Abstract

In this paper, we contend that both the practices of and the reflections on global governance are branching out into many different directions. Against the coexistence of different regulatory and theoretical models, we argue that global governance can no longer be seen as subject to any particular teleology. Rather, we propose a ‘post-governance’ perspective to capture and make sense of the multiplicity of concurrent, overlapping and competing trends and developments. Just like post-punk followed early punk rock and provided new energy and experimental creativity, post-governance provides opportunities to revitalize our debates on world politics. It does so since it does not offer a new paradigm itself. Rather, it is a post-paradigmatic view that takes the plurality of global governance into account and aims to capture differentiations in the practice and thinking thereof. Bringing real-world developments and the way we think about them together, ‘post-governance’ allows us to consider the persistence of ‘traditional’ forms of global governance as well as the simultaneous emergence of new approaches. Instead of forcing disparate developments into one singular narrative, this provides a more differentiated picture of global governance. We thus propose ‘post-governance’ as a mode of world politics in a post-paradigmatic world which is creative and dynamic yet inconsistent and without apparent teleology to the observer. We advance these arguments by outlining what ‘post-governance’ entails for us, by taking stock of current debates seen from a post-governance perspective, and by discussing how these can be advanced from a post-governance point of view.
“The history of thought and culture is, as Hegel showed with great brilliance, a changing pattern of great liberating ideas which inevitably turn into suffocating straitjackets, and so stimulate their own destruction by new emancipating, and at the same time, enslaving conceptions.”

Isaiah Berlin (1979: 159)

Goth is dead, punk is dead, and rock n' roll is dead. Trends are dead. Nothing exists anymore because the world is spinning faster than any trend.

Poppy, American singer & YouTube personality

Introduction

With the breakthrough of bands like The Ramones, Sex Pistols and The Clash, the birth of punk rock as a musical genre is generally dated to 1976. Initially a rebellion against rock music, punk rock itself, however, quickly established its own orthodoxy and rather limited musical templates. Thus, for obvious reasons and as early as 1978, artists started to diverge from the new punk mainstream, creating a new ‘post-punk’ scene (Reynolds 2006). This new approach picked up elements of punk, like the DIY culture, the spirit of innovation, its angst and anger as well as the rejection of both musical and social conventions. At the same time, it left behind rigid rules and emphasized new creative freedoms to experiment. Unsurprisingly, this attracted many artists, who quickly branched out into several new music styles and approaches, laying the groundwork for new wave, gothic rock, industrial music, house music, neo-psychedelia, new romantic and synthpop, to name just some of the influential genres of the 1980s. At the same time, punk itself developed into sub-genres like hardcore, Oi! and anarcho-punk, as well as melodic and skate punk which, in turn, created the foundation for later genres like noise rock, alternative rock, and grunge. As such, we understand the emergence of post-punk both as a ‘coming-to-terms’ with what was as well as a creative opening into what will be.

In this paper, we contend that global governance, both as an idea and a practice, has entered a similar stage. More explicitly, it has succumbed to what Isaiah Berlin described as a recurring “pattern of great liberating ideas which inevitably turn into suffocating straitjackets” (Berlin 1979, 159) stimulating its very own differentiation and branching out. We therefore argue that the best way to intellectually grasp its current manifestation is to refer to it as post-governance. To be sure, global governance from its very beginning included a wide range of different voices and perspectives, challenging disciplinary and political orthodoxies at its time. These different
takes overall agreed on the idea that governance was no longer only provided by the state but could also through complex multistakeholder arrangements beyond the state. Thus, there was a certain normative consensus if not teleology inherent in global governance. More recently, though, this idea has differentiated into new variant forms and versions. We introduce post-governance as a notion to reconstruct and structure this increasing differentiation in both the scholarship and the practice of global governance.¹ Much like post-punk emerged from the confines of punk, we witness new forms of thinking and doing world politics beyond what we thought we knew as global governance. These new modes and approaches are partly overlapping and reinforcing, partly contradicting and confusing. Overall, though, we see strong dynamics of differentiation, which challenge the teleology expressed in early theories and practices of global governance.

While the coexistence of different ideas is not new to global governance, it has arguably reached a new quality recently. Described and discussed as “gridlock” in a practical perspective (Hale, Held, and Young 2013) and as “interregnum” in theoretical terms (Pegram and Acuto 2015a), practitioner and scholars alike have, for different reasons, in fact advanced alarmist diagnoses on the current state of global governance. This criticism echoes broader debates about the future of multilateralism and the liberal world order as such, both of which seem to be under attack from the rise of illiberal powers beyond and populism within as well as resurgent geopolitics and great power competition. Against this perception of global governance in crisis, we argue that grand narratives, whether practical or theoretical terms, have always been too simple and too sweeping to capture the diversity of governance forms and models of interaction across the many areas of global politics. Instead of holding on to one master narrative with teleological implications, we argue that heterogeneity is the new standard and that our discussions and conclusions about global governance will always remain unfinished. Much like post-punk, post-governance describes a pluralistic, unfinished approach defined by experimentation and creative differentiation. As a heuristic perspective, post-governance looks at the totality of global policy-making but rejects the ambitious notion to find one unifying narrative or a theory to explain it all. Rather, post-governance manifests itself in diverse ways, reflecting complex in-betweens and the undefined of what we currently experience in and discuss as world politics.

¹ We develop our argument by considering global governance in its two mutually constitutive dimensions: For one, global governance is practical (i.e. it represents ways of doing world politics). For another, global governance is theoretical (i.e. it represents modes of thinking world politics). While casting the notion in ambiguous terms (Finkelstein 1995), these two dimensions arguably make global governance, despite its lack of conceptual precision, so attractive within IR discussions (Hofferberth 2015, Dingwerth and Pattberg 2006).
None of this is to argue that the notion of global governance should be discarded altogether. Rather, we hope that a post-governance perspective would help us make sense of developments beyond the narrow scope of global governance without sacrificing insights gained from within. We thus propose post-governance to expand our thinking and application of the original concept instead of discarding it. Such an expansion is based on the original concept but thinks it backwards and forwards as it sharpens and broadens it at the same time (Weiss and Wilkinson 2019, 25-8). Taking a cue from The Exploited, global governance is not dead. However, we caution against any kind of orthodoxy or straightforward, one-dimensional terminology claiming either to be at the core of or having understood the essence of global governance since this would only represent another straightjacket. Just like post-punk opened new opportunities and introduced new genres, we like to think of post-governance as a constructive intervention, recognizing and fostering the further emergence of new approaches. This intervention can help us take stock of where we are and help us make sense of practical diversification that we witness and its parallel pluralization of theoretical understandings of global governance. With this aim, we first introduce our notion of post-governance in more detail. We then outline what a post-governance perspective reveals by introducing taxonomies of real-world approaches as well as academic reflections of global governance. Finally, the conclusion summarizes how post-governance might revitalize debates on global governance and whether it is to be welcomed.

Post-Governance – What and Why?

