

International Organizations' Modes of Governance in Areas of Limited Statehood

The Case of Food Security

Leon Schettler, Angela Heucher and Andrea Liese



SFB-GOVERNANCE WORKING PAPER SERIES • No. 73 • MARCH 2018

SFB-Governance Working Paper Series

Edited by the Collaborative Research Center (SFB) 700 "Governance In Areas of Limited Statehood – New Modes of Governance?"

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Schettler, Leon/Heucher, Angela/Liese, Andrea 2018: International Organizations' Modes of Governance in Areas of Limited Statehood: The Case of Food Security, SFB-Governance Working Paper Series, No. 73, Collaborative Research Center (SFB) 700, Berlin.

ISSN 1864-1024 (Internet)

ISSN 1863-6896 (Print)

This publication has been funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG).

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DFG

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Leon Schettler, Angela Heucher and Andrea Liese

Abstract:

International organizations (IOs) are confronted with a twin challenge in areas of limited statehood (ALS). On the one hand, IOs are *governmental* organizations qua mandate. Their usual approach – providing a range of services to their members and working with or for a given state – may, however, either be blocked or prove unsustainable in ALS. On the other, ALS present numerous challenges to IO governance, ranging from insecurity to a lack of meta-governance. Yet, we know surprisingly little about how IOs operate in these contexts, and, in particular, which modes of governance they choose for which purposes. How can IOs attain the twin objectives of acting in accordance with their mandate, which gives primacy to governments, and responding to ALS-specific challenges in order to effectively provide food security? This paper addresses IOs' choice of distinct modes of governance, ranging from *bargaining* to *persuasion*. It investigates how different types of IOs use and combine these modes in light of varying ALS-challenges. The empirical observations presented in this paper stem from interviews with IOs (ECHO, FAO, IDB, WFP, and the World Bank) at the level of headquarters and country offices (in Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti, Niger, and Sierra Leone), as well as from organizational documents.

Zusammenfassung:

Internationale Organisationen (IOs) stehen vor einer doppelten Herausforderung in Räumen begrenzter Staatlichkeit (RbS): Einerseits sind IOs qua Mandat *Regierungs*-Organisationen. Ihre übliche Vorgehensweise – ihren Mitgliedern bestimmte Dienstleistungen bereitzustellen und mit oder für einen Staat zu arbeiten – kann in RbS jedoch nicht umsetzbar oder nicht nachhaltig sein. Andererseits gehen RbS mit zahlreichen Herausforderungen für die Governance-Aktivitäten von IOs einher, wie einer beeinträchtigten Sicherheitslage oder fehlender Meta-Governance. Nichtsdestotrotz wissen wir wenig darüber, wie IOs in solchen Kontexten operieren und welche Governance-Modi sie für welche Zwecke wählen. Wie können IOs im Einklang mit ihrem regierungsfokussierten Mandat operieren und dabei gleichzeitig auf RbS-spezifische Herausforderungen reagieren, um Ernährungssicherheit effektiv bereitzustellen? In diesem Working Paper analysieren wir, wie verschiedene IO-Typen angesichts RbS-spezifischer Herausforderungen diverse Governance-Modi (von *bargaining* bis *persuasion*) wählen und kombinieren. Unsere Analyse beruht dabei auf Interviews, die wir an den Hauptsitzen mehrerer IOs (ECHO, FAO, IDB, WFP und Weltbank) und in ausgewählten Länderbüros (in Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti, Kolumbien, Niger und Sierra Leone) durchgeführt haben, sowie auf organisationalen Dokumenten.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Areas of Limited Statehood – A Challenge for IOs¹

Areas of limited statehood (ALS)² present numerous challenges to international organizations (IOs) operating as external governance actors in many countries throughout the world (e.g. Schäferhoff 2014; Stoddard/Harmer 2007). As member state organizations, IOs differ from other external governance actors such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private corporations, public-private partnerships, or bilateral development agencies. While all external actors are in principle subject to regulation and oversight by the host government, only IOs are directly bound to governments via their constituency and mandate. A first general challenge for IOs thus derives from the fact that IOs seek to work with their respective member states, which are often absent or weak in areas of limited statehood. This concern with the state becomes evident in the mandates of IOs and in how they present themselves to the public and to relevant actors. Take the case of IOs in food security³ governance: The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), for instance, posits that its mandate is “to support members in their efforts to ensure that people have regular access to enough high-quality food” (FAO 2017; emphasis added). Accordingly, the FAO Constitution includes functions for the organization such as “to furnish such technical assistance *as governments may request*” or “to organize, *in cooperation with the governments concerned*, such missions as may be needed to assist them” (FAO 2015: 3; emphasis added). Similarly, the World Food Programme (WFP) states in its Basic Documents that “projects should be undertaken *only in response to requests from the recipient country or countries concerned*” (WFP 1993; emphasis added). IOs thus need to consider the state as a relevant actor, no matter how limited its statehood may be.

A second general challenge comes from the idea that food security is a governance good for whose provision states carry the primary responsibility: The 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Article 11 posits that signatory states “recognize the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger,” and they “will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right” (ICESCR 1966). The 2004 Voluntary Guidelines on the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food also underline state responsibility by locating this objective within the context of *national* food security (FAO 2005). While these Guidelines are not legally binding, their primary aim is to provide guidance to states, while

¹ This paper draws on research conducted by the SFB 700/D8 project team, for which funding by the German Research Foundation (DFG) is gratefully acknowledged. A first version of this paper was presented at the SFB 700’s 2017 international closing conference. We thank the conference’s participants, in particular Tobias Berger, for valuable and constructive comments. Furthermore, we thank Nadine Grimm-Pampe and Ciris von Strasser for editorial and research assistance.

² In this paper, we follow a Weberian understanding of statehood (Weber 1921/1980), i.e. statehood as the ability to enforce central decisions and the monopoly over the means of violence (cf. Risse 2012). In either of these two dimensions, statehood can be limited territorially (with respect to geographical areas), socially (with respect to certain social groups), as well as sectorally (with respect to policy issues) (Draude et al. 2012).

³ Food security is a multidimensional concept, constituted by food availability, food access, food utilization, and the stability of these aspects. It exists “when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets the dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life,” cf. FAO et al. 2015.

the potential benefits for other stakeholders are of secondary concern. However, all countries at risk of famine and at high risk of food insecurity, as well as nearly all countries on a watch list by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), are characterized by severely limited statehood. In addition, the Global Hunger Index (GHI) finds serious and/or alarming food security conditions only in states with low values for indicators of statehood (cf. Liese 2018; Stollenwerk/Opper 2017).⁴ Thus, in areas of severely limited statehood, the state as the entity responsible for food security, according to international norms, does not seem to provide this governance good sufficiently. The challenge, then, is one for IO governance. IOs' usual modes of governance would entail addressing the state directly (e.g. providing policy advice to the state). However, this may not work if the government lacks the administrative capacity to implement this advice. How does an IO thus operate, if it does not have a strong government as a partner?

A third general challenge for IOs concerns the implementation of programs and projects "on the ground." Some evolve due to the lack of a functional monopoly over the means of violence, while others relate to limited administrative capacities. For instance, security is "a constant headache" for humanitarian IOs engaged in conflict zones, such as in Colombia. Governance can also be particularly challenging if there are severe limitations to the state's capacity to plan and implement projects. In Haiti, this frequently presents problems for the ability of development organizations to make plans – an activity which presupposes the presence of capable government counterparts. We elaborate on the set of specific challenges that relate to the implementation of programs and projects "on the ground" in areas of limited statehood in chapter 2.

1.2 Research Question and Relevance

How do IOs deal with these challenges? This paper focuses on the modes of IO food security governance in areas of limited statehood. Thus, the emphasis is on "how" IOs seek to achieve their goals, as well as on how they engage in governance defined as "institutionalized modes of social coordination to produce and implement collectively binding rules or to provide collective goods" (Risse 2012). Despite the unique characteristics of IOs as member state organizations, we know very little about the modes of IO food security governance in areas of limited statehood. In particular, we know little about how IOs seek to fulfill two goals at the same time: On the one hand, effectively providing food security by responding to the ALS-related challenges they encounter, and, on the other, acting in accordance with their mandate, which gives primacy to governments. We also lack insights into IOs' perceptions of their own engagement. Our contribution is located in this research gap, and our research question is thus as follows: *Which modes of governance do different types of IOs choose to provide food security in areas of limited statehood?*

In line with this question, this paper seeks to make two main contributions. First, while we know that IOs and UN institutions, in particular, are very active as external governance actors in areas of limited statehood (Lederer 2018) and that non-hierarchical modes of governance are common (Risse 2018), we know less about specific modes of IO governance. Exceptions include

⁴ There is, however, some variation in the "midfield." This can be taken as an indication that other factors – for example, the success of external governance actors or the provision of goods by internal governance actors – affect the GHI values for states with somewhat limited statehood (Liese 2018: 13).

the observation that IOs (and regional organizations) are said to use networks and governance by negotiation (Lederer 2018) and that they usually enter into some sort of (contractual) relation with a host country government (Risse 2018). We thus aim to provide more nuance to non-hierarchical modes of IO governance in areas of limited statehood. Second, food security literature usually does not address questions of how governance actors such as IOs operate when providing this governance good. Few works on the topic exist. For instance, we know that humanitarian IOs engage in negotiations with non-state actors to obtain access to certain areas and to provide emergency relief during famines, e.g. in Somalia (Menkhaus 2012). We thus strive to offer a more systematic account of IO modes of governance to food security literature, which is particularly relevant given that different modes of governance may be linked to the effectiveness of food security governance – an important but under-researched question (Liese 2018).

