


# **Bachelor Thesis**

## **The Alliance of Small Island States**

***39 states, one voice: How AOSIS sustains international collective  
action despite theoretical and practical obstacles***

Rebecca Konrad, 

June 29, 2022

Public Governance across Borders

Faculty of Behavioral, Management and Social Sciences, University of Twente

Institut für Politikwissenschaft, Westfälische Wilhelms – Universität Münster

Word Count: 11959

Reference number of Ethical Approval: 

First: Supervisor: Dr. Le Anh Nguyen Long

Second Supervisor: Dr. Pieter-Jan Klok

## Abstract

The Alliance of Small Island State (AOSIS) is a network of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) that are extraordinary vulnerable to the effects of climate change. AOSIS is today a widely acknowledged and successful negotiation group at the UN. The case of AOSIS is interesting because classical theories of collective action suggest that a network like AOSIS must fail due to obstacles like free-riding and the group size. However, AOSIS seems to neglect these theories. The research question that arises is *How did the AOSIS members states manage to successfully overcome the existing obstacles that prevail in international collective action?* The RQ was approach by first identifying common obstacles for SIDS for international collective action by performing a Systematic Literature Review. SIDS suffer from obstacles to participation due to lack of resources and obstacles to cooperation due to the heterogeneity of the group. To examine whether the institutional design helped by overcoming these obstacles, as proposed by Elinor Ostrom (1990) was a Content Analysis performed. Ostrom identified eight design principles that long enduring self-governing groups fulfil. As only four of eight deign principles could be identified for AOSIS, can the RQ not be answered by identifying the institutional design as main reason for the successful long-term cooperation of AOSIS.

Table of Contents

- 1. Introduction..... - 1 -**
- 1.1. Research Question..... - 4 -**
- 1.2. Scientific and Societal relevance..... - 5 -**
- 2. Theory..... - 6 -**
- 2.1. Collective Action ..... - 6 -**
- 2.2. Institutional Design principles ..... - 8 -**
- 3. Research Design..... - 9 -**
- 3.1. Systematic Literature Review ..... - 10 -**
- 3.2. Qualitative Content Analysis ..... - 13 -**
- 3.3. Materials ..... - 15 -**
- 4. Results..... - 16 -**
- 4.1. Obstacles for Small Island States in the international climate policymaking arena- 17 -**
- 4.1.1. Individual limitations and barriers to global policymaking for SIDS ..... - 18 -
- 4.1.2. Internal obstacles and barriers for AOSIS..... - 19 -
- 4.1.3. Obstacles and limitations for AOSIS in the international arena ..... - 21 -
- 4.1.4. Summary and Discussion ..... - 22 -
- 4.2. AOSIS institutional design ..... - 24 -**
- 4.2.1. Clearly defined boundaries..... - 26 -
- 4.2.2. Proportional equivalence between benefits and costs ..... - 27 -
- 4.2.3. Collective choice arrangements ..... - 29 -
- 4.2.4. Monitoring..... - 30 -
- 4.2.5. Graduate sanctions ..... - 31 -
- 4.2.6. Resolution mechanisms..... - 32 -
- 4.2.7. Minimal recognition of rights to organize..... - 33 -
- 4.2.8. Nested enterprise ..... - 34 -
- 4.2.9. Summary and Discussion ..... - 35 -
- 5. Conclusion..... - 39 -**
- 6. Literature List..... - 41 -**
- 7. Appendix..... - 52 -**
- Appendix A: Codebook ..... - 52 -**
- Appendix B: Selected Articles SLR..... - 53 -**

## 1. Introduction

*„Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change;“*

Article 2 I. (a) Paris Agreement

What is remarkable about the Paris Agreement from 2015 is the primal mentioning of **a new target of aiming at 1.5°C temperature increase limitation to pre-industrial times**, which makes a huge difference compared to the prior status quo of 2°C. This is because it is scientifically proven that almost all consequences of global warming like extreme weathers, droughts, rise of sea level are substantially larger at 2°C temperature increase than at 1.5°C so that 2°C global warming ultimately endangers a significantly higher number of lives and ecosystems to be faced with extinction, displacement and hunger crises (IPCC, 2022). Even though the necessity to tackle climate change by limiting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in order to decrease global warming, has been scientifically well established for decades, did it only gain the attention of the wider public and policy makers in the recent past (Bjermeland, n.d; Christoff, 2016). Primarily industrialized and emerging industrialized states opposed the new target and argued that it was unrealistic (see Bjermeland, n.d.). Disagreements around how to address climate change were intense. Indeed, Paris can be seen as a corrective to Copenhagen, where countries failed to come to an agreement on how to address climate change in cooperation with one another (Christoff, 2016).

Eventually several factors and committed actors led to the admission of the long-term goal of maximum 1.5°C temperature increase into the Paris Agreement in 2015. However, reaching consensus was no easy task. Because effective international climate policymaking is faced by multiple obstacles because an agreement must be effective but also be accepted by

all parties (Erbach, 2015). The more ambitious goal of 1.5°C requires stricter measures that potentially negatively impact national economies, raise questions about justice between developed and developing countries, while main polluters (industrialized states) are a) not as affected by climate change and b) current decision makers will not be in power anymore once the consequences of today's pollution become visible (ibid.). Even though the necessity of a 1.5°C target was scientifically emphasized, Article 2 of the Paris Agreement cannot be taken for granted, because certain industrialized countries even lowered their ambitions regarding to reduce greenhouse gas emissions shortly before COP21 in Paris (European Parliament, 2015).

One of the actors that is widely credited with helping to achieve this result is the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) (Ourbak, 2018). AOSIS has campaigned for promoting the new and necessary target of the limitation of 1.5 degree global temperature increase to pre-industrial times in international climate policy documents and agreements, since 2008 ("*1.5°C to Stay Alive*" Campaign) (Benjamin & Thomas, 2016; Bjermeland, n.d.). AOSIS was established to function as an advocate of states that are extraordinary vulnerable to climate change and to leverage power through a united voice during the representation of its members in international policy making and negotiations in the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (Betzold, Castro & Weiler, 2012). The foundation of AOSIS was November 1990 at the Second World Climate Conference taking place in Geneva, originally including 24 member states (Brewer, 2004; Chasek, 2005). Today it is an intergovernmental organization consisting of 39 small islands and 5 observer states with low coastal lines located in the Caribbean, Pacific, and African, Indian Ocean and South China Sea (AIS) (AOSIS n.d., UN, n.d.-a.; see Image 1 and Table 1)).

**Image 1:**

Geographical position of AOSIS Member States (source AOSIS, n.d.-c.)



What the AOSIS member states have in common are characteristics like “[...] small populations, lack of resources, remoteness, susceptibility to natural disasters, excessive dependence on international trade and vulnerability to global developments.” (Brewer, 2004, p. 168). Furthermore, these states are economically, socially, and environmentally more vulnerable to disturbances and shocks due to their relative isolation and small size (UNEP, 2014). In comparison with larger countries, they find themselves clearly in a disadvantaged position, which makes support by larger states crucial (ibid.). The United Nations acknowledges these Small Island Development States (SIDS) - which the AOSIS members states belong to - as a group of states which face “unique social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities” (see UN, n.d.- b.). Even though the population of these states contribute only little to the global population, AOSIS allows them to be heard in UN policy- and decision-making processes, making it a “extremely useful and powerful tool” (Schwebel, 2018, p. 217). Further, AOSIS has an important role for SIDS at the UN because it is the only island-based group, existing to promote SIDS interests in a comparable way and is today a key player in international climate negotiations (Betzold, Castro & Weiler, 2012; Schwebel, 2018).