Global governance, both in practice and theory, has evolved considerably since its early days, so much that its very meaning has become contested (Hofferberth 2015). Unsurprisingly, then, practitioners and scholars of world politics alike advance different understandings of and narratives on global governance and its future trajectory. Weiss and Wilkinson (2014a) for example, in a deliberate provocation, argue that global governance should ‘come to the rescue’ of the otherwise sterile and limited field of International Relations. More recently, Coen and Pegram (2018) suggest that global governance should be thought of in three generations “to indicate trajectory, points of analytical transition and legacies” (Coen and Pegram 2018, 107). While we are sympathetic to Coen and Pegram’s attempt to provide orientation for an ever more

---

2 The reference here is obviously to their debut studio album *Punks not Dead* which was released in 1981 and explicitly went against post-punk. Ironically, the album benefited from the post-punk momentum, made it into the Top Twenty UK Charts and thus further popularized if not mainstreamed punk. Ultimately, it also contributed to its further differentiation in the post-period by inspiring many new genres itself.
wide-ranging discussion, their generational metaphor to us overstresses the notion of trajectory, specifically since it evokes a teleological sense of progress. To rather emphasize ambiguity, concurrency, and differentiation of approaches, we propose to think of current practices and theories of global governance as being in a post-period of increased differentiation.

To begin to think about differentiation of and within global governance, we must first define it. Following Rosenau (1995, 13), we understand global governance as “systems of rule at all levels of human activity – from the family to the international organization – in which the pursuit of goals through the exercise of control has transnational consequences”. Similarly, for Ruggie (2014, 5), global governance refers to all “systems of authoritative norms, rules, institutions, and practices by means of which any collectivity, from the local to the global, manages its common affairs”. In other words, global governance encompasses the totality of attempts to govern and regulate problems of a cross-border nature through the establishment of rules and the pursuit of goals, either collectively or at least in the awareness of others being involved and affected by it. Governance in the abstract is therefore not hierarchical but features all sorts of different actors and different types of resources, authorities and powers. At the same time, such a broad definition does not limit global governance to contexts where cooperation prevails. To the contrary, we argue that global governance for the most part is highly conflictual (Lake 2010).3

While mutually constitutive, this rather broad and abstract perspective on governance to some extent creates a disconnect to the practitioners’ world. More specifically, while the previous definitions are widely accepted in academic discussions, political practice understands global governance in narrower terms, identifying it with a specific model of policy-making that is characterized as multi-stakeholder, multi-level, horizontal, and networked (Dingwerth and Pattberg 2006). Policymakers and commentators refer to this practical conception when they evoke the notion of global governance. Our post-governance approach responds to their understanding but at the same time is more broadly within the scope of Rosenau’s definition.4

With this in mind, we evoke the analogy of post-punk in order to (1) come to terms with practical and intellectual developments of and within global governance and then (2) provide dynamic taxonomies to structure current discussions in and on global governance. ‘Post’ in this context should not be read in its temporal dimension such as ‘after’, ‘later than’, or ‘subsequent

---

3 As Sinclair (2012) argues, ignoring the political and thus contested nature of global governance predisposes one to functionalist approaches, which is why we include instances of power politics in our discussion as well as instances of cooperation.

4 That said, we concur that there will never be Post-Governance Commission with the UN and would like to thank Julian Eckl for pointing this out.
to’ (Griffin 2017). Rather, we use the prefix to point out that global governance is going through an intense period of differentiation as it moves ‘beyond’, much like post-punk broke away from punk to create new genres while still being influenced by it. As such, post-governance is meant to capture change and continuity at the same time and does not assess whether practices or theories of global governance are disappearing or failing (Abrahamsen 2003, 194-6). Instead, we introduce this idea to reveal shifts and dynamics in global governance, which are otherwise glossed over in unified trajectories and overly teleological thinking. Put simply, classic modes and models of multistakeholderism persist but are now paralleled, supplemented and challenged by other approaches, some of which refer back to ideas older than any articulation of global governance (Weiss and Wilkinson 2014b).5

Just as punk drew on proto-type genres such as garage rock to attack a stifling and confined society and establish a new musical genre, global governance drew on existing ideas like interdependence and transnationalism in the liberal tradition and the English School to question predominant approaches and their paradigmatic, self-absorbed discussions of anarchy and competition (Zürn 2018a, 138). Furthermore, both punk and global governance as ‘ideas’ were highly successful and carried a vibrant energy in their early years. While lacking artistic skills (punk) and conceptual clarity (global governance), both changed their respective worlds. Global governance in particular triumphantly established itself as a new paradigm, achieving ‘near-celebrity status’ in IR by the mid-2000s (Barnett and Duvall 2005). In other words, thinking world politics in terms of multistakeholderism in the 1990s became just as edgy and fashionable as listening to loud, aggressive music, wearing offensive t-shirts and sporting unusual haircuts throughout the 1980s. Just like Green Day, The Offspring and Blink-182, global governance gained widespread popularity and entered the disciplinary mainstream. And just as these bands were criticized for ‘selling out’, there are discussions whether global governance delivers as a paradigm or has conceptually over-stretched (Hofferberth 2015, Dingwerth and Pattberg 2006). As such, following initial euphoria of innovation, punk and global governance alike, both “yearning[s] of some sort” (Sinclair 2012, 1), entered their respective post-stages. Just as punk had its heyday but we no longer label those inspired by it as ‘punk’, we need new ideas to describe and make sense of current manifestations of global governance and recent experiences such as the financial crisis, looming trade wars and the evolution of global climate policy.

5 In this sense, post-governance helps us to think of the “complexities of the post-Cold War era [as] concrete expressions of global governance” while reminding us at the same time “that forms of world order have been and will be different in other epochs” (Weiss and Wilkinson 2019, 20).
Reflecting these experiences, post-governance acknowledges and appreciates the concurrency and plurality of different regulatory models across different policy fields and their intellectual reflections across disciplines. Post-governance is thus as much a disciplinary intervention to structure discussions as it is a normative argument to embrace and come to terms with differentiation, both intellectually and practically, for the sake of intellectual progress and improving global policies. Just as diversification eventually overcame punk and created space for new genres, there is great potential in rethinking global governance as it transitions into a broad range of differentiated approaches. In this sense of an anti-paradigmatic and engaged pluralism (Eun 2016, Jackson and Nexon 2013), a post-governance lens reveals the diversity of global governance beyond simple narratives and sweeping accounts. In other words, post-governance supports the conclusion that both theorizing as well as doing world politics has to be pragmatic and eclectic. In other words, theorizations and practices of global governance must be advanced ‘locally’ and in the spirit of being problem-driven rather than attempting to develop macro-paradigms which try to explain or solve everything. We hold such a position to be a promising to realize “the potential for intra and cross-disciplinary learning [and for] taking advantage of insights gained at both the macro and micro-level” (Coen and Pegram 2018, 109).

