014: 123; Hooghe et al. 2020). The independence from state authority of nongovernmental GGIs leads to higher legitimacy demands among multiple societal audiences with regard to generating political authority. Compared to intergovernmental GGIs, nongovernmental GGIs may require tighter links to their audiences because their legitimacy is less of a given (Bernstein 2014, 2018: 195). Moreover, GGI legitimation practices are not always unitary, but entail contradictory processes within the organizational body, such as differences between who is targeted by the GGI secretariat and by its intergovernmental decision-making body, or even individual GGI members (Zaum 2013).

Ideational Structures: Democratic Norms

Ideational normative structures interact with communities of actors to create different legitimacy demands across forms of governance (Bernstein 2011, see also Chapter 6). Research has demonstrated the strong influence of democratic norms on GGI self-legitimation, as well as on (de)legitimation processes more generally (Grigorescu 2015; Dingwerth et al. 2020).

A second explanation posits that GGIs have been socialized to promote norms of participatory governance and therefore target new audiences beyond constituencies according to democratic ideals (Tallberg et al. 2013; Dingwerth et al. 2019). For intergovernmental GGIs we expect such norms to gear legitimation practices toward non-state actors, as well as toward citizens of member states (Symons 2011; Zaum 2013; Gronau and Schmidtke 2016; Zürn 2018). This is more likely to occur when democratic member states have strong power within an intergovernmental organization. Previous research has shown that intergovernmental organizations with a more democratic membership are more likely to rely on democratic legitimation because democratic constituencies have an incentive to specifically focus on the transparency and accountability of organizations (Gleckman 2018). In contrast, non-democratic states make chains of conferment of legitimacy between states and intergovernmental organizations illusory. Moreover, when governments include civil society in their delegations to intergovernmental GGIs, adherence to democratic narratives increases (Bernauer

and Gampfer 2013). Likewise, international bureaucrats and government officials accustomed to democratic norms are likely to support the use of a democratic narrative because they believe that it is appropriate to do so (Dingwerth et al. 2020). Indeed, democratic norms have become more key to intergovernmental GGIs over time (Grigorescu 2015).

In contrast to intergovernmental GGIs in which democratic norms have increasingly gained prominence, recent studies show that democratic norms were crucial in the legitimation of nongovernmental GGIs during their early days in the 1990s but that such norms have lost some of their centrality in this regard over time (Dingwerth 2017). Where intergovernmental regulation exists, nongovernmental GGIs now primarily seek to show how their work contributes to the goals set by public bodies and to effective problem-solving. As a result, democratic legitimation is less crucial (Dingwerth 2017). In the case of nongovernmental GGIs in the realm of environmental sustainability, we do not expect democratic norms to be as influential for the composition of audiences during our period of study as in the case of intergovernmental GGIs. Rather, we expect democratic norms to have been more central during earlier periods, invoked to legitimate the creation of nongovernmental GGIs in the first place.

Politicization

Recent studies in global governance have demonstrated that politicization is an important element of GGI legitimation and delegitimation (Hooghe et al. 2020). We therefore include a third explanation that emphasizes the formative role of politicization for how audiences of legitimation are composed, reflected in the observation of an increasingly “contested multilateralism” (Morse and Keohane 2014). We expect politicization to be particularly key to explaining the formation of self-appointed audiences in response to the growing authority of GGIs (Rauh and Zürn 2020). These audiences may be involved in both legitimation and delegitimation. Intergovernmental organizations are better known and have higher levels of authority than nongovernmental GGIs in the domain of environmental sustainability. This means we expect intergovernmental organizations to face a higher degree of self-appointed audiences than less well-known, nongovernmental regulatory GGIs that often rely on private authority and market dynamics.

In turn, GGIs may choose to respond to self-appointed audiences’ critique to varying degrees. The need for self-legitimation by GGIs vis-à-vis non-state audiences can be expected to increase with politicization in the form of the activation of self-appointed audiences (Ecker-Ehrhardt 2018). According to this explanation, the selection of targeted audiences is motivated by a desire to counter opposition to the GGI, and critical actors are to be privileged among targeted audiences of GGI self-legitimation attempts (Zürn 2018). Previous studies underpin this explanation by

pointing to the importance of the internal assessment made by a GGI of which critique could harm it most during times of politicization. For example, radical critics have been excluded as targets of the self-legitimation politics of the World Trade Organization while moderate critics have been addressed (Anderl et al. 2019). If a GGI recognizes protesters to be significant in shaping perceptions of its legitimacy, it is more likely that they will be targeted by self-legitimation attempts. This provides critics with recognition by acknowledging that their views matter. Through this process, global governance institutions can privilege, for example, civil society groups that express less far-reaching demands, while excluding more critical audiences (Bexell et al. 2021).

At the same time, nongovernmental GGIs lack rule-setting authority through political institutions, nationally or globally. In contrast to what is the case for intergovernmental GGIs, rule subjects are not necessarily identical to decision-makers, as previously highlighted. An experimental study of private standard-setting bodies in environmental governance indicates that in the absence of politicization, there is no inherent opposition from the public (in the US) to nongovernmental global governance. Public attitudes turned more negative when people as part of the experiment were exposed to information providing cues suggesting that private GGIs are not democratic or legitimate (Neuner 2020). We therefore expect nongovernmental GGIs to be more vulnerable to politicization and that drivers related to countering critique are more influential for the composition of targeted audiences in the case of nongovernmental GGIs than for intergovernmental GGIs. Next, we look at our two cases through the lens of each explanation in turn.

Institutional Set-Up

UNFCCC

The composition of targeted audiences in the UNFCCC is strictly regulated in the climate agreements that distinguish between constituencies (treaty parties, i.e., member states) and non-constituencies (non-Party stakeholders or observers). Rules of access and accreditation negotiated by states are the primary determinant for the composition of UNFCCC audiences (Interview, senior manager, UNFCCC secretariat, May 15, 2017; UNFCCC 2017a). As a treaty-based intergovernmental GGI, we find a multilayered system of agents and audiences of legitimation and delegitimation. First, the UNFCCC with its 197 member states is a largely party-driven GGI, in which member states through the decision-making body called the Conference of the Parties (COP) engage in collective legitimation primarily toward targeted constituent members but also non-constituencies, such as corporate actors (renewable industry) and science (e.g., the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC). Secondly, individual member states are

agents of legitimation in their own right, primarily toward both domestic and global audiences such as the carbon market industry, trade unions, and low-lying island states. Illustratively, with the US re-entry into the Paris Agreement in 2021, President Biden hosted a Leader's Summit on Climate in April 2021 with the aim of increasing the ambition of states' climate targets for the United Nations (UN) Climate Summit in Glasgow in November 2021 ([US Department of State 2021](#)). This legitimation attempt targeted invited governments as well as non-constituent actors such as the World Bank, IMF, Fridays for Future, as well as large investors and banks. Thirdly, the UNFCCC secretariat is a key agent of legitimation primarily targeting constituent member states. Increasingly, after the adoption of the Paris Agreement, it also targets non-constituencies such as women's movements and youth movements (Interview, senior official, UNFCCC secretariat, November 12, 2016; [Miljödepartementet 2021](#)). The secretariat has gained increasing authority and influence as an agent of legitimation over the past decade (Interview, senior official, UNFCCC secretariat, November 9, 2016; Interview, senior manager, UNFCCC secretariat, May 15, 2017; [Well et al. 2020](#)). However, our interviews indicate that the most significant target audiences for legitimation attempts by the UNFCCC secretariat are still member states, for example, major emitters such as the US, China, and the European Union.

While the UNFCCC rests strongly on intergovernmentalism, the Paris Agreement paved the way for the Global Climate Action Agenda,² a joint legitimation strategy by the UNFCCC secretariat and COP aiming to broaden the composition of audiences ([Bäckstrand and Kuyper, forthcoming](#)). This resulted from organizational demands to engage and mobilize non-constituent actors ([UNFCCC 2021a](#)). Two rotating High-Level Climate Champions, appointed for two years by the COP, are tasked with reaching out to the governments of member states, as well as targeting cities, businesses, investors, and indigenous people to accelerate climate action (Interview, senior official, UNFCCC secretariat, November 9, 2016; Interview, senior manager, UNFCCC secretariat, May 15, 2017; [UNFCCC 2021a](#)). An indication of a shift toward hybrid multilateralism is that the number of participants at COPs has increased dramatically (see next section). Currently, more than 2200 observer organizations and 130 intergovernmental organizations have been accredited and admitted, including UN organizations and specialized agencies. The Paris Agreement officially recognizes "the importance of the engagements of all levels of government, and various actors" ([UNFCCC 2015](#)). Our material thereby shows that the legal provisions in intergovernmental climate agreements have been key to the composition of audiences of legitimation.

In sum, UNFCCC's longstanding formal rules for accreditation are important to explaining who is targeted by agents seeking to legitimate this GGI and its climate

² Formally, the name is the Marrakech Partnership on Global Climate Action as it was established at COP 22 in Marrakech.

agreements. The key targeted audience is member states. Still, all of the secretariat, COP, and member states initiated reforms to widen non-state actor participation through the Global Climate Action Agenda to increase compliance with the Paris Agreement.

FSC

The FSC case shows that the formal statutes that determine membership and internal governance processes are important for explaining who is targeted by legitimation practices. This is because there is much debate around the three-chamber system that structures membership, as well as around formal FSC decision-making procedures in its General Assembly. Our material shows that internal legitimacy issues related to governance reform gear much legitimation toward constituent members as defined by the three-chamber system described below. FSC Statutes govern the organization and are updated every three years. According to the FSC Statutes, individuals and legal entities can apply to become members but existing members can challenge applications recommended by the FSC's Board of Directors. The FSC's membership constituency is a heterogeneous mix of civil society organizations, companies, and individuals. At its inception, a decision to exclude governments from participating in the FSC was made due to demands from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who claimed that states already had enough influence on forest management domestically. FSC certification rules are created by FSC members. As of early 2021, the membership of FSC International comprised approximately 620 organizational members and 550 individual members. Decision-making powers reside with the FSC General Assembly, convened every third year, comprising three "chambers" of stakeholders: economic, social, and environmental. Each chamber holds 33.3% of the vote on all decisions. Each chamber is further divided into a north and south sub-chamber, holding 50% of the vote of that chamber. The economic North sub-chamber has consistently been the largest chamber in numerical terms and the social South sub-chamber has been the smallest (Cadman 2011: 63).

This complex organizational construct impacts the composition of targeted audiences in that it requires the FSC to devote much attention to addressing members' demands for organizational reform. The complexity of decision-making through the General Assembly has meant that there has been considerable focus on internal governance reform over the past ten years, privileging legitimation of the FSC toward members who are dissatisfied with cumbersome procedures and issues related to transparency and participation (FSC 2019). Concerns about power imbalances between different member groups (sub-chambers) also preoccupy organizational reform efforts. The FSC International Secretariat has not been able to address or implement the large number

of motions adopted by members at the General Assembly. Motion implementation is a controversial issue between the Secretariat and members and a recent governance review pointed to a great need for expectations management regarding what the Secretariat can implement (FSC 2019). There are legitimacy issues related to the selection of members in FSC working groups that develop new policies, as well as to the effectiveness and transparency of these groups. Moreover, in the recent governance review, southern sub-chamber members conveyed that the FSC felt like a Northern/European system that was imposed on a Southern reality (FSC 2019: 31). In brief, legitimation through organizational reform is targeted toward dissatisfied constituent audiences rather than non-constituencies.

Our material shows that the targeting of constituencies is at the expense of targeting non-constituencies, creating internal tensions (Interview, manager, FSC, May 25, 2018; Interview, program manager, FSC, May 29, 2018). Unlike in the case of intergovernmental organizations such as UNFCCC, actors who are bound by FSC rules (certificate holders) are not necessarily constituent members. Rather, forestry sector companies (forest owners and timber producers) can (voluntarily) opt to be bound by FSC rules. These companies can obtain FSC certification through verification procedures conducted by third-party auditing companies. Indeed, tensions between certificate holders and FSC members appear to have risen in recent years (FSC 2019). Our interviews with FSC staff showed that the need to direct self-legitimation toward members came at the expense of targeting, for example, actors selecting to be bound by FSC rules. The Secretariat lacked the organizational resources to target more types of audiences (Interview, manager, FSC, May 28, 2018). The FSC interviewees put young consumers first among audiences they would like to reach more than what the FSC is currently able to do because “they will be the consumers and decision-makers of tomorrow” and will be fundamental to this demand-driven global certification scheme (Interview, program manager, FSC, May 29, 2018).

Comparison

The lack of a pre-existing source of public authority on the part of the FSC is a key difference in form compared to the UNFCCC. This section shows that in the FSC case, institutional statutes are subject to continuous questioning, resulting in organizational reform as a legitimation practice targeted toward constituent audiences. Demands on reform steer legitimation attempts toward dissatisfied constituencies. In the UNFCCC case, the institutional set-up in terms of rules for access and accreditation of non-constituencies is an important explanatory factor for the composition of its diverse legitimation audiences, but the set-up is not questioned in itself.

Normative Democratic Structures

UNFCCC

Our interviews demonstrate that self-legitimation by the UNFCCC secretariat largely relies on norms of scientific and technocratic effectiveness grounded in advances in climate science. However, alongside norms of effectiveness, participatory democratic norms have been important to UNFCCC from its inception, as evident in secondary literature and in our empirical material (Interview, senior manager, UNFCCC secretariat, May 15, 2017). More than half of the member states in the UNFCCC are electoral democracies and the UNFCCC has therefore championed democratic values such as participation, inclusion, and accountability, transferred from the domestic level (Bäckstrand and Kuyper, forthcoming). Our interview material and policy documents demonstrate that this means that member states individually and through COP decisions target both global and domestic audiences such as indigenous people, women, youth, and the wider public (Interview, activist, Fridays for Future, January 31, 2020; Interview, negotiator Swedish Delegation, May 24, 2021). The Paris Agreement paved the way for decisions to target audiences by establishing mechanisms such as the Local Communities and Indigenous Platform, the Action for Climate Empowerment, Youth Envoy, and Gender Action Plan (Interview, representative of indigenous NGO, November 12, 2016; UNFCCC 2017b, 2019). As discussed in the previous section, the UNFCCC has consistently targeted new audiences through UN Special Envoys on youth and climate investors, and through the Global Climate Action Agenda. The broadening of targeted audiences has also led to critique. Business sector participation, for example by the automobile and oil industry, has dramatically increased in the COP, resulting in civil society criticism of corporate takeover. The climate justice movement has called for banning the fossil fuel industry from having formal status in the UNFCCC, citing a “conflict of interest” between companies’ profit goals and the UNFCCC’s goal of achieving a fossil-free world (Bäckstrand et al. 2021).