**Table 1:**

AOSIS Member States separated into regional groups

Caribbean	Pacific	African, Indian Ocean and South China Sea (AIS)
Antigua and Barbuda	Cook Islands	Cabo Verde
Bahamas	Federated Stated of Micronesia	Comoros
Barbados	Fiji	Guinea Bissau
Belize	Kiribati	Maldives
Cuba	Nauru	Mauritius
Dominica	Niue	Sao Tome and Principe
Dominical Republic	Palau	Seychelles
Grenada	Papua New Guinea	Singapore
Guyana	Republic of the Marshall Islands	
Haiti	Samoa	
Jamaica	Solomon Islands	
Saint Kitts and Nevis	Timor Leste	
Saint Lucia	Tonga	
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Tuvalu	
Suriname	Vanuatu	
Trinidad and Tobago		

*Source:* AOSIS (n.d.-d.)

### 1.1. Research Question

For some Small Island Developing States is the mitigation of global warming is a question about extinction and existence (Betzold, 2010). While being the lowest polluters of greenhouse gases, Small Island States are the most affected by climate change (ibid.). Over time AOSIS developed into a widely recognized and respected negotiator in climate policymaking (Betzold, 2010). This is outstanding because it is “an example of the so-called ‘structural paradox’, the question of how the weak bargain successfully with the strong.” (ibid). This demonstrates that there is strength to be found in numbers, however is cooperation – particularly international cooperation – something that can be taken for granted? Established theories of Collective Action suggest that a Network like AOSIS will ultimately fail due to external circumstances and human behavior (see Olson, 1965; Hardin, 1968). However, AOSIS seems to show the opposite of what the theories suggests.

The Research Question that arises from this is *How did the AOSIS members states manage to successfully overcome the existing obstacles that prevail in international collective action?*

Two sub-questions are derived from this RQ, and make it easier to tackle:

SQ1: *Which obstacles exist for small island states when they want to act collectively?*

SQ2: *Can the institutional design of AOSIS help to overcome the obstacles and achieve sustainable collective action?*

## **1.2. Scientific and Societal relevance**

The societal relevance of the topic is directly connected to the importance of tackling climate change. AOSIS demonstrates that disputes between members can be put aside in order to pursue a more important common goal. The group is a representative of networks that consist of states with only limited individual power that leads to disadvantages in the international policy making agora (a nonphysical fluid space caused by globalization and shaped by social and political actors (Stone, 2008)). However, AOSIS allows Small Island Developing States to be recognized, heard and respected in international climate negotiations in the international policy making agora. Therefore, the case of AOSIS is scientifically relevant because it is a case where cooperation was successful. Consequently, this thesis is contributes to the knowledge about the conditions that can lead to successful international cooperation. Lessons from AOSIS' achievements can be drawn and ideally transferred to other policy areas. Power asymmetries in the international sphere is not a climate policy specific issue, which makes the outcomes of the thesis relevant for other networks with similar preconditions. It thereby contributes to the wider question of how small states can overcome obstacles in the international policy making agora by working together in networks.



## 2. Theory

Cooperation is not easy to achieve. Free-riding, different interests and goals, issues in communication and imposing sanctions, lack of trust as well as resources imbalances and capacities have the potential to hinder effective cooperation (see Olson (1965), see Ansel & Gash (2007), see Ostrom (2008)), especially in networks like AOSIS (see Provan & Kenis (2007)). However, in real life many instances of cooperation can be observed, leading to the emergence of theories to explain such cooperation. In this section collective action theory (Olson, 1965) is explained to illustrate why AOSIS success is surprising. Afterwards Elinor Ostrom's (1990) Institutional Design Principles are explained to introduce a framework that may be able to explain why AOSIS managed to sustain their cooperation.

### 2.1. Collective Action

In his work "*The Logic of Collective Action*" (1965), Mancur Olson points out the difficulties and obstacles that group activities face when aiming to pursue a joint goal instead of acting individually to achieve that same goal (Ostrom, 1990). Olson denies the assumption that collective action will occur voluntarily simply due to common interests of self-interested and rational actors (Olson, 1965) He emphasizes that other factors like group size need to be considered too, stating that collective action becomes unlikely otherwise the group being constituted of a small number of individual actors, the involvement of coercion or other factor promoting common action (Olson, 1965; Ostrom, 1990). Olson's general argument and connected models like the *Tragedy of the commons* and the *prisoner's dilemma* are founded upon the issue of *free-riding* (ibid.). The loss of motivation for taking actions and contributing to achieve a joint interest is provoked once the benefits from the achievement by others is not exclusive so that passive/inactive individuals may benefit too (Ostrom 1990). Consequently, the inactivity/the free riding of everyone will prevent the production of the collective benefit as the self-interest exceeds (ibid.). Measures to mitigate climate change like reduction of

greenhouse gas emissions are vulnerable to free riding so that collective action becomes unlikely due to the nonexclusive character of the benefits from the achieved goal. However, collective action may be promoted through incentives separate from the actual common goal, which happened when Europe let Russia access the World Trade Organization to convince Russia to ratify the Kyoto Protocol (Harris, 2007; Olson, 1965).

International collective action is extraordinarily difficult in the case of climate policymaking because it touches on the tragedy of the commons (Hardin, 1968). The air that is being polluted is by definition a common good from which use no one can be excluded, so that overuse in the form of excessive pollution by rational actors to maximize own profit and benefit is likely but cannot be controlled without restricting the freedom to use the common good through law or taxes (Hardin, 1968). What Hardin already described in 1968 is still not successfully achieved by the international community. Stone (2008, p. 26) points out that a "global decision-making process" does not exist but instead a policy vacuum for public problem "ownership". Harris (2007) concludes that the international climate regime so far failed as proposed by the collective action theory. The climate policymaking space must be changed in order to enable successful collective action as it currently "faces some of the most fundamental obstacles to cooperation." (Harris, 2007)

However, AOSIS seems to negate the expectations suggested by collective action theory. Achieving collective action becomes especially hard to achieve in international relations where a legal authority or government is absent, and the actors are geographically dispersed. Still, AOSIS represents a case where actors willingly came together to self-govern themselves. Ultimately the answer to the question how this self-governing group achieved sustainable collective action may be offered by the institutional design of AOSIS.

## 2.2. Institutional Design principles

Unlike Olson, Keohane (1984) is proposing that collective action can indeed happen if it is facilitated by an international institution. Elinor Ostrom (1990) proposes eight design principles that provide a guideline for understanding when cooperation may succeed on the basis of how it is institutionalized by network actors. This is a good supplement for the work by Provan and Milward (1995). In contrast to Olson's view of rational self-interested actors does Elinor Ostrom (1990, 1993) argue that the sustainable management of common-pool resources (CPRs) like water, is possible if the group design fulfills certain conditions (Wilson, Ostrom & Cox, 2013). Originally, Ostrom's design principles were engaged with Institutions for long-enduring irrigation systems, but they were eventually generalized and applied to a variety of topics (see for example Robert et. al., 2021, see Wilson, Ostrom & Cox, 2013).

In the following the eight design principles illustrated by Ostrom (1990, p. 91-102) and Ostrom (1993, p.1908-1019) are summarized :

1. The institution needs *clearly defined boundaries* to define who has access to the institutional resources and a clarification about which resources are managed, by whom and under which limitations.
2. There must be *proportional equivalence between benefits and costs* so that provision and appropriation are balanced, contributions regulated, and proportionally higher costs rewarded with higher benefits.
3. Furthermore, *Collective Choice Arrangements* in the form of operational rules that can be changed at low costs to adapt to the current situation must be negotiated by the members.
4. The compliance with the previously mentioned rules must be achieved in the light of the absence of a superordinated authority that may enforce them. The self-governing group must therefore implement *monitoring* mechanisms.