To elaborate our perspective and in order to recognize the post in post-governance, the next two sections provide meta-discussions of the practices and scholarship of global governance from a post-governance perspective. While we discuss practice and theory separately, this is a mere structuring device – we strongly believe in the mutually constitutive relationship between these two dimensions. More specifically, given that global governance “was born from a marriage […] between academic theory and practical policy in the 1990s” and as such “precipitated by a blend of real world events and developments in the academy” (Weiss and Wilkinson 2019, 21), modes of thinking global governance are deeply informed by modes of doing global governance and, to a lesser extent, vice versa. Post-governance thus helps us to consider new, branched-out practices and reflections of global governance and how both relate to each other.

**Global Governance Practices Seen Through the Post-Governance Lens**

Just like global governance, post-governance consists of states, international organizations, civil society, the private sector and a range of other actors interacting with each other in different

---

6 Following this argument, it should be clear that global governance should not harbor any ambition to “play with the big kids” and establish itself as another contender for IR’s grand theory. The type of theorizing that is needed would rather be inspired by Swedberg (2014) and Jackson and Nexon (2013) who emphasize process over substance in theory.
regulatory frameworks to collectively provide (and thereby also contest) rules and order in complex and otherwise decentralized and potentially even conflicting constellations of politics across borders and beyond nation-states. For these contexts, we distinguish four post-governance approaches in a taxonomy of ideal-type regulatory models. To structure them, we situate these practices along a continuum showing their relative proximity or distance to traditional approaches of global governance. The key characteristics distinguishing these types are the centrality of state actors and the importance of non-state actors in processes of governance, whether they see governance processes as being more vertical (hierarchical, structured by power relations) or more horizontal (less structured by power relations), and whether they view interactions in terms of positive-sum games and absolute gains or zero-sum games and relative gains. ‘Neoclassical’ approaches are closest to traditional notions of global governance. They emphasize the multi-actorness of governance, horizontal and positive-sum interactions. ‘Skeptical’ approaches emphasize the centrality of the sovereign state in global policy-making and perceive governance processes as vertical, hierarchical, with cooperation impeded by relative gains thinking.

The first ideal-type, multistakeholderism 2.0, is closest to the traditional idea of global governance and brings together constituencies from different levels in search of cooperative solutions for issues of common concern. The second, intermediary governance, is characterized by states and international organizations using the private sector or civil society to realize their objectives, either through direct principal-agent delegation or more indirect orchestration. The third, resurgent intergovernmentalism, complements classic bilateral and multilateral diplomacy with deepened transgovernmentalism and global summity and limited access via “minilateralism”. The fourth form reflects a new emphasis on sovereignty and power politics which sees the sovereign and independent nation-state at the very core of global governance.

Before further outlining these ideal-types, three preliminary remarks are in order. First, there is

---

7 This fourfold taxonomy reflects our impression of recent trends in global governance. It should be seen as the attempt to open a debate not forestall one.
no evolutionary or teleological sequence between these analytical ideal-types. As such, our
taxonomy defies clear trajectories and we are aware that it will leave us with an ambiguous
picture. While we still witness “transition[s] away from the dominance of sovereignty and the
international system” (Pegram and Acuto 2015b, 586) defined in state terms, we also see new
forms of governance emerging, some of which are not as multilateral or cooperative as
suggested in previous takes on global governance. More specifically, different fields are
governed through different, potentially contradicting constellations of these frameworks.
Second, we do not think of our own ideal-types as static. Rather, their practice as global
governance is dynamic and changes over time. Third, while all four ideal-types fall under the
theoretical definition of global governance, they relate differently to global governance as a
practice and a discursive symbol. Multistakeholderism 2.0 and Intermediary Governance affirm
the very ideas underpinning global governance and present themselves as complementary
approaches – hence our designation as ‘neoclassical’. Resurgent Intergovernmentalism takes a
more neutral, distanced stance as it shares some goals and concerns with global governance but
situates those within the larger sphere of global cooperation between nation-states. As such, it
is more of a substitute or at least serious revision of the classical practice of global governance.
Sovereignty & Power Politics finally explicitly rejects global governance and portrays itself
as competing with it.

**Multistakeholderism 2.0**

Our first ideal-type represents an updated version of multistakeholderism, the central
innovation of global governance. Committed to engaging all stakeholders in participatory and
open decision-making processes and working across all levels from the local to the global,
multistakeholderism was most prominently expressed in the high-level report of the UN
Commission on Global Governance (1995). The vision especially empowered private actors,
such as non-governmental organizations, business and epistemic communities, by granting
them access to political fora, leading to a veritable explosion of new forms of private or public-
private governance (Pattberg 2005, 2010). Multistakeholderism today, however, is different.
For one, the sheer prevalence of transnational institutions and their systems of interlinked
governance have changed the scope conditions for and the nature of multistakeholderism and
transnational influence (Tallberg et al. 2013). As “regime complexes” (Alter and Meunier 2009)
proliferate, their management as well as the management of interfaces between them, is gaining
“increasing relevance for coherent and effective global governance” (Gehring and Faude 2013,
For another, while there has been a dramatic increase in non-state actors participating in global governance overall, this increase has been unevenly distributed. NGOs and transnational corporations have significantly expanded their activities and representation in some fields. This does not, however, indicate a similar depth and quality of multistakeholderism in other fields as well, where little formal oversight and fewer legal constraints are still being favored (Weiss, Seyle, and Coolidge 2013, 4-5).

That said, expanded and deepened forms of multistakeholderism can be found in very different policy domains. In the case of global environmental governance, for example, we see a broad and comprehensive shift from multilateralism to multistakeholderism (Newell, Pattberg, and Schroeder 2012). While the 1990s saw a zenith of multilateral norm-setting like the 1992 Rio Conventions on Biodiversity, Climate Change and Desertification, the system stagnated as it entered the new millennium. Since then, we have seen a proliferation of new actors, new governance mechanisms and an intensified interaction across governance levels, leading to “a plethora of private and transnational institutions, public-private partnerships, private norms, and global public policy networks addressing environmental issues” (Pattberg and Widerberg 2015, 686). In contrast, large parts of internet governance have followed a different path towards multistakeholderism. There, private and public-private governance has managed the manifold interdependencies by developing and harmonizing technical standards and regulatory norms through a host of committees, fora and working groups which were often dominated by private actors, especially technical experts (Antonova 2011). However, as the next section shows, states have become more prominent actors in internet governance, processes and institutions since the mid-2000s, somewhat formalizing the domain by following a different regulatory logic (Carr 2015, 641).

**Intermediary Governance**

Our second ideal-type refers to situations where actors involved in governance can be classified into functional roles where the regulating actor and the target of regulation are connected by an intermediary. At first glance, intermediary governance may be mistaken for multistakeholder governance because similar actors are involved. The difference, though, is in the way these actors interact. In a multistakeholder setting, formal status is de-emphasized and decision-making tends towards the consensual. In intermediary governance, formal hierarchies persist and decisions are made at the top and then transmitted downwards. Intermediaries and targets of regulation may be offered a consultative role but authority remains with the actors at the top.
Intermediaries in this logic can represent different actors ranging “from profit-making firms such as inspection companies and credit rating agencies, to NGOs such as human rights advocacy groups, to transgovernmental networks of regulatory agencies” (Abbott, Levi-Faur, and Snidal 2017, 7). Regulators draw on intermediaries because intermediaries may have capacities and expertise that they themselves lack or because intermediaries may have more autonomy and enjoy greater legitimacy in the field. Intermediaries interpret and translate rules during implementation, monitor compliance, mediate between regulators and targets, and provide feedback from targets to regulators.