1.3 Empirical Foundations and Structure of the Paper

Our empirical observations come from interviews with different IOs and the analysis of selected IO documents. The IOs we focus on are: ECHO (Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection of the European Commission), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), the IDB (Inter-American Development Bank), the World Bank, and the WFP (World Food Programme). We conducted interviews at the respective IO headquarters as well as in five different countries, namely Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti, Niger, and Sierra Leone.⁵ Our cases thus cover the most central organizations in the area of food security governance, yet the case selection also varies in the different types of governance goods selected (humanitarian aid and development).

The paper proceeds as follows: To begin, we provide a glimpse from our empirical study into the challenges IOs face in areas of limited statehood (section 2). Then, we continue with a literature review of modes of governance (section 3), before elaborating upon the responses of the IOs studied in the form of non-hierarchical modes of governance (section 4). Here, we elaborate on initial empirical patterns. We conclude by way of a short summary, hint at potential explanations for the choice of a certain mode of governance, and provide suggestions for further research (section 5). In sum, we hope to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of non-hierarchical IO modes of governance in areas of limited statehood.

2. Limited Statehood as a Challenge to IO Governance

IOs active in the realm of food security need to deliver in contexts that vary greatly with regard to governance constellations, geographical conditions, the presence of non-state actors, armed groups, and legal and social norms, as well as configurations of limited statehood.⁶ IO food

⁵ We sought variation with regard to statehood contexts in order to detect IO adaptation to these contexts, and thus chose these countries according to statehood indicators provided by the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) (BTI 2016).

⁶ While we are aware that IOs activities in food security governance take place at the international/transnational, the regional, the national, and the local level, we focus here on IO modes of governance at the latter two levels, i.e. the national and the local level. It is here where we can most directly observe IO governance in areas of limited statehood.

security governance in areas of consolidated statehood is very rare and generally limited to humanitarian crises following natural disasters (e.g. UN OCHA's and WFP's assistance to the United States after Hurricane Katrina [UNICEF 2005]). IOs are predominantly active in areas of limited statehood. In such areas, IOs play an important role as external governance actors that may complement food security efforts by state and non-state actors. At the same time, such areas present unique challenges to IO governance. In this section, we outline a few of these challenges specific to areas of limited statehood.

Four specific challenges are particularly prevalent for food security IOs "on the ground" in areas of limited statehood and are of interest here. These include two security-related challenges, namely restricted access and an insecure operating environment, and two policy-related challenges, namely the necessity of policy reform and a lack of coordination/meta-governance. All of these challenges have the following aspect in common: They are actor-centered rather than structural, which means that whether or not these challenges arise (as well as the extent of their severity) depends on the actions of different types of actors. Accordingly, IOs draw on different modes of governance in an attempt to compel another actor either to behave in a certain way and take a certain course of action or to refrain from taking a given action. In this sense, the (in)action of others is crucial for the success of the IO governance intervention, i.e. providing food security to governance addressees in areas of limited statehood. We thus exclude those challenges which are structural and do not depend on the interaction between IOs and other actors. For instance, development IOs report that severe limitations with regard to equipment, organizational resources, and skilled employees in Haiti (as well as in Sierra Leone) impair their effectiveness. This became evident in Haiti in the course of the invasion of the "Mediterranean Fruit Fly." Food inspection and quarantines would have been necessary to controlling this fruit fly invasion. However, due to a lack of capacity, it was not possible to install quarantine posts along the Haitian border. While these are certainly challenging circumstances in many countries, these are structural rather than actor-related challenges. Accordingly, IOs do not address such challenges through interaction-based modes of governance. Rather, IOs have other means at their disposal. For instance, some IO staff report having delegated project implementation and oversight to a country's administration only formally, while IO staff in fact do most of the work. As one interviewee said,

*"We said 'you know what, you guys are gonna do it.' And I haven't slept very much since then, because they can't write the terms of reference (...). We are doing half of their work. I think that there is nobody in the ministry of agriculture who spends more time per week than I do on that project."*⁷

In the remainder of this section, we discuss each challenge in turn. *Restricted access* is an initial challenge for IOs in areas of limited statehood. The term "restricted access" implies that there is an actor, e.g. a non-state armed group, which limits access to certain areas or certain populations. For IOs with a humanitarian mandate, access is key in order to deliver aid effectively (cf. Liese 2018). As one interviewee made clear, "in principle, we want to reach out to all people

⁷ Interview with World Bank official, June 2015, Washington, DC.

in need. And for that, there is one precondition: you have to have access. You have to get to these people.”⁸ However, access is not always existent. The literature here often refers to the case of Somalia, where Al-Shabaab refused to permit IOs and other humanitarian actors to operate in areas under their control during the Somali famine of 2011 (Menkhaus 2012). In Somalia, the entanglement of humanitarian assistance with stabilization and state-building agendas was particularly problematic, as these differing agendas compromised access by eroding trust in IOs’ neutrality and impartiality (Menkhaus 2010). Restricted access is also an issue in other countries. For instance, in Colombia, according to one interviewee, “ELN and FARC mined the rural areas, so the access of this place to the population was very limited.”⁹ Restricted access and limitations on the monopoly on the use of force are intimately linked in these areas, as the control of parts of Colombian territory by non-state armed groups indicates the Colombian government’s limited monopoly on the use of force. This makes the implementation of IO projects and governance challenging.

Insecurity poses a second challenge for IOs when providing food security in areas of limited statehood. Security is “a constant headache” for IOs who engage in food security governance in conflict zones. For instance, one humanitarian IO reported an incident where “fighting broke out between the government and some local armed groups” in Colombia and thus decided to interrupt the mission until things calmed down, despite people in the area who were in need of food assistance – a regular occurrence.¹⁰ According to another interviewee, “there must be a minimum reasonable security level for international organizations to be able to go into certain areas of Colombia, especially in the remote areas, which are controlled not by the government but by illegal armed groups.”¹¹ Chronic insecurity was also identified as a decisive impediment to aid efforts in South Somalia before and during the Somali famine in 2011 (Menkhaus 2012).

The inadequacy of existing policies or, rather, *necessity of policy reform* is also a common challenge in areas of limited statehood. In Sierra Leone, for instance, the FAO identified the necessity of developing a new land policy, which encompasses elements of tenure security and land administration, as pivotal for achieving food security in its 2012–2016 country programming framework (FAO 2012). The “how,” i.e. the process side of policy reform and policy change, is a crucial question in international development cooperation (e.g. Brinkerhoff/Crosby 2002). In particular, policy implementation and policy reform require the involvement of host country governments. However, the adoption of policies does not guarantee implementation: While the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) was adopted by many African countries and received substantial support, ownership for this agricultural policy and the specific commitments it entailed (e.g. raising agricultural spending) for national governments nonetheless seemed to be lacking and implementation lagged (Zimmermann et al. 2009).

Finally, a *lack of coordination or meta-governance* is oftentimes described as a pervasive challenge in areas of limited statehood. Whereas governments in areas of consolidated statehood can

⁸ Interview with ECHO-official, May 2015, Brussels.

⁹ Interview with FAO-official, March 2016, Colombia.

¹⁰ Interview with WFP-official, March 2016, Colombia.

¹¹ Interview with ECHO-official, May 2015, Brussels.

function as a “governance manager” (Genschel/Zangl 2008), many governments in areas of limited statehood lack the capacity necessary to play this role. Given the proliferation and density of actors in international development cooperation, however, coordination appears vital, in particular in order to avoid a duplication of efforts, which is seen as wasteful (Shaw 2011). For IOs in areas of limited statehood, knowing “who’s working on what, how many projects, the timeline, what are they planning to do, with each fiscal year, with what money,” as one IO official explained with regard to Haiti, is not straight-forward.¹² It is exactly this type of coordination, however, which is essential for IOs “to be sure that we are doing the work that we are here to do.”¹³

How do different types of IOs respond to these different types of challenges, and which modes of governance do they use vis-à-vis different actors whose (in)action decisively influences the successful provision of food security on the ground? Before turning to our empirical analysis of IO non-hierarchical modes of governance, the next section will first provide a review of the literature on modes of governance and limited statehood.

3. Literature Review: Modes of Governance and Limited Statehood

In the growing literature on governance in areas of limited statehood (cp. Krasner/Risse 2014; Risse/Lehmkuhl 2007; Risse et al. 2018), the term “modes of governance” refers to the governance processes and thus the “how”-dimension of governance (Risse 2018). Modes of governance thus describe the interactions between governors and their addressees.¹⁴ Modes of governance are specific activities, based on different logics of action (Draude et al. 2012). This approach is well-suited to analyze how IOs engage on the ground in contexts where statehood is limited.

The literature on modes of governance identifies two ideal-typical types: hierarchical and non-hierarchical modes of governance (Risse 2018). Accordingly, external governance actors may govern in an either hierarchical or non-hierarchical way. *Hierarchical rule* by external actors has existed throughout history, when external powers employed military and economic *coercion* as a means of governance (e.g. see Esders 2009 on the Romans; Dodge 2007, on the US in Iraq; or Lake 2018 on trusteeships). Since 1945, the use of force may also be mandated by Chapter VII resolutions of the UN Security Council (Wallensteen 2015). Yet empirically, such hierarchical steering backed by force and coercion on behalf of external actors is rare in international politics today. In particular, IOs such as the WFP or the FAO lack the ability to steer through UN Chapter VII resolutions, as famines and undernourishment are typically not considered “a threat to global peace and security” (UN 1945, Chapter VII). In rare cases, humanitarian assistance is backed by resolutions from the UN Security Council: ECHO and its partners, for example, could only begin cross-border delivery of food to Syria after this was permitted under a UNSC resolution. With UN SC Resolutions 2165 and 2191 from 2014 and Resolution 2258 from 2015 (valid until January 2017), the UN Security Council has “authorized UN agencies and their

¹² Interview with WFP-official, February 2016, Haiti.