5. The monitoring mechanisms must be accompanied by *graduate sanctions* that the members agree and execute in cases of noncompliance, breach of rules or free riding. A climate where the members know that free riding of others will be sanctioned, and the joint benefit/goal is achieved creates confidence and voluntary contribution of own resources. A situation of “quasi voluntary compliance” is achieved through a certain degree of coercion.
6. *Resolution Mechanisms* must be created that help with fast and low-cost conflict resolution among the members.
7. Furthermore, a *minimal recognition of rights to organize* of the self-governed group and its rules by (local) external authorities must be achieved to prevent external interference that may impede successful cooperation.
8. Lastly, the structure of a *nested enterprise* must be created to enable different activities and topics to be discussed at different layer with different group sizes to optimize the work.

Theories of collective action suggest that effective international cooperation, especially on climate change matters, is likely to fail. The case of AOSIS seems to be an example where Small Island Developing States were able to overcome the obstacles of international collective action. This thesis aims to understand whether the institutional design of AOSIS helped SIDS to achieve better cooperation. Elinor Ostrom Institutional Design Principles offer the explanation that any kind of system that has these principles will successfully cooperate.

### **3. Research Design**

In an international system that is prone to free riding, AOSIS, achieved to become a key player in international climate policymaking, despite contrary suggestions by collective action

theories. Therefore, this research investigates *How did the AOSIS members states manage to successfully overcome the existing obstacles that prevail in international collective action?*

The RQ is answered in two steps by first performing a systematic literature review to lay a foundation for SQ1 (Torraco, 2005). Afterwards SQ1 and SQ2 are answered by performing a qualitative Content Analysis (Given, 2008).

### **3.1. Systematic Literature Review**

To answer SQ1 a literature review is conducted to give an overview about the general obstacles that authors of existing literature and previous research identified for small actors with comparatively little power (small island states in particular) to engage in collective action (Torraco, 2005).

A systematic literature review is a structured way to provide the reader with an overview and fresh understanding of a topic that has already been covered by several studies or a “emerging topic that would benefit from a holistic conceptualization any synthesis of literature to date.” (Torreco, 2005) It may lay the foundation for subsequent analysis. For a literature review no new data must be generated. However, a limitation of this method is the necessity of the reliance on previous research, and possible constraints regarding the accessibility.

First, a keyword search by using digital databases and search engines like Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar and Research Gate is conducted. The used keywords are “Networks”, “Climate Change”, “Small Islands”, “AOSIS” and “UNFCCC” to identify a first set of literature. Table 2 tells us how many articles can be found through a keyword search in Scholar, Scopus and Web of Science by using the keywords “small islands”, “UNFCCC” and “1.5 degree”. The results illustrated in the table show that the quantity of published articles relating to the topic increased. This indicates that the scientific interest in the topic grew which reinforces its scientific relevance.

**Table 2:**

Number of Articles found through keyword search

	Scholar	Web of Science	Scopus
1990-1999	198	2	/
2000-2009	3.170	9	1
2010-2020	15.00	75	2

Further decisions about inclusion and exclusion of scientific articles are carried out in a staged review by first conducting the keyword search on the mentioned platforms and downloading articles that *based on their title* can be considered as relevant for answering the research question. A sum of 51 articles was gathered. Then a second selection round is carried out by *reading the Abstracts* of the preselected articles to generate a short list including those that are most relevant for the research question. I use a traffic light system and distinguish the articles into green = included, yellow = may be considered later if necessary and red = excluded. Based on this, 12 articles were included because they explicitly focus on AOSIS and their position and strategies in climate negotiations (see for example de Águeda Corneloup & Mol, 2014; Wong, 2011; Ourbak & Magnan, 2018; Betzold, Castro & Weiler, 2012). 17 articles were put aside to be considered later if the selected articles prove to lack sufficient information. Those articles do not primarily focus on AOSIS but were more general and cover Small Island Developing States and their vulnerability to climate change (see Oculi & Stephenson, 2018; Hoad, 2015), Climate negotiations in the UN system (see Sorkar, 2020), the necessity of 1.5 degree goal (see Nurse & Moore, 2007) and coalition building in climate negotiations (Castro, 2020). However, while the focus was on another topic these articles may still be useful for background information and to generate a wider understanding of the context in which AOSIS operates. Lastly, 22 articles were excluded due to several reasons. The predominant reason why articles were excluded is because SIDS in particular were not the center of interest in the research or only one Small Island state served as a broader example (see Corbett, Ruwet & Weller, 2020) or the article was too technical and put the focus only on

the 1.5 degree issue (see King & Harrington, 2018; Taylor et. al., 2018). Furthermore, some articles were also excluded because no abstract or summary was available or the literature was not accessible (see Heileman, 1993; Mead & Wewerinke-Singh, 2021; Arshad et. al., 2019).

**Table 3:**

Overview selection process

	1. keyword search based on title	2. reading abstract	3. in depth reading and first open coding	4. Literature considered because cited in selected article	5. in depth reading of articles from 4.	6. final case selection
Number of articles after each selection round	51	11 = green 17 = yellow 23 = red	11	16	3	14

Afterwards an in-depth reading of the 11 selected articles with open coding was conducted (see Appendix A: Codebook) Simultaneously to this process is the reference list and bibliography of articles that are included in the review, screened to identify other relevant articles that were not found during the keyword search. Thereby, 16 articles that were either frequently cited in the field (see Chasek, 2005; Larson, 2003; Shibuya, 1996), appeared to be relevant based on their title (see de Águeda Corneloup, 2011) or the content that was quoted (see Brewer, 2004; Grote, 2010) were included in the last selection round. Finally, after reading the abstract, introduction and conclusion of these 16 articles 3 were considered as relevant and were ultimately included into the final case selection. In the end, 14 articles were included in the SLR while 12 proved to include sufficient knowledge to answer the SQ1 (see Appendix B).

The existing knowledge that was retrieved from a complete reading of the selected literature was synthesized into a “taxonomy or other conceptual classification of constructs “(see

Torraco, 2005, p. 363) and translated into a table to present the different kinds of usual obstacles that were identified.

### **3.2. Qualitative Content Analysis**

The literature review provides the foundation to ultimately answer SQ1 by conducting a Content Analysis that analyses which of the identified obstacles to collective action are applicable in the case of AOSIS. Subsequent SQ2 asks the question *Can the institutional design of AOSIS help to overcome the obstacles and achieve sustainable collective action?*

SQ2 will also be answered by a qualitative Content Analysis which aims to “categor[ize] qualitative textual data into [...] conceptual categories, to identify consistent patterns and relationships [...]” (Given, 2008, p. 120). A Content Analysis has the potential to reveal and identify messages that are not consciously and implicitly communicated in the text (ibid.) I analyze qualitative data regarding the detectability of Ostrom’s design principles, but no suggestions regarding the improvement will be formulated nor will new data (except complementary interview) be created.

Along with the taxonomy developed during the SLR, Elinor Ostrom’s design principles are translated into a codebook to conduct a Content Analysis that seeks to identify whether Ostrom’s design principles can be identified in the design of AOSIS so that they may provide an explanation for the success of AOSIS.