In global governance, if regulators are states or groups of states, they often take a directive approach, using the “shadow of hierarchy” to empower and/or coerce intermediaries into implementing policies, e.g. when European states pressured the SWIFT banking consortium to implement European sanctions against Iranian banks in 2012. This is most similar to principal-agent and delegation models of regulation. International organizations may also act as regulators, but without the formal legitimacy of sovereign states, they usually have to take a ‘softer’ approach. In what has become known as “orchestration”, an IGO “enlists and supports intermediary actors to address target actors in pursuit of IGO governance goals” (Abbott et al. 2015, 4). Here, the intermediary plays a more prominent role because it has capabilities that the IGO is lacking, “such as local information, technical expertise, enforcement capacity, material resources, legitimacy and direct access to targets” (Abbott et al. 2015, 5). In contrast to more direct relationships where the regulator has legal authority over an intermediary, orchestration is premised on voluntary participation and non-binding instruments (Pegram 2015, 627-628). While this blurs the line between orchestration and multistakeholder governance, there is a crucial difference in that an orchestrating IGO is still clearly the regulator, whereas the same role is shared among all participants in a multistakeholder arrangement.

Just like multistakeholderism, intermediary governance plays an important role in many policy domains and can be seen prominently in certain aspects of internet governance (DeNardis 2014, 153-172). Many states lack the technical expertise and the necessary infrastructure to establish an infrastructure for the control of illicit content, and even powerful states like China or the United States generally find it easier to use legislative or commercial pressure on intermediaries to achieve their ends (Deibert and Rohozinski 2010). These intermediaries are usually large corporations that provide specialized internet services, such as Facebook or Google, who are at
least somewhat susceptible to state pressure. Similar approaches can also be found in other fields. For example, in certain arenas of security governance, the use of private contractors as intermediaries has become a defining feature of security assemblages and new governance networks (Avant 2016, Abrahamsen and Williams 2009). Whether this represents the erosion of state capacity or rather the rearticulation of state interests through public-private partnerships remains to be seen. Sure enough, private actors usually take subsidiary roles in policing, security provision and law enforcement fields, working with authority delegated to them by state agents. More broadly and contrary to multistakeholderism, non-state actors in intermediary arrangements are seen more as service providers rather than as partners in policy-making (Gould 2015).

**Resurgent Intergovernmentalism**

While much of global governance is provided through multistakeholder approaches or organized through intermediaries, there are also fields that are more state-dominated, or have become so in recent times (Fehl 2014). However, the resurgent intergovernmentalism that we see today is different from the state-to-state multilateral diplomacy of earlier times. Instead, governments are adopting new approaches to deal with the inefficiencies of traditional multilateralism via (1) deepened transgovernmentalism and (2) limiting access via “minilateralism” (Patrick 2015, Eckersley 2012). As to deepened transgovernmentalism, meetings at the executive level such as those of the heads of state in the G-7 are preceded and paralleled by ‘transgovernmental’ meetings between mid-level officials and bureaucrats and by consultations with non-state actors. In other words, executive meetings are merely the visible and symbolic tip of the intergovernmental iceberg which rests on a vast transgovernmental machinery operating beneath the surface: “a system of meetings and the work of ministers, and their ministries, working groups, international institutions but also transgovernmental organizations and regulatory networks with formal and informal regulatory actors” (Alexandroff and Brean 2015, 10). This confluence of traditional diplomacy and ongoing, more informal modes of diplomacy constitutes what Alexandroff and Brean (2015) call ‘global summitry’.

---

8 The limited impact of the 2018 hearings of Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg in the US Senate and then at the European Parliament indicate some of the limitations of intermediary governance.
In addition, states have also turned to “minilateralism” (Eckersley 2012). Being arguably nimbler and hence more effective, minilateral approaches only include the minimum number of states necessary to arrive at a solution. While minilateral approaches have existed since the 1970s, such informal and smaller arrangements have become more numerous and more important recently. Instead of utilizing the United Nations and Bretton Woods systems, states increasingly seem to prefer to negotiate through “parallel frameworks that are *ad hoc* and temporary rather than formal and permanent” (Patrick 2015, 116). The ‘Coalition of the Willing’, forged by the Bush administration to gain international support for the Iraq invasion in 2003, is a prominent example of minilateralism: After having failed to gain UN and NATO support, the US administration in a rather informal and loose fashion reached out to states willing to commit and thus avoided the complex consensus-building at the core of multilateralism (Wivel and Oest 2010). Another example for resurgent intergovernmentalism would be the G-system (Conzelmann 2012, 224). In the wake of the 2007-2008 global economic and financial crisis, the G-20 took up important regulatory functions to contain the crisis. In the process, it moved beyond simple intergovernmentalism. Among others and parallel to the meetings of the heads of states, the G-system included conferences for the secretaries of finance which received less media attention but arguably constituted the real work of the G-20. Their most important contribution was to facilitate further discussion about issues of common concern, organized through “transnational and transgovernmental webs of formal and informal policy making activity” (Slaughter 2017, 285) and increasingly embedded in a multitude of supplementary summits and other activities.9

**Sovereigntism and Power Politics**

The fourth form of governance resonates with a renewed emphasis of national sovereignty as well as an increased willingness to pursue confrontational politics and the use of power resources to achieve aims at the expense of other states. We are aware that this mode goes beyond what some would consider global governance (Terhalle 2015, Sterling-Folker 2005). For us, though, it represents a crucial part of our post-governance taxonomy since it allows us to capture policy shifts from more cooperative forms towards more conflictual, zero-sum exchanges. Obviously, such fields appear to be ‘in crisis’ in terms of cooperation and collective

---

9 Connecting to multistakeholderism and orchestration, the G-20 over the years have also reached out to various constituencies – business (first in 2010), labor, science, civil society, youth (2013), women (2015) –, bringing in representatives from these sectors chosen by the host government of the summit into various fora. It is also noteworthy that the G-20 has not limited its deliberations to financial and economic issues but also discussed topics like terrorism or climate change (Slaughter 2017, 286).
action. However, even these forms of governance still produce governance ‘outputs’ relating to cross-border challenges which underscores the need to include them in our framework rather than considering them to be beyond its scope. In other words, global governance only appears to be in crisis and the liberal world order under attack if one equates it with “shift[ing] international relations away from zero-sum issues towards win-win ones” in the first place (Mead 2014, 69). Thus, to assess a crisis of global governance is to read it as a somewhat narrow and functionalist framework of cooperation in the first place.