After the adoption of the Paris Agreement 2015, our material demonstrates that self-legitimation has been increasingly based on linkages between democratic norms and effectiveness norms. The recent work program for the Global Climate Action Agenda 2020–2021, as well as the annual *Yearbook of Climate Action*, calls for enhanced diversity, inclusion, and participation of non-state actors in order to implement the Paris Agreement (UNFCCC 2019, 2020). The implementation of the Paris Agreement not only rests on carbon emissions reduction undertaken by constituent member states, but also on commitments by, for example, the business sector, investors, and sub-national actors (Interview, activist, Fridays for Future, January 31, 2020; Interview, senior official, UNFCCC secretariat, May 20, 2021). Our interviews with around fifty UNFCCC accredited non-state actors indicate

that an overwhelming majority rank democratic participation as a precondition for effectiveness in terms of goal achievement.³ Furthermore, in a recent survey of stakeholders' perceptions that compared UNFCCC with other climate and energy GGIs, the UNFCCC ranks highest on democratic norms such as participation, accountability, transparency, and inclusion (Nasiritousi and Verhaegen 2020). Consequently, at the climate summit in Paris, there were more than 27,000 accredited participants, of whom 13,482 were registered as non-state observers, 10,591 as state party representatives, and 3221 as media observers (Müller et al. 2020). Clearly, democratic norms have geared UNFCCC legitimation practices toward a very broad spectrum of societal audiences. Yet, powerful member states and major emitters (China, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, and Iran) are authoritarian regimes who actively block the participation of civil society activists, in both domestic politics and in the UNFCCC, resulting in an ambiguous status for democratic norms.

In brief, democratic norms have contributed to broadening the spectrum of targeted audiences of the UNFCCC, reflecting inclusive multilateralism as well as democratic demands from influential democratic member states. However, compared with the UNFCCC's institutional set-up, discussed in the previous section, democratic norms have less direct explanatory value for the composition of audiences. This is because democratic norms are entangled with effectiveness norms and because of the influence of non-democratic states.

FSC

Our empirical material and secondary literature make clear that democratic claims were key to justifying the creation and rule-setting authority of the FSC throughout its early years. At the inception of the FSC, it was believed that a democratic participatory membership structure would yield legitimacy to the FSC (Cadman 2011: 4; Moog et al. 2015). During the first decade of the FSC, its self-legitimation strongly revolved around democratic norms, claiming legitimacy with reference to the democratic qualities of its organizational construct and inclusive approach. The audiences targeted as a result of such democratic norms were mainly FSC member constituencies (and potential members) who were to be convinced of the FSC's democratic qualities. This is in contrast to the UNFCCC case in which we found that democratic norms directed self-legitimation toward non-constituencies, that is, the range of nongovernmental actors in the climate change negotiations, through various more or less institutionalized participatory procedures.

³ Interviews with civil society, business, indigenous people, trade unions, and women's organizations at COPs 2014–2017, see Kuyper and Bäckstrand 2016. Details on file with the author.

The merits of the FSC three-chamber structure and its voting procedures are emphasized in self-legitimation through FSC's annual reports, on the FSC's website, and in its strategic policy documents. All FSC interviewees emphasized the uniqueness of the FSC General Assembly, the voting structure and that each chamber has equal voting capacity: "We come together every three years with the members and debate on motions that are then voted on and passed on to become our normative frameworks and policies" (Interview, program manager, FSC, May 29, 2018). Interviewees testify that members are prioritized in FSC communication: "We spend most of our energy communicating with members. Then certificate holders and then we try to squeeze in consumers where we can" (ibid). This means constituencies remain the primary target of self-legitimation by the FSC but arguably the driver for this is a cumbersome institutional structure, as found in the previous section, rather than democratic norms, per se. Clearly, a concern in our interviews is a lack of efficiency resulting from participatory ambitions: "The thing that I love most is that we talk to everyone. And the thing that I hate most is that we talk to everyone," one FSC employee explains (Interview, Director, FSC, May 28, 2018). It is particularly noteworthy that self-legitimation drivers based on democratic norms mainly concern the internal qualities of the organization, that is, the power balance between the three chambers of members. In contrast, in the UNFCCC case, democratic norms steer legitimation attempts externally towards non-constituencies, expecting non-state actor participation to improve the democratic qualities and enhance effectiveness in terms of goal compliance.

Over time, comparing the 1990s to the period from 2010 and onward, the explanation related to democratic norms has become less central compared to the previous explanation relating to the institutional structure. As the FSC has become more established, demonstrating effective impact in terms of strengthening sustainable forestry has become the key imperative. Even if democratic norms still feature in material stemming from the FSC, such norms do not provide as strong direction as before regarding which audiences are targeted in processes of legitimation.

Comparison

Our theoretical expectation is that ideational structures in the form of democratic norms lead GGIs to open up toward non-constituent actors in an attempt to gain broader societal legitimacy. As a universal intergovernmental organization with a significant share of member states that are liberal democracies, citizens in the form of domestic electorates are important audiences in the UNFCCC in contrast to the FSC. Yet, while the UNFCCC confirms the importance of democratic norms, participation is perceived as a means of increasing effectiveness in

terms of compliance with the Paris Agreement on world-wide decarbonization to 2050. In the FSC case, democratic norms have decreased in significance over the past decade with regard to explaining the composition of audiences. FSC self-legitimation based on democratic norms mainly concerns the internal qualities of the organization related to the power balance between the three member chambers. In contrast, in the UNFCCC case, democratic norms steer legitimation attempts toward non-constituencies and result in participation by a very diverse range of nongovernmental actors.

Politicization

UNFCCC

The regulation of climate change is highly politicized and contested in domestic and global contexts since the world is still about 80% dependent on fossil fuels for industrial production and consumption. Our material indicates that, in earlier times, politicization does not explain the composition of audiences for the UNFCCC but that after the adoption of the Paris Agreement, politicization triggered new formations of audiences of legitimation and delegitimation. This is particularly evident during the period from 2016–2020, after President Trump declared the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement (Interview, senior official, UNFCCC secretariat, May 20, 2021; Interview, negotiator Swedish Delegation, May 24, 2021). In June 2017, President Trump announced he would start the withdrawal process and in November 2020 the US formally left the Paris Agreement. This exit from an international treaty by a powerful constituent member state, which is also the second largest greenhouse gas emitter in the world, is a strong example of behavioral delegitimation of the UNFCCC (see Chapter 3). The US withdrawal caused immediate outrage and condemnation at both international and domestic levels. The US retreat from the Paris Agreement spurred self-legitimation by the UNFCCC secretariat. The Global Climate Action Agenda, an institutional legitimation effort by the UNFCCC (see Chapter 4), was strengthened after the climate summit in Marrakech in 2016 (Bäckstrand et al. 2017; Streck 2020). In the run-up to the UN climate summit in Glasgow in November 2021, the Net-Zero Emission Banking Alliance, which comprises over forty-three banks committed to net zero emissions, was announced by the Climate Champions and the COP jointly with the business sector (UNFCCC 2021b; Interview, senior official, UNFCCC secretariat, May 20, 2021). Other GGIs, such as the IPCC and United Nations Environment Program, also appeared as new agents of legitimation of the UNFCCC. Domestically, the US withdrawal paved the way for worldwide rallying behind the Paris Agreement from the governors of seventeen US states and the District of Colombia, who signed a statement condemning

President Trump's action. The US withdrawal created a powerful pro-climate resistance movement in the US, led by bipartisan coalitions of governors (the US Climate Alliance) and mayors (Climate Mayors), joining forces with businesses, investors, and faith and university leaders through even broader alliances such as "We Are Still In" (Interview, senior official, UNFCCC secretariat, November 9, 2016; Interview, negotiator Swedish Delegation, May 24, 2021). State, local, business, and civil society leaders from the US participated in events at the Bonn Climate Conference in 2017 (Interview, senior manager, UNFCCC secretariat, May 15, 2017; Interview, senior official, UNFCCC secretariat, May 20, 2021; Interview, negotiator Swedish Delegation, May 24, 2021).

Three major self-appointed audiences that became more active after 2016 were the business community, cities, and the youth movement of Fridays for Future, activated by large gatherings such as the Global Climate Action Summit in September 2018, held in San Francisco. The summit aimed to encourage states and non-state actors to commit to more stringent climate targets ahead of the UN Secretary-General's Climate Summit in New York in September 2019. While President Trump refused to refer to the summit, it was attended by more than 6000 actors from one hundred countries, including politicians, corporate leaders, indigenous people, activists, and Hollywood celebrities (Arroyo 2018). These acted as intermediary audiences (see Chapter 2), calling in turn on countries to reduce their carbon emissions. In advance of the summit, the wider public and citizens called for strengthened climate commitments by organizing a climate march in San Francisco that drew around 30,000 citizens. Politicization of the climate agenda led to the activation of the (indirect) constituent audience of US citizens. In addition, an important self-appointed audience that emerged was youth and school children, particularly Fridays for Future led by the Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg—combining a system-critical narrative with an appeal to the science-based authority of the IPCC. The main object of delegitimation by Fridays for Future was state parties to the UNFCCC, which failed to comply with the Paris Agreement. With the increased influence of Fridays for Future, the UNFCCC started to address youth more deliberately, turning it into a targeted audience, including organizing a youth summit in conjunction with the climate summit in Glasgow in 2021 (Interview, activist, Fridays for Future, January 31, 2020). Similarly, our interviews indicate that the UNFCCC sought to "tame" the criticism of radical audiences by inviting them to climate summits (Interview, indigenous NGO, November 12, 2016; Allan 2020).

In conclusion, politicization has less explanatory value for the composition of *targeted* audiences of UNFCCC legitimation than the two previous explanations. In contrast, it has more explanatory relevance for the composition and activation of *self-appointed* audiences (such as the business sector and the youth movement). This section also shows that who is an audience or an agent can rapidly change due to politicization and that these terms should be understood relationally. A specific

actor can be an audience in relation to certain agents of (de)legitimation and an agent of (de)legitimation in relation to other actors, who are in that case audiences.

FSC

Our interviews with FSC staff, as well as critical statements on FSC certification, indicate that politicization is an important explanation as to why certain audiences are addressed by legitimation practices. Increasingly, legitimation and delegitimation claims related to the FSC have concerned the credibility of FSC certification and related verification procedures. There has been an increasing number of publicly exposed cases of companies who have obtained FSC certification but failed to live up to responsible forestry in practice. Third party certification companies undertake the actual verification of businesses who apply for FSC certification. According to critics, there are conflicts of interest as certifying bodies are paid by certified companies ([Greenpeace International 2013](#)). Critics have increasingly argued that certification bodies are too flexible in their interpretation of the FSC's standards and that the relationship between the FSC and supposedly independent certification bodies is too close ([Cadman 2011](#): 65). Reports by, for example, the Rainforest Foundation, World Rainforest Movement, Mighty Earth, and Greenpeace International have claimed that FSC certification has been wrongly granted to certain companies by FSC accredited certifiers. FSC certification has become big business for a number of large commercial certification companies ([Moog et al. 2015](#): 478). FSC employees also point out that social media platforms have amplified the voices of some critics (Interview, program manager, FSC, May 29, 2018).

Our interviews show that criticism from members weighs heaviest in the eyes of FSC staff: "If members criticize us we do tend to jump as quickly as possible to fix the situation" (Interview, program manager, FSC, May 29, 2018). As a founding member of FSC, Greenpeace International has been a vocal and active member issuing reports that have questioned the credibility of the FSC by exposing several cases of misconduct by companies holding FSC certification. Greenpeace International has submitted a number of recommendations to improve FSC governance, in light of what Greenpeace International considered the FSC's "process paralysis" ([Greenpeace International 2014](#)). By 2017, Greenpeace International representatives claimed that the FSC was no longer fit for purpose because the FSC economic member chamber used block votes to stop member motions of which the economic chamber did not approve. In 2018, Greenpeace International formally left the FSC, pointing to "very uneven implementation of FSC principles and criteria globally" ([Greenpeace International 2018](#)). Greenpeace International also demanded more transparency, including the publication of digital maps of certified forest. At the national level, environmental NGOs have left FSC bodies in

several European countries (Moog et al. 2015; Johansson 2012: 431). Transnational forest activist organizations and individuals established the FSC watchdog website FSCwatch.org, becoming a vocal self-appointed audience. At the same time, there were few public reactions to Greenpeace International's termination of its FSC membership. While there were some brief newswire reports at the time, we have found no public reactions beyond a narrow set of civil society organizations and environmentally-oriented news sites and social media channels. Clearly, debates on the FSC rarely reach beyond elites active in sustainable forestry advocacy, although recent studies indicate that informed citizens hold legitimacy beliefs on private certification schemes such as the FSC (Neuner 2020). Compared to intergovernmental environmental agreements, certification standards are less known among most citizens (Bernstein 2014: 142).

In essence, contestation and the high-profile exit of Greenpeace International has directed FSC self-legitimation toward critical NGOs, as well as toward consumers, seeking to secure legitimacy for the FSC brand in spite of NGO criticism (see also Chapter 5). FSC staff believed that large, critical environmental NGOs were highly influential in shaping consumers' views on FSC legitimacy, in fact, more than the companies who were FSC certified. "The Secretariat puts most energy into facing the critical environmental NGOs" (Interview, manager, FSC, May 25, 2018). This is in line with contestation on legitimacy requirements between the audiences of environmental NGOs and businesses found in previous research (Bernstein 2014: 139). Above all, consumers and retailers stand out as increasingly important audiences, if the market-dependent FSC certification is to spread. Indeed, one FSC interviewee said about the exit of Greenpeace International that "when such strong organizations that many consumers trust step outside, it can affect opinions on the FSC" (Interview, manager, FSC, May 25, 2018). Looking at material from the FSC, increased focus has been placed on proactively targeting consumers, as expressed, for example, in its 2018 Annual Report: "We continue to significantly increase the promotion of FSC as a consumer brand" (FSC 2018: 30). More efforts are devoted to market surveys and consumer surveys (FSC 2018). Market dependence implies great brand sensitivity and vulnerability to criticism. While democratic norms were key to explaining the composition of audiences in the early days of the FSC, since around 2010, contestation has become a more important explanation.