¹³ Interview with WFP-officials, January 2016, Niger.

¹⁴ For a related, but distinct conceptualization that puts an emphasis on the interaction between IOs, their intermediaries and recipients, see the work on “orchestration” by Abbott et al. 2015a.

partners to use routes across conflict lines and the border crossings at Bab al-Salam, Bab al-Hawa, Al Yarubiyah and Al-Ramtha to deliver humanitarian assistance (...) to people in need in Syria" (UN 2016). The resolutions authorize cross-border convoys of emergency aid via Turkey, Jordan, and Iraq to areas controlled by armed rebel groups. They also represent the Security Council's response to the articulated frustration among humanitarians due to their inability to reach victims of the conflict (Gladestone 2014). An extreme case of insecurity of aid workers and lack of access hinder a humanitarian response is Somalia. Here, instances of kidnapping and killing have led to the withdrawal of aid workers before and during the last famine in 2011 (Maxwell/Fitzpatrick 2012). It was also in Somalia that the UN sent a peacekeeping operation in 1992 in response to a widespread famine (De Wet 2004: 156).

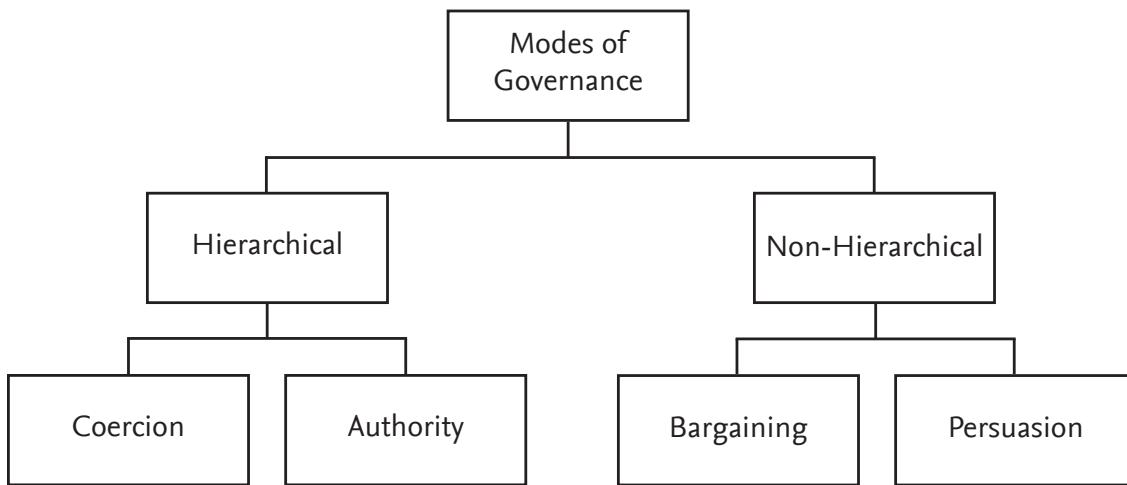
Besides using military force, hierarchy can also be exercised by means of legal enforcement. Hierarchical steering based on political and legal authority is a very stable form of governance with which to govern, as authorities are able to evoke obedience of their orders, irrespective of the latter's content (Schmelzle 2015). Yet, as states have only rarely delegated political authority to IOs (Abbott et al. 2015b: 10–11; Hooghe/Marks 2015), they typically do not draw on hierarchical modes but rather rely on *non-hierarchical modes of social coordination*. These will be discussed in this section.

Bargaining is a communicative process during which actors exchange demands, promises, or threats (cp. Risse 2000: 8). Based on a fixed set of preferences and utility functions, each actor strives to maximize gains with the use of incentives. While promises and rewards can be characterized as "positive incentives," threats and sanctions constitute "negative incentives." According to this mode, IOs may use incentives (during interactions or unilaterally) to address preferences of other actors, but they cannot change the preferences themselves. In principle, positive and negative incentives can be attached to every kind of governance output regardless of its content (Schmelzle, 2011). Given that these incentives manage to alter the cost-benefit calculation of the respective governance addressees, rewards and sanctions can be a powerful steering mechanism. Examples include the regulation of private businesses which seek to gain in reputation by fulfilling certain standards (Börzel/Deitelhoff 2018), as well as work on conditionality by the World Bank and the IMF (cp. Woods 2006: 4–6).

Persuasion is a mode of governance through which IOs seek to convince their governance addressees through communicative processes. According to Jeffrey Checkel, persuasion is "a social process of interaction that involves changing attitudes about cause and effect in the absence of overt coercion" (Checkel 2002: 1). Two strands of literature on persuasion exist. First, there is a long tradition in rational-choice scholarship emphasizing a strategic and manipulative understanding of persuasion (e.g. Riker 1996). Particularly in the constructivist norm literature, however, persuasion has been theorized as a key element on changes in both attitudes and normative convictions, as well as in behavior. For instance, Price (1998) described how advocates of a landmine ban were successful in persuading their audience by connecting the issue to campaigns against weapons of mass destruction and their equally indiscriminate effects. Similarly, Keck and Sikkink (1998) highlight how normative ideas about the avoidance of bodily harm became persuasive to the extent that they resonated with pre-existing normative convictions. On this understanding, which we subscribe to in this paper, persuasion follows a

"logic of appropriateness" (March/Olsen 1989). In sum, the literature has so far mainly discussed the following modes of governance:

Figure 1: Modes of Governance – A Literature-Based Overview.



Sources: Checkel 2002; Draude et al. 2012; Risse 2012, 2018.

4. Empirical Analysis

Which modes of governance do IOs choose to respond to challenges in areas of limited statehood when providing food security? In this section, we seek to provide an answer to these questions by drawing on empirical material we collected and analyzed from both IO documents and over 150 interviews with the staff of international organizations in the area of food security. Specifically, we conducted interviews with the staff of ECHO (Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection of the European Commission), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), the IDB (Inter-American Development Bank), the World Bank, and the WFP (World Food Programme) in their respective headquarters, as well as in their national offices in five countries: Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti, Niger, and Sierra Leone. While the selection of IOs was based on their relevance in the field of food security and on variation concerning the type of actor (e.g. multilateral development bank and humanitarian donor), our country selection was based on varying degrees of statehood on the national level, measured by the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI). To analyze our interviews and IO documents, we conducted a qualitative content analysis in MAXQDA (cp. Früh 2011; Schreier 2012).

Strictly speaking, one needs to observe interactions between governors and governance addressees directly to assess modes of governance fully. Evaluating their effectiveness, in turn, demands careful observation regarding output, outcome, and impact (cp. Beisheim/Liese 2014). However, we do not seek to measure effectiveness, nor to observe interactions directly. Rather, we concentrate on IOs as external governance actors and ask which governance modes they apply in order to provide food security. Thus, we focus on IOs' perspectives and perceptions

on modes of governance, as well as which challenges in areas of limited statehood IOs seek to address by drawing on particular modes of governance.

IOs will sometimes rely on other governance actors who can steer hierarchically. In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, IOs benefitted from the presence of UN peacekeeping troops in the aftermath of the post-electoral violence of 2010/11. The presence of UN peacekeepers led to an improved security situation and thus contributed to IOs being able to conduct food security activities through non-hierarchical modes. We analyze these observations in more depth in the section on combined modes of governance; otherwise, we focus predominantly on non-hierarchical modes of governance.

4.1 Non-Hierarchical Modes of IO Governance

The non-hierarchical modes of governance we find can be located on a spectrum between the logic of appropriateness and the logic of consequences (see Figure 2). The logic of consequences and the logic of appropriateness comprise the two major logics of social action (cp. March/Olson 1989). Both logics rest on distinct assumptions about actors and their relations to social structures. The logic of consequences (LoC) assumes rational, self-interested actors who seek to maximize their utility. According to the LoC, agents select their course of action based on cost-benefit calculations, while options result from their surrounding opportunity structure. In contrast, actors in the logic of appropriateness (LoA) are conceived as rule-followers who seek to take the right course of action. Social structures matter, as they socialize actors into believing what is appropriate.

In the following, we will first elaborate upon and describe the five modes of governance we identified when analyzing IO governance in areas of limited statehood, drawing both on interviews conducted with IO staff as well as on organizational documents. We begin with those governance modes, which are located at the left side of the spectrum and thus closer to a logic of consequences, namely *bargaining* and *signaling*. Then, we proceed to modes that increasingly follow a logic of appropriateness, namely *alignment*, *convening*, and *persuasion*.

Figure 2: Non-Hierarchical Modes of Governance.



Source: Own illustration.

After empirically sketching these modes, we provide some tentative findings as to the patterns we identified. These encompass on the one hand, patterns of IO type and modes of governance, and on the other hand, the type of challenge and modes of governance.