More generally, we see this ideal-type as indicative of new modes of governance and attempts at regulating global issues. On the one hand, these originate from so-called revisionist powers such as China and Russia whose ascent has led to a renewed emphasis on geopolitical logics in world politics. On the other hand, the West itself, the United States chief among it, is undermining the very world order that has been the foundation of its global supremacy. Global trade is a case in point: the field was long organized through multilateral processes like the GATT/WTO rounds, partly institutionalized via the World Trade Organization (WTO) and had strong elements of multistakeholderism in fields like business standards and labor conditions. More recently, with protectionist policies globally ascendant, the U.S. government has firmly latched onto the idea of trade as a zero-sum exchange, where countries are ‘winning’ or ‘losing’.

In the bigger picture, we see the shift towards a logic of power politics as emblematic of a deeper conflict between supporters of global governance and those of a renewed ‘sovereigntism’. These camps represent dissenting visions similar to the more general debate between ‘cosmopolitans’ and ‘communitarians’ (Zürn and de Wilde 2016). Echoing communitarian ideals, intellectuals and policymakers in the US and elsewhere “regard global governance as inherently undemocratic because it violates popular sovereignty and undermines constitutional government by ceding legislative authority to unelected and unaccountable entities” (Goodhart and Taninchev 2011, 1047). ‘New sovereigntists’ thus argue that democratic self-determination is only possible within a Westphalian understanding of sovereignty (Spiro 2000). Accordingly, we witness an increasing willingness of governments approaching global issues in a more confrontational manner, emphasizing self-interest and power politics over consensus and cooperation. Climate governance, for example, has been

---

10 After all, trade wars ‘are good, and easy to win’, as President Trump has famously tweeted.

11 Sovereigntism was first articulated in American legal debates where the term was used to denote the position that ‘foreign’ sources of law should not be considered in domestic legal affairs or that they should at least be heavily discounted relative to domestic sources of law (Resnik 2008).
riven by conflicts, sometimes along unexpected lines and often displaying blatant and unapologetically advanced national interests (Streck and Terhalle 2013, 534-7).

While skeptical towards some of the core ideas of global governance, we wish to point out that today’s ideas of power politics are still influenced by the very processes that they question. More specifically, sovereignty today is not simply a return to some “timeless” classic mode of politics from earlier eras. On the contrary, the use of power politics in the 2010s is influenced by the experience of other forms of global governance and adapts some of their instruments, practices and language – just like rock music was influenced by the emergence of punk (e.g. in the development of alternative rock) and thus can be considered as falling under the broader label of post punk. For example, scope conditions have changed so much that states are adapting their exercise of power to a new, globalized environment. Power is increasingly exercised in ways that were less prominent in previous era of global politics. First, there is power through networks, in what Farrell and Newman (2019) refer to as “weaponized interdependence”. Second, international institutions have become more politicized and are increasingly prominent sites of contestation. Third, states increasingly leverage non-state actors or state proxies to achieve their goals, e.g. China using state-owned firms for geoeconomical purposes or the United States using its hegemony in the tech sector to facilitate global surveillance programs. As such, power politics today occur in light of a changed scenery of global diplomacy – while we see a lot of sovereigntist rhetoric, in reality this often translates into multilateral policies echoing different logics, incentives, and modes of representation (Keohane and Victor 2011).

*Explaining Differentiation in the Practice of Global Governance*

How can this differentiation of global governance be explained? While we are unable to offer a comprehensive theory of the determinants how particular fields shift between particular regulatory logics, we at least wish to briefly offer potential explanations. To begin with, several structural factors might shape such an outcome, such as the actors involved in a field and their interactions as well as the nature of the problem. For example, we can think of inter-state problems like arms control, transnational problems like migration or trade, and non-territorial problems like climate change imposing different constraints on institutional design. Furthermore, the degree of formalization in any policy field and the forms of power that can be used in interactions have an impact to what extent and in which direction it will move.12 Thus,

---

12 See Abbott, Green and Keohane (2016) for an organizational ecology approach to this question.
we follow Newell, Pattberg and Schroeder and emphasize the importance of agency and power in global governance: “The process of initiating multiactor governance is not politically neutral, nor does it exist in a vacuum. […] There is a politics to making claims about where governance deficits lie and why and who gets to frame discussions about which alternatives are appropriate, desirable, and viable” (Newell, Pattberg, and Schroeder 2012, 356, see also Grigorescu and Başer 2019). In a nutshell, being able to frame discussions and determine modes of governance and the overall architecture are straightforward expressions of agency and power as well as reflections of circumstances and structural contingencies.

We also recognize functional-rationalist arguments that consider multistakeholder approaches proposed during the 1990s as unable to solve today’s problems. As such, the evolutionary diversification towards other regulatory models expressed in post-governance can be explained as an attempt to meet shifting realities of different policy fields, hoping to create ‘better’, more suitable forms of governance. In a historical-institutionalist reading, one would point to punctuated equilibrium dynamics (Krasner 1988, Young 2010), i.e. that regulatory models do not evolve in a linear fashion but respond to shocks. In such an approach, 9/11 and the global economic crisis, for example, have triggered a period of disequilibrium which the system is still working its way through. This might imply that the multistakeholder era of global governance was exceptional since it was only possible within a liberal hegemony that is coming to an end. After its moment of exceptionalism manifested in the “end of history” (Fukuyama 1992), world politics is currently returning to its more likely state of affairs of realpolitik and power politics, with a broader scope of actors than just states, though, and in light of strong institutional arrangements which continue to produce governance on a daily basis. Whichever of the two macro explanation one ultimately prefers, the crux of the matter remains the same: Global governance is no longer a unified, teleologically advanced notion of world politics. Rather, it encompasses different constellations in different fields and even within those, existing in tension to one another, logics shift back and forth between the four ideal-types.

**Global Governance Reflections Seen Through the Post-Governance Lens**

Following real-world developments in the attempt to study and theorize them, recent academic reflections of global governance have diversified just as much as its practices. Our emphasis on post-governance helps us outline major strands and prominent approaches within the current debate. The approaches we discuss in this section are mostly deductively developed and represent aspirational explanations rather than empirical ideal-types. Providing heuristic tools
and conceptual frameworks, however, they inform our understanding of global governance just as much as, or maybe even more than, the empirical observations made based on them. To structure different approaches and frameworks, we use the same continuum of ‘neoclassical’ and ‘skeptical’ approaches that we introduced in the previous section. Again, we situate different approaches depending on how they relate to the original notion of global governance and, based on this, to what extent they predict integration or competition as the main features of the future development(s) in and of global governance.13

‘Neoclassical’ approaches, echoing most emphatically the seminal work of the 1990s, advocate traditional ideas global governance. What these contributions share is a conviction that the original insights of global governance are still broadly correct. This is premised on the assumption that the drivers of globalization – greater mobility of people and goods, a changing landscape of risks, faster access to information, increasing rates of innovation – have not slowed down and are not likely to do so in the future. In other words, as the number of transboundary issues continues to grow in number and complexity, the need for global governance intensifies. Maintaining the notion that the state is retreating and that the increasing prominence of non-state actors in governance is changing the fundamental dynamics of governance, scholars in this vein see globalization as a game-changer for world politics, emphasize governance opportunities beyond the nation-state, and ultimately conceive of global governance as multi-level governance (Hooghe and Marks 2003). Overall, in this functionalist perspective, cooperation rules over conflict as globalization needs to be governed (Held and McGrew 2002a) and global problems can be regulated and managed (Coen and Pegram 2018, 108). Focused on problem-solving, global governance marks a “power shift” away from the state (Mathews 1997) as we see an increasing “diversification of ‘rule-makers’” (Marx and Wouters 2018, 122).