Comparison

Our expectation was that the politicization of a GGI triggers legitimation practices toward critical audiences in order to restore legitimacy and prevent further delegitimation. This is an important explanation for the targeting of audiences of legitimation in the FSC case. It is less so for the intergovernmental GGI, the

UNFCCC. Yet, the increasing politicization of the UNFCCC in conjunction with the US exit from the Paris Agreement during the period 2016–2021 resulted in an expansion of self-appointed audiences of legitimation, turning eventually into intermediary audiences of legitimation as their level of activity increased. In comparison, Greenpeace International's termination of its FSC membership in 2018 did not expand the range of self-appointed audiences involved in legitimation and delegitimation. Rather, it involved audiences that were already active and critical against the FSC.

Conclusions

The political authority of intergovernmental organizations resides in the recognized public authority of states, delegated by agreement to the organization as states commit themselves to managing collective problems. In contrast, nongovernmental voluntary-based GGIs need to generate political authority and legitimacy by obtaining consent from their constituent and non-constituent audiences. For nongovernmental and hybrid GGIs, the constituency category is less of a given than for intergovernmental GGIs. This chapter has explored how this difference affects the composition of audiences of (de)legitimation in global governance (see also Chapter 9). The chapter has compared two types of GGIs operating in the policy field of sustainable development—the UNFCCC and the FSC. Our alternative theoretical explanations for the composition of audiences related to the formal institutional set-up of these GGIs, democratic ideational structures, and politicization. These explanations reflect empirical and normative debates around which audiences are significant and whose opinions should count in assessments of GGI legitimacy.

Guided by the questions of how and why the composition of audiences varies across intergovernmental and nongovernmental GGIs, we found that the relevance of the three explanations differs. (1) Our comparison between the UNFCCC and the FSC shows that for both types of GGIs, factors related to institutional structures, as expected, significantly contribute to explaining the composition of audiences, albeit in different ways. Formal statutes and governance mandates less directly guide who is targeted by the FSC compared to the UNFCCC regarding the composition of audiences. Rather, for the FSC, statutes are subject to continuous revisions, resulting in organizational reform as a legitimation practice directed toward constituencies. FSC constituencies are of a more diverse nature, including industry and NGOs, compared to the UNFCCC, for which states are the only constituent member type. In the UNFCCC case, the institutional set-up in terms of UN formal statutes and rules for access and accreditation of non-constituencies is an important explanatory factor for its very diverse composition of audiences. (2) Over the past decade, explanations related to democratic norms appear to have

become more central for the composition of audiences of the UNFCCC than for the FSC. For the UNFCCC, democratic participation is currently conceived of as a means to increased effectiveness. In the UNFCCC, democratic norms shape legitimation attempts toward non-constituencies and result in participation by a very diverse range of nongovernmental actors. In the FSC, democratic norms have decreased in significance over the past decade in terms of explanation for the composition of audiences. (3) In contrast, politicization is a more important factor for explaining targeted audiences in the FSC case than for the UNFCCC case. Contestation of the FSC triggers legitimation practices toward critical audiences in order to restore legitimacy and prevent further delegitimation. For self-appointed audiences, however, the case is the opposite. Politicization through a powerful member state's exit from the GGI has great explanatory value for the composition of such audiences. The US exit from the Paris Agreement in 2016 activated a range of new self-appointed audiences from businesses to youth movements. In contrast, Greenpeace International's termination of its FSC membership in 2018 did not trigger a comparable broadening of self-appointed audiences as reactions were mainly limited to audiences already active in forest sustainability affairs.

Overall, our study of audiences of (de)legitimation demonstrates that it remains analytically challenging to draw lines between particular actor groups with regard to being an audience or an agent of (de)legitimation in concrete instances of (de)legitimation. As stated in this volume's theoretical framework (Chapter 2), these concepts can best be understood in relational terms. Any given actor may, at the same time, be an audience in relation to certain agents of (de)legitimation and an agent of (de)legitimation in relation to other actors (who in that case are audiences). The next chapter zooms in on individual citizens as audiences of (de)legitimation.

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The Effects of (De)Legitimation on Citizens' Legitimacy Beliefs about Global Governance

An International Survey Experiment

Farsan Ghassim

As global governance institutions (GGIs) have become ever more contested in recent years (Zürn 2018), legitimation battles are taking center stage in world politics. While state actors such as former United States President Trump attacked GGIs like the World Health Organization (WHO) over its alleged poor handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and its supposed preferential treatment of China, such institutions defended themselves against criticisms of their procedures and performance (Horton 2020; Mahase 2020). Meanwhile, other GGIs like the European Union (EU) have been subject to mass protests—both in favor and against, for example, in the wake of Brexit (Davidson 2017; Brändle et al. 2018). Many such attempts at the legitimation and delegitimation of GGIs occur publicly with the intention of influencing the views of audiences at home and abroad. However, do such (de)legitimation efforts indeed affect GGIs' legitimacy in the eyes of the global public? Building on the preceding chapters and current research to tackle this question, the present chapter offers a comprehensive study of international citizen audiences in this context. Concluding part three of the volume, this chapter explores the final aspect of our theoretical framework relating to audiences in the GGI discourse, namely, the potential impact of (de)legitimation attempts on public legitimacy beliefs.

Drawing on cueing theory, the chapter tests theoretical expectations about the effects of (de)legitimation by governments, citizen protests, and GGIs themselves—both in isolation and combination—on public legitimacy beliefs. To this end, I conducted survey experiments on nationwide samples of people in countries throughout the world—from the Americas (Canada and Colombia) to Europe (France and Hungary), from Africa to the Middle East (Kenya, Egypt, and Turkey), from Asia (Indonesia and South Korea) to Australia, making this the most universal and generalizable study of the effects of GGI (de)legitimation on public

legitimacy beliefs. The chapter studies such effects with respect to a diverse set of GGIs: the United Nations (UN), the World Bank, and the WHO.

I explore the following questions, expecting affirmative responses to each of them:¹ First, are governmental delegitimation attempts and citizen protests effective at decreasing public confidence in GGIs? Second, are GGIs' attempts at self-legitimation ineffective at increasing public confidence in them? Third, do delegitimation attempts by governments and citizen protests overpower GGIs' attempts at self-legitimation, such that these diverging influences in combination negatively affect public perceptions of GGIs' legitimacy?

The next sections proceed as follows: In section two, I review the most relevant literature and pinpoint the research gap that this chapter helps to fill. Part three introduces the core concepts and theory underlying this study. The fourth section outlines my research design and methods. Part five presents the empirical results of my experimental survey. The final section summarizes the study, before briefly discussing its limitations.

Literature Review and Research Gap

This chapter primarily contributes to two bodies of literature: first, research on the (de)legitimation of GGIs; and second, work on public attitudes toward GGIs. The former starts from the increasing politicization and public contestation of global governance in recent years (e.g., [Zürn et al. 2012](#); [Zürn 2018](#)). While the World Trade Organization (WTO) was in focus around the turn of the millennium ([Gill 2000](#)), the legitimacy of other international organizations like the EU and—more recently—the WHO has since been controversially debated by a broader public as well ([Norris and Inglehart 2019](#); [Horton 2020](#)). In this context, some states and other agents have attempted to (de)legitimate GGIs to advance their own interests, whereas GGIs themselves and sympathetic actors have tried to legitimate the GGIs in question (e.g., [Zaum 2013](#); [Binder and Heupel 2015](#); [Ecker-Ehrhardt 2018a, 2020](#)). While mapping and explaining elite communication on GGIs, this literature does not systematically explore if, when, and how (de)legitimation attempts succeed or fail in shaping public legitimacy beliefs about GGIs. The present chapter contributes to filling this gap in the literature.

The second main body of work that I address relates to public opinion on GGIs (e.g., [Ecker-Ehrhardt 2014](#); [Dellmuth and Tallberg 2015](#); [Dellmuth and Schlipphak 2020](#)). Much of this research is limited by its reliance on existing datasets, for example, from the World Values Survey ([Haerpfner et al. 2020](#)). Since such surveys are not specifically conducted for the purpose of studying public attitudes

¹ The experiments are pre-registered with the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton Credibility Lab at AsPredicted.org.

toward GGIs, their coverage of these institutions is usually limited. Moreover, existing survey research is often based on observational analyses, aimed at identifying individual- and/or country-level variables that may be associated with public attitudes toward GGIs. Public opinion on the EU is a particular subfield in which scholars have made more progress in exploring the underlying drivers of individual attitudes (e.g., [Gabel and Scheve 2007](#); [Hobolt and de Vries 2016](#)). However, findings on the EU are not necessarily transferable to other GGIs, given that the EU is especially contested and since public knowledge on the EU is presumably higher on average than on other GGIs, which might in turn impact people's susceptibility to elite cues ([Dellmuth and Tallberg 2021](#): 3).

More recently, scholars started employing survey experiments to causally identify various drivers of public attitudes on global governance, for example, the different elements of climate change agreements ([Bechtel and Scheve 2013](#)) or the institutional design features of GGIs like the EU ([Hahm et al. 2020](#)) and the UN ([Ghassim et al. forthcoming](#)). [Dellmuth and Tallberg \(2021\)](#) study the effects of different aspects of elite (de)legitimation attempts on public confidence in various GGIs. While their study advances our understanding of GGI (de)legitimation in important ways, significant gaps still remain, for example, establishing whether their findings are applicable beyond a Western sample of countries and exploring what happens when delegitimation and self-legitimation coincide (as is common in public debates). This chapter builds and expands on this research.

Concepts and Theory

Like the rest of the volume, this chapter addresses the *empirical* legitimacy of GGIs, as opposed to their *normative* legitimacy ([Weber 1922/1978](#); [Beetham 1991](#); [Buchanan and Keohane 2006](#): 405). That means I do not concentrate on GGIs' objective conformity with normative standards such as justice or democracy by virtue of their institutional characteristics, policies, or otherwise; instead, I focus on *people's belief* in the appropriate exercise of authority by the particular GGI in question ([Tallberg and Zürn 2019](#)). In this conception, a GGI enjoys legitimacy in the eyes of citizens if they believe in the GGI's rightful use of power. Conversely, if certain individuals do not deem a GGI's exercise of authority appropriate, then the GGI lacks legitimacy in their view.

I draw on cueing theory to explore how (de)legitimation attempts by three different types of agents affect the GGI legitimacy beliefs of the general public. Cueing theory addresses how informational messages (i.e., cues) of communicating agents shape audiences' opinions on the issue to which the messages relate ([Druckman and Lupia 2000](#)). People may use cues to infer information and form attitudes about different objects—from individual persons such as electoral candidates to abstract concepts like democracy ([Bullock 2011](#): 497). A classic example

are economic ideologies such as *laissez faire* about which the average citizen is arguably neither very educated nor well informed (Converse 1970). For example, leftist parties can make their opposition to neoliberal economic policies clear, thereby hoping to affect their voters' views. Leftist voters would then presumably tend to oppose *laissez faire* policies, even if they do not fully understand their ramifications. Cues thereby simplify choices for citizens and allow them to overcome informational deficits in political contexts (Zaller 1992). In a similar vein, GGIs may be the attitudinal objects to which such cues relate. Political or other actors can provide cues in order to affect public attitudes in this respect. These are presumed to be even more effective in circumstances involving a lack of knowledge like in the case of economic ideologies mentioned above.

In the tradition of much of the GGI legitimacy literature, I concentrate on (de)legitimation attempts that refer to both input and output dimensions (Scharpf 1999), that is, on procedure as well as performance (cf. Dellmuth et al. 2019), which have been identified as the key elements that determine the legitimacy of political regimes. Prior studies have shown that both of these aspects matter for people's attitudes on global governance, for instance, for their confidence in existing GGIs (Dellmuth and Tallberg 2021), institutional reforms (Ghassim et al. forthcoming), and long-term visions like global democracy (Ghassim 2020). In other words, people care about both the extent to which GGIs are open to citizen participation, as well as the public goods to which these institutions contribute. Hence, this chapter takes both input and output elements into account, thereby including the most salient arguments related to the legitimacy of GGIs.

I theorize that the (in)effectiveness of (de)legitimation attempts aimed at GGIs partly depends on the agents of (de)legitimation—in particular, their credibility in the specific context (Druckman 2001). Speakers' credibility determines their persuasive power, and this credibility, in turn, may be broken down into the factors of *expertise* and *trustworthiness* (Hovland et al. 1953). We may regard specific agents of (de)legitimation as credible if we believe that they have relevant knowledge and if we trust them to reveal that information accurately (Lupia 2002). Hence, an agents of (de)legitimation who are independent from the GGI that is the object of (de)legitimation may be perceived as credible sources by citizens, particularly if they do not have any apparent vested interest in their (de)legitimation attempts. In this chapter, I distinguish between three different agents with diverging levels of credibility with respect to the GGI that is the target of (de)legitimation: national governments, citizen protesters, and the GGI itself.

First, citizens may adopt their national government's opinion on a particular GGI if they trust their government to be a credible—that is, both knowledgeable and trustworthy—source with respect to the specific GGI in question. In the current international system, national governments are the principal way in which citizens are represented in world politics. In the field of International Relations, prominent theories such as that of two-level games (Putnam 1988)

presume that national governments act as credible sources of information for citizens, for example, when representing them in international negotiations. Of course, people's trust in their national government in matters of foreign policy in turn depends on whether they are confident in their national government more generally. This tends to be the case, particularly if citizens generally support the party in power (Campbell et al. 1960; Dalton 2007). However, in international politics it is often assumed that a domestic government—somewhat independent of the party in power—also represents the *national* interest more broadly (Aldrich et al. 1989). Indeed, public opinion scholars have demonstrated the effectiveness of governmental cues in various circumstances (Hooghe 2007; Isani and Schlipphak 2020; Dür and Schlipphak 2021). Applying this to the present context, national governments should be able to influence the views of their citizens on GGIs either positively or negatively through delegitimation or legitimation efforts. Dellmuth and Tallberg (2021) found such cues by governments to be effective in the context of GGIs, particularly when they were negative. In practice, such cues are indeed often negative, as in the case of the Trump-WHO dispute mentioned above. This leads to my first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Delegitimation attempts by governments reduce the publicly perceived legitimacy of a GGI.