4.1.1 Bargaining

In bargaining situations, IOs can make use of positive and/or negative incentives to manipulate preference structures and thus to induce a certain behavior of another actor. Accordingly, manipulating the incentive structure of one's counterpart is a mode of governance that follows a logic of consequences. The assumption here is that actors are rational and react to incentives being offered in a way that is dependent on how they judge the costs and benefits of a given incentive.

Empirically, we observed this mode of governance particularly as one which multilateral development banks (here: IDB and the World Bank) rely upon when responding to the challenge of inadequate policies or the necessity of policy reform at the country level. Within our sample, the IDB and the World Bank are those IOs endowed with the most financial resources. Development banks have governments as their main counterparts – or rather, as their “clients” – with whom they negotiate the conditions for loans received. For instance, the IDB and the World Bank have very similar types of budget support mechanisms at their disposal: While the IDB uses policy-based loans (PBLs), the World Bank uses development policy loans (DPL). Both are disbursed on the basis of compliance with policy and institutional reforms (e.g. in the sector of food security) agreed upon by the IO and the relevant government (IDB 2016; World Bank 2014). The objective of both PBLs and DPLs is thus to incentivize the government to carry out policy reforms. For instance, the IDB, if it assesses a necessity to reform the financial system of a given country, can offer a PBL to a government as a way to support the implementation of a reform.¹⁵ At the same time, PBLs are only given under certain circumstances. One interview partner, for example, compared the PBL to a son asking his father for money in saying, “Ok, I am going to give you my money, but show me something,” for instance, “show me that you have good qualifications in math.”¹⁶ What is telling here from a semantic perspective is that the PBL is only given as a reward for good performance by the host country government, and it is used to further incentivize desirable behavior, such as carrying out certain policy reforms.

Similarly, the World Bank also negotiates DPLs with central governments as its main client and integrates conditions into the loan agreement. Rather than linking the loan to an objective such as a policy reform, the World Bank here includes conditions on how the development policy loan should be implemented in practice. As one interview partner described negotiations with the government, the World Bank can stress that they “are happy to provide (...) a development policy loan of 10.5 million dollars but only if we can also support some non-state actors to be able to deliver services in these areas.”¹⁷ Thus, the World Bank uses DPLs as a means to integrate non-state actors, e.g. NGOs, into the governance process in the country.

But IOs do not only use rewards as an incentive when bargaining with governments. They may also use sanctions to penalize unwanted behavior. The World Bank, for instance, has a record of suspending or closing projects when they find evidence for corruption or misuse of loans, as examples from Uganda and Bangladesh demonstrate (Financial Times 2015; The

¹⁵ Interview with IADB-official, June 2015, Washington, DC.

¹⁶ Interview with IADB-official, June 2015, Washington, DC.

¹⁷ Interview with World Bank official, June 2015, Washington, DC.

Guardian 2012). As one interview partner noted, “in this particular case (...) where we found corruption in the contract we completely shut the project down,”¹⁸ also in order to send a strong signal to the government. Again, the relationship between the IO and the government is similar to familial ties. The quotation in this case, for example, is attributed to a government official but is described by the IO staff member in familial language: “the way that the government sees the World Bank is like a nursing mother, (...) they expect a lot of support and a lot of help from the World Bank.”¹⁹ A project flagged to be shut down by the World Bank is thus seen as harsh punishment by the “nursing mother” – the IO.

While we did find several examples of IOs using incentives to promote a certain behavior (with rewards more commonly used than sanctions) vis-à-vis the government, this mode of governance in its IO-state configuration seems to be limited more to the development banks (the IDB and the World Bank). But even there, this mode of governance is not necessarily the first choice. While one interview partner in the field acknowledged that they could use “financial leverage to force them [authors’ note: the government] to deal with this issue,” it is not actually seen as a preferable option. According to the same interview partner, “that never works anyway. So financial leverage is sort of the last thing you want to be trying.”²⁰

At the same time, humanitarian IOs often use bargaining as a response to a situation of restricted access. In order to address this challenge, IOs draw on this mode of governance vis-à-vis non-state armed actors (an IO- non-state actor configuration) in an attempt to gain access to affected populations in areas not controlled by the respective government.

4.1.2 Signaling

Signaling constitutes a further mode of governance which we can observe in areas of limited statehood. This governance mode can be characterized by IO attempts to direct meaningful signals to different recipients. The nature of this mode of governance is one-sided: the IO communicates a message towards other actors, but does not necessarily engage directly with them “face-to-face.”

We observed this mode of governance in Colombia – a country with a history of conflict and a long-standing presence of violent non-state actors who have certain areas under their control. As one interviewee describes it, “sometimes the mere presence of an international actor in one of these areas helps already;”²¹ thus, the IO governs through “protection by presence”. By being present in a country, humanitarian IOs in particular can send messages to different groups. They can signal to armed non-state groups that their actions are being watched, which can have a mitigating effect.²² Furthermore, humanitarian agencies can communicate to communities in affected areas that they have not been left on their own. Finally, they can also let the international community know that upholding a presence in the country in question

¹⁸ Interview with World Bank official, March 2016, Sierra Leone.

¹⁹ Interview with World Bank official, March 2016, Sierra Leone.

²⁰ Interview with World Bank official, February 2016, Haiti.

²¹ Interview with ECHO-official, May 2015, Brussels.

²² Interviews with ECHO-officials, May 2015, Brussels.

is still necessary. Thus, they can raise awareness for an ongoing conflict and thereby further strengthen the “protection by presence” signal vis-à-vis armed non-state actors and the affected populations. ECHO, for instance, classifies Colombia as a “forgotten crisis” (ECHO 2015b, 2017) in order to raise awareness to the situation in the country and to highlight the high level of humanitarian need, thus calling upon the international community to keep an eye on the country. For ECHO, “protection by presence” is one way to respond to a humanitarian crisis, which, however, does not qualify as a stand-alone activity, but in combination with other types of responses (ECHO 2015a).

Use of *signaling* as a mode of governance resonates well with findings from the literature on traditional UN peacekeeping (that is, Chapter VI-based peacekeeping without an enforcement mandate), which identifies two principal mechanisms: interposition and observation (Fortna 2004). IOs in the realm of food security governance do not have any means of violence at their disposal to defend themselves from violent attacks. Thus, interposing themselves between armed groups to secure buffer zones is not at their disposal. Yet, as Fortna (2004) points out, even UN Peacekeeping Observer Missions (PKOs) with a more robust mandate are rarely well-armed relative to the warring parties, and they do not typically respond with force against violations of a cease-fire. Nonetheless, UN PKOs are recognized as a very cost-effective measure for conflict deterrence (Hegre/Nygård 2015). Similar to UN PKOs, IOs active in conflict zones can function as auxiliary peacekeepers by signaling physical presence and by demonstrating their observation of events. Like PKOs, the presence of IOs can also deter actors from using violence – at least to a certain degree.

Why does the presence of IOs in conflict zones bear the potential to enhance security for governance actors? The literature on UN observer missions (Fortna 2004; 2008) provides valuable clues, pointing to mechanisms which are likely to hold for humanitarian IOs as well. ECHO, for instance, is a humanitarian agency that prides itself on being a field-based donor. ECHO only resorts to “remote management” – in which operational responsibilities are delegated to partner organizations – when humanitarian access is severely limited. The preferred option is direct management, since ECHO as a field-based donor strives to “to visit project implementation sites and engage with the operational staff of partner organizations, and civilian populations, in face-to-face discussions,” as a guideline for ECHO staff on remote management reveals (ECHO 2013). Moreover, some IOs with a dual mandate, i.e. humanitarian and development, also seek to remain present in areas of conflict as long as possible. As one interview partner in Colombia pointed out: “we’ve maintained our presence in Córdoba, Chocó, Putumayo, and Nariño” – all of these being conflicted-affected areas with regular fighting.²³ Accordingly, we observe that different types of IOs all try to uphold their presence on the ground even in adverse circumstances, and we assume that – next to the main objective of reaching beneficiaries – signaling may also play a role here.

How can the mere presence of a UN observer mission interrupt causal pathways that lead to conflict, such as deliberate aggression, uncertainty about the enemy’s intentions, conflict by accident, or a combination of these factors? First, the presence of IOs increases the cost of an attack, as IOs represent the international community. Under the “spotlight of international

²³ Interview with FAO-official, March 2016, Colombia.

attention” (Fortna 2004: 487), violations of a cease-fire agreement or of other strong international norms is likely to incur at least diplomatic costs, but may incur losses in military or economic aid. The international audience costs are perhaps the most important asset to IOs engaging in food security governance in conflict zones. Where humanitarian assistance is mandated by a UN Security Council Resolution, violations directly challenge the authority of the UN Security Council and may trigger follow-up action up to Chapter VII resolutions. Next, IOs in conflict zones may help to reduce uncertainties about actions and intentions of the other party, since they maintain established (indirect) channels of communication with both. Finally, “accidental attacks” (e.g. if leaders do not have full control over their troops) are less likely to lead to immediate retaliation – such retaliation likely to kick-off a vicious cycle of escalation – since IOs offer a third channel of communication to deal with such isolated events (Fortna 2004).

In the field, humanitarian organizations at times also engage in mediation and conflict resolution between security forces and armed non-state groups. In post-conflict settings, they may even manage to build bridges between former warring parties (e.g. humanitarians in Colombia; see section on convening below).