Different kinds of textual data like speeches, interview transcripts, policy statements, draft decisions, submissions, news articles and book chapters were analyzed. The data was primarily gathered by searching the document library at the AOSIS website which includes 226 different kinds of primary data published by AOSIS in the form of statements, protocols, reports, submissions, speeches, and other documents from December 1991 to June 2022 (AOSIS d., n.d.). Furthermore, auditory data in the form of interviews and statements by AOSIS negotiators and officials in podcasts will be used. To complement this the articles from the



SLR were again consulted as most of them included a section about AOSIS structural design (see Carruthers et. al., 2020 & Ourbak & Magnan, 2018) or interviews with AOSIS delegates that contribute to the functioning of the alliance (see McNamara, 2009 & Schwebel, 2018). The analysis is conducted by using Atlas.ti as tool to organize and structure the work.

A Content Analysis was chosen because it is an analytic method that creates a systematic path to integrate and synthesize different kinds of data, and is a quite flexible method, while it has the advantage that no new data must be generated (Given, 2008) However, there are some limitations. It is necessary to “recognize that text is open to subjective interpretation, reflects multiple meanings, and is context dependent” (Given, 2008, p. 120), so that credibility and replicability may be difficult. The improvement of trustworthiness may be achieved if the analysis is executed by multiple researchers, however this is not possible in a bachelor thesis (Given, 2008).

The selection process began with focusing on content like textual or auditive material that was published and produced by AOSIS (member states), representatives or negotiators itself. Afterwards scientific articles, book chapters, articles in journals, websites of other actors in international climate policymaking, and interviews shall serve as complementary sources. The selection process will be like the steps taken for the literature review. A Codebook was developed based on Ostrom’s eight design principled (see 2.2.) (see Appendix A: Codebook).

To sum up, the Research Question is answered in two steps by first developing an overview of the obstacles that Small Island States face when they want to act collectively by using existing documents in a Systematic Literature Review. Second, a Content Analysis is conducted to analyze selected resources regarding the detectability of Elinor Ostrom’s design principles to ultimately draw a conclusion on whether the design of AOSIS played a role in overcoming the identified obstacles.

### **3.3. Materials**

Due to the limited scope only a certain number of well selected sources can be included. Predominantly textual data will be used but complemented by podcasts and interviews. 29 documents in the form of scientific articles, book chapters, articles in journals, policy documents, policy statements, speeches, newspaper articles and websites from relevant actors were collected. Even though the use of Podcasts as a source is not yet that common in scientific research the number is increasing (Kinkaid et. al., 2019). Podcasts containing interviews with experts and officials can be considered as enriching modern source of information that can contribute to the contextualization and complementation of the gathered textual data. For this thesis two episodes from the Podcast “Islands on Alert,” from 2021, published by AOSIS itself, were used.

As the first keyword search indicates scientific interest in the topic grew over time. Conducting research about the case of AOSIS is important because the network is an example of how effective networking and cooperation can lead to small actors with comparable little power, being heard and respected in the international policy making agora. AOSIS manages to influence the policy making agenda on behalf of small island states whose existence depends on the success of the mitigation of and adaption to climate change. Lessons can be drawn from this case where obstacles of collective action were successfully overcome. In this interdependent and globalized world is AOSIS demonstrating the indispensability and major advantages of acting collectively instead of individually or relying on others. The case is thus scientifically interesting as it helps to understand under which conditions international collective action can happen.

#### 4. Results

The aim of this thesis is to examine successful collective action among AOSIS members. To achieve this aim, I begin by asking “*Which obstacles exist for small island states when they want to act collectively?*” (SQ1) To address this question I conducted a systematic literature review (SLR) of articles where AOSIS and SIDS were the focus of study. The review includes a total of 12 articles published between 1999 and 2018 (see Appendix B).

The oldest article is from 1999 written by Ashe, Lierop & Cherian, which lays focus on AOSIS’ first successes in the context of the UNFCCC negotiations. Furthermore, the paper is frequently quoted for describing SIDS as “[...] historically been politically and economically marginalized by the international community [...].” (Ashe, Lierop & Cherian, 1999, p. 210).

The main foci of the literature were:

- (1) the success (strategies) of AOSIS, the disproportionate influence of AOSIS in climate negotiations over time and their achievement to stay united (see Betzold, Castro & Weiler, 2012; Betzold, 2010 & de Águeda Corneloup & Mol, 2014);
- (2) the possibilities of SIDS to increase their influence and overcome disadvantages in multi-lateral negotiations at the UN by forming coalitions and alliances (see Chasek, 2005; de Águeda Corneloup, 2011; Deitelhoff & Wallbott, 2012; Jaschik, 2014);
- (3) how SIDS from the Pacific perceive and assess their capabilities in the UN negotiation context. The results indicate that membership in AOSIS is perceived as enriching and SIDS from the Pacific are impaired by their institutional capabilities. (Mc Namara, 2009; Schwebel, 2018);
- And (4) retracing AOSIS’ evolution and point out the challenges lying ahead of the alliance (see Ourbak & Magnan, 2017; Wong, 2011)

The literature review shows that so far research was primarily done on the success, strategies of SIDS and AOSIS and its development over time. However, until now no research has put the focus on the internal functioning and institutional design of AOSIS.

#### **4.1.Obstacles for Small Island States in the international climate policymaking arena**

The fight against climate change must necessarily be a collective action achievement as it is a transboundary issue of worldwide concern that cannot be solved by one state individually (Stone, 2008). Efforts to tackle climate change through collective action traditionally mainly take place within the UN context. SIDS are faced with certain obstacles when they want to participate in this process as individual states or by acting collectively with other SIDS as AOSIS.

The results of the analysis suggest that obstacles in international policymaking for SIDS when they want to act collectively can be distinguished into barriers to participation and barriers to cooperation. Barriers to participation primarily occur because SIDS are historically disadvantaged due to their lack of resources and size. Barriers to cooperation primarily occur within AOSIS because of the heterogeneity and size of the group.

The findings of the SLR indicate that SIDS are structurally disadvantaged at the UN due to their lack of financial and organizational resources what makes exertion of influence for SIDS almost impossible when they act individually. SIDS are therefore deprived from the ability to participate in collective action at the UN level. AOSIS allows SIDS to partially overcome this obstacle but not fully because AOSIS still suffers from limited resources while the outcomes of UN negotiations are still mainly determined by the major powers.

Furthermore, there are obstacles to successful cooperation that AOSIS members are faced with internally. These issues are primarily caused by the heterogeneity of the group which bears conflict potential and divergency of interests that can endanger the cohesiveness and unity of the group.

#### **4.1.1. Individual limitations and barriers to global policymaking for SIDS**

Beside the vulnerability to the consequences of climate change, an unifying feature of Small Island States is that they face common challenges when they want to participate in international policymaking (Betzold, 2010; Betzold, Castro & Weiler, 2012; Chasek, 2005; Deitelhoff & Wallbott, 2012). In the past, the small size led to the interests of small developing states with little resources, political clout, and structural power to become marginalized and neglected in international policymaking (Ashe, van Lierop & Cherian, 1999; Betzold, 2010; Betzold, Castro & Weiler, 2012; McNamara, 2009). Until today power is a determinant for success in enforcing own interests during multilateral negotiations, so that it is unlikely that small island states are able to make a meaningful contribution to climate negotiations if they act exclusively individually (Betzold, 2010). The maximization of power and pooling of resources through coalitions therefore becomes highly conceivable and attractive for weaker states (Chasek, 2005).

##### ***4.1.1.1. Financial limitations***

The past has shown that states that suffer from the absence of financial resources cannot delegate their negotiators and experts to international meetings and events that require traveling, accommodation and other costs as the expenses exceed their budget (Deitelhoff & Wallbott, 2012). This issue is twofold as it on the one hand prevents SIDS from being represented in multilateral climate negotiations but also excludes them from the participation in collaborative action within networks like AOSIS, because the travel expenses cannot be covered (Deitelhoff & Wallbott, 2012). Lack of financial means may consequently force small states to prioritize between different international negotiation meetings because the attendance and participation in all sessions is not feasible (Deitelhoff & Wallbott, 2012).