Second, citizen protests may be considered a credible source of (de)legitimation and thereby affect the publicly perceived legitimacy of the GGI in question. The underlying assumption here relates to our perception of citizen protests as a radical and legitimate form of awareness-raising and political resistance (Andrain and Apter 1995; Klandermans and De Weerd 2000; Quaranta 2015; Mueller 2018). Through the act of protest, some particularly engaged citizens may raise the awareness of other citizens and thereby become a political force affecting societally prevalent views on a particular subject. Recent decades offer many examples of citizen protests targeting GGIs—from the protests in Seattle aimed at the WTO (Gill 2000; Smith 2006) to the demonstrations by EU opponents and supporters for and against Brexit (Davidson 2017; Brändle et al. 2018) to the recent Fridays for Future protests at the UN. Indeed, scholars have shown that citizen protests affect public opinion on political institutions under different conditions (McLeod and Detenber 1999; Frye and Borisova 2019). While some research—like Chapter 5 in this volume—links citizen protests to public legitimacy beliefs (see also Haunss 2007; Anderl et al. 2019), the extent to which such protests affect the perceived legitimacy of GGIs remains an open question. Here I examine this question experimentally for the first time. Assuming that fellow citizens are generally viewed as a credible source of information, I hypothesize that citizen protests criticizing GGIs are effective in lowering public perceptions of their legitimacy. Similar to Kertzer and Zeitzoff (2017), I focus on the concept of social peers rather than supposed

protests organized top-down by elite actors such as civil society organizations. My expectation may be summarized as follows:

Hypothesis 2: Delegitimation attempts by citizen protesters reduce the publicly perceived legitimacy of a GGI.

Third, the GGI whose legitimacy is in question presumably has rather little credibility with respect to its own status. There is no doubt that GGIs possess a high level of expertise about themselves. However, since GGIs desire public legitimacy for various reasons (Buchanan and Keohane 2006; Tallberg et al. 2018), they have a vested interest in portraying themselves in terms that would lend them such legitimacy in the eyes of the public, making them lack trustworthiness—the second essential element of credibility. Hence, I expect that claims of GGIs themselves about following good procedures and performing well are generally perceived as having rather little credibility and would therefore not affect public perceptions of GGIs. Dellmuth and Tallberg (2021) provide some evidence for this hypothesis.² If confirmed in the present context, such an expected null finding would arguably have important implications for GGIs which in recent years have increasingly been trying to portray themselves in the best possible light in order to improve their public image (Ecker-Ehrhardt 2018b; Von Billerbeck 2020). Specifically, it would mean that such efforts are—to some extent—futile. Moreover, such a null finding would carry important implications for much recent scholarly literature that primarily focuses on GGIs' attempts at self-legitimation while paying less attention to the wider context of external (de)legitimation in which this self-legitimation takes place (Ecker-Ehrhardt 2018b, 2020). Such a null finding would suggest that scholars analyzing the legitimacy of particular GGIs should pay greater attention to agents of (de)legitimation beyond those GGIs themselves. My third hypothesis may thus be summarized as:

Hypothesis 3: Self-legitimation attempts by GGIs do not affect their publicly perceived legitimacy.

Finally, the hypotheses above beg the question of what happens if the different attempts at self-legitimation and delegitimation coincide. Exploring this question is one of the central contributions of this chapter to current research on GGI legitimacy. While such interactive effects have been explored in other research fields,

² However, they also find that GGIs are effective at *delegitimizing* themselves. In the context of the present chapter's framework, this finding makes sense. While GGIs have a vested interest in portraying themselves in a positive light (and thus lack credibility in this respect), they do not have an obvious interest in admitting deficits, which is why such admissions may be interpreted as evidence of the presumably great extent to which a GGI's legitimacy is in question, thereby acting as a delegitimizing cue.

thus far there has been no study on GGI legitimacy that investigates the effects of a co-occurrence of delegitimation and self-legitimation attempts. Nonetheless, studying these interactive effects is crucial for understanding debates about GGI legitimacy in the real world, as it is usually the case that audiences receive mixed messages: While GGIs may be delegitimated by certain agents like hostile governments or protesting citizens, they rarely leave such delegitimation attempts without a reaction. As a result, audiences are exposed to conflicting messages regarding the legitimacy of GGIs. This leads to the question: What happens if a government or a citizen protest aims to delegitimize a particular GGI, while that GGI at the same time tries to legitimate itself?

On the one hand, we might expect that the resulting dispute between agents of delegitimation and self-legitimizing GGIs introduces sufficient confusion into the debate for the public legitimacy of the GGI in question to remain relatively unaffected. Hence, even though GGIs may not be able to *increase* perceptions of their legitimacy through simple claims in this respect, they may be able to deflect attacks on their perceived legitimacy (e.g., from governmental agents) through such acts of self-legitimation. An even more optimistic scenario (from the perspective of GGIs) would be that their attempts at self-legitimation are so effective on their own (or somehow only effective when combined with the hostile efforts by agents of [de]legitimation) that—as a result—we would expect the perceived legitimacy of GGIs to *increase* when external delegitimation is combined with self-legitimation. While theoretically possible, such a scenario has rather little theoretical grounding if Hypothesis 3 holds. Lastly, assuming that the hypothesized delegitimation effects (see Hypotheses 1 and 2) are sufficiently strong, and further assuming an additive relationship between these expected negative effects and the presumed null effect of GGI self-legitimation (see Hypothesis 3), we should think that the combination of governmental delegitimation or citizen protests with GGI self-legitimation would produce an aggregate negative effect on public legitimacy beliefs. Indeed, this was my pre-registered *ex ante* hypothesis before conducting the study. Hence, this latter expectation may be summarized as follows:

Hypothesis 4: The combination of governmental delegitimation and GGI self-legitimation reduces the publicly perceived legitimacy of a GGI.

Hypothesis 5: The combination of delegitimizing citizen protests and GGI self-legitimation reduces the publicly perceived legitimacy of a GGI.

While this chapter does not focus on country differences in GGI legitimacy beliefs, I strive to provide the most generalizable analysis of the effects of GGI (de)legitimation to date. It is therefore essential to include a highly diverse sample of countries in this study, as we know that different countries have diverging opinions on various political issues, including GGIs. For example, whereas support for

GGIs like the UN is consistently high in Southeast Asian countries, it is generally low in the Arab world (World Values Survey Association 2020). While there are, of course, fierce opponents of the UN in Southeast Asia, and strong supporters in the Middle East, *on average* Southeast Asians consistently hold more positive views than Arabs toward the UN. Such robust differences point to underlying factors at the national and regional levels like regime type, geopolitical power, population size, living standard, culture, history, economic development, media landscape, educational system, and so on. Divergent predispositions toward GGIs may imply that related (de)legitimation attempts have varying effects on people from different countries. For instance, a generally positive predisposition toward GGIs in a country may mean that legitimation attempts tend to be more effective, while delegitimation attempts are usually less effective, all else being equal. To stick with the examples above, legitimation attempts may be relatively effective in Southeast Asia because they would take place in a context of mostly positively predisposed people. Conversely, a generally negative attitude toward GGIs among citizens of a country may imply that *delegitimation* attempts are rather effective, while *legitimation* attempts would tend to be less effective. In terms of the examples above, GGI delegitimation may be particularly effective in the Arab world, while legitimation attempts would be rather futile, given that people in this region are negatively predisposed toward GGIs on average.³ Thus, maximizing the global generalizability of any results in this context calls for evaluating the hypotheses above across country contexts that are as diverse as possible in terms of predispositions toward GGIs.

Research Design and Methods

In order to test the hypotheses in the previous section, I conducted a multinational survey experiment in ten countries worldwide. The overarching dependent variable of this study is citizens' belief in the legitimacy of GGIs. Following previous research, I operationalize such beliefs as people's *confidence* in GGIs (see e.g., Dellmuth and Tallberg 2021). While the concepts of confidence and belief in the appropriate exercise of authority may not be perfectly aligned, operationalizing legitimacy beliefs in this way has several advantages. To begin with, "confidence" is presumably more widely understood than legitimacy's more formal definition as belief in the appropriate exercise of authority (Tallberg and Zürn 2019). Moreover, confidence arguably captures effectively the notion of diffuse support for a

³ However, the relationship may also be the other way around, that is, delegitimation attempts may be especially effective in countries with a *positive* predisposition toward GGIs, while not so effective in countries with a *negative* predisposition. This could be because only a certain part of any population may ultimately be positively or negatively predisposed toward GGIs; and once that threshold is reached, legitimation and delegitimation respectively become ineffective.

GGI (Easton 1975), paralleling that of perceived legitimacy. Due to its inclusion in the World Values Survey and elsewhere, there is by now a sizeable body of survey research on public confidence in different GGIs (e.g., Norris 2008; Dellmuth and Tallberg 2015), so that my use of this operationalization contributes to cumulative knowledge. My method for the question about confidence in GGIs diverges somewhat from previous approaches. I asked the respondents: “How confident (or not) are you in the [GGI]?” The addition of “(or not)” is intended to ensure minimal balance, so that the question does not lead to confirmation bias among the respondents (Shaeffer et al. 2005). The six-point response scale ranges from “not confident at all” to “completely confident,” with “confident” and “rather confident” plus their negations as weaker options. In order to reduce satisficing, I refrain from offering middle options or explicit no-opinion (“don’t know”) responses (Bishop 1987; Krosnick et al. 2002).

Let us now turn to the GGIs that I include in my survey experiment. There is a vast diversity among GGIs as we conceptualize them in this volume. The concept of GGIs comprises various institutions with a global governing or regulatory function, including traditional GGIs like the UN and non-state market-driven GGIs like the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). While it would be intriguing to explore the perceived legitimacy of GGIs like the FSC, they are unfortunately little known among the global public (despite their omnipresence on product packaging etc.), so that asking about their perceived legitimacy in the terms outlined above—without any additional information—would presumably be rather uninformative in many cases. I therefore decided to concentrate on three relatively well known but diverse GGIs with different functional specializations: the UN, the WHO, and the World Bank. While the UN is the most widely known GGI, the World Bank and the WHO are less well known but are certainly not obscure.⁴ Indeed, the WHO is quite salient in global public discourse during the COVID-19 pandemic at the time of writing, while the World Bank and the UN are seemingly not as regularly and controversially discussed. Taken together, exploring public opinion on these three diverse GGIs from different policy fields allows for a reasonably comprehensive assessment of the effects of (de)legitimation on GGI legitimacy, thereby reducing potential GGI-specific effects that a limitation to only one of these GGIs might entail.

In order to explore the effects of GGI self-legitimation and/or delegitimation on citizens’ legitimacy beliefs, I expose the respondents in each survey country to maximally one of five possible treatments for each of the three GGIs above: first, supposed delegitimation by the foreign ministry of the survey country; second,

⁴ This can be demonstrated, for example, by the rates of no-opinion (“don’t know”) responses in recent surveys, which include questions on these three GGIs. For instance, when asked about their confidence in the UN, WHO, and World Bank respectively, the average rates of no-opinion responses across all countries included in the most recent wave of the World Values Survey were 9.5% for the UN, 11.5% for the WHO, and 14.1% for the World Bank (World Values Survey Association 2020).

citizen protests criticizing the GGI; third, self-legitimation by the GGI; fourth, the combination of governmental delegitimation and GGI self-legitimation; and fifth, the combination of citizen protests and GGI self-legitimation.

In line with my theoretical framework above, the treatments refer to both the procedural and performance dimensions of the GGI in question. The governmental delegitimation treatment's general form is: "The foreign ministry of [survey country] recently noted that the [GGI] is neither democratic nor effective." Similarly, the citizen protest treatment is worded as follows: "There have recently been major protests by citizens like yourself, criticizing the [GGI] as neither democratic nor effective." The self-legitimation treatment is worded as follows for all three GGIs: "The [GGI] recently stated that it is democratic and effective." Lastly, the combined treatments begin with the statement: "There is a controversy about the [GGI]." This is then followed by combinations of the vignettes above. The order of GGIs in each survey is randomized to prevent any sequencing effects. Immediately after these vignettes, the respondents in the treatment groups are asked the aforementioned dependent variable question. Alternatively, respondents can also be part of the control group for each of the GGIs above, thus receiving no vignette treatment and simply—like all the respondents—being asked about their view on the specific GGI "in light of recent news."⁵

In order to ensure the global generalizability of my results, I include a variety of countries in my survey experiment. The primary dimensions along which my survey countries are supposed to vary are world region and the (expected) level of support for GGIs. To this end, I analyzed World Values Survey data from recent years, which show that contemporary support for GGIs is clearly clustered by world region. In addition, I aimed for the greatest possible diversity in terms of regime type, geopolitical power, population size, and living standard—within the practical constraints of online survey research, which is skewed toward larger countries, as well as regions and individuals with internet access. Table 11.1 presents my selection of countries and the corresponding attributes. For the purpose of this chapter, the diversity of countries included serves to increase the generalizability of my empirical results rather than provide individual country analyses.

The questionnaire's original language is English. It was translated into the primary languages of my survey countries by native speakers of the target language. Advance translations ensured that my questionnaire was convertible into all the desired languages (Harkness et al. 2010). A second independent translation for each survey language allowed for reducing translator-specific preferences. I resolved divergences between different translations of the same language by discussing the matter with the two translators and referring to third sources such

⁵ The full questionnaire, including the survey flow logic, is available at <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/leggov>.

Table 11.1 Survey countries and their characteristics

Country	GGI views	Region	Regime	Power	Population	Wealth
Australia	0.09	Pacific	Free	0.79	25	\$55,060
Canada	0.18	North America	Free	0.80	38	\$46,195
Colombia	-0.03	South America	Partly free	0.60	50	\$6,429
Egypt	-0.45	North Africa	Not free	0.57	100	\$3,019
France	0.12	Western Europe	Free	0.82	67	\$40,494
Hungary	-0.15	Eastern Europe	Partly free	0.60	10	\$16,732
Indonesia	0.35	Southeast Asia	Partly free	0.65	268	\$4,136
Kenya	0.54	Sub-Saharan Africa	Partly free	0.44	53	\$1,817
South Korea	0.40	East Asia	Free	0.78	52	\$31,846
Turkey	-0.31	Middle East	Not free	0.69	82	\$9,127

Notes: GGI views are calculated as country averages of confidence in the UN based on the most recent waves of the World Values Survey (World Values Survey Association 2015; Haerpfer et al. 2020), standardized to a range of -1 (most negative) to 1 (most positive). Regime categorizations are based on current Freedom House aggregate categorizations (Freedom House 2021). Power data are based on the World Power Index (Morales Ruvalcaba 2019), which ranges from 0 to 1 and—given its broader definition of power—suits the present purpose better than more commonly used indices such as the *Correlates of War* (2013). Population data are in millions and were obtained from the World Population Prospects database (United Nations 2017). Wealth data are the contemporary per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in current United States dollars, adjusted for purchasing power parity (The World Bank Group 2017).

as additional translators and online translation services. I used Qualtrics's survey platform for designing and programming the survey, including the randomization of treatments (Qualtrics 2018) and translations. In this web format, the survey was tested in all languages on 178 respondents of different ages, genders, and education levels in all target countries to confirm its functionality, check the translations' comprehensibility, and resolve any remaining issues.⁶ The experiments were fielded in collaboration with Qualtrics between May and October 2021.