4.1.3 Alignment

The default mode for international organizations – in particular, if host governments are also IO member states – is to cooperate with the government of a respective country, i.e. to engage in governance with or on behalf of the state. IOs rarely circumvent the government altogether. This principle is ingrained in the way IOs see themselves. For example, one interview partner notes that the WFP “works largely in support of the national governments – and upon their invitation.”²⁴ Typically, the government invites the WFP before it provides humanitarian assistance and/or engages in development cooperation. Variations of this procedure were often presented in interviews, also by other IOs. Even ECHO – a humanitarian donor whose countries of operation are not also member states in its structure – works in complementarity to and in coordination with the government, albeit always in accordance with humanitarian principles.²⁵

In this vein, IOs often draw on a mode of governance we denote as “alignment,” meaning that the IO aligns its work with the preferences of the respective government. There are certain limitations concerning to which degree IOs will align with governmental initiatives. For instance, as it pertains to emergency relief, humanitarian principles take precedence. Acting in accordance with humanitarian principles also serves to enable a sufficient operating space for IOs in the first place, since “[a]dherence to the principles helps humanitarian workers carry out their work; it facilitates access and acceptance” (ECHO 2017). As interview partners repeatedly pointed out, respect for the independent nature of humanitarian assistance and the following aspect is indispensable: IOs are “not being coordinated by the government. The government is not telling us where to intervene, because then you become part of a political agenda and you run the risk of alienating a part of the population.”²⁶ There are some trade-offs between

²⁴ Interview with WFP-official, June 2015, Rome.

²⁵ Interview with ECHO-official, May 2015, Brussels.

²⁶ Interview with ECHO-official, May 2015, Brussels.

adhering to humanitarian principles and providing assistance to those in need. According to a WFP conference report on humanitarian assistance in conflict and complex emergencies, IOs have been criticized “for acting as an implementing arm of the government [in Sri Lanka] – to the detriment of upholding humanitarian principles” (WFP 2009: 14), which can endanger the security of staff working in these areas and limit humanitarian space in the long term.

“Is alignment really a mode of governance?” readers might be asking at this point. We believe it is. Recall that governance is defined as “modes of social coordination with the intent to deliver collective goods and/or services” (Risse 2012). In our paper, we deal with food security. Social coordination takes place because social actors come together and agree to engage in joint activities. Where interests or norms between IOs and governments diverge, IOs must bargain, try persuasion, or decide not to engage with the issue at hand. If, on the other hand, IOs actively choose to align with pre-existing interests and/or norms of respective governments, they enable the kind of social coordination needed for governance to take place. Thus, alignment is itself a mode of governance.²⁷

When operating in an alignment mode of governance, IOs may react to proposals and ideas by the government. For instance, an interview partner at the World Bank in Côte d’Ivoire describes how the IO “responded to what the government was identifying as areas where the World Bank could add something,”²⁸ the issue at hand being the design and implementation of a land law. Here, the government actively identifies a policy issue in need of action, and in a second step chooses an organization which it believes can “add something,” thus also hinting at the Ivorian government taking on the role of a governance manager. But IOs, in this case the World Bank, do not simply wait for the government to seek out the IO to aid in the development and implementation of a policy. Rather, they also strive to put issues on the agenda and initiate processes themselves, since “when we live here, when we see things happening, we also have our own experience and then we have issues sometimes that we put on the table,”²⁹ a mode of governance which we analyze more in depth in the section on persuasion, as this mode is aimed at changing the very preferences with which IOs can then align themselves.

In development contexts in particular, IOs want to align with the relevant government, in accordance with transnational guidelines such as the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which promulgates the leadership of developing country governments in development cooperation (OECD 2005/2008). As one interview partner emphasizes: “Governments have to lead. Governments have to lead without a doubt,”³⁰ thus the IOs place themselves in a supporting rather than a leading role. However, this self-conceptualization can encounter practical difficulties that make alignment difficult. One interview partner reflected on differences between countries in observing that “in other countries, you actually have to run behind the government, the government is already way ahead and you run after them.” But in the case of

²⁷ Of course, nothing precludes the possibility that governments actively align with the agenda of an IO. Yet, our focus in this paper is on the perspective of IOs.

²⁸ Interview with World Bank official, February 2016, Côte d’Ivoire.

²⁹ Interview with World Bank official, February 2016, Côte d’Ivoire.

³⁰ Interview with WFP-official, March 2016, Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone as the IO, “sometimes you really have to roll up your sleeves,”³¹ because otherwise the progress of developing a policy document, for instance, would be stalled significantly. These observations correspond with findings by Severino and Ray (2010), who argue that the principle of alignment as promoted by the Paris Declaration only “fits” a certain kind of country. If administrative capacity is too low, governments may not be able to formulate the policies and priorities with which IOs can align themselves. Thus, donor coordination is necessary. On the other hand, high administrative capacity serves as a litmus test for the earnestness of IOs. According to Severino and Ray, at least in the case of Brazil, some doubts seem to be in order, as Brazil’s rainforest program did not receive adequate funding by donors even though it provided clear policy priorities with which IOs could have aligned themselves (2010). For those countries who have some administrative capacity, IOs have different ways of addressing this conundrum; most commonly they will include components on capacity building in their programs and projects in order to foster the capacity of their counterparts in the state institutions in the middle-to-long term.

4.1.4 Convening

Convening power refers to the ability to bring people together and to facilitate deliberation among them. Similar to Abbott et al. (2015a) we argue that IOs:

“often enjoy privileged access to important actors (state or non-state) within their governance domains. This allows them to empower actors and organizations by bringing them into contact with other influential actors, and to steer them by selecting which actors and organizations to convene” (Abbott et al. 2015: 14).

IOs thus enjoy convening power the more they are able to attract those stakeholders that are essential for a governance process to be effective. Depending on the expected benefit of participation, critical stakeholders are more or less likely to participate in these encounters. Through this governance mode, IOs enable other actors to engage in deliberation and to negotiate topics of common concern with one another, the aim being to achieve a compromise or even a consensus. IOs can take on a variety of different roles within this governance mode: On the one hand, they can take a step back and act the part of an “honest broker,” making it possible for others to come together to talk. On the other hand, IOs can play a more active role in shaping the agenda, setting the scene, deciding on whom to invite (and whom to leave out), as well as taking the lead in the deliberative process itself. To be clear, what we sketch out here are nuances in the way IOs enact convening as a governance mode, rather than providing clear-cut types, for there are differences in the ways in which IOs use convening power.

On the national level, IOs may govern by facilitating deliberation among various stakeholders in differing combinations. ECHO, for instance, chairs the humanitarian donor group in Colombia and organizes regular meetings with UN entities and the government, thus enabling information sharing and coordination among all actors providing humanitarian assistance in an

³¹ Interview with World Bank official, March 2016, Sierra Leone.

attempt to address a lack of meta-governance.³² Therein, voluntary compliance or participation by the UN and by government entities is a prerequisite for the functioning of this governance mode, since ECHO lacks hierarchical enforcement mechanisms vis-à-vis other relevant actors. However, here ECHO can serve the international community by bringing entities together that – at least theoretically – have a common goal in mind and seek to ensure the complementarity of their work. Thereby, ECHO provides a focal point and exercises an – albeit soft – steering function. Given that donor steering groups are rather small (only a limited number of members) and that participants often share similar backgrounds and values (possibly even a common lifeworld), we assume that questions of power may recede into the background in this setting, and that deliberation among IO staff becomes more likely.

How IOs govern by convening can be described in quite simple terms. According to one IO staff member, what the IO does is to “make people sit together,” and to “try and bring them together.”³³ Many IOs describe this ability to convene a diverse group of actors for deliberations as one of their core strengths, given their relationships to numerous and different stakeholders, ranging from government entities to NGOs, to civil society organizations, to farmers’ groups, and so on. For instance, after transnational guidelines have been developed at the global level, their implementation at the national level is oftentimes the decisive next step. To enable this implementation, IOs facilitate processes in which stakeholders can discuss how to translate these guidelines into rules or policies that are applicable to the specific country context. While stakeholders who come together may also engage negotiations based on a logic of consequentialism (e.g. bargaining), IOs can use their convening power and set up an institutional framework of interaction more conducive to deliberation (cp. Deitelhoff 2009).

For instance, after the Principles on Responsible Agricultural Investment (PRAI) were negotiated in consultation with member states, NGOs, and the private sector within the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) with support from the FAO, IFAD and WFP through a technical support group, deliberations began within countries at the national as well as at the community level. FAO therein supported the development of community protocols whereby communities discuss how they want to be treated by investors and what the rules of engagement should look like.

Further, observations from Sierra Leone point to the role IOs play in bringing together a diverse group of people. In Sierra Leone, FAO is supporting the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Governance of Tenure (VGGT) (cp. FAO 2016a, 2016b). To do so, the IO places emphasis on the multi-stakeholder platform it organizes and convenes “once a year with more than one hundred stakeholders from government, civil society, academia, [and the] private sector.”³⁴ The goal of these meetings is then to facilitate a discussion among participants on which tenure questions are most relevant from their perspective, as a first step, and then to identify ways through which the VGGT can be of help in addressing these issues, given the specific context and challenges of Sierra Leone. The FAO, in this process, limits its own involvement, arguing that “[i]t’s not us telling them but just trying to sensitize them how

³² Interview with ECHO-official, May 2015, Brussels.

³³ Interview with FAO-official, June 2015, Rome.