On the other end, more skeptical approaches proceed from the assumption that global governance is not working (Terhalle 2015, Goldin 2013, Sterling-Folker 2005). In this perspective, global governance is beset by a multitude of pathologies, such as institutional gridlocks, regime fragmentation, and the irreconcilable division of interests (Pegram 2015, 586). Thus, while sharing the notion that globalization and interdependence continue to deepen, this skeptical perspective stresses conflict over cooperation. The development of appropriate

13 Before outlining them in detail, note that both ends advance the idea that international politics contains ‘at least some pockets of hierarchy’ and thus reject the assumption of international anarchy (Zürn 2018a, 138). For a more critical view on the persisting power of anarchy and the notion that global governance fails to overcome it see Cerny and Prichard (2017). As a rule of thumb to distinguish between empirical ideal-types and theoretical approaches, think of the former as being part of the practitioner’s discourse and hence being used in political debate whereas the latter is exclusively (or at least predominantly) used in academic discussions. That said, certain overlaps between this and the previous section are unavoidable.
governance mechanisms in response to global problems is at best lagging, if feasible at all (Mazower 2012, 363-366). Expressing frustration with the naivety and excitement of early global governance thinking, this perspective sees a more general crisis of multilateralism (Hale, Held, and Young 2013). Even before the Trump administration accelerated this process, Patrick argued that “effective multilateral responses are increasingly occurring outside formal institutions, as frustrated actors turn to more convenient, ad hoc venues” (Patrick 2014, 58-59). Dovetailing current debates about the end of the liberal world order due to developments such as Trump’s ‘America First’ strategy, Brexit, and other populist approaches around the world, skeptics argue that the old order of multilateralism and global governance is fading away and the new has yet to emerge in clearer contours.

While representing two different assessments, both ends share a certain unifying thinking on global governance. Both assume that global governance is one thing or at least is moving into one direction, leaving little space for alternative interpretations, deviance and ambiguity. Advanced as grand theory, both the neoclassical and the skeptical perspective present sweeping accounts which, in their final instance, express an either/or logic of global governance. Almost as in a mechanical balance, the first perspective views the emergence of global governance as eroding national sovereignty. Vice versa, the second perspective frames any state-based intervention as a resurrection of sovereignty and therefore a decline of global governance. Their different assessments, however, directly motivate theoretical frameworks and heuristic tools used to study global governance. These different conceptual frameworks cover different themes, which either echo neoclassical or skeptical assumptions about global governance.

We contend that a post-governance perspective helps to structure and organize at least four different frameworks currently advanced. Rather than trying to unify or prioritize them, we merely describe the different frameworks and their commitments as we embrace their diversity. Even though we are aware of the danger of academic compartmentalization into ever smaller debates discussed by fewer and fewer scholars, we maintain that we need scholarship that
defines progress not through the unnecessary pursuit of orthodoxy and unity to keep up with the evolving practices of global governance. In other words, within each framework, sophisticated arguments about world politics have been developed that merit attention. As foundational ontologies (Jackson and Nexon 2013, 550-2), each of them presents a different view of global governance and a unique way of thinking world politics or, more specifically, different parts of world politics. Hence, their relative value cannot be determined in paradigmatic competition through falsification. Rather, following Sil and Katzenstein’s (2010) notion of eclecticism, each one should be assessed according to its own logic as scholars further spell out their commitment and pick their framework in order to make sense of their respective research problems.14

**Judicialization & Constitutionalism**

Judicialization (Zangl 2008) and constitutionalism (Wiener et al. 2012) as distinct modes of thinking global governance argue that legally binding, and therefore particularly strong forms of global governance are emerging. Following these perspectives, deepening integration represents more than just interdependence. Rather, it reflects the emergence of new legal foundations that serve as backbones of global governance. Observable in both domestic and international politics, these processes have the potential to change the underlying dynamics of global governance and replace the rule of power with the rule of law (Hirschl 2006). Evidence of the judicialization of international affairs is drawn, among other, from commercial dispute settlement (e.g. within the WTO), the expanding mandate of the International Criminal Court, the strengthening of other international human rights tribunals, and the integration of quasi-judicial non-compliance procedures into new international conventions. As such, while still contested in many ways, it is argued that contexts of international rule of law are gradually expanding (Zangl 2008, 848). Such a shift, it is claimed, from intermediate global governance to more “constitutionalised relations in the global realm” (Wiener et al. 2012, 3), holds the potential to provide a different foundation to world politics and would thus fundamentally change global governance and how it is being provided, regulated, maintained, and enforced.

---

14 To pick up once more on the post-punk analogy, it stands to reason that new genres (i.e. our different perspectives in this discussion) such as gothic and hardcore developed their own codes, fanzines, festivals, and fashion as they broke away from punk. More importantly, each also developed its own system of status and recognition. Trying to compare bands from different genres to determine which is ‘better’ is thus a pointless exercise. At the same time, we do not claim that our continuum is comprehensive in the sense that it features all approaches. Rather, we contend that the four approaches that we propose are extensive enough to allow further discussion.
Arguably, such assumptions implicitly echo classical global governance thinking and sometimes go even further, arguing that the “global monopoly on the legitimate use of organized violence – a world state – is inevitable” (Wendt 2003, 491). As such, this is the most visionary and bold reflection of global governance, carrying the assumption that it will not only increase in scope but also in legal authority.

**Polycentric Network Governance & Regime Complexity**

Somewhat less visionary yet still assuming a highly institutionalized world of cooperation, advocates of polycentric network governance and regime complexes contend that global governance is defined by institutional overlap and informality. As such, they redefine authority while placing less emphasis on its legal or binding nature (Krisch 2017, Lake 2010). Rather, decision-making comes in different forms and originates from different loci as global governance is defined by “multiple governing authorities at different scales rather than a monocentric unit” (Ostrom 2010, 552). This neoclassical exploration of global governance argues that networks in particular have become important complements to existing institutions, providing increased and deep interdependence as well as changing not only the nature of global governance but also furthering the emergence of new global problems (Zürn 2018b, Kahler 2009). These networks and regime complexes often coincide with particular policy fields and their governance architectures. To capture the complexity of these fields, it is argued that a range of diverse actors, different legal agreements with varying specificity and other soft-law conventions, norms, and implicit modes of governance exist. While there is no fully agreed-upon hierarchy of rules and procedures for resolving conflicts between them, they overall provide enough order to maintain collective commitments for problem-solving (Keohane and Victor 2011, Young 2010).

