

Dear colleagues,

Please find below a panel proposal for the next meeting of DVPW's IR Section 4-6 October 2017 in Bremen. If the subject and panel description (below) spark your interest, please submit an abstract of approximately 200 words by 20 March 2017 to:

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Call for Papers

“Inter-Organizational Relations: Theory and Practice”

In global governance, both the proliferation of international organizations and the broadening of their mandates increasingly lead to organizational overlaps and the emergence of new organizational fields, also referred to as regime complexes. Due to its traditional focus on states, the discipline of International Relations had long neglected the importance of such inter-organizational relations. It was only when international organizations were recognized as autonomous units towards the end of the 1990s that IR's attention subsequently also turned to the relations between them. Given this delay, IR scholars have tended to ‘import’ theoretical frameworks from disciplines more advanced on that matter, mainly sociology, economics, and psychology. Today, IR scholars apply a multitude of theoretical frameworks alongside each other, sometimes in harmony and sometimes in contradiction (particularly economic vs. sociological or rationalist vs. constructivist perspectives). The explanations provided by these frameworks, be it resource dependency, culture, path dependence or bureaucratic logic, shed light on specific aspects of inter-organizational relations and are helpful in elucidating individual instances of organizational interaction. However, they tend to subsume the empirical reality under pre-established categories and thus frequently fail to do justice to the more complex and dynamic reality of Inter-organizational relations.

Therefore, we are seeking papers papers that demonstrate strong empirical understanding, while building on previous frameworks and making sophisticated theoretical contributions. Some of the questions that could be addressed are:

- What is the most insightful theoretical approach for explaining inter-organizational relations to date? Can such a claim even be made or should theoretical approaches rather be categorized according to their main research question, for instance: how do organizations relate to each other (network theory), why do organizations act in certain ways (institutionalisms), or what are the consequences of their interplay (regime theory)?
- How can the multitude of theoretical explanations be reconciled in a more pragmatic and/or holistic theoretical model? In particular, what ideas exist to reconcile rationalist and constructivist as well as economic and sociological divides? Should scholars be encouraged to build more on each other's work, instead of continuously developing their own ways of making sense of the subject or will consolidation happen ‘inevitably’?
- The different theoretical explanations of organizational actions are insightful, but how do they work in practice? How can we imagine the organization/individual making those decisions that follow one or all of the above-mentioned theoretical logics?

- More generally, how could the gap between theory and practice in the field of inter-organizational relations be reduced? Does addressing the theory-practice gap require an agreement among scholars on the most viable theoretical approach?
- What is currently restricting research on inter-organizational relations, and how is it possible to overcome these obstacles?

We do not want to limit discussions to a particular area of global governance because we assume that the dynamics across empirical contexts may be similar. Therefore, we want to prioritize the phenomenon/topic of inter-organizational relations over its specific empirical manifestations. Given the focus of our own work, however, we particularly welcome studies on international interventions (humanitarian action, development aid, peacekeeping). We, of course, remain open to papers that challenge our premise about generalizability and consequently highlight the idiosyncrasies of the inter-organizational field of intervention. If a shared interest on the topic of interventions exists, more specific questions may emerge, such as:

- In what ways are the inter-organizational dynamics in the field of intervention fundamentally different than in other fields?
- What then is the impact of inter-organizational relations on multidimensional interventions, such as on the Millennium Development Goals, Peacekeeping or the Protection of Civilians?
- How does the coordination discourse relate to organizational practices in post-conflict interventions? Does this discourse remain on the level of rhetoric, or is the UN engaging in 'overlap management'? If policy reforms, such as the cluster system and UN Integration, can be seen as active overlap management, how do we assess them?
- Why are practitioner/policy studies on inter-organizational relations in intervention contexts often of limited analytical value? Can this be explained merely by the influence of a strong coordination rhetoric, lack of theory, or the technocratic tendencies of these studies?