³⁴ Interview with FAO-official, March 2016, Sierra Leone.

they could use the VGGT in order to address these issues.”³⁵ Again, this in part works because people are very committed and see a high need for addressing tenure and land-related issues. Thus, the capacity of IOs to bring diverse stakeholders together and to facilitate an exchange among them goes hand in hand with voluntary participation and self-motivation by the many actors involved. At the same time, IOs seem to play a decisive role in enabling this process and have a certain degree of discretion in shaping it. Yet, there are some givens: in Sierra Leone for instance, one of the participants of the multi-stakeholder platform was the Ministry of Agriculture “because FAO always works with the Ministry of Agriculture.”³⁶

Finally, the convening power IOs may exercise becomes particularly relevant when the stakeholders involved do not have a certain level of trust amongst each other, or even fear that the other actor wishes to harm them. Given such a context, e.g. in a conflict setting, and if actors are rather reluctant to engage with one another, the ability of IOs to nonetheless facilitate an exchange, because this IO enjoys trust and respect among all parties, hints at a special kind of convening power. In Colombia, for instance, the situation is changing dramatically. While humanitarian actors have been able to work in areas controlled by non-state actors in the past, they now expect development and peacebuilding efforts to increasingly enter the country. According to one interviewee, humanitarian IOs that have years of experience in both building trust and working in these communities can play an important role as a link between the communities on the ground and the state entities now entering the area.³⁷ Humanitarian IOs and their partners see themselves as well-positioned to bring together different types of actors and to facilitate the transitory phase from humanitarian relief to peace-building and development efforts.

4.1.5 Persuasion

For most IOs, governments are central partners. Our interviewees also often pointed out that their role is to support the government in achieving its objectives. But how do IOs go about this if, based on their own analysis, they find that the government does not pursue the “right” objectives, is not focusing on a problem that merits attention, or should give more priority to specific issues?

We observe that IOs often invest significant time and efforts in engaging with the government in an attempt to persuade them to act on a particular issue, e.g. when they observe the necessity of policy reform as a prevalent challenge. In our understanding, persuasion is a mode of governance in which one actor tries to convince another actor, through a process of communication and exchange, to choose a particular option or to act in a certain way. Compliance by the other actor is voluntary; a government for instance can decide whether it finds the arguments put forward by the IO convincing, or not. Persuasion differs from bargaining, as it does not rely on incentives; rather, IOs seek to appeal to the identity and normative convictions of their counterpart.

³⁵ Interview with FAO-official, March 2016, Sierra Leone.

³⁶ Interview with FAO-official, March 2016, Sierra Leone.

³⁷ Interview with ECHO-official, February 2016, Colombia.

IOs draw on different sources of information, for instance when dealing with governments. As one interview partner described it, “you explain situations, you try to discuss a diagnostic, you try to discuss international experiences in other places, and then you try to convince the government (...) that this issue merits particular treatment.”³⁸ In the case of Côte d’Ivoire, the World Bank identified the issue of cocoa prices as a relevant one; yet, according to one interview partner, the government was not necessarily willing to act on this issue. Nevertheless, the World Bank did engage in a process with state officials and “through a diagnostic, through basically hard data, through analysis, quantitative analysis in particular, you show ‘a’ implies ‘b’ and then you say, OK, obviously this is something where the government should be changing the incentives, changing the institutions.”³⁹ In this way, IOs attempt to shape the policy preferences and priorities of governments by providing knowledge, data, and information in the hopes that “the facts” will demonstrate to the government the value of addressing a certain issue. This is not always successful, or, rather, it may require patience on the part of the IO to wait for a “window of opportunity,” since timing can be a crucial factor.

IOs do not only apply this mode of governance vis-à-vis the government. They also use it when facing problems of restricted access. By using persuasion, IOs seek to gain access to governance addressees in conflict-affected areas. In Colombia, for instance, there are areas that are under the control of non-state armed actors such as the FARC or the ELN. These actors need to be taken into account since at the very least “you cannot go to any community affected by the conflict without the armed group knowing who you are.”⁴⁰ What all IOs – humanitarian or development-focused, UN and non-UN – routinely point out is that they do not talk with armed groups directly. How, then, do IOs provide food assistance in these areas, if they do not deal directly with those in control? The lines of communication are more indirect in these cases: IOs rely on local community leaders to act as a linking pin or transmission belt to the armed groups and to inform them of the IO’s activities.⁴¹ One interview partner described this as a very subtle activity in that “you let [it be] know[n] to them, that this is to the benefit of people”⁴² and in this manner, IOs, through brokers, indirectly attempt to persuade armed groups to let them operate in the areas under their control. IOs may also collaborate with NGOs who seek to raise awareness among non-state armed groups regarding humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law. For instance, ECHO provides funding to the NGO Geneva Call to conduct projects aimed at disseminating humanitarian norms among non-state armed actors in Columbia, as well as in other countries (ECHO 2015b). Thus, ECHO indirectly also uses the governance mode of persuasion.

Sometimes, humanitarian IOs will also directly negotiate with those in control in rebel-held areas in an attempt to reach beneficiaries in need. In this kind of exchange, one WFP staff for instance said that they attempt to explain “what you are trying to do, why you are trying to do that, what will happen if you are unable to do it, and also what could be the consequences

³⁸ Interview with World Bank official, February 2016, Côte d’Ivoire.

³⁹ Interview with World Bank official, February 2016, Côte d’Ivoire.

⁴⁰ Interview with ECHO-official, February 2016, Colombia.

⁴¹ Interviews with World Bank and FAO-officials, March 2016, Colombia.

⁴² Interview with ECHO-official, February 2016, Colombia.

for the other party if they don't allow that to happen.”⁴³ By providing information on how the WFP operates, on the importance of humanitarian principles for the IO's work, and by drawing attention to possible consequences, the IO seeks to convince the armed group to let it pass. In order to gain acceptance, the WFP thus seeks to “maintain a constructive relationship with local actors,” as “defining the right degree of cooperation with those actors” is necessary to being able to provide assistance (WFP 2017: 3). This requires flexibility on the part of the negotiator, since there is no “cookie cutter recipe.”⁴⁴

4.1.6 Combining Modes of Governance

Rather than only choosing one mode of governance or the other, IOs combine different modes of governance in an effort to increase their effectiveness. To start, IOs may combine different governance modes at once (“linking”). Next, IOs can sequence governance modes, meaning that they first use one particular mode of governance. If they then find that they have not achieved the required outcome thus far, they may follow up with a different governance mode (“sequencing”).

Based on our interviews, we observe that the modes of governance of persuasion and bargaining may be closely linked. For instance, a WFP interviewee is convinced that “one can always find a creative solution,” when faced with problems of limited access. According to the interviewee, the challenge is rather in finding the words to communicate the solution.⁴⁵ At first, the IO may strive to convince the armed group that it should grant access, by referring to international norms and humanitarian principles, in particular. Here, the IO is engaging in persuasion. Nevertheless, the communication between the IO and the non-state armed group may also fall under the category of bargaining where a give-and-take situation is present.⁴⁶ While these are two separate examples, we expect that IOs may engage in persuasion and bargaining at the same time in order to be able to operate under difficult conditions of a limited humanitarian space and high insecurity.

Sequencing, trying mode *b* after mode *a*, is another way of combining modes of governance. We find that IOs often engage in a communicative process with their government counterparts at first. Therein, IOs “provide knowledge, information, data, to convince different actors that things have to change,”⁴⁷ in an attempt to convince the government of the necessity to address an issue. If this is not successful, an option of last resort may arise, and the IO may try to use bargaining, in particular positive rewards, to nudge or push the government into dealing with and acting on an issue of concern. However, this seems to be an almost desperate move on the part of the IO, as incentives are not necessarily seen as an effective instrument. In the case of Haiti, one IO staff member mentions that financial leverage can sometimes be used, but that

⁴³ Interview with WFP-official, June 2015, Rome.

⁴⁴ Interview with WFP-official, June 2015, Rome.

⁴⁵ Interview with WFP-official, June 2015, Rome.

⁴⁶ Interview with WFP-official, June 2015, Rome.

⁴⁷ Interview with World Bank official, February 2016, Haiti.

the IO “probably [doesn’t] have the resources at this stage to provide enough financial leverage to force them to deal with this issue and, frankly, in my experience that never works anyway.”⁴⁸

A special type of “sequencing” is involved where IOs rely on other actors to provide the first or second ingredient. For example, IOs can request support from other actors that have the means to hierarchically ensure security and thus enable the IO to become active. In our analysis, we found that IOs rely upon a range of different actors to hierarchically ensure security, ranging from external governance actors such as UN peacekeeping troops to the national police—an aspect we will elaborate on shortly. In Côte d’Ivoire, one WFP interview partner reported that the main challenge was security because “on the roads there were bandits, there were unknown groups of armed people” and also because “there were barriers on the road,” so “it was not easy to move relief items across the country.”⁴⁹ WFP updates on the situation further describe the situation in the country at the time, in that in May 2011, “the general security situation ha[d] improved throughout the country but remains unpredictable” (WFP 2011). For the WFP, this insecure operating environment went hand in hand with the challenge of managing the logistics of the response and of providing relief to the people in need. To be able to perform these activities, the WFP relied on the support of the United Nations Peacekeeping Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI). For instance, the WFP referred to UNOCI’s role in ensuring “as far as possible, the security of United Nations staff” and in providing “assistance in terms of protection, if needed” (WFP 2011). In the aftermath of the post-electoral violence 2010/11, the WFP identified deteriorations in the security situation as a potential risk for its operations, and continuously referred to UNOCI and government forces as those actors able to minimize the risk of violence, in particular in Western Côte d’Ivoire (WFP 2013). But the WFP did not rely solely on a hierarchy enforced by UNOCI as an external governance actor, but identified local NGOs with whom they collaborated in different parts of the country. By combining these efforts, they “bypassed the fact that the state was not functioning.”⁵⁰

4.2 Modes of Governance – First Patterns

In this section, we elaborate upon some of the patterns we have identified in our empirical analysis. These patterns constitute preliminary findings, rather than a fully-fledged typology. For instance, we do not claim *per se* that certain types of IOs do not use certain modes of governance; we only posit that we did not find indications for this in our empirical material. We discuss two patterns in turn. First, we reflect upon how certain types of IOs (e.g. development cooperation IOs, multilateral development banks, and humanitarian assistance IOs) are more or less likely to use certain modes of governance. Second, we elaborate upon whether IOs use a certain mode of governance (e.g. convening) more often than others to respond to a particular challenge related to areas of limited statehood (e.g. restricted access).