Qualtrics does not have proprietary survey panels, but rather acts as a survey sample aggregator from different sources. For this survey, Qualtrics drew on four leading survey sample providers: Dynata, Cint, Lucid, and Toluna. These companies have proprietary survey respondent pools, that is, databases of internet users from across the world who have registered as potential survey participants

⁶ The survey's versions in all targeted countries are available at <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/leggov>

for market research and other purposes. The respondents were recruited from across the target countries and all four survey sample providers according to quotas based on the most up-to-date statistics for gender, age, region, and education. The national breakdowns are based on the most recent and highest-quality data available. My team drew on official government sources such as national census data and other reputable sources. Regional quotas and weights aimed for the lowest possible national levels according to the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) in the context of online survey research, for instance, Ontario vs. Quebec in the case of Canada. Education quotas and weights are based on a tripartite division into levels 0–2 (no secondary education degree), 3–5 (secondary education degree), and 6–8 (university degree) of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) based on statistics from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2021). As a result, I obtained nationwide samples of more than 3000 respondents in each country that are highly diverse and nationally representative along the four quota/weighting dimensions. Entropy balancing (Hainmueller 2012) was used to reweight raw data for the desired population proportions to achieve the target parameters once the samples are weighted. For the pooled analyses in this chapter, each country sample is weighted equally.

After collecting all responses, I used Microsoft Excel, R Studio (R version 4.1), and Stata (version 16) for transforming and cleaning the datasets, as well as conducting the statistical analyses. The survey set-up involves the aforementioned weights. The aggregate sample is stratified by country. The statistical significance of differences in means between the control and treatment groups are established by two-sided t-tests (Student 1908). The following results are based on responses pooled across all ten survey countries.

Results

While one of my hypotheses is clearly borne out (Hypothesis 3), three receive limited support (Hypotheses 1, 2, and 4), and one can be rejected (Hypothesis 5). There is limited support for Hypothesis 1, as governmental delegitimation attempts aimed at the World Bank and the WHO lead to (weakly) statistically significant decreases in the perceived legitimacy of these institutions. Moreover, there is limited support for Hypothesis 2, given that supposed citizen protests against the World Bank decrease public confidence in this organization. I conclude that the delegitimation of GGIs by governments and citizen protests has some limited effectiveness, depending on the GGI in question. As predicted by Hypothesis 3, GGI self-legitimation in itself does not enhance public belief in GGIs' legitimacy. While GGI self-legitimation is not effective at counteracting governmental delegitimation of the WHO (partly confirming Hypothesis 4), in most cases there

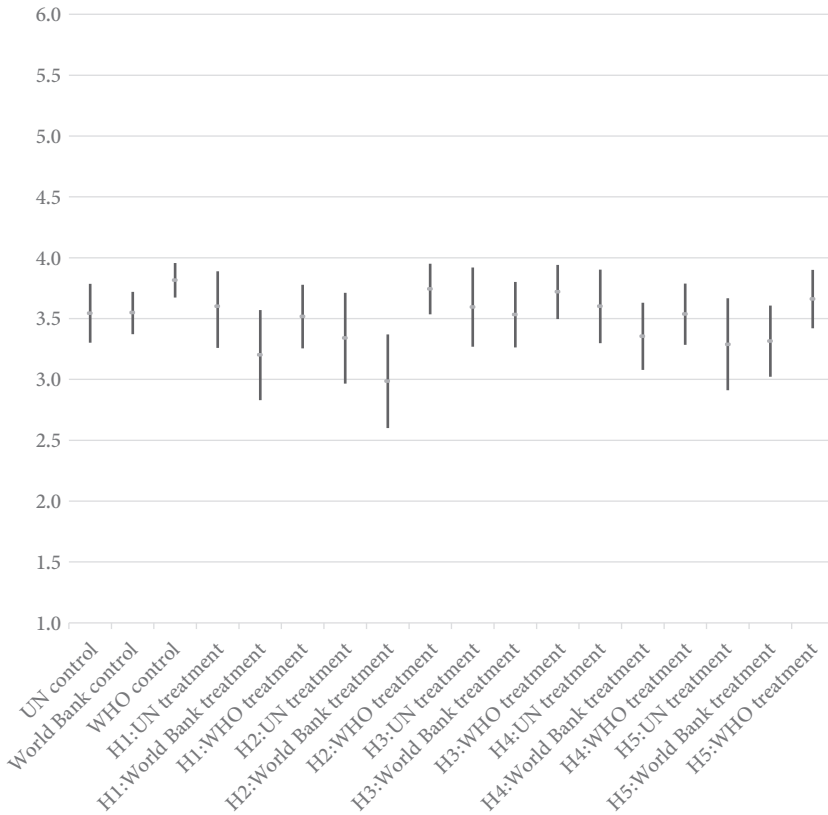


Fig. 11.1 Summary of effects

Note: The scale ranges from no confidence at all (1) to complete confidence (6). The dots indicate point estimates. The lines indicate 95% confidence intervals.

are no changes in public confidence when governmental delegitimation and citizen protests are combined with GGI self-legitimation (contrary to Hypothesis 5). We may conclude that while GGIs are somewhat vulnerable to delegitimation by agents and actions such as hostile governments and citizen protests, the experimental results here demonstrate that they can effectively defend themselves against such attacks and at least neutralize them through self-legitimation. As a result, the legitimacy of various GGIs in a diverse set of countries remains centered around the middle (i.e., 3.5) of my scale from “not confident at all” (1) to “completely confident” (6) throughout the various conditions tested here (see Figure 11.1). Table 11.2 summarizes the main findings for the different hypotheses, split by GGIs. Below, I present and discuss these results in more detail.

Table 11.3 shows the mixed results for Hypothesis 1, that is, the expectation that delegitimation by national governments effectively decreases public confidence in

Table 11.2 Summary of results

Hypothesis	UN	World Bank	WHO
H1) Government	×	(√)	√
H2) Protests	×	√	×
H3) GGI	√	√	√
H4) Government + GGI	×	×	√
H5) Protests + GGI	×	×	×

Notes: The dependent variable here is confidence in the stated GGI. “√” means that the effect is in the expected direction (if any) and is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$, or that there is no statistically significant difference as expected. “(√)” indicates that the statistical significance of the expected effect is only $p < 0.1$. “x” signifies that there is no statistically significant difference or equivalence as expected.

GGIs. My experiments confirm this hypothesis in the case of the WHO, for which average confidence decreases by 0.3 points (on a scale from 1 to 6)—a weakly significant effect ($p < 0.03$). The same is true for the World Bank: The effect size here is slightly larger, causing average confidence in the GGI to drop from a value above the middle of the scale (3.5) to below that level. However, the statistical significance of the observed effect is weaker ($p < 0.07$). Lastly, I do not observe a statistically significant effect of the governmental delegitimation treatment on public confidence in the UN.

Table 11.3 Hypothesis 1—Delegitimation by national governments

GGI	Difference	Control mean	Treatment mean	p-value
UN	0.0299	3.5439	3.5738	0.8520
World Bank	-0.3459	3.5458	3.1999	0.0670
WHO	-0.2971	3.8141	3.5170	0.0260

Notes: The dependent variable here is confidence in the stated GGI. The table presents the most relevant results of the two-sided Student's t-tests on two samples (Student 1908). The presented results are the point estimate of the difference in means between the control and treatment groups (second column); the mean in the control group (third column); the mean in the treatment group (fourth column); and the p-value of the difference (fifth column).

Table 11.4 also shows mixed results with respect to Hypothesis 2, that is, the expectation that delegitimation by citizen protests adversely affects the public legitimacy of GGIs. In the case of the World Bank, average confidence decreases by around 0.6 points, which constitutes a statistically highly significant effect ($p < 0.01$). It is worth noting that this effect leads public confidence to deteriorate from a positive view (mean > 3.5) to a critical view of the World Bank on average (mean < 3.5). However, no such effect is evident in the case of the UN or the WHO.

Table 11.4 Hypothesis 2—Delegitimation by citizen protests

GGI	Difference	Control mean	Treatment mean	p-value
UN	-0.2051	3.5439	3.3389	0.2820
World Bank	-0.5606	3.5458	2.9852	0.0040
WHO	-0.0711	3.8141	3.7430	0.5040

Note: See notes below Table 11.3.

The null results in Table 11.5 are as expected based on Hypothesis 3: Self-legitimation by GGIs is not effective at increasing public confidence in GGIs. This is demonstrated by the p-values of the UN, World Bank, and WHO conditions, which are far from conventional levels of statistical significance. In addition, it should be noted here that public mean confidence in the different GGIs is positive (i.e., above the 3.5 middle of the scale) across all control and treatment conditions, that is, while GGIs may not be effective at improving public confidence in themselves through self-legitimation, their perceived legitimacy is already at a positive level. The null result on self-legitimation appears to raise questions regarding the major investments of GGIs and the research community in recent years, employing and exploring self-legitimation in the context of GGI legitimacy debates. However, the results below regarding the combination of delegitimation and self-legitimation somewhat justify the efforts of GGIs and scholars.

Table 11.5 Hypothesis 3—Self-legitimation by GGIs

GGI	Difference	Control mean	Treatment mean	p-value
UN	0.0503	3.5439	3.5942	0.7620
World Bank	-0.0141	3.5458	3.5317	0.9180
WHO	-0.0948	3.8141	3.7193	0.4040

Note: See notes below Table 11.3.

Table 11.6 provides limited support for the hypothesized negative effects on public confidence in GGIs as a result of a combination of governmental delegitimation and GGI self-legitimation. In the case of the UN, the difference in means is far from conventional levels of statistical significance. For the World Bank, the difference in means is negative (as expected) but not statistically significant at conventional levels, either. Lastly, in the case of the WHO, the difference in means is also negative (as expected) and statistically significant ($p=0.03$). Therefore, the hypothesis that governmental delegitimation combined with GGI self-legitimation decreases public confidence in GGIs can only be confirmed in the case of the WHO.

Table 11.6 Hypothesis 4—Governmental delegitimation and GGI self-legitimation

GGI	Difference	Control mean	Treatment mean	p-value
UN	0.0561	3.5439	3.6001	0.7160
World Bank	-0.1915	3.5458	3.3542	0.1720
WHO	-0.2781	3.8141	3.5360	0.0300

Note: See notes below Table 11.3.

Finally, the results in Table 11.7 cast doubt on Hypothesis 5, that is, the expected negative effect on public confidence in GGIs when citizen protests and GGI self-legitimation are combined. In the case of the UN, the negative difference in means is statistically insignificant at conventional levels ($p < 0.19$). The same is true for the World Bank ($p < 0.12$) and the WHO ($p < 0.21$). These results show that self-legitimation—even if not effective at *increasing* public confidence in isolation—may help GGIs to deflect the otherwise potentially harmful delegitimation effects of citizen protests. However, the magnitude of the statistical insignificance of these results indicates that the outcome may depend on the relative strengths of delegitimation and self-legitimation efforts. Specifically, whether GGIs are able to maintain and defend their legitimacy depends on how powerful their self-legitimation is compared to the delegitimation efforts they face. While it was sufficient in the case of my experiment, this may not always be the case.

Table 11.7 Hypothesis 5—Citizen protests and GGI self-legitimation

GGI	Difference	Control mean	Treatment mean	p-value
UN	-0.2548	3.5439	3.2891	0.1860
World Bank	-0.2319	3.5458	3.3139	0.1200
WHO	-0.1546	3.8141	3.6595	0.2070

Note: See notes below Table 11.3.

Conclusion

This chapter makes a major contribution to this volume and the study of GGI (de)legitimation more broadly. In terms of our conceptual and theoretical framework (see Chapter 2), this study explores how various *agents* (governments, citizens, and GGIs themselves) may use different *practices* (discursive or behavioral), drawing on diverse *justifications* (relating to GGIs' procedures and performance), in order to affect the legitimacy beliefs of one type of *audience* (citizens across the

world) with respect to three different legitimacy *objects* (the UN, the WHO, and the World Bank).

My findings provide mixed evidence to support and reject the five guiding hypotheses. First, there is some evidence that governmental delegitimation attempts can work in isolation to lower public confidence in certain GGIs, somewhat corroborating Hypothesis 1. Second, in partial support of Hypothesis 2, there is some evidence that citizen protests can indeed negatively affect public confidence in GGIs. Third, GGI self-legitimation in isolation has no effect on public perceptions of GGIs' legitimacy, as predicted by Hypothesis 3. Fourth, there is some evidence that the combination of governmental delegitimation and GGI self-legitimation lowers public beliefs in the legitimacy of global governance institutions—in line with the prediction of Hypothesis 4. Fifth, the combination of citizen protests and GGI self-legitimation does not decrease public confidence in GGIs—in contrast to Hypothesis 5. These results are somewhat encouraging for GGIs. While their efforts at self-legitimation may not produce the desired effect of increasing public confidence, self-legitimation *can* serve as an adequate reaction to delegitimation attempts (e.g., by governments or citizen protests as tested here) in order to keep public confidence levels in GGIs stable at positive levels. This finding in particular significantly expands our understanding of how GGI legitimacy debates work in practice, moving beyond the isolated effects of GGI delegitimation and legitimation that previous studies investigated (e.g., [Dellmuth and Tallberg 2021](#)).

Lastly, let me briefly discuss some of this study's inherent limitations. For one, I did not consider attempts at legitimation emerging from actors other than the GGI in question. However, in line with the theoretical considerations outlined here, external actors may indeed be perceived as credible sources with respect to the legitimacy of a GGI and thereby succeed in increasing perceptions of its legitimacy (unlike the unsuccessful isolated attempts at self-legitimation studied here). The chapter's most notable limitation is arguably that real-world attempts at legitimation and delegitimation are much more complex than the basic treatments I used here to test the potential effects of (de)legitimation efforts by different agents on legitimacy beliefs among the general public. In the real world, GGIs do not simply try to legitimate themselves by *saying* that they are democratic and effective. Instead, they often let their *actions* speak for themselves, for instance, by becoming active in the field or initiating reforms. Testing the effects of such (de)legitimation strategies is a worthy subject of inquiry for future studies.