#### ***4.1.1.2. Organizational Limitations***

Human resources are an important facet of organization. A frequently described issue is a disadvantaged situation for SIDS regarding their negotiation capacity because of the size of their delegation (often only 1-2 representatives) (Betzold, Castro & Weiler, 2012; Deitelhoff & Wallbott, 2012). Events where international climate policymaking takes place do not only consist of formal negotiation sessions and votings but beyond that of numerous informal but relevant meetings and working groups, often timewise overlapping with other negotiation sessions (Deitelhoff & Wallbott, 2012). In addition to that all delegations at UN conferences are faced with a tremendously high amount of paperwork which cannot be entirely processed by small delegations, thus being disadvantaged as they cannot capture all relevant pieces of information like bigger delegations (McNamara, 2009). Finally, not rarely do the administrations of small states suffer from the absence of sufficient expertise in the respective field, that would enable them to advocate for their interests with the best possible chances (Ashe, Lierop & Cherian, 1999; Deitelhoff & Wallbott, 2012).

Consequently, states without administrative capacity and expertise are left behind as they cannot attend and follow the negotiation sessions as thoroughly as more powerful states with bigger delegations (Deitelhoff & Wallbott, 2012; McNamara, 2009). It becomes clear that even though the United Nations employ a one vote per state system to promote equality among the states, are SIDS still highly disadvantaged (Deitelhoff & Wallbott, 2012; McNamara, 2009; Panke, 2012).

#### **4.1.2. Internal obstacles and barriers for AOSIS**

According to the literature, the main internal obstacle for effective cooperation within AOSIS is the difficulty but indispensability to find one common position in a group of 39 members whose efficiency and group cohesion is weakened when not acting as a unified block (Betzold, Castro & Weiler, 2012; Chasek, 2005; Ourbak & Magnan, 2018; Schwebel,

2018). Conflicts arise due to the heterogeneity of the group, increased diversity of issues in climate negotiations and competing or overlapping negotiation groups (Betzold, Castro & Weiler, 2012; Chasek, 2005; Ourbak & Magnan, 2018; Schwebel, 2018).

The AOSIS member states are scattered across the globe, causing them to differ regarding their cultural backgrounds, economic sector, population size, severity of vulnerability or development stages and affectedness by climate change, which makes conflicts and antithetical positions especially between the different regional groups not surprising (Betzold, Castro & Weiler, 2012; Chasek, 2005; de Águeda Corneloup, 2011).

Identifying common ground becomes more challenging with an increased number and diversity of issues in the climate policymaking agenda because it creates more room for discussions and dissent among the AOSIS members with potentially diverse priorities and self-interests (Betzold, Castro & Weiler, 2012; Chasek, 2005; de Águeda Corneloup, 2011). Moreover, as the member states may still act individually (for example by making individual submissions) or team up with other states or coalitions outside AOSIS, can the inability to find consensus promote solo efforts of the AOSIS member states to the degree that member states may even hold positions against AOSIS itself (Betzold, Castro & Weiler, 2012; de Águeda Corneloup, 2011). In addition to that, are some AOSIS members also members in coalitions that thematically overlap with AOSIS so that these states have alternatives to AOSIS (Ourbak & Magnan, 2018). By aiming at incorporating, respecting, and equalizing the positions of all regions in order to prevent to affront or dissatisfy members, the quality of AOSIS draft proposals, the effectiveness and successful implementation are at risk (Chasek, 2005; Schwebel, 2018). Furthermore, occasionally external actors seek to interfere and weaken AOSIS cohesion by actively provoking conflicts between the members or attempting to buy out members (Betzold, Castro & Weiler, 2012; Deitelhoff & Wallbott, 2012). Lastly, the absence of trust may hinder the AOSIS members to successfully work together – a situation which occurred in 2009 after the COP15 in Copenhagen, (Betzold, Castro & Weiler, 2012). The lack of

resources runs through all cases where SIDS want to act collaboratively. Resource sharing among SIDS is difficult to accomplish. This is promoted due to the condition that SIDS are geographically dispersed around the globe so that they can be found in all regional groups of the United Nations<sup>1</sup> (Ashe, Lierop & Cherian, 1999; Betzold, 2010). As already elaborated under 4.1.2. financial difficulties can hinder governments to be able to send delegates to negotiation events and preparatory meeting. This can highly impact the internal functioning and effectiveness of AOSIS events when regional groups within AOSIS cannot hold preparatory meetings to already develop common positions within their region (AOSIS, 2002 b.).

#### **4.1.3. Obstacles and limitations for AOSIS in the international arena**

The disadvantages that exist for SIDS in the international policymaking arena like financial constraints are, albeit alleviated through the alliance, still present in the capacity of AOSIS (Deitelhoff & Wallbott, 2012). AOSIS is disadvantaged when compared to other coalitions that do not exclusively consist of developing states but include more wealthier nations that can provide additional support through financial means by for example funding regional forums or other events that can have positive influence on the coalition's assertiveness (Deitelhoff & Wallbott, 2012). Hence AOSIS remains quite limited in size and does not hold significant political clout so that asymmetrical balance of power in international negotiations cannot be fully overcome (Betzold, 2010).

As already elaborated AOSIS is quite successful in allowing SIDS to be heard in the international climate policymaking arena. However, the increased foundation of other coalitions and negotiation groups constitutes an obstacle for the prospects and effectiveness of AOSIS

---

<sup>1</sup> "The regional groups were formed to facilitate the equitable geographical distribution of seats among the Member States in different UN bodies." (UN, n.d.-c.)  
The five regional groups of Member States in the United Nations are: African States, Asia-Pacific States, Eastern European States, Latin American and Caribbean States, Western European and other States (UN,n.d.-e.)



because the more coalitions exist the more challenging it is for any group to be noticed and involved during the negotiations (Betzold, Castro & Weiler, 2012).

At the same time AOSIS is faced with much more powerful opponents (for example the United States or the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) that pursue contrary interests and hinder effective mitigation measures or commitments in order to prevent unwanted negative impacts on their economy (Betzold, 2010, Schwebel, 2018). Decisions in climate negotiations are still primarily shaped by the major powers bargaining with each other (Deitelhoff & Wallbott, 2012). This is (because) in contrary to SIDS/AOSIS powerful states possess the resources to offer their opponents a reward or threaten them into compliance by using their political weight as leverage in negotiations (Deitelhoff & Wallbott, 2012; de Águeda Corneloup & Mol, 2014). However, Annex-1 states<sup>2</sup> that possess the crucial structural power to determine negotiation outcomes are able to overrule AOSIS entrepreneurial leadership strategy that rely on moral arguments (de Águeda Corneloup & Mol, 2014). In addition to that is coalition building is also happening between more powerful actors which diminishes AOSIS assertiveness and increases the challenge (Deitelhoff & Wallbott, 2012).

