

GLOBAL INSTITUTIONS



The United Nations as a Knowledge System

Nanette Svenson

ROUTLEDGE

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The United Nations as a Knowledge System

This book seeks to explore how the United Nations has generated, warehoused, disseminated, structured, packaged, expanded, transferred and leveraged its vast resources of accumulated information and experience throughout the decades and, particularly, since the start of the twenty-first century with the introduction of more connective information and communications technology. It examines the overarching objectives that have guided such activity and divides UN knowledge management into three distinct, but often overlapping and intertwining, categories:

- knowledge for social and organizational learning;
- knowledge for norm setting; and
- knowledge for creation of products and services.

Svenson brings together these multiple aspects of UN knowledge management to present a holistic view of how the organization utilizes its global intelligence to educate, advocate and serve member countries' development. Instead of looking at the UN as an international bureaucracy or as a peacekeeping, policymaking, humanitarian or development entity, this work studies the UN as a generator and purveyor of information, learning and experience in all of these areas. This book will be key reading for all students and scholars of international organizations.

Nanette Svenson is an Adjunct Professor at Tulane University and an independent consultant for the United Nations and other international organizations.

Global Institutions

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About the series

The “Global Institutions Series” provides cutting-edge books about many aspects of what we know as “global governance.” It emerges from our shared frustrations with the state of available knowledge—electronic and print-wise, for research and teaching—in the area. The series is designed as a resource for those interested in exploring issues of international organization and global governance. And since the first volumes appeared in 2005, we have taken significant strides toward filling conceptual gaps.

The series consists of three related “streams” distinguished by their blue, red, and green covers. The blue volumes, comprising the majority of the books in the series, provide user-friendly and short (usually no more than 50,000 words) but authoritative guides to major global and regional organizations, as well as key issues in the global governance of security, the environment, human rights, poverty, and humanitarian action among others. The books with red covers are designed to present original research and serve as extended and more specialized treatments of issues pertinent for advancing understanding about global governance. And the volumes with green covers—the most recent departure in the series—are comprehensive and accessible accounts of the major theoretical approaches to global governance and international organization.

The books in each of the streams are written by experts in the field, ranging from the most senior and respected authors to first-rate scholars at the beginning of their careers. In combination, the three components of the series—blue, red, and green—serve as key resources for faculty, students, and practitioners alike. The works in the blue and green streams have value as core and complementary readings in courses on, among other things, international organization, global governance, international law, international relations, and international political economy; the red volumes allow further reflection and investigation in these and related areas.

The books in the series also provide a segue to the foundation volume that offers the most comprehensive textbook treatment available dealing with all the major issues, approaches, institutions, and actors in contemporary global governance—our edited work *International Organization and Global Governance* (2014)—a volume to which many of the authors in the series have contributed essays.

Understanding global governance—past, present, and future—is far from a finished journey. The books in this series nonetheless represent significant steps toward a better way of conceiving contemporary problems and issues as well as, hopefully, doing something to improve world order. We value the feedback from our readers and their role in helping shape the on-going development of the series.

A complete list of titles appears at the end of this book. The most recent titles in the series are:

Summits and Regional Governance (2015)

*edited by Gordon Mace, Jean-Philippe Thérien, Diana Tussie,
and Olivier Dabène*

Global Consumer Organizations (2015)

by Karsten Ronit

World Trade Organization (2nd edition, 2015)

by Bernard M. Hoekman and Petros C. Mavroidis

Women and Girls Rising (2015)

by Ellen Chesler and Terry McGovern

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (2nd edition, 2015)

by Julian Lindley-French

Governing Climate Change (2nd edition, 2015)

by Harriet Bulkeley and Peter Newell

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (2015)

by Turan Kayaoglu

Preface

I decided to write this book after working in and with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other UN entities around the world for over a dozen years and teaching various graduate courses on the UN system. My work with the UN has been concentrated in knowledge- and capacity-related areas, so in my classes I naturally wanted to include some instruction on these aspects of UN work. I was surprised to find relatively little scholarly publication, or literature of any kind, on this dimension of the UN.

My perspective is clearly biased, albeit informed by both internal and external UN experience. I believe the knowledge work of the UN is among its most important. Thus, I feel more should be done to promote this type of focus within the UN and that more should be written about it as well.