⁴⁸ Interview with World Bank official, February 2016, Haiti.

⁴⁹ Interview with WFP-officials, February 2016, Côte d’Ivoire.

⁵⁰ Interview with WFP-officials, February 2016, Côte d’Ivoire.

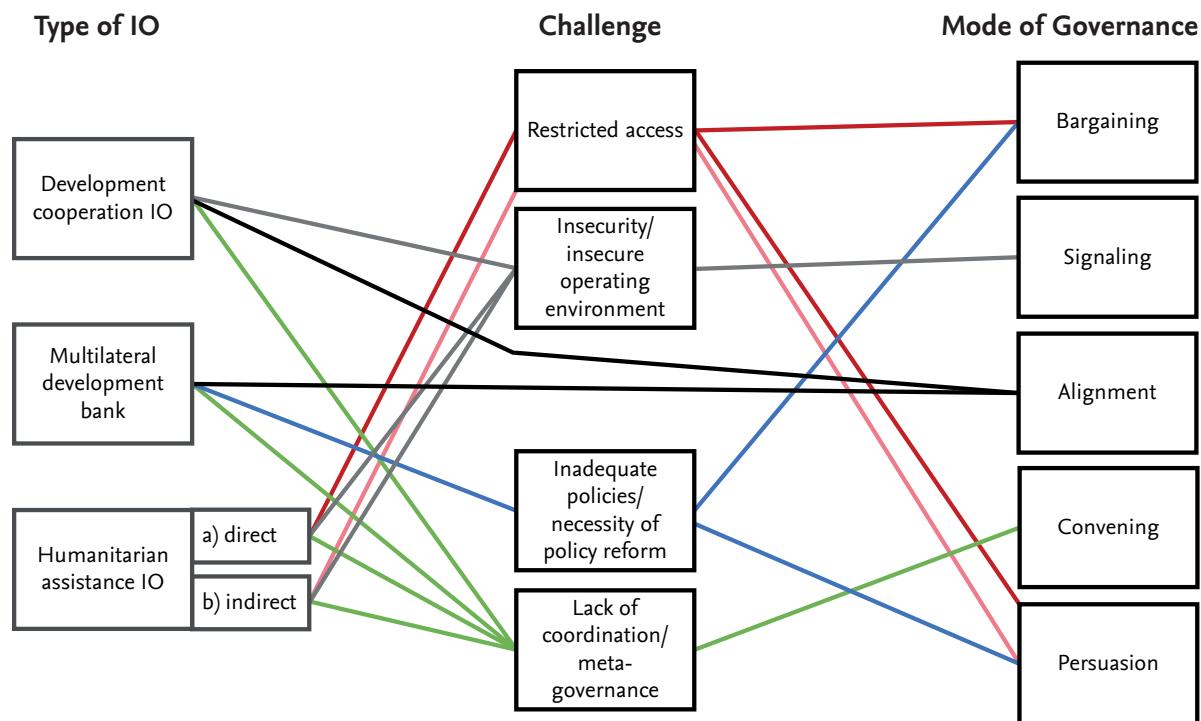
4.2.1 Types of IOs and Modes of Governance

With regard to different types of IOs and modes of governance, we observe, firstly, that multilateral development banks – here, the IDB and the World Bank – draw on a broad range of modes of governance. We found instances in which they used *bargaining*, *alignment*, *persuasion*, and *convening*. For instance, the IDB and the World Bank use bargaining and persuasion if they find that there is a necessity for policy reform. Then, these IOs will engage in a conversation with the government, their “client,” in an attempt to convince them of the necessity to become active in a certain issue area. While multilateral development banks use almost all of the modes of governance on the spectrum we identified, we did not find instances in our material where they chose the signaling mode of governance. This may be linked to the fact that we mostly discussed signaling as directing meaningful communication towards actors who are party to a conflict – not the typical setting in which IDB and the World Bank are active.

Second, development cooperation IOs use signaling, alignment, and convening in areas of limited statehood. It may be surprising that a development cooperation IO uses signaling, as we discussed this mode of governance in light of the challenge of both insecurity and an insecure operating environment in conflict zones where humanitarian assistance is required. However, an IO such as the FAO, while predominantly active in development cooperation, also claims a role for itself in humanitarian assistance and in transition, in referring to its dual mandate to work in both situations, which may explain this finding.

Third, with regard to IOs active in the field of humanitarian assistance, we distinguished between those who provide food security directly or through partners (direct), and those who fund food security activities by others and see themselves as donors (indirect). Whereas the WFP is an example of the former type, ECHO constitutes an example of the latter. Humanitarian IOs in our sample rarely used alignment, (with the exception of humanitarian IOs in Colombia), which may be explained by the fact that humanitarian actors hold the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence in high regard. If governments are parties to a conflict, even the perception of aligning with governmental priorities could be potentially dangerous for IOs. Humanitarian IOs who directly provide food security drew on all other four modes, namely bargaining, persuasion, signaling, and convening. Whereas multilateral development banks (and potentially development cooperation IOs, too) direct their bargaining and persuasion efforts at the government, humanitarian assistance IOs of the first type (direct) engage in bargaining and persuasion more commonly with non-state armed actors. They do so in an effort to gain access to affected populations, to ensure the safety of their staff, or the safe passage of goods and materials. In contrast, “indirect” humanitarian IOs do not negotiate with these actors directly. Rather, they use indirect paths of communication but nonetheless place their bets on persuasion. ECHO, for instance, funds NGOs that aim to disseminate the principles of international humanitarian law among non-state armed actors as the appropriate way to behave in a conflict or civil war, rather than offering material benefits.

Figure 3: Choice of Governance Modes: Patterns with Regard to Type of IO, Challenges and Modes of Governance



Source: Own illustration

4.2.2 Types of Challenges and Modes of Governance

With regard to the types of challenges IOs face in areas of limited statehood and the modes of governance they choose, we find, firstly, that IOs usually draw on bargaining and persuasion when facing the challenge of restricted access. Restricted access oftentimes means that non-state armed groups limit or prevent IOs from going into areas where populations IOs seek to assist, given humanitarian concerns, are located. IOs use bargaining, based on a logic of consequences, as well as persuasion, based on a logic of appropriateness. They oftentimes combine or sequence these two modes as the situation evolves on the ground.

The question as to whether these two modes are or are not incompatible (or to which degrees), both for the individual IO as well as for IOs/humanitarian actors in the aggregate or as a community, does present itself. On the one hand, an individual IO may find it difficult to draw on persuasion after bargaining had already been applied earlier on, as the non-state armed actor may expect to receive certain benefits or positive incentives, as had been the case in the past. Thus, it may be difficult to combine bargaining and persuasion in this order over time, whereas their combination seems to pose less of a difficulty when persuasion is applied before bargaining. On the other hand, if IOs bargain for access – and must rely much more strongly on positive incentives, as they do not have the means to sanction non-state armed actors – different “standards,” according to which access is granted, may evolve. Non-state armed actors

could then use these differences between IOs to negotiate more preferential terms of access for themselves, by referring to the fact that other actors had already complied with these higher demands.

Second, we found that in response to an insecure operating environment and general insecurity in a given area, IOs mostly draw on signaling as a mode of governance. Signaling functions via the presence of an IO on the ground and constitutes a meaningful signal or symbol towards different types of addressees. In this sense, signaling is one mode of governance that may also be directed at the ultimate governance addressees themselves (in underlining that “we are on your side and watching out for you”), and not only at those who may be drivers of insecurity or perpetrators of violence, e.g. non-state armed actors or state institutions in a civil conflict. Yet, as we are indeed interested in those challenges in which modes of governance are applied to get actors to take a specific action or to refrain from it, we nevertheless focused here primarily on the latter type of addressees, i.e. those who contribute to the security situation on the ground.

Third, when faced with the challenge of inadequate policies and a necessity of policy reform, IOs in our sample typically engage in bargaining and persuasion in an attempt to nudge the government of a country into taking action on a policy issue. This may prove to be difficult in practice if the government is not actually convinced that such action is necessary or if it has other policy priorities than those identified by the IO. Then, even attempts to bargain and to provide rewards to governments – as multilateral banks sometimes try to do – seems to be futile and unsustainable in the long term.

Finally, IOs most often address a lack of coordination or meta-governance through the governance mode of convening. Interestingly, all IOs in our sample profess to engaging in convening and thus in exercising a steering function and bringing different actors together to negotiate issues of common concern. At least theoretically, if IOs identify a lack of coordination as a challenge – and simultaneously perceive a host country government to have some degree of capacity – IOs could also seek to persuade said government to become active as a “governance manager” and to fulfill this coordination function. However, it seems that IOs see convening more as their responsibility, be it convening and coordinating the “international community” in a given country (e.g. ECHO in Colombia), or be it convening and bringing together all stakeholders when developing a plan on how to implement transnational guidelines at the country level (e.g. FAO in Sierra Leone).