#### **4.1.4. Summary and Discussion**

Referring to the theory, the SLR shows that the existing scientific research on AOSIS and SIDS that was analyzed in this thesis did not identify free riding as an issue or obstacle for the successful cooperation of AOSIS. The results may be treated carefully because the absence of evidence cannot be equalized with evidence for the actual absence, due to the limited scope of the thesis. However, concerns about the effectiveness of the cooperation when it comes to action taking were raised, due to the large size of the coalition and its conflict potential due to

---

<sup>2</sup> “Annex-1 Parties include the industrialized countries that were members of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) in 1992, plus countries with economies in transition (the EIT Parties), including the Russian Federation, the Baltic States, and several Central and Eastern European States.” (UN, n.d. d.)

the heterogeneity of membership. This indicates that the problems raised by Olson (1965) in his collective action theory are to a certain degree applicable to AOSIS, as the group size is indeed causing problems. Nonetheless, AOSIS is successfully engaging in climate policymaking since over 30 years. This again implies that AOSIS somehow managed to overcome these obstacles of collective action. While Olson identifies the number of members as an obstacle, the case of AOSIS is showing that there seems to be power in numbers which becomes visible in the assertiveness and ability to participate in international policymaking that SIDS gain through AOSIS compared to acting individually. Furthermore, indications were found that SIDS tremendously suffer from the lack of resources, especially due to financial limitations that excludes them from participating in collective action. *Resource dependency* (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) explains why the AOSIS member states decided to form the network. Actors/organizations are considered as open systems, influenced by their external environment (Hillmann et. al., 2009). Through the increase of resources, can actors become more independent and increase own power over other actors (Hillmann et. al., 2009). By pooling resources are the AOSIS member states overcoming their individual obstacles to participation and create a common pool of resources that allows them to collectively engage in international climate policymaking. In short, **AOSIS managed to overcome significant barriers to collective action.** The answer to “*Which obstacles exist for small island states when they want to act collectively?*” (SQ1) was extensively examined in the previous paragraphs and is summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4**

Overview Obstacles for SIDS and AOSIS in international arena

Affected by obstacles	Identified obstacles in SLR
Individual limitations SIDS	Lack of resources and structural power: <i>Financial</i> <i>Human Resources</i> <i>Administrative</i> Historically marginalized
Internal to AOSIS	Increase issues Increase negotiation groups/coalitions Diversities and heterogeneity <i>Economically</i> <i>Human resources</i> <i>Self-interests</i> Trust Group size External pressure and inducement
AOSIS acting in international arena	Increase negotiation groups/coalitions (attention) Incapability to act Asymmetrical bargaining: <i>Lack structural power</i> <i>Lack economic power</i> Major powers

#### 4.2. AOSIS institutional design

The answer to *why* SIDS act collectively could be clarified through the SLR. However, what still needs to be answered is how AOSIS managed to sustain a cohesive and respected group in international policymaking, which will be investigated in the following.

The following section will examine SQ2 which asks *can the institutional design of AOSIS help to overcome the obstacles and achieve sustainable collective action?* To address this question each of Elinor Ostrom's design principles (see 2.2.) will be examined individually, aiming at determining whether AOSIS fulfills the criteria.

The presence of the 8 different principles would suggest that the institutional design of AOSIS contributed to the sustainable collective action as Ostrom developed her framework as

a guide to how long enduring self-governing groups are organized (see SQ1). I conducted a Content Analysis of different kinds of materials, as described in section 3.2. and 3.3. that gave insides to the internal functioning and institutional design of AOSIS.

Elinor Ostrom's institutional design principles may be logically grouped into two main categories. To the first category belong institutional design principles that structure the work and increase the efficiency of the self-governing group. Clearly defined boundaries, collective choice arrangements, resolution mechanisms, minimal recognition of rights to organize and nested enterprise belong to this group. The results of the analysis indicate that most principles in this group are present in AOSIS' institutional design. They primarily helped SIDS in overcoming the barriers to participation in international climate conferences by supporting effective cooperation within AOSIS. The second category includes institutional design principles that serve to prevent free riding and safeguard justice within the self-governing group to sustain collective action. Proportional equivalence between benefits and costs, monitoring and graduate sanctions belong to this group. No convincing indications for the presence of most of these design principles was found. The second category is especially interesting regarding the concerns that Olson (1965) raised towards the probability of successful collective action of big groups when. Considering the identified obstacles (see SQ1) was especially the conflict potential caused by the heterogeneity of the group classified as the main obstacle to successful collective action. Therefore, the presence or absence of conflict resolution mechanisms becomes highly relevant for the answer whether the institutional design allowed AOSIS to overcome the obstacles to collective action.

In the following the results of the analysis will be elucidated more extensive for each design principle individually.

#### **4.2.1. Clearly defined boundaries**

The first design principle can be considered as present if AOSIS has clearly defined boundaries regarding the access to its institutional resources and their management.

Only member states of AOSIS have access to the benefits and resources of the alliance, while only sovereign states can become members, so that SIDS which are non-sovereign states are excluded and must cope with the status of an observer (Schwebel, 2018). AOSIS is first and foremost a coalition of Small Island Developing States with low-lying coasts and recognized as most vulnerable to the consequences of climate change (Slade, 1995; Ashe, Lierop & Cherian, 1999; Chasek, 2005; Carruthers et. al., 2020). However, as clear as the criteria for being able to become a member seem, some member states stick out as they are not characterized as SIDS, because the state is not developing or an island (for example Singapore) (de Águeda Corneloup, 2011; Schwebel, 2018).

Focusing on the kind of resources managed, AOSIS, as already elaborated in 4.1.3., does not possess a great number of structural or financial resources. There is no continuity in the AOSIS resources as there is no regular budget so until now the funding and raising money is a task that the AOSIS chair must fulfill (AOSIS, 2021, Episode 8 Carruthers et. al. 2020; Chasek, 2005). AOSIS workshops are therefore most often funded by other non AOSIS governments, UN bodies and other Funds (see AOSIS, 2000 a.; AOSIS 2001; AOSIS, 2002 b.)

In addition to that, AOSIS is not operating from a regular secretariat with regular staff but from the diplomatic missions to the UN of the member state that holds the chair (AOSIS, 2021, Episode 8; de Águeda Corneloup, 2011; Carruthers et. al., 2020).

The Content Analysis has shown that AOSIS possesses defined boundaries because it is clear that only member states have access to the resources and benefits of AOSIS. Financial

resources are raised and managed by the chair and the bureau, under the limitations that there is no consistency in the budget (financial resources) or the staff (human resources).

#### **4.2.2. Proportional equivalence between benefits and costs**

Second, the provision of proportional equivalence between benefits and costs requires that contributions by the member states are balanced and proportionally higher costs counterbalanced by higher benefits.

Due to the absence of a regular budget or other available documents about AOSIS financing, no regulated contributions through financial payments identified. However, the membership still comes with certain costs for the member states as they aim to pool their human resources through the alliance.

AOSIS governments appoint ambassadors, experts, and negotiators to the AOSIS negotiation block during climate negotiations and other events so that costs in the form of human resources occur as these people cannot primarily act as advocate for the national delegation (Sopoaga, 2003; AOSIS, 2007; Williams, 2011). Even though costs arise, the return of pooling their resources within AOSIS has proven to be sufficiently higher than the costs, especially when compared to individual acting.

Nonetheless, financial limitations may hinder member states from contributing human resources to the AOSIS delegation (Sopoaga, 2003; Williams, 2011). The absence of representatives of a member state leads to the state not being able to communicate and negotiate their preferences within the AOSIS position making process. Consequently, the achievements that AOSIS makes in subsequent negotiation events may not benefit this country as much as others, even though AOSIS generally seeks to promote all SIDS interests. At the same time the absence of sufficient AOSIS negotiators weakens the whole alliance.

Additional costs arise for the member state that is holding the chair of AOSIS (AOSIS, 2021, Episode 8). The current chair Mr. Walton Aubrey Webson stated that his bureau accepted to chair AOSIS under the condition that they would still be able to carry out their usual work as permanent mission of Antigua and Barbuda to the UN (AOSIS, 2021, Episode 8). In return the chair of AOSIS is able to shape the alliance during his or her chairmanship for example by deciding on the key goals for the next period, putting forward new initiatives and enmeshing their particular style of management (AOSIS e., n.d.; AOSIS, 2021; AOSIS, 2021, Episode 8).