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PART V
CONCLUSION

12

Conclusions

Legitimation and Delegitimation of Global Governance Institutions

Kristina Jönsson and Anders Uhlin

Global challenges such as climate change, economic crises, pandemics, and refugee crises have demonstrated the need for governance arrangements beyond the nation-state and led to a transfer of authority to global governance institutions (GGIs). These GGIs need to be perceived as legitimate by key audiences and hence engage in processes of self-legitimation in order to justify their exercise of authority. But they are also challenged and criticized for not being effective in solving the problems they were set up to solve, for lacking in transparency and accountability, and sometimes more fundamentally for being part of the problem rather than offering any solutions to global challenges. This kind of delegitimation of GGIs has increased in an age of power shifts in world politics, which contain strong populist and nationalist tendencies. The politics of legitimation and delegitimation in global governance, which is the focus of this book, is a key feature of contemporary global politics (Zaum ed. 2013; Zürn 2018; Dingwerth et al. 2019; Tallberg and Zürn 2019).

This book has theorized and empirically explored processes of legitimation and delegitimation of GGIs. We have moved beyond previous research by focusing on legitimation *and* delegitimation and by highlighting how these processes are often intertwined. Moreover, we have analyzed (de)legitimation practices, justifications, and audiences within an integrated theoretical framework. We have provided broad comparative analyses to uncover patterns of (de)legitimation processes and structured focused comparisons to explain variation in these patterns with reference to the institutional set-up of GGIs, policy field characteristics, and broader social structures, as well as the qualities of agents of (de)legitimation. We have worked with a wider range of material and methods than what has been common in previous research. Combining insights from qualitative case studies, content analysis of GGI annual reports, Twitter data, an elite survey, and survey experiments, we have been able to capture different aspects of the complex processes of (de)legitimation in global governance, triangulate data, and overcome limitations in specific data sources. We have strived for pluralism in terms of our selection

of sixteen GGIs by including intergovernmental, nongovernmental, and hybrid GGIs, task-specific and multipurpose GGIs from several policy fields, including economic affairs, sustainable development, and peace and security, with either global or regional memberships.¹

In this concluding chapter we offer our answers to the volume's overall research question: *How, why, and with what impact on audiences, are GGIs legitimated and delegitimated?* We revisit the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 2 in light of the book's findings. First, we provide answers to the three parts of the research question—how, why, and with what impact on audiences. Concerning the how question, we recapitulate some major findings in the previous chapters in order to outline the broad pattern of (de)legitimation across policy field and type of GGIs. The why question is answered with reference to explanatory factors related to the institutional set-up of the GGI, characteristics of the policy field, and broader social structures. Turning to the impact on audiences, we elaborate on how and when (de)legitimation influence both the composition of audiences and individuals' legitimacy beliefs. Having addressed the three main research questions, we then move on to theorize the interplay between legitimation and delegitimation based on the findings of the book. In the final section, we discuss the implications of our study for the broader research fields of legitimation studies in general, contestation in global governance, and normative considerations in rule-making beyond the nation-state. In doing so, we also point to some possible policy implications of our findings.

In short, this book offers three major take home messages as contributions to research on legitimacy in global governance. First, the (de)legitimation of GGIs are highly complex, dynamic, and interactive processes. While previous research has focused on either legitimation (Zaum ed. 2013; Gronau and Schmidtke 2016; Ecker-Ehrhardt 2018; Dingwerth et al. 2020) or delegitimation (Hauns 2007; Copelovitch and Pevehouse 2019; Stephen and Zürn 2019), we demonstrate that this process typically unfolds in an interplay between the two. Moreover, while previous research has tended to focus on discursive, institutional, or behavioral (de)legitimation practices separately, we show how these practices more often than not go together and reinforce each other. We also demonstrate how (de)legitimation justifications are usually derived from a combination of norms that must be understood in relation to normative and political contexts that are time specific—and in relation to more diverse audiences of (de)legitimation than what has been acknowledged in previous research. Second, the impact of

¹ The sixteen GGIs in our sample, grouped according to policy field, are the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO), Group of Twenty (G20), World Bank, Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), World Health Organization (WHO), Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), United Nations Security Council (UNSC), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), International Criminal Court (ICC), Kimberley Process, United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), African Union (AU), and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

(de)legitimation processes on legitimacy beliefs is not as straight forward as generally assumed. We demonstrate that whereas delegitimation may influence citizens' legitimacy beliefs, GGI self-legitimation alone tends to be ineffective. However, when a GGI engages in self-legitimation to counter the delegitimation by state or societal actors, this legitimation can mitigate the negative impact of delegitimation. Third, the institutional set-up of GGIs, the nature of the policy field, and broader social structures shape processes of (de)legitimation by determining what (de)legitimation practices are available to different agents, and what justifications are most likely to resonate with different audiences. This agent-structure analysis is essential for understanding processes of the (de)legitimation of GGIs. Below, we elaborate on these points.

How are GGIs Legitimated and Delegitimated?

The chapters in this book have provided rich answers to the broad question of how GGIs are legitimated and delegitimated. In this section, we highlight the main findings on the forms of legitimation and delegitimation across policy field and type of GGIs.

Practices

When analyzing (de)legitimation practices, a first finding is the diversity of practices employed by both GGIs and other actors. Discursive (de)legitimation practices are typically less costly and more easily available to a range of potential agents of (de)legitimation than are most institutional and behavioral practices. Speaking out for or against a GGI, for example, in social media, does not require enormous resources. Institutional legitimation practices by GGIs are obviously less common as they entail substantial changes of institutional practices and policies. A relatively common form of behavioral delegitimation is protest. Chapter 5 provides several examples of different types of civil society protests against the ASEAN, the G20, and the World Bank. Leaving a GGI is a powerful behavioral delegitimation practice. A prominent example is former US President Trump's withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement in order to delegitimize the UNFCCC (Chapter 4). A similar but less publicly known case of behavioral delegitimation through exit was when Greenpeace International left the FSC in 2018 (Chapter 10). In short, legitimation and delegitimation practices in global governance are multiple and definitely not limited to discursive practices.

Second, institutional and other behavioral (de)legitimation practices are typically combined with discursive (de)legitimation. For example, most GGIs tend to publicize institutional reforms when they implement them and use them to legitimize their exercise of authority. Hence, they combine their institutional

legitimation practice with discursive legitimation. This is evident in the analysis of GGI annual reports in Chapter 3, as well as in most of the comparative case studies. Discursive (de)legitimation practices are sometimes combined with behavioral (de)legitimation practices. The case of the AU (Chapter 4) provides illustrative examples of this, for example, Gaddafi's discursive statements were frequently backed up by rituals and other behavioral legitimation practices.

Third, a consistent pattern is that global GGIs in the economic policy field tend to more frequently use both institutional legitimation practices (e.g., as referred to in annual reports) and discursive legitimation practices (e.g., on Twitter) than GGIs in other fields. Overall, we find fewer instances of both institutional and discursive legitimation by nongovernmental and hybrid GGIs, regional organizations (with the exception of the EU), and GGIs in other policy fields. The analysis also indicates that regional and global economic intergovernmental organizations are among those most frequently subject to both behavioral legitimation and delegitimation practices by elites. However, (de)legitimation are also common in other policy fields, as discussed in the case of the UNFCCC (Chapter 4), in the case of regional intergovernmental organizations such as the ASEAN (Chapter 5), as well as in the cases of hybrid and nongovernmental GGIs, such as the Kimberley Process (Chapter 8) and the FSC (Chapter 10). Overall, our findings suggest that the relatively strong focus on global economic intergovernmental organizations in previous research is understandable as these GGIs stand out as being particularly frequently involved in the politics of (de)legitimation. Yet, research on legitimacy in global governance should not be limited to these GGIs.

In sum, the chapters in this volume have demonstrated how GGIs use a variety of discursive and sometimes institutional and behavioral legitimation practices, how other agents apply multiple discursive and behavioral legitimation practices in support of GGIs, and how GGIs are targeted by diverse discursive and behavioral and occasionally institutional delegitimation practices. While confirming the frequent use of discursive (de)legitimation practices, the studies clearly demonstrate that research on the politics of (de)legitimation in global governance should not be limited to the discursive dimension. Institutional and other behavioral (de)legitimation practices are more important for the legitimacy of GGIs than what is generally acknowledged in the literature. In particular, the ways in which behavioral and institutional (de)legitimation practices are combined with discursive practices deserve more scholarly attention. This needs to be studied beyond the major economic intergovernmental organizations.

Justifications

Turning to justifications, a first finding is how normative justifications vary across type of GGI, and policy field. In general, intergovernmental GGIs have been

comparatively more likely to legitimate themselves mainly through technocratic norms, whereas nongovernmental and hybrid GGIs have more frequently utilized democratic norms (Chapter 6). Chapters 7 and 8 show that fairness is invoked when (de)legitimizing many types of GGIs, but in different ways, depending at least partly on the purpose of the GGI and its institutional set-up. For example, as an international court, the ICC has received particular scrutiny regarding its ability to be impartial and fair. The WHO typically centers on its expert role by identifying health problems and solutions with a focus on the vulnerable as a way of legitimating the organization but, over time, justification related to efficiency and economics have become increasingly central. In the 1990s, the WTO had to respond to justifications related to democracy, while the focus today is on efficiency and procedural fairness. The COVID-19 pandemic affected the (de)legitimation dynamics during 2020 and 2021 by invoking justifications based on technocratic norms, but also fairness, impartiality, and justice.

A second finding is that justifications are quite significantly affected by the position of the agent of (de)legitimation in relation to the object of (de)legitimation. Chapter 8 demonstrates how the legacy of colonialism affects normative justifications in an African context. In the case of the ICC, considerations regarding its impartiality and fairness prominently featured a critique of the court as being biased against Africans. The Kimberley Process is delegitimized by civil society organizations that focus on institutional and structural unfairness toward mining communities and consumers. In the case of the AU, efficiency justifications are used to legitimate financial independence from the West, while the critique from primarily civil society concerns the failure to involve nongovernmental actors and to live up to people-centered norms.

A third finding is the stability in purpose justifications over time. Chapter 6 observes that the way in which GGIs refer to their core purpose in their annual reports has generally remained stable over time. GGIs underline their continued commitment to their delegated purpose, and thus their legal legitimacy. However, in the case of the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO, their initial purpose was adjusted to include sustainability norms resulting from changing social structures. In contrast, Chapter 7 shows that in the case of the WHO, there was a notable shift in the annual report justifications in the late 1990s in regard to procedures and performance. This reflects a change of leadership, in which the new Director-General wanted to market a new strategy for the WHO that was more aligned with the current neoliberal ideas of how to address global health challenges.

In sum, the chapters show that a wide range of normative justifications are invoked in (de)legitimation practices, depending on the GGI, policy field, and time frame. They also demonstrate that self-legitimation justifications related to the purpose of GGIs in general remain relatively stable, while procedure

and performance related justifications show greater variation. Many of the findings support previous research, but the chapters demonstrate the difficulty in disentangling legitimation and delegitimation practices and their justifications, calling for more in-depth research of how normative justifications are employed in relation to different GGIs. There is a need to contextualize justifications as their normative status may change over time, as well as across policy fields and geographical regions.

Audiences

Our analyses of (de)legitimation audiences have mainly sought to answer the questions of why and with what impact on audiences GGIs are (de)legitimated, rather than the question of how this is done. Hence, we mainly discuss these findings in the following sections. In this section, we just want to highlight two points. First, the composition of audiences related to the legitimacy of GGIs is often more diverse than what has been observed in previous research. Several chapters have identified a number of nongovernmental and non-constituent audiences that go significantly beyond the focus on member states in much previous research. Distinguishing between targeted and self-appointed audiences is a fruitful way to analyze this diversity, as demonstrated in Chapters 9 and 10.

Second, certain (de)legitimation practices tend to be associated with certain audiences. Based on the elite survey data, we find a significant association between engaging in behavioral *legitimation* practices associated with the functioning of GGIs (assisting in policy-making and providing funding) and targeting member states and GGI staff. In contrast, *delegitimation* practices (particularly making critical public statements) are more strongly associated with targeting the general public, people believed to be affected by the GGI, and civil society organizations. Moreover, our Twitter-based results demonstrate that social media is indeed an arena of interplay between legitimation and delegitimation through activity by both agents and audiences of (de)legitimation.

Taken together, our findings on how GGIs are legitimated and delegitimated demonstrate the diversity of legitimation and delegitimation practices, the multitude of justifications used, and the broad set of targeted and self-appointed audiences in such processes. Moreover, the analyses indicate how (de)legitimation practices, justifications, and audiences are linked. Practices draw on the different normative justifications that affect audiences. For practices to be effective, the justifications used must resonate with the relevant audiences. Also, the type of audience may influence the kind of practices an agent of (de)legitimation decides to use. As stated throughout this book, it is not possible to fully understand processes of (de)legitimation without focusing on all three components of the theoretical framework and how they are connected.

Why are GGIs Legitimated and Delegitimated?

Our overarching why question is concerned with factors related to institutional set-up, policy field characteristics, and social structures, seeking to explain variation in the legitimation and delegitimation of GGIs.

Institutional Set-up

The institutional set-up of a GGI is an important explanatory factor, and a rich literature suggests that (de)legitimation patterns are shaped by this factor (Zaum ed. 2013; Tallberg and Zürn 2019). Our GGI sample has different types of GGIs (intergovernmental, nongovernmental, hybrid, and network-based institutions), and geographical scope (global or regional). We find that the institutional set-up significantly explains both the combination of legitimation and delegitimation and the diversity of (de)legitimation practices, justifications, and audiences.

First, the degree of *authority* explains why GGIs need to be legitimated in the first place and why they are targeted by delegitimation practices. A general finding in the literature on legitimacy in global governance is that the more authority a GGI has, the more it will be targeted by delegitimation, and the more it will need to be legitimated (Zürn 2018). To some extent the studies in this book confirm that increased authority triggers (de)legitimation. The global and regional GGIs with the most authority are among the most frequently targeted by delegitimation practices and are also the most actively engaged in self-legitimation. However, we also observe similar patterns of (de)legitimation related to GGIs with less authority, including nongovernmental and hybrid GGIs. The (de)legitimation of these GGIs might be less intense than the (de)legitimation related to, for example, the EU, the WHO, and the WTO, but we note that similar (de)legitimation practices, justifications, and audiences are at play in the case of, for example, the FSC and the Kimberley Process. Hence, while we acknowledge that a certain degree of authority is a prerequisite for the (de)legitimation of a GGI, our analyses do not suggest that authority per se is an important explanation as to why a GGI is legitimated or delegitimated in certain ways.