However, these large aggregates of regime complexes bring their share of challenges. Importantly, there are concerns that overlapping regimes reduce the clarity of legal obligation, open the door for forum shopping, cross-institutional political strategies and strategic inconsistency, as well as limit overall accountability and thus might lead to non-compliance (Orsini, Morin, and Young 2013, Alter and Meunier 2009). In this sense, while emphasizing interdependence and the need for collective order, regime and network approaches remain a little less optimistic in their assessment of global governance. In other words, the complexity
of governance emerging in many fields does not provide efficient and legitimate solutions to all of them equally.15

**Orchestration & Fragmentation**

Taking these concerns one step further and tying them into a skeptical perspective, orchestration and in particular fragmentation have been advanced as a new frameworks for the analysis of global governance (Abbott et al. 2015, Pegram 2015). Based on an actor-focused, rationalist framework, orchestration implies that regulators (i.e. principals) deliberately leverage intermediaries (i.e. agents) to pursue their governance objectives. At the same time, orchestration assumes that global governors are limited in terms of their resources “such as local information, technical expertise, enforcement capacity, material resources, legitimacy and direct access to targets” (Abbott et al. 2015, 5). Given the intricate nature of global problems and the challenge of globally exercising comprehensive authority (Lake 2010), international organizations in particular have been theorized as “orchestrators by design” (Viola 2015). As such, while lacking legal authority and resources, orchestrators still have the ability to regulate and organize governance through assembling and utilizing other actors in the field. Obviously, this marks an important departure from traditional global governance thinking since it is no longer based on the assumption of shared interest, functional cooperation and overall improved outcome. Rather, orchestration can lead to regulatory competition as it emphasizes the agency and interest of particular organizations in charge. Orchestration includes conflict in theoretical terms and carries a certain frustration with naïve global governance assumptions overemphasizing its cooperative nature. Overall, it remains agnostic about the likelihood of effective governance emerging in any field (Pegram 2015, 627-628).

Taking an even more skeptical approach, the concept of fragmentation has been introduced to describe processes in which the governance architecture of an issue area comes under increased strain, decomposing into a “patchwork of international institutions” with no one in charge or accountable (Biermann et al. 2009, 15). Rejecting the inherent teleology of classical global governance, fragmentation emphasizes that few policy domains can be orchestrated let alone fully regulated by a single global governor or institution. In other words, while not losing sight of it altogether, fragmentation is deeply skeptical about the possibilities for effective global

---

15 Recent research in this field in particular reflects an attempt to come to terms with the role of transnational actors in these networks and thus connects directly to the notion of transnationalism inherent in global governance (Tallberg et al. 2013).
governance. Arguing that “institutional fragmentation is an inherent structural characteristic of international relations today [since] there is no policy domain where all relevant provisions are placed under, or legally linked to, a single institutional umbrella with universal membership” (Zelli and van Asselt 2013, 3), this perspective presents itself as a ‘sober’ account of global governance. For advocates of this perspective, fragmentation offers an analytical meta-narrative to theorize what global governance has always focused on: The interplay between different institutions and actors with indeterminate, potentially beneficial or disruptive outcomes.

**Gridlocks & Crises**

Representing the most skeptical perspective on global governance in our continuum, advocates of gridlock & crises approaches point to the existence of unsolvable, or at least deeply challenging, obstacles to global governance. In a series of arguments, global governance becomes a conflictual variant of geopolitics, featuring strong national interests, enduring power politics, and ultimately represents nothing else but the timeless *realpolitik* nature of world politics (Terhalle 2015, Mead 2014). More specifically, it is argued that against deeply conflictual beliefs in the desired order, interdependence and transboundary problems do not facilitate cooperation but evoke nationalist and populist responses, further reducing the scope for cooperation and promoting isolationist thinking (Hale and Held 2018, 130).\(^{16}\) The implication is not only that cooperation is difficult. Rather, all instances of global governance will eventually be overcome by competition and interest-based politics. Hence, these approaches argue that global governance, even in its heyday, has always been too naïve and optimistic (Waltz 1999, Gilpin 2002, Sterling-Folker 2005). In a different, Neomarxist critique, global governance has been identified as a project of establishing a new economic order to serve the structural needs of capitalism. Short of any fundamental reformulation, global governance will remain flawed and perpetuate its own crises (Overbeek 2005).

Overall, these approaches share the notion that we need to rethink global governance, both in terms of our theories and its practice. Chief among those, it is argued that geopolitical variables such as hierarchy, power and territory continue to matter even in a globalized world and that we need to theorize those to better understand global governance in the 21st century (Bially

---

\(^{16}\) While emphasizing the emergence of order, note that global governance in its original take was never shy to consider such dynamics. In fact, Rosenau (1992) oscillated back and forth between a more idealist perspective of global cooperation and a more realist framework of global inequality and power. Held and McGrew (2002b, 8-12) reflected this ambivalence in their introduction as they famously framed the departure from geopolitics to global governance with a question mark.
Mattern and Zarakol 2016). Any form of global governance, it is argued, will always produce winners and losers and thus will be fundamentally contested by those benefitting less from it than others. Furthermore, it is claimed that rising powers in particular cannot be accommodated in existing governance structures and will either split off or create counter-orders, thereby regressing the current system of global governance into an “age of disorder” in the near future (Schweller 2011, also Jentleson 2012).

**Explaining Differentiation in Global Governance Thinking**

These brief summaries indicate the diversity of current approaches to global governance seen from a post-governance perspective. Each of them directly speaks to the phenomenon but they do so in different ways and thus, arguably, represent different ‘genres’ of global governance thinking. Framing their emergence as a process of theoretical diversification, we offer two possible explanations based on different epistemological stances and understandings of how global governance thinking relates to the practice thereof. First, from a positivist stance, one could surmise that the theoretical differentiation we witness is a mirror of real-world developments. In this perspective, against the vicissitudes of world politics, global governance thinking merely echoes practical differentiation as it continues to mature as a theoretical discourse. In other words, with global governance itself becoming more diversified and its objects and substance constantly evolving, scholars of global governance by default play a catch-up game and thus constantly have to refine their theories (Hewson and Sinclair 1999). While these different approaches shed different lights on global governance, they can ultimately be related and ‘tested’ against an independent reality of global governance.