Extra costs may also come up for a country that agrees to host or participate in the planning of an AOSIS workshop (AOSIS, 2001).

What is central is that the members are aware of the benefits and importance of acting collectively as they individually suffer from the obstacles to participation described in section 4.1.1. (Jaschik, 2014; Schwebel, 2018). Knowing that the alliance also generally positively affects their position in the UN system in terms of representation and visibility, leaving AOSIS would be an option if the alliance is not considered as beneficiary for their state (Chasek, 2005; Schwebel, 2018).

In summary this means that no regulated contributions in the form of financial means are established. However, contributions exist through the delegation of human resources to the AOSIS delegation and attendance of AOSIS events but is not regulated and limited to the capacities of the member states who are sometimes not able to make their contribution. However, higher costs for the chair are balanced through more influence. Proportional equivalence between benefits and cost is therefore partially identifiable but not officially established and regulated.

### **4.2.3. Collective choice arrangements**

The third design principle that Ostrom identifies are collective choice arrangements in the form of operational rules that should be changeable by the members at low costs in order to be adaptable to the situation.

Collective choice arrangements cannot be found in the form of a formal Charter or a founding treaty (Betzold, 2010; Carruthers et. al., 2020; Chasek, 2005). Yet, there are informal arrangements and procedural traditions that the Member States agreed on and respect like the rotation of the AOSIS chair among the regional groups every few years (AOSIS, 2004; AOSIS, 2021, Episode 2 & 8). However, these arrangements are flexible and not to be prioritized over the effective representation and functioning of AOSIS (AOSIS, 2004; AOSIS, 2021, Episode 8). Hence, the existing rules are in certain cases flexible.

Furthermore, there are other kinds of agreements in the form of Declarations, Statements or outcomes from preparatory meetings that the AOSIS Ministers and Heads of States or ambassadors and experts adopt before major negotiation events, which include the common positions on certain issues (see AOSIS, 1999; AOSIS 2002 a.; AOSIS, 2005; AOSIS, 2007; AOSIS, 2021; de Águeda Corneloup, 2011). The summits of the Governments and Heads of the AOSIS member states also function as assembly to reaffirm their informal collective choice arrangements and goals like continued information sharing and the promotion of a strong cooperation (AOSIS, 2002 a.; AOSIS, 2005). The forum to actively change or formally established operational rules would be this committee. The establishment of a more formalized structure of the secretariat and the budget are supported by the heads of the state and governments of AOSIS and currently a goal of the AOSIS chair and endorsed by the heads of AOSIS states (AOSIS, 2005; AOSIS, 2021).

The findings indicate that even though AOSIS does not possess a formalized Charta there are still collective choice arrangements in the form of informal operational rules and procedural



traditions identifiable. Agreements like the common position in upcoming negotiations are necessarily adapted to the current situation. Further, the informal arrangement may be changed to optimize the cooperation but must be accepted by the member states through a consensus in order to be respected and executed. As important decisions are taken by the Summit Heads of the States it is questionable whether the rules are changeable at low cost as travel expenses occur and adaptability to current situations is constrained to occasions where AOSIS representatives gather.

#### **4.2.4. Monitoring**

The fourth criteria is fulfilled if AOSIS emplaced mechanisms to monitor whether the members comply with the rules identified under 4.2.3.

The analyzed resources did not provide evidence to identify monitoring mechanisms within AOSIS. In the light of the absence of formally established operational rules and a budget is it questionable what could be monitored. Even though the member states agreed to contribute and share their resources, the limited capacities that concerns most member states cannot be hold against them or monitored at low costs so that the expenditures would outweigh the advantages of monitoring (Gormley, 1986). Furthermore, the AOSIS bureau is only scarcely staffed so that the monitoring of the actions and contributions of 39 member states is likely to be out of the possibilities, as no indications about regular reports or other information about the contributions and behavior of the member states could be found.

Even though it is easy to trace which country did not send their negotiators and experts to AOSIS events it is questionable that this satisfies the presence of monitoring mechanisms (Sopoaga, 2003; Williams, 2011).

#### **4.2.5. Graduate sanctions**

The existence of the fifth institutional design principles can be confirmed for AOSIS if the members agreed on graduate sanctions that will be imposed in cases of noncompliance of the rules that were detected through the monitoring mechanisms.

Again, what must be stressed here is that even though the AOSIS member states respect the structure and operational rules that were established over time, no member state or the chair have any authority or power over the other members (AOSIS, 2021, Episode 8). However, the climate of voluntary contribution is still achieved since the member states are aware of the benefits and importance of their collective action, as the governments still promote the interests of their citizens by delegating ambassadors or ministers to work with AOSIS (AOSIS, 2021). Especially the absence of proper formalized rules and monitoring mechanisms complicates the case, as the violation of the informal rules is not actively controlled. As elaborated under 4.2.4. monitoring may include the revision of which AOSIS government sent representatives to AOSIS events like workshops, preparatory meetings and negotiations to strengthen the manpower. Sanctioning the absence of representatives would be questionable, as reasons are primarily exhausted financial capacities, but no information hinting towards sanctions was found (Williams, 2011). Refusing to send representatives while profiting from AOSIS achievements during negotiations may in these cases not be identified as motivated by attempts of free riding as it does not happen voluntarily and with selfish and bad intentions.

As no indications about sanction mechanisms were found within the available sources, the fifth design principle is not traceable in the case of AOSIS. This is not surprising as this principle, similar to the monitoring mechanism, is mainly based and dependent on the existence of collective choice arrangements, which does not exist in a formal manner so that it could be prosecuted.

#### **4.2.6. Resolution mechanisms**

The sixth design principle is present if AOSIS has mechanisms to promote fast and low costs conflict resolution between its members.

Finding a common position and resolving conflicts within AOSIS is desirable as the coalition works on the basis of consensus while AOSIS member states are still able to act individually if they cannot agree on particular issues (de Águeda Corneloup, 2011). The possibility to agree to disagree and act individually instead of forcing consensus cannot be seen as a conflict resolution mechanism but rather as a way to prevent the escalation of conflicts and protection of the cooperativeness within AOSIS.

The past showed that in cases of disagreement or conflict, finding an agreement that satisfies the priorities of all members and regional groups does not necessarily generate the most efficient and reasonable outcome (Betzold, 2010; Chasek, 2005). Conflict resolution in the form of noncontroversial and appeasing agreements, therefore, does not seem to contribute to sustainable cooperation with desirable results.

Since there are no formally established resolution mechanisms and no AOSIS assemblies on a regular basis, the conflict resolution and the promotion of a continued cohesion and good climate of the group is a task that the chair fulfills (AOSIS, 2021, Episode 8). The current chairmanship aims to bring the members together by a certain style of messaging that puts emphasize on simple and straightforward messages by constantly repeating and highlighting the purpose of AOSIS, accentuating the commonalities of the member states and the high benefit that they gain from working together in a way that is easy to understand by everyone (AOSIS, 2021, Episode 2 & 8).

Even though actual resolution mechanisms that the members established for fast and low-cost conflict resolution could not be identified, beyond discussions during AOSIS meetings and the possibility to act individually, AOSIS shows strategies that aim at motivating and promoting the will to stay united and overcome disagreements.

#### **4.2.7. Minimal recognition of rights to organize**

Minimal recognition of rights to organize is based on the idea that the self-governing group can to a certain degree act independently and without interference of (local) external authorities.