In the process of researching this book, I quickly came to realize what an ambitious notion it was to attempt to present a picture of “UN knowledge”—much like trying to describe UN diplomacy or any other intrinsic characteristic of the system that spans so many different thematic areas, organizations, geographic regions, and purposeful agendas. This book represents a step in that direction. It offers a collection of *some* of the ways the UN works with knowledge and facilitates access to it for people and institutions everywhere. There is much more to be told, and I hope this work will encourage others to share what they know.

Acknowledgement

A number of people made important contributions to the preparation of this book, directly and indirectly. Some of those within the UN system prefer to remain anonymous; nevertheless, their comments have been enormously valuable and are highly appreciated.

Specific groups that must be recognized for their continued professional support and instruction include the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Regional Center for Latin America and the Caribbean, especially the Knowledge Management, Local Governance and Capacity Development teams; as well as the Knowledge Management and Capacity Development units at UNDP headquarters in New York, and Jenifer Colville, in particular, for her insightful edits. Thanks also go to the Dag Hammarskjöld Library team in New York for their very informative session on the UN library system; the United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC) team for their helpful guidance on UNSSC programming; the Academic Council on the United Nations System, for providing access to numerous academics and practitioners associated with the UN; and Alexandra Draxler, formerly of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), for educating me on the inner workings of the organization. Officials of UN Habitat, the UN University and the University for Peace (UPEACE) provided critical inputs as well.

My Tulane University research assistants deserve a round of applause for their considerable assistance. I am personally indebted to Meredith Bambrick for her invaluable research on international law and co-authoring of portions of the chapter on international agreements. Samantha Marrone and Hilary Ervin also provided substantial research for the chapters on knowledge management and capacity development.

Lastly, I would like to thank Alfredo Jefferson, for hiring me from the private sector into the UN, and my incredible husband and daughters for supporting my ambitious ideals with a sense of humor and constantly offering their unconditional love.

Abbreviations

AAR	After Action Review
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AMC	Advance Market Commitments
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Commission
AQUASTAT	Global Water Information System
ASPIRE	Action by Students to Promote Innovation and Reform through Education
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BDP	Bureau for Development Policy
CAME	Conference of Allied Ministers of Education
CapEFA	Capacity Development for Education for All
CAPNAM	Capacity Needs Assessment Methodology for Planning and Managing Education
CAREC	Caribbean Epidemiologic Centre
CD	capacity development
CD4CDM	Capacity Development for the Clean Development Mechanism
CDG	Capacity Development Group
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CDO	Capacity Development Office
CEB	Chief Executives Board for Coordination
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CERN	European Organization for Nuclear Research
CFC	chlorofluorocarbon
CFNI	Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CINTERFOR	Inter-American Centre for Knowledge Development in Vocational Training

CIPH	Commission on Intellectual Property Rights, Innovation and Public Health
CNA	competent national authorities
COMTRADE	Commodity Trade Statistics Database
CoP	Communities of Practice
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DAD-IS	Domestic Animal Diversity Information System
DEC	Development Economics Center
DFS	Department of Field Support
DHL	Dag Hammarskjöld Library
DIAS	Database on Introductions of Aquatic Species
DISTAT	United Nations Disability Statistics Database
DPI	Department of Public Information
DPKO	Department for Peacekeeping Operations
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECE	early childhood education
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EFA	Education for All
EPTA	Expanded Program of Technical Assistance
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
Eurostat	Statistical Office of the European Commission
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FAOLEX	National Laws and Regulations on Food, Agriculture and Renewable Natural Resources
FAOSTAT	Food and Agriculture Statistics
FDI	foreign direct investment
FGIS	Fisheries Global Information System
FIRMS	Fishery Resources Monitoring System
FISHSTAT	Aquatic Resources Statistics
GCPSE	Global Centre for Public Service Excellence
GCSP	Geneva Center for Security Policy
GCTV	Global Connections Television
GDP	gross domestic product
GFRA	Global Forest Resources Assessment
GIAN	Geneva International Academic Network

GIEWS	Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture
GIIS	Geneva Institute of International and Development Studies
GIS	geographic information system
GLADIS	Global Land Degradation Information System
GLC-SHARE	Global Land Cover-SHARE
GNI	gross national income
GPS	global positioning system
GTOS	Global Terrestrial Observing System
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HKiosk	Humanitarian Kiosk
IAC	International Advisory Committee
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IARC	International Agency for Research on Cancer
IBE	International Bureau of Education
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICGEB	International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology
ICIC	International Committee of Intellectual Cooperation
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICMET	International Center for Materials Evaluation Technology
ICT	information and communications technology
ICTP	International Centre for Theoretical Physics
IEA	International Energy Agency
IEF	International Energy Forum
IESALC	International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFFI	International Finance Facility for Immunization
IFI	international financial institution
IGWG	Intergovernmental Working Group
IICBA	International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
IIIC	International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation
IILS	International Institute for Labour Studies