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we analyzed how IOs choose modes of governance to respond to challenges specific to areas of limited statehood. First, we demonstrated that IOs are aware of and reflect these challenges and, second, that they deal with these challenges by drawing on a range of different modes of governance in order to provide food security. Previous studies have already established different modes of governance, such as bargaining and persuasion, which (external) governance actors may draw upon. We analyzed whether IOs as external governance actors also use these modes of governance and provided empirical insights, where feasible, concerning

when they do. We also found that communicative modes, persuasion in particular, seem to be preferred to the usage of incentives, be they rewards or sanctions.

In addition, we identified *signaling*, *convening*, and *alignment* as governance modes that humanitarian and development IOs alike use in their work. As to the first, signaling is a governance mode well-known to peace and conflict scholars researching the effects of peacekeeping missions. We showed that the signaling mechanism also bears relevance for humanitarian and development organizations in the field of food security governance. IO presence signals to non-state armed actors that misbehavior will not go undetected. This may directly contribute to an improved security situation in areas where the state is not present and thereby indirectly contribute to higher food security, as IOs become able to safely deliver humanitarian assistance. Second, IOs use their convening power to facilitate deliberation among stakeholders who are essential in providing food security locally. Third, “alignment” with pre-existing preferences and/or normative beliefs has been a ubiquitous practice among development and humanitarian IOs. The idea is mirrored in the 2005 *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*, which refers to the concepts of “ownership” and “alignment.” Both are meant to serve as guiding principles in development cooperation, specifying that a) the government should be in/take the lead, and that b) donors (IOs from our sample that are signatory to the agreement include the IDB and the World Bank) should adapt to these goals. While we find some empirical hints for this, alignment has not been theorized as a governance mode so far. We also provided evidence that IOs assess existing preferences and normative beliefs among their governance addressees, which then informs their governance intervention. After all, adapting to already existing ideas and opting out where no consensus can be found presents a cost-efficient governance mode at IOs’ disposal (similar to convening, which might be equally cost-efficient and also sustainable). Building on existing literature, we showed how these governance modes may be combined by linking and sequencing them. We thus analyzed how IOs in the field of food security govern. In the remainder of this section, we will first address potential explanations for why IOs choose certain modes of governance over others, before turning to future research directions.

Three potential explanations may assist in understanding what guides IOs’ choice of governance modes: perceptions of (varying degrees of) statehood, the aim of governance (humanitarian vs. development), and the constellation of governance actors. First, what matters for IO behavior and their choice of governance modes is how they perceive the environments in which they operate (Broome/Seabrooke 2012). Our empirical material suggests that how an IO perceives the monopoly on the use of force “on the ground” matters for the choice of governance mode – whether it uses *bargaining* or *persuasion* or calls upon collaboration with governance actors able to steer hierarchically. Contrary to our expectations, IOs apparently have few problems in accessing such areas. As one interview partner said, “so far we haven’t really had any direct problems from the presence of the armed groups.”⁵¹ This is possible because IOs can draw on their own prestige and credibility, which is why they enjoy respect, as another interviewee underlines: “even with the presence of armed actors, (...) international organizations have access in order to assist people, they are respected somehow by the different armed

⁵¹ Interview with IO-official, Colombia, February 2016.

groups.”⁵² In this way, IOs can be the linkage for the government to areas where it does not have access.⁵³ Overall, we find that questions of humanitarian space and access are more important than limitations of statehood. To secure access where there are limitations on the monopoly on the use of force, IOs are more likely to draw on modes of governance such as *bargaining* or *persuasion*, since they need to convince other actors to guarantee a safe and secure operating environment. With regard to the capacity to set and implement rules, one recurring theme throughout the interviews is that while the capacity to formulate rules is generally adequate (Haiti being the exception), the capacity to implement these rules is often lacking. This can be due – but is not limited to – the misallocation of resources to the central level to the detriment of the local level, corruption, lack of monitoring and planning capacity, or a lack of resources. IOs’ modus operandi mostly build on the presence of governments or state institutions. As one IO development staff observes for a country of extremely limited administrative capacity, the IO “de facto played the role of the ministry (...) in the complete absence of the state, in order to have some kind of activity that were not just distribution or emergency activities.”⁵⁴ In such a scenario, the IO can then directly interact with governance addressees or with other governance actors to provide goods and services.

Second, the aim of governance – whether it is “humanitarian”⁵⁵ or “development” – in conjunction with international norms guiding their work (e.g. humanitarian principles), may also play a role for IOs’ choice of governance modes. According to the separation of these two systems, the governance of both humanitarian and development assistance⁵⁶ follows different patterns. Specifically, emergency relief is more regulated and strictly based on the operating principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence (Rubenstein 2007: 525). Moreover, a differentiated design of governance modes can make sense where the two are structurally different. A first structural difference is the relationship to time. Due to their requirements to deliver results quickly, humanitarians often engage in governance under severe time pressure. The urge to achieve results quickly stands in contrast to the demand for more sustainable transformations and ownership, which require a slow and ongoing process that allows for reflection and re-adjustment (Locher et al. 2002: 14). IOs with a development mandate usually have more time for an intervention, but are also more often required to engage with complex social structures (e.g. institutional structures and social norms) to assist lasting empowerment processes. As a result, there is a point to be made for differentiated governance modes on functional grounds. Specifically, interventions that require a lasting impact on complex social structures demand non-hierarchical modes that aim at learning, rather than at short-term compliance. Accordingly, *convening*, *alignment* and *persuasion* are more promising than *bargaining*, which motivates compliance only as long as rewards or sanctions persist.

Third, the constellation of governance actors seems to matter. For it is only in rare cases that IOs will enter an area of limited statehood and “do it on their own”. Here, we can distinguish

⁵² Interview with IO-official, Colombia, March 2016.

⁵³ FAO Interview, June 2015.

⁵⁴ Interview with FAO-official, June 2015, Rome.

⁵⁵ Used interchangeably with the terms “emergency aid” and “humanitarian relief.”

⁵⁶ In the following, we will generally use the term “assistance” rather than the term “aid.”

governance configurations involving a) the IO and state actors, b) the IO and non-state actors, and c) constellations involving all three actors. Usually, IOs are part of a governance configuration that includes, at the very least, the government of a respective country, which grants the IO permission to work. Apart from that, other actors that may join the governance constellation include other international organizations, bilateral development agencies, or NGOs. Either cooperation happens because these actors have material or ideational resources that provide them with *veto power* (e.g. the government of a country), or the IO *wants* to engage with other actors for functional or normative considerations. Based on our interview material, we suggest that IOs will engage in *alignment* vis-à-vis the government if the government is able and willing to exercise its veto power and if it is capable of formulating a development plan or policies with which the IO can align its activities. If the government is weaker, we still found some sort of superficial alignment, but also persuasion. While we do not focus on private sector actors in this paper, a number of our interviewees did mention the increasing importance of these actors. Other studies found that the contribution of businesses to public sector governance typically relies on the modes of governance of *bargaining* and *persuasion* (Börzel/Deitelhoff 2018; Flohr et al. 2010; Kell/Levin 2003). Finally, with regard to non-state armed groups, the IOs in our sample typically engaged in *bargaining* but also in *persuasion* to ensure access to populations in need.

In sum, we have identified several directions for future research. First, more research is needed to investigate whether further modes of governance exist. In addition, it is unclear whether these modes of governance are IO-specific, or whether other external and domestic governance actors also choose these modes. Also, the question arises as to whether one IO can draw on and combine different governance modes or whether some are incompatible per se, either at one point in time or over time. For instance, many humanitarian IOs depend on their reputation and prestige to be able to operate. If they switch from a mode of persuasion to one of bargaining and appear to be willing to compromise on, for example, humanitarian principles when seeking to obtain access to restricted areas, they may lose credibility in the long run. Second, we need systematic studies linking governance modes to their effectiveness under different statehood circumstances. In conjunction with outcome-centered studies, this would allow for assessments as to how IO governance and performance in areas of limited statehood could be improved in the future. Finally, research is necessary into how IOs and their governance modes mutually influence one another and what systemic and aggregate effects they yield. For instance, do different IOs use the same or different modes? Does duplication occur if IOs draw on the same modes, or perhaps even mutual obstruction? To what extent can this question be addressed through coordination, and how? For instance, if different IOs direct different modes of governance towards the same state or non-state actor, this may create confusion and limit the effectiveness of IO governance at large. Overall, we are convinced that the question of how IOs govern in areas of limited statehood provides several, fruitful pathways for future research.

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Research Framework

Governance has become a central theme in social science research. The Collaborative Research Center (SFB) 700 Governance in Areas of Limited Statehood investigates governance in areas of limited statehood, i.e. developing countries, failing and failed states, as well as, in historical perspective, different types of colonies. How and under what conditions can governance deliver legitimate authority, security, and welfare, and what problems are likely to emerge? Operating since 2006 and financed by the German Research Foundation (DFG), the Research Center involves the Freie Universität Berlin, the University of Potsdam, the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), the Social Science Research Center Berlin (WZB) and the German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA).

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Freie Universität Berlin



University of Potsdam



German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP)



Social Science Research Center Berlin (WZB)



German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA)