Second, where the GGI can be placed on the *governmental-nongovernmental* spectrum explains variation in (de)legitimation practices, justifications, and the composition of audiences. Intergovernmental GGIs use discursive practices more than nongovernmental GGIs. They also use technocratic justifications to a higher degree. Furthermore, GGIs that grant more access to nongovernmental actors tend to experience a greater variation in legitimation and delegitimation practices, justifications, and audiences, due to their more complex institutional set-up. The case of the UNFCCC confirms this with its institutionalized accreditation and access to more than 2200 observer organizations (Chapter 4).

Policy Field

The characteristics of the policy field can also explain patterns of GGI (de)legitimation. First, we find that the *complexity of the policy field structure* in terms of what types of actors dominate the field is important for the forms of (de)legitimation. Within the state-centered security field, GGIs and member states are the main producers and targets of (de)legitimation practices and, as a result, we find a more limited set of mainly discursive (de)legitimation practices. In contrast, a richer variety of agents and practices characterizes policy fields such as the environment, development, and health, and we therefore find both a broader set of agents of (de)legitimation and a greater combination of discursive, institutional, and behavioral practices in such policy fields. This is related to the increasing organizational complexity or fragmentation in global governance, which challenges the institutional boundaries of GGIs. Climate change, for example, is a policy issue that affects several policy fields. Thus, the global and national regulation of climate change is a very politicized issue with high stakes, explaining the diversity of (de)legitimation practices, justifications, and audiences related to the UNFCCC. Other GGIs, such as the FSC and ICANN, operate in policy fields characterized by less complex policy field structures and feature less diverse (de)legitimation patterns.

Second, the *degree of politicization* in a policy field is a major factor that explains variation in delegitimation practices, which is in line with previous research (e.g., Zürn 2018). In general, politicization is higher in the economic policy field than, for example, in health. However, the spill-over effects between different policy fields may reduce this difference, as illustrated by the Trump administration deploying similar delegitimation practices across policy fields in order to undermine multilateralism. Furthermore, politicization stands out as an important factor for explaining the activation of self-appointed audiences, but it does not appear to be decisive for who is targeted by self-legitimation. Finally, the degree of politicization in a policy field may vary over time due to both external events and changing normative structures and their resonance with different audiences, thereby affecting the variation in (de)legitimation practices, justifications, and audiences.

Social Structures

The structural context of (de)legitimation processes includes both material and ideational aspects. First, *material power structures* matter for processes of (de)legitimation. Material distribution patterns reflect global economic and political power structures, as well as social stratification and inequalities. The politics of the (de)legitimation of GGIs plays out in the context of geopolitical power

relations and the global capitalist economy, amply illustrated by the conflict between the US and China with consequences for the multilateral system. Material social structures also include social stratification embedded in the inequalities between groups, which determine the repertoire of (de)legitimation practices available to different actors and what audiences are regarded as important for the legitimacy of GGIs. For similar reasons, powerful states in the Global North are likely to be able to use a richer set of (de)legitimation practices, and more effectively, compared to low-income countries in the Global South. To exemplify, powerful member states can withhold or stop funding as an effective delegitimation practice if they are the main financial contributors to a GGI, as we have witnessed in several cases and most recently in the case of the WHO. These power structures change over time, which also explains variation in (de)legitimation across GGIs and policy fields. For example, decolonialization has changed membership compositions in many of the older GGIs and thus also challenged established power relations and evoked justifications related to fairness.

Second, *normative structures* help explain the processes of (de)legitimation related to GGIs. The ideational dimension of structures refers to norms, ideas, discourses, and identity based social stratification. The liberal world order on which contemporary global governance has been built includes structurally embedded norms on, for example, economic growth, market economy, liberal democracy, human rights, and sustainable development. Whereas the economic policy field is dominated by neoliberal norms on capitalist development, norms on sustainable development prevail in the policy field of climate change and the environment, while human rights and democracy norms are influential across several policy fields. Hence, normative structures not only shape the justifications that are available in the (de)legitimation of global governance, but also determine how well different legitimization and delegitimation practices work, depending on how normative justifications resonate with different audiences, as shown in several of our chapters.

In sum, we find that the institutional set-up of the GGI, policy field characteristics, and social structures explain variation in how GGIs are legitimated and delegitimated and toward what kind of audiences. These explanations are complementary rather than competitive. The theoretical framework developed in Chapter 2 conceptualizes these factors as overlapping, as a GGI's institutional set-up is related to the policy field structure, which, in turn, is embedded in broader social structures. Hence, both conceptually and empirically it is difficult to disentangle the relative explanatory power of each. Concerning institutional set-up, the degree of authority of a GGI accounts for the likelihood of it being subject to (de)legitimation. Complex GGIs with a diversity of governmental and nongovernmental actors as members and stakeholders tend to engage in a more diverse set of discursive, behavioral, and institutional practices compared to intergovernmental GGIs. The characteristics of the policy field determine the

diversity of (de)legitimation practices, the type of normative justifications, and the composition of audiences. Material structures determine the repertoire of (de)legitimation practices available to different agents and what audiences are regarded as important for the legitimacy of GGIs. Ideational dimensions of social structures determine the (de)legitimation justifications that are available and how well various normative justifications resonate with different audiences.

What is the *Impact* on the Composition of Audiences and their Legitimacy Beliefs?

After answering how and why GGIs are (de)legitimated, we now turn to the impact of (de)legitimation on audience composition and individuals' legitimacy beliefs. First, the analyses in Chapters 9 and 10 demonstrate how (de)legitimation shape the composition of audiences. Previous research on (de)legitimation in global governance has often focused on constituent audiences, taking for granted that member states and the public in these states are those who are addressed through legitimation, even if GGIs increasingly reach out to more diversified audiences. Through the LegGov elite survey we find that elites engaging in the (de)legitimation of GGIs more frequently target non-constituent audiences, such as civil society organizations. For elites, targeting the legitimacy beliefs of member state representatives or the general public does not appear to be the main priority. Through their (de)legitimation practices, elites contribute to the development of a more diverse composition of (de)legitimation audiences related to GGIs. Also, when not specifically targeted, audiences may claim a role in the processes of (de)legitimation, constituting themselves as self-appointed audiences. Politicization results in greater activation of self-appointed audiences, at least within the domain of sustainable development. We find that citizens are the most common self-appointed audience on Twitter, particularly in relation to global and economic GGIs. When GGIs use Twitter and other social media for discursive legitimation without targeting any specific audience, the composition of audiences still becomes diverse because the relative accessibility of this medium enables the activation of a number of self-appointed audiences. Overall, our findings suggest that previous research may have overstated the importance of member states as the primary (de)legitimation audience in global governance.

Second, when using survey experiments to examine the impact of (de)legitimation practices on citizens' legitimacy beliefs, Chapter 11 uncovers that GGIs are to some extent vulnerable to delegitimation by agents such as hostile governments and actions such as citizen protests. There is some evidence that governmental delegitimation attempts can work in isolation to decrease public confidence in certain GGIs, and that citizen protests can negatively affect public confidence in GGIs. While GGI self-legitimation statements in isolation

have no effect on public perceptions of GGIs' legitimacy, the chapter also finds that GGIs can effectively defend themselves against and at least neutralize them through self-legitimation. To put it differently, the combination of governmental delegitimation and GGI self-legitimation does not lower public belief in the legitimacy of a GGI; and neither does the combination of citizen protests and GGI self-legitimation. In short, while efforts at self-legitimation may not produce the desired effect of increasing public confidence, self-legitimation may at least keep public confidence levels in GGIs stable - often at positive levels.

In sum, the findings of this book show a more complex and partly different composition of (de)legitimation audiences than what is usually assumed and provides a first assessment of the impact of (de)legitimation on legitimacy beliefs. Non-constituent audiences, particularly civil society actors, are more prominent as targeted audiences than what has been acknowledged in previous research. Moreover, citizens appear as prominent self-appointed audiences, at least in discursive (de)legitimation on Twitter. Concerning the impact on individuals' legitimacy beliefs, the survey experiments show that GGI self-legitimation alone is not effective whereas delegitimation by both governmental and nongovernmental actors can have a negative effect on legitimacy beliefs. However, when delegitimation and self-legitimation are combined, the latter tends to neutralize the negative effects of the former.

Theorizing the Interplay between Legitimation and Delegitimation

This book has demonstrated that processes of legitimation and delegitimation can fruitfully be analyzed together in an integrated theoretical framework. Now we take a step further and begin to theorize how and when processes of legitimation and delegitimation feed into each other. We do this in three steps, drawing on the book's findings. First, we specify the main differences between processes of legitimation and processes of delegitimation with regard to the main components of our theoretical framework. Second, we analyze how legitimation and delegitimation feed into and influence each other. Third, we formulate expectations on when legitimation is likely to result in delegitimation, and vice versa.

Overall, the chapters in this book have emphasized that legitimation and delegitimation are similar processes—two sides of the same coin—that should be analyzed together using the same theoretical framework. Hence, we have often referred to (de)legitimation to capture both processes. However, when closely examining the findings of this book, it becomes clear that legitimation and delegitimation are distinct processes that differ in important ways. Table 12.1 compares legitimation and delegitimation regarding key components of our theoretical framework.

Table 12.1 Comparison between legitimation and delegitimation (based on the book's findings)

	Legitimation	Delegitimation
Frequency	Very common	Somewhat less common
Key agents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) GGI 2) Governmental and nongovernmental constituent actors 3) Non-constituent actors 	Governmental and non-governmental constituent and non-constituent actors
Key practices	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Discursive 2) Institutional 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Discursive 2) Behavioral
Key justifications	Purpose related Technocracy Democracy	Fairness Democracy
Key audiences	GGIs: unspecified audience; Other agents: civil society, general public, GGI	GGI, constituent actors, civil society, general public
Impact on legitimacy beliefs	Not on its own, but may neutralize delegitimation	Some, but impact can be neutralized by legitimation

First, an overarching finding is that legitimation is more common than delegitimation in global governance. GGIs engage in self-legitimation on a more or less regular basis. Many have public communication departments that produce numerous statements promoting and defending the institutions' activities through various publications, press releases, websites, and on social media. Moreover, various political, economic, and civil society elites also tend to use legitimation more frequently than delegitimation vis-à-vis GGIs, according to our elite survey.

Second, in terms of key agents of legitimation, our findings suggest a clear order of importance. The main agent of legitimation is the GGI itself. All GGIs analyzed in this book engage in self-legitimation relatively frequently. Next to the GGI itself, its constituent actors (mainly states, but in some cases nongovernmental actors) are key agents of legitimation. Non-constituent actors are less prominent, but still relevant, agents of legitimation. Concerning delegitimation, we cannot identify key agents that are more important than others. State and non-state, constituent and non-constituent actors figure prominently in our analyses of delegitimation processes.

Third, when comparing key practices of legitimation and delegitimation, our findings confirm the central role of discursive practices in both processes. The second key type of legitimation practice is institutional whereas the second key

type of delegitimation practice is behavioral. Hence, beyond discursive practices, the repertoire of (de)legitimation practices that are most commonly used differ between legitimation and delegitimation.

Fourth, concerning key justifications, our findings also suggest that there are differences between legitimation and delegitimation. Whereas normative justifications related to the purpose of the GGI tend to be common in GGI self-legitimation, other actors who delegitimize a GGI less frequently refer to the purpose of the GGI. Instead, delegitimation often centers on shortcomings in the fairness and democratic qualities of the GGI's procedures and performance. In contrast, legitimation by many task-specific intergovernmental GGIs, particularly in the economic policy field, predominantly make use of technocratic justifications, whereas security and nongovernmental/hybrid GGIs tend to more often use democratic justifications related to procedure and performance.

Fifth, turning to the key audiences of legitimation and delegitimation, the analyses in this book suggest that legitimation by the GGI itself often does not have a specific targeted audience. Other agents legitimating a GGI by discursive practices often target civil society and the public. However, when other agents engage in behavioral legitimation practices, the key audience is often the GGI itself. Delegitimation audiences include the GGI, constituent actors, civil society, and the public as targeted (and sometimes self-appointed) audiences.

Finally, the survey experiment in Chapter 11 suggests that delegitimation is more effective than legitimation in influencing people's legitimacy beliefs. Self-legitimation on its own does not have any significant impact on legitimacy beliefs; but as a response to delegitimation, self-legitimation can still mitigate the negative effect of delegitimation. Delegitimation is more likely to influence people's legitimacy beliefs, but its negative effect can be neutralized by GGIs' attempts at self-legitimation.

This comparison of legitimation and delegitimation demonstrates the important differences between the two processes. The next step in our theorization is to analyze the interplay between these two processes. We theorize the politics of (de)legitimation in global governance as a dynamic and interactive process in which legitimation and delegitimation practices feed into each other in complex struggles over the legitimacy of GGIs. Our empirical analyses provide several illustrations of this interplay between self-legitimation and legitimation, as well as delegitimation by other agents.

In order to present the interplay between legitimation and delegitimation through a more generic story, we outline a typical scenario that synthesizes the cases covered in this book. The starting point is that a GGI engages in discursive self-legitimation on a more or less regular basis. It does so through various forms of public communication, making use of documents such as press releases and annual reports, as well as social media. Then something happens that triggers criticism from certain audiences. The trigger might be external to the GGI, such as

a natural disaster or a pandemic, but is most often related to a specific practice or policy of the GGI—or the lack of any practice or policy in response to a problem within the policy field in question. If criticism is strong and comes from several influential actors, this might even escalate into a legitimacy crisis. Delegitimation practices are typically discursive, but sometimes combined with behavioral practices, such as the withdrawal of funding or even an exit from the GGI or public protests by civil society organizations and citizens. In rare instances, there might also be institutional delegitimation, such as when critics establish a new competing institution. While the targeted GGI can usually handle discursive delegitimation, at least if critics do not focus on the core purpose of the GGI, institutional and certain behavioral delegitimation practices are typically more challenging. Faced by such delegitimation practices, the GGI response will be to intensify its discursive self-legitimation, making use of normative justifications that most likely resonate with key audiences. However, if the delegitimation practices are more challenging and the agents of delegitimation are recognized as important for the GGI's legitimacy, discursive legitimation practices will not suffice. The GGI might then engage in some kind of institutional self-legitimation in order to counter the criticism. Meanwhile, other actors than the GGI are also likely to try to counter the delegitimation practices by engaging in various forms of discursive and behavioral legitimation. There will then be an ongoing struggle between, on the one hand, the GGI's critics and on the other, the GGI itself and its supporters. Such legitimacy struggles might continue for a relatively prolonged period and become more or less routinized, but they might also escalate into a legitimacy crisis for the GGI or the situation might stabilize if the GGI is successful in restoring its legitimacy through institutional or discursive legitimation practices that positively affect the legitimacy beliefs of key audiences. Whereas GGI legitimation practices in general are not likely to positively affect legitimacy beliefs, when responding to delegitimation practices a GGI may successfully counter the negative effects of these practices. The more precise repertoire of (de)legitimation practices depends on the material power resources of agents of (de)legitimation and the global configuration of power at large. Normative justifications are shaped by broader ideational structures in global politics, as well as in more specific policy fields. Broader social structures also account for who is regarded as relevant audiences in relation to GGI legitimacy.