Alternatively, following a post-positivist stance, one would point out that global governance thinking is generative of the practices it studies as the terminologies we use constitute our perceptions (Fierke 2002). More specifically, depending on which conceptual framework one uses, chances are high that its very dynamics will be ‘found’ in empirical analysis. In other words, just as anything else studied in IR, global governance runs the danger of “vindicating one’s pet approach” (Shapiro 2004, 19). Given the inherent complexity of the global order, we only see what our theoretical lenses offer us. Put differently, as our perceptions lack immediate access to what we study, our theories are always only proxies and heuristic tools rather than mirror images of reality. Different approaches thus represent different realities, each of them heuristically helpful as we try to make sense of the phenomenon. The differentiation we witness is thus not necessarily progress towards theoretical maturity but rather a reminder that
“Popperian fantasies about ingenious conjectures and inexorable refutations” can only fail us as we theorize global governance (Friedrichs and Kratochwil 2009, 710). While still retaining much of its attractiveness today, global governance has arguably undergone a ‘hype cycle’ where the ‘peak of inflated expectation’ was inevitably followed by the ‘trough of disillusionment’ (Fenn and Raskino 2008). Not being able to realize the expectations put into it (Weiss and Wilkinson 2019, 18-9), the thousand theoretical flowers blooming today represent more pragmatic, yet no fully ‘true’ understandings of what global governance is and how to explain it. Paraphrasing Isaiah Berlin (1979: 159) once more, past theories of global governance have become straightjackets for present and future conceptions, this is where global governance is indeed in crisis. These and other normative notions are discussed in the conclusion below.

Conclusions

In a widely recognized debate, influential scholars have recently proclaimed the end of IR theory and argued for a post-paradigmatic era for the subfield (Dunne, Hansen, and Wight 2013, Jackson and Nexon 2013). In this paper, we applied a similar perspective to global governance to argue that its practices and academic reflections are marked by advanced differentiation and suggest a post-governance perspective to bring together otherwise contradicting developments. In other words, to make sense of increasingly complex modes of global governance, we have to move past a unified way of doing and thinking global governance narrowly defined as international cooperation, multi-level engagement and the academic discussion thereof. All of this reminds us that thinking and doing world politics comes in trends which tend to create their own dogmas, much as Lapid argued in his seminal article on the “Third Great Debate” where he reminded us that for IR, „having just escaped from one straitjacket, there is no point in pushing so early for a new one” (Lapid 1989, 237, Fn. 1). In this sense, moving global governance from paradigmatic to post-paradigmatic theorizing echoes the evolution of IR. We use the analogy of post-punk to describe this new perspective, which is meant to capture the concurrency of different approaches to allow us to discuss change in light of continuity. Instead of warranting a single perspective, it is the simultaneity of different approaches that defines global governance today, both practically and theoretically. The challenge for practitioners and scholars alike is to accept this plurality without attempting to unify it by searching for the ‘best’ approach, while continuing to engage in and study attempts to govern and regulate problems of cross-border nature, either collectively or at least in the awareness of others being involved and affected by it.
Following the meta-structure of the argument so far, we would like to end on why a post-governance perspective matters in practical as well as in theoretical terms. To begin with the former, we have not offered any normative evaluation in our account of ideal-type modes and logics of governance for reasons of space. However, a post-governance perspective, we believe, not only allows but rather compels us to – briefly – revisit this lacuna. Whether it is by bringing in a ‘club governance’ perspective that reminds us how easily multistakeholderism can become dysfunctional due to being overly exclusive, non-participatory or closed-minded (Schneiker and Joachim 2018, Tsingou 2015), emphasizing power politics and conflict within (Jentleson 2012), or simply by reminding us of the organic and contingent patchwork and thus preliminary and ultimately historically confined nature of any global governance manifestation (Weiss and Wilkinson 2019), global governance cannot remain neutral in light of the challenges and contestation it currently faces. In a very practical sense, it has to reflect its own role and impact to provide legitimate answers and justification as to why one should support it. More than ever, the practical discourse needs to answer the ‘whether’ in the affirmative instead of simply assuming the ‘wither’, since that might fall sort of maintaining collective action in the face of nationalist populism (Zürn 2018a).

Having said that, it is legitimate to ask whether the shift from global to post-governance is to be welcomed in normative terms along the lines of whether it is improving the provision of order or not. On this point, overall, we take a cautious but optimistic stance. The reason for our caution is that the legitimacy of any individual governance arrangement is conditioned by its possibilities for input and its capability to generate output (Tallberg, Bäckstrand, and Scholte 2018). As such, any assessment must be based on empirical developments that have to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. But on a more abstract level, despite its seemingly erratic and constantly shifting character of patchwork arrangements providing no holistic governance order altogether, we are relatively sanguine that post-governance overall does not herald the end of global cooperation. Even as some analysts fret whether the ‘End of the West’ will undercut the foundations of the global order, we believe that post-governance is only another evolutionary stage of global cooperation, not its endpoint or even necessarily a sign of crisis.17

In theoretical terms, a post-governance perspective frees us from having to commit to one framework and thereby presumptuously decide where global governance is heading. Instead of following macro-narratives inspired by grand theory and ending up seeing what one wants to

17 On that note, we would like to emphasize that the title of this paper – ‘It’s the End of the World As We Know It’ – itself satirizes the doomsayers, since after all, the R.E.M. song from which this line is drawn continues with ‘…And I Feel Fine’.
see\textsuperscript{18}, we can pursue analytical questions such as: How and why do modes of global governance change within policy domains? Why do certain theoretical concepts become ‘fashionable’ and replace others? To which degree are regulatory choices determined by structural characteristics and agency? How can we best align our reflections with real-world practices? Most importantly, how can we assess the comparative suitability, effectiveness and normative desirability of different governance forms? While engaging with those questions, we need to remind ourselves of the family resemblances and partial overlaps between different frameworks, both substantially as well as in terms of researchers involved, without papering over differences in the pursuit of larger, sweeping narratives.

We believe our post-governance perspective can be applied to global governance at large as well as to more specific issue areas within. In its non-teleological form, post-governance overall helps us to accept that there is no single answer how to govern the world or study practices thereof. In other words, the perspective helps us to take the notion of global governance seriously without turning any particular form of it into a paradigm itself. Thus, post-governance leaves us with multiple forms of governance, multiple research agendas, multiple insights and ultimately multiple words to be studied. Obviously, it remains to be seen whether such a perspective is able to capture the complexity we witness in global governance today. For now, however, we contend that post-governance and its post-paradigmatic stance is an important intervention into a sprawling practical and theoretical discourse otherwise not coming to terms with its own diversity. As such, thought of in a pluralistic and dynamic fashion, we hope that rethinking global governance as post-governance can help it stay relevant in the future and allow continued dialogue among practitioners and scholars alike. We also hope it helps us to engage with topics traditionally not discussed within global governance. Just as some of the musical subgenres of post-punk eventually outgrew their punk origins, post-governance might help us to overcome reluctance to consider otherwise unrecognized dynamics and topics. In fact, once it moved punk beyond its own orthodoxy, post-punk elevated its progenitor to new heights, leaving us with different genres, bands, and songs to choose from based on taste, mood and situation. We hope our paper offered reason to think of global governance in a similarly creative, open-minded and inviting fashion.

\textsuperscript{18} As we argued before, just like IR theory, thinking global governance paradigmatically (that is without further justification) privileges different actors and institutions in the process. Neoclassical approaches champion non-state and international institutions while skeptical approaches orbit around the nation-state. Such different ontologies cannot be tested against each other.
References