IITE	Institute for Information Technologies in Education
ILC	International Law Commission
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMLI	International Maritime Law Institute
IMO	International Maritime Organization
INCAP	Institute of Nutrition of Central America and Panama
INSTRAW	International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
IOC	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission
IRC	Innocenti Research Centre
ISSA	International Social Security Association
ITC-ILO	International Training Centre—International Labour Organization
ITS	Integrated Training Service
IWE	Institute for Water Education
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JODI	Joint Oil Data Initiative
K4D	Knowledge for Development
KM	knowledge management
LDCs	least developed countries
LL.M.	Master of Laws
LRIS	Land Resource Information and Decision Support System
MAF	MDGs Acceleration Framework
MBS	<i>Monthly Bulletin of Statistics</i>
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
MOOC	massive open online course
MOW	Memory of the World
MTDSG	Multilateral Treaties Deposited with the Secretary-General
MUN	Model United Nations
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEPAD	New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NMUN	National Model United Nations
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODA	official development assistance
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
ODS	Official Documents System

OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OL	organizational learning
OLADE	Latin America Energy Organization
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PAHO	Pan-American Health Organization
PBF	Peace Building Fund
PHI	Department of Public Health, Innovation, Intellectual Property and Trade
PRI	Principles for Responsible Investment
PRME	Principles for Responsible Management Education
R&D	research and development
REFORGEN	Global Information System on Forest Genetic Resources
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
SHERLOC	Sharing Electronic Resources and Laws On Crime
STEPS	Systematic Time-bound Evaluation of Performance and Systems
STI	sexually transmitted infections
TACSI	The Australian Centre for Social Innovation
TEMS	Terrestrial Ecosystem Monitoring Sites
TSD	Turin School of Development
TVET	technical and vocational education and training
UIE	UNESCO Institute for Education
UIL	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAI	United Nations Academic Impact
UNA-USA	United Nations Association of the United States of America
UN CC:Learn	UN Climate Change Learning Partnership
UNCITRAL	United Nations Commission on International Trade Law
UNCRD	United Nations Centre for Regional Development
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNCTAD	United Nations Convention on Trade and Development
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNEVOC	UNESCO International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNGC	United Nations Global Compact
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
UN HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIC	United Nations Information Center
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNICRI	United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute
UNIDIR	United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNIHP	United Nations Intellectual History Project
UNIS	United Nations Information Service
UNISDR	United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNLB	United Nations Logistics Base
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOG	United Nations Office at Geneva
UNOSAT	UNITAR Operational Satellite Applications Programme
UNP	United Nations Publications
UNPAN	United Nations Public Administration Network
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UNSC	United Nations Statistical Commission
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
UNSO	United Nations Statistics Office
UNSSC	United Nations System Staff College
UNTC	United Nations Treaty Collection

UNTOC	United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime
UNTS	United Nations Treaty Series
UNTSI	United Nations Training School Ireland
UNU	United Nations University
UNU-BIOLAC	UNU Program for Biotechnology in Latin America and the Caribbean
UNU-CRIS	UNU Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies
UNU-CS	UNU Computing and Society
UNU-EHS	UNU Institute for Environment and Human Security
UNU-FLORES	UNU Institute for Integrated Management of Material Fluxes and of Resources
UNU-FTP	UNU Fisheries Training Programme
UNU-GCM	UNU Institute on Globalization, Culture and Mobility
UNU-GEST	UNU Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme
UNU-GTP	UNU Geothermal Training Programme
UNU-IAS	UNU Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability
UNU-IIGH	UNU International Institute for Global Health
UNU-INRA	UNU Institute for Natural Resources in Africa
UNU-INWEH	UNU Institute for Water, Environment and Health
UNU-LRT	UNU Land Restoration Training Programme
UNU-MERIT	UNU Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology
UNU-WIDER	UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UPEACE	University for Peace
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VMS	Fishing Vessel Monitoring Systems
WBI	World Bank Institute
WCEFA	World Conference on Education for All
WDR	World Development Report
WFP	World Food Programme
WFS	World Food Summit
WHO	World Health Organization

WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WMU	World Maritime University
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WTO	World Trade Organization
ZNU	Zaporizhzhya National University

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