This generic story of the interplay between legitimation and delegitimation resonates with the findings of several chapters. The way that civil society protesters react to GGI legitimation practices and, in turn, provoke renewed self-legitimation by the targeted GGI is the focus of Chapter 5. It shows how protest against the World Bank resulted in substantial legitimation (institutional reform), whereas protest against the G20 only led to symbolic legitimation through discursive legitimation practices by the G20, or no response at all. In the case of protests against the ASEAN, representatives of this GGI appeared to ignore civil society protesters

altogether. Overall, Chapter 5 suggests that civil society protests are most likely to result in substantial GGI responses when the protests are of a specific nature and are carried out by actors recognized as relevant by the targeted GGI.

Other chapters also provide examples of the interplay between delegitimation and legitimation. Changes in the legitimation of the World Bank, IMF, and WTO could be attributed to the sustained delegitimation of these GGIs throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Chapter 6). Chapter 7 describes how the WHO has repeatedly engaged in reforms in order to meet severe criticism. Chapter 4 shows how delegitimation during a legitimacy crisis related to COP15 led to more self-legitimation and (de)legitimation by other actors related to the UNFCCC. The US retreat from the Paris Agreement also spurred self-legitimation by the UNFCCC secretariat. Similarly, but with nongovernmental actors as the main players, the high-profile exit of Greenpeace International from the FSC led to self-legitimation (Chapter 10).

In short, the chapters in this book demonstrate how legitimation and delegitimation feed into each other in complex struggles over GGI legitimacy. Synthesizing these findings, we have outlined a generic story of the possible interplay between legitimation and delegitimation. The third and final step in our theorizing is to propose some expectations concerning the conditions under which an interplay between legitimation and delegitimation is likely to occur (Table 12.2).

First, we argue that the combination of different types of legitimation practices is important. Discursive legitimation alone is seldom fully convincing, in the view of most audiences. Institutional legitimation practices move beyond mere rhetoric

Table 12.2 Theoretical expectations concerning the interplay between legitimation and delegitimation (derived from the book's findings)

Legitimation is more likely to result in delegitimation when:

- discursive legitimation is not combined with institutional practices
- justifications do not resonate with key audiences
- it occurs in policy fields that have a history of politicization

Delegitimation is more likely to result in legitimation when:

- discursive delegitimation is combined with behavioral practices
 - agents of delegitimation hold sufficiently central positions in broader power relations (related to policy field or broader social structures), meaning that the targeted GGI has to recognize them as relevant actors for its legitimacy
 - delegitimation focuses on specific policies or practices by the GGI rather than its overall authority, meaning that it is possible to address concerns by delegitimizing agents through policy reform (i.e., institutional legitimation practices)
 - justifications resonate with the targeted GGI and/or its key constituent members
 - it is directed at the GGI itself and/or constituent audiences
 - it occurs in policy fields that have a history of politicization
-

to demonstrate that the GGI is taking action to strengthen its legitimacy through institutional reform. Discursive legitimation practices that are not backed up by any institutional practices are less likely to impress critical audiences and may therefore result in delegitimation.

Second, legitimation using normative justifications that do not resonate with key audiences may provoke delegitimation. For example, audiences that mainly care about fairness and democracy are not likely to be satisfied with legitimation that uses technocratic justifications, and this discrepancy between the preferred norms may result in delegitimation.

Third, policy field context is also likely to play a role in when legitimation results in delegitimation. Legitimation that takes place within policy fields that have a history of politicization are more likely to result in delegitimation. The economic policy field, for example, is known to have a prolonged history of intense politicization and we therefore expect the legitimation of GGIs in this field to more frequently result in delegitimation compared to other less politicized fields.

Delegitimation, for its part, is more likely to result in legitimation when discursive delegitimation is combined with behavioral delegitimation practices. As argued above, a combination of different types of practices is typically more robust than the use of one type of practice alone. Hence, we expect discursive delegitimation that goes together with some kind of behavioral delegitimation practice (such as leaving the GGI or organizing a demonstration against the GGI) to be more likely to trigger a legitimation response (from the GGI and/or other actors). Discursive legitimation practices alone can generally be more easily ignored by the targeted GGI.

Moreover, as argued in Chapter 5 with reference to civil society protest, we propose that delegitimation is more likely to result in legitimation when agents of delegitimation hold sufficiently central positions in broader power relations (related to policy field or broader social structures), meaning that the targeted GGI has to recognize them as relevant for its legitimacy. GGIs can typically afford to ignore delegitimation attempts by less powerful actors.

Third, the object of delegitimation may also be important. We expect delegitimation to be more likely to result in legitimation when it focuses on specific policies or practices by the GGI rather than its overall authority. This is because in the case of the delegitimation of specific policies or practices, it is possible to address the concerns of the delegitimizing agents through policy reform (i.e., institutional legitimation practices). When delegitimation is of a diffuse kind, challenging the overall authority and purpose of a GGI, it is difficult for the GGI to identify any legitimation practice that would satisfy the agents of delegitimation.

Fourth, in line with the argument about legitimation above, we expect that it is more likely that delegitimation results in legitimation when normative justifications resonate with the targeted GGI and/or its key constituent members. For

example, a GGI that prides itself on its technocratic performance, but does not care much about democratic procedures, is more likely to react with legitimation when facing delegitimation related to the technocratic justification of its performance and simply ignore delegitimation concerning its (lack of) democratic procedures.

Fifth, in terms of audiences, our analyses suggest that delegitimation is more likely to provoke legitimation responses when directed at the GGI itself and/or its constituent audiences. If there is no specific targeted audience, any legitimation response depends on the reactions of self-appointed audiences, which is less likely to happen. Delegitimation that works through an intermediate audience (such as the public) is also less likely to result in legitimation.

Finally, delegitimation that occurs in a policy field that has a history of politicization is more likely to trigger legitimation responses, compared to delegitimation in less politicized policy fields.

To sum up, a core argument of this book is that GGIs are (de)legitimated through the interplay of GGI self-legitimation, and legitimation and delegitimation by other agents. While legitimation and delegitimation are distinct processes that to some extent differ concerning the key aspects of our theoretical framework (such as key agents, practices, justifications, and audiences of (de)legitimation), they should be analyzed together using the same framework. Based on the book's empirical findings, we have proposed a number of expectations on when legitimation is likely to result in delegitimation, and vice versa. These expectations—related to the type of agents, objects, practices, justifications, and audiences of (de)legitimation, as well as policy field—need to be tested in future research.

Broader Implications

In addition to the specific contributions to research on legitimacy and (de)legitimation in global governance, our findings address at least three broader fields: (de)legitimation in domestic politics, contestation in global politics, and normative debates in the study of global governance. In this section, we discuss the implications for research (and policy) in these fields.

(De)legitimation in Domestic Politics

Research in political theory and comparative politics on the legitimation and delegitimation of political regimes and institutions at the national level is abundant and has indeed inspired studies of (de)legitimation in global governance, including this book (Habermas 1976; Beetham 2013). To what extent, then, can our findings return to the context of domestic politics and inform research on processes of (de)legitimation more generally? GGIs and states are obviously different

entities and the (de)legitimation context of global governance and domestic politics differs in significant ways. GGIs, typically, have less authority than states, and hence, might provoke less delegitimation and require less legitimation. However, GGIs are more dependent on legitimacy than states as they lack coercive power and have fewer resources with which to ensure compliance. Hence, despite having less authority than states, GGIs might require more legitimation. Another difference is that unlike states, most GGIs are task specific, even if many of them operate in increasingly complex policy fields.

Acknowledging such important differences between global and national politics, we still argue that our findings could have implications for the study of legitimation and delegitimation more broadly. We suggest that the basic features of our theoretical framework also apply to domestic politics, that is, agents of (de)legitimation use certain practices and normative justifications that may or may not have an impact on audiences, and these processes are situated in a structural context that shapes them. Studying the interplay between legitimation and delegitimation, the combination of discursive and behavioral (de)legitimation practices, and the composition of audiences of (de)legitimation beyond the citizens of a state, could enrich (de)legitimation research more generally.

To take one example, the delegitimation of an authoritarian regime is an important aspect of a process of democratization and the delegitimation of a democratic regime is key to a process of autocratization. Highlighting the central role of legitimacy for political regimes, democratization research in line with our framework would focus on the variety of discursive and behavioral practices undertaken by representatives of authoritarian regimes to convince key audiences such as citizens and external actors that their rule is rightful. It would also highlight the practices used by pro-democracy actors to challenge the legitimacy of an authoritarian regime, and how such practices of legitimation and delegitimation feed into each other. While the key normative justification in such processes is obviously related to democracy, technocratic, fairness, and religious justifications might play a role, depending on the type of authoritarian regime in question. Struggles for democracy can be understood as struggles for regime legitimacy. Similarly, attempts to undermine the legitimacy of a democratic regime can be analyzed as delegitimation practices and, again, studied in relation to legitimation.

Contestation in Global Politics

Research on global social movements and contentious politics has examined how protests target GGIs (e.g., O'Brien et al. 2000; Della Porta and Tarrow 2005; Smith 2008; Kalm and Uhlin 2015; Anderl et al. 2019). Contestation in global governance is also derived from populist nationalism (Copelovitch and Pevehouse

2019; Söderbaum et al. 2021). While most of the literature on contentious politics and global governance does not explicitly refer to contestation as delegitimation, we argue that doing so by using our framework could contribute to this field of research. Understanding global social movements and protest activities in terms of delegitimation adds important dimensions to the analysis of contentious politics beyond the nation-state. First, it focuses our attention on the centrality of legitimacy concerns to protest movements, which could enrich the understanding of the drivers behind the mobilization of social movements. Second, the importance of finding normative justifications of delegitimation practices, highlighted in our analyses, has implications for frame analysis in social movement research. In particular, it highlights the challenge of framing contentious mobilization beyond the nation-state through norms that resonate with diverse transnational audiences. Third, the integration of analyses of GGI legitimation responses to protests can enrich research on global contestation. The dynamic interplay between delegitimation and legitimation provides a new avenue for research on global social movements as it pays equal attention to rule and resistance (cf. Anderl et al. 2019).

Normative Considerations in Global Governance

While our approach to legitimacy research has been empirical, analyzing how processes of legitimation and delegitimation unfold, our findings raise a number of normative questions. We argue that our empirical results have implications for normative International Political Theory debates. We have shown that multiple normative justifications are used in the politics of (de)legitimation in global governance. Democracy is only one of several normative justifications employed to legitimate and delegitimate GGIs. Non-democratic (and anti-democratic) normative justifications are increasingly common, not least related to populist nationalism (Söderbaum et al. 2021). How to handle conflicts between different normative justifications is an important question that calls for further research that more explicitly engages with the ethical dimensions of scholarship on the normative justifications of (de)legitimation. This includes justifications used by audiences that are likely to disagree with the current power structures in global governance. Moreover, our analysis of the composition of (de)legitimation audiences vis-à-vis GGIs raises the question of whose legitimacy beliefs ought to count in global cooperation. Is the movement away from states as the most important type of audience for the legitimacy of GGIs good or bad for democracy? Does it indicate the emergence of a global stakeholder democracy (Macdonald 2008)? Or does the emergence of new self-appointed (de)legitimation audiences undermine traditional forms of representation within states? These questions go beyond theory

debates and raise questions for policy and practices as well. The policy implications concern appropriate forms of governance beyond the nation-state, whose voice should count in world politics, and how to communicate with different audiences.

Concluding Remarks

This book has unpacked processes of legitimation and delegitimation in global governance. Our main message is that these processes typically feed into each other in complex struggles over GGI legitimacy. (De)legitimation agents, objects, practices, justifications, and audiences are intrinsically linked in the interplay between legitimation and delegitimation. The precise nature of these processes depends on the type of GGI, policy field, and social structures and varies over time. We have advanced the study of (de)legitimation in global governance by offering a uniquely broad and comprehensive analysis of discursive, behavioral, and institutional practices, a broad range of normative justifications, and societal as well as state audiences. We have demonstrated how processes of (de)legitimation vis-à-vis GGIs can be studied using a variety of data sources, as well as quantitative and qualitative methods. With a larger and more diverse sample of GGIs than in previous studies, we have been able to compare (de)legitimation processes across global and regional intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental and hybrid GGIs, and transgovernmental networks.

Our findings suggest that concerns about a looming legitimacy crisis in the multilateral system at large, which is common in academic literature and public debate, may be overstated. While the delegitimation of GGIs is indeed quite common, legitimation attempts appear to be even more so. Legitimation alone might not significantly impact legitimacy beliefs, but when delegitimation triggers processes of self-legitimation, the latter can effectively mitigate the effects of the former, enabling GGIs to maintain a stable level of legitimacy. The argument that, overall, the legitimacy of GGIs might not be at risk is in line with the findings of the two other books in this series. [Dellmuth et al. \(2022\)](#), investigating legitimacy beliefs among citizens and elites, find overall moderate levels of confidence in GGIs. Moreover, [Sommerer et al. \(2022\)](#) show that legitimacy crises are not necessarily bad for GGIs.

GGIs will remain important actors as humankind faces increasing global challenges. There will be good reasons for continuing to critically scrutinize and maybe even delegitimize many GGIs, and the GGIs themselves will need to further develop their self-legitimation practices. Processes of legitimation and delegitimation are likely to remain key aspects of world politics for the foreseeable future.

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