As already mentioned, AOSIS is without any allegiance to any country or nationality and led by an appointed chair who is usually operating from his or her country's mission to the UN in New York (Schwebel, 2018). Consequently, AOSIS is never governed from the territory of any member state so that it cannot fall under the area of competences or jurisdiction of a local external authority that itself is a member of AOSIS. Therefore, no violation of the recognition of rights to organize can happen from an authority coming from a member state itself.

Interference from the local authorities in New York is also not expectable as AOSIS operates from the diplomatic missions of its member states to the UN which falls under the jurisdiction of the Vienna Convention of Diplomatic Relations that grants the inviolability of the premises of the mission and its archives, protection against intrusion and safeguards free communication covering all functions of the mission (Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, Article 22, 24, 25, 27).

As already exemplified does the chair of AOSIS possess a certain degree of freedom by deciding on the goals during her or his period of chairmanship. The heads of the state and governments of the AOSIS members regularly expressed their gratitude to the work of the

chair and evinced their support for the plans and goals of the current chair instead of dictating them. (AOSIS, 1999; AOSIS, 2002 a.; AOSIS, 2021)

The findings indicate that AOSIS possesses a minimal right to organize as no member state or the local authorities in New York can interfere into AOSIS business. Furthermore, the chair, who is temporarily in charge of organizing AOSIS, is equipped with a certain degree of freedom.

#### **4.2.8. Nested enterprise**

Finally, Ostrom states that successful self-governing organizations organize and optimize their work on different levels with different group sizes. This is clearly the case for AOSIS when it comes to their mode of operation before and during major negotiation events. AOSIS increases its efficiency during negotiations and meetings through division of labor by splitting into smaller groups, so that involvement in a bigger number of issues and working groups is possible (AOSIS, 2002 b.; de Águeda Corneloup, 2011) In addition to that does the task sharing in preparation of negotiation events includes the appointment of an issue coordinator that represents the alliance during the sessions and talks (AOSIS, 2000 b.; Sopoaga, 2003; AOSIS, 2007; de Águeda Corneloup, 2011). With its larger and task sharing delegation AOSIS is thereby overcoming the issue that SIDS, when acting individually, are often incapable of following all events and negotiation sessions due to their lack of human resources (de Águeda Corneloup, 2011). Apart from that the AOSIS member are states organized in three regional groups, namely the Pacific, Caribbean and African, Indian Ocean and South China Sea (AIS), who hold regional preparatory meetings (AOSIS, 2002 b.; AOSIS, 2003; AOSIS, 2019; Chasek, 2005). This exchange within the regional groups is supposed to optimizes and accelerate the work (AOSIS, 2019; Chasek, 2005). As already elaborated the chair of AOSIS is rotating between the different regions, which themselves decide which country from their

region will take the office of chairman so that no discussion within the whole alliance is necessary (AOSIS, 2004; AOSIS, 2021, Episode 8). In addition to that working groups may be established to develop ideas on possible enhancements of AOSIS institutional arrangements (AOSIS, 2005).

#### **4.2.9. Summary and Discussion**

In summary, by performing a Content Analysis, evidence for the existence of four of Ostrom's design principles in the institutional design of AOSIS were found. Namely, clearly defined boundaries, collective choice arrangements, minimal rights to organize and nested enterprise. Especially those design principles that could not be identified are interesting for further discussion, as their absence does not seem to hinder successful cooperation within AOSIS. The presence or absence of equivalence between benefits and costs and resolution mechanisms is questionable as the analysis did not reveal enough information to confidently classify them as present, so that they are for now considered as rather absent.

It is noticeable that the present design principles can be grouped into a category of characteristics that serve to efficiently structure the work of AOSIS. While the design principles that could not be identified can be grouped into design principled that are supposed to be installed in order to guarantee and promote group cohesion by preventing free riding and setting incentives for voluntary contribution.

The inconclusive presence/absence of conflict resolution mechanisms is interesting as the main obstacle to cooperation for AOSIS is the conflict potential so that this design principle can be considered as highly relevant for successful cooperation. For monitoring and sanction mechanisms no information at all was found that could hint towards the presence of these design principles. However, as information about the internal structures of AOSIS are not too easily accessible for externals (Schwebel, 2018) and in the light of the absence of a formal Charter and the predominance of customary practice can the possibility that AOSIS indeed

fulfills the criteria not be ruled out at this point. The absence of evidence cannot be considered as evidence.

Referring to the question “*Can the institutional design of AOSIS help to overcome the obstacles and achieve sustainable collective action?*” no definite answer can be given as only four of eight design principles were classified as present. However, this does not suggest that the institutional design did not help at all in overcoming obstacles and achieving sustainable collective action. Maybe for the case of AOSIS the presence of four design principles might be sufficient to enable long enduring cooperation because the design principles might not be equally important or because AOSIS’ resources are different. Furthermore, the international character of the cooperation and the geographical dispersion of the members or other factors like trust between the states and the issue itself may compensate for the absence of some design principles.

*The design principles may not be equally important* so that the presence of *all* design principles is not inevitably necessary. Thereby, the importance of each design principle may vary according to the group. In cases of international cooperation like AOSIS the design principles that were identified as present may suffice to enable stable long-term cooperation. The ultimate requirement for successful long enduring resource management within a self-governing group is maybe not necessarily the presence of all design principles but promoted with increasing presence of the characteristics that Ostrom identified by examining successful cases. However, the current chair of AOSIS Walton Webson stressed that changes to the institutional design of AOSIS must be executed carefully, as the alliance is currently sufficiently working and alternations (like implementing more of Ostrom’s design principles) might even endanger the cooperation (AOSIS; 2021, Episode 8).

Furthermore, the present design principles may suffice for the case of AOSIS as *the kind of resources that are managed by the group differ significantly from those that were originally the foundation for Ostrom’s work*. Elinor Ostrom originally developed the

Institutional Design Principles after successfully examining self-government of local common goods and resources like rivers, lakes, and forests where the group members and the resources are not geographically dispersed but rather assembled around the resources (Ostrom, 1990). AOSIS' group resources do not concern the regulated use of natural resources but is about pooling individual resources in the form of negotiation rights and information in order to create common resources in the first place.

What is further peculiar in the case of AOSIS is that *cooperation happens internationally* so that the costs for the implementation of design principles like conflict resolution mechanisms or monitoring are significantly higher. Conflict resolution by bringing the conflicting members physically together is not as easily achievable as the parties are separated by distance. Ostrom (1990) acknowledges that the installation of monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms is an expensive investment. International monitoring on this scale would increase these costs and outsourcing might be necessary (Stone, 2008). Participation in networks already comes with expenses for the members, which can often not be afforded by developing countries so that the membership could become less attractive or not affordable anymore (Stone, 2008,). Consequently, the implementation of these design principles might not be reasonable for AOSIS and even diminish the likelihood of successful cooperation.

The results from the analysis under 4.1. do not show any evidence that free riding is an obstacle for AOSIS. Reasons for this might be that free riding is an issue, but no information were found or that free riding is not an issue because AOSIS has overcome this problem, but not through the mechanisms that Ostrom proposes. If AOSIS indeed does not fulfil the criteria to verify the presence of equivalence between benefits and costs, monitoring mechanisms and graduate sanctions, it becomes conceivable that the institutional design of AOSIS is not explicitly helping in overcoming the obstacle of free riding that according to Olson (1965) will hinder the cooperation of a large group like AOSIS. Consequently, there seem to be other factors that lead to a voluntary involvement and sustainable group cohesion. Cox, Arnold &



Villamayor (2010) identified that one common critique on the set of design principles is that they are incomplete as for example social variables are missing. Harkes (2006, p.250f.) criticizes that Ostrom misses the “glue” of an institution which are social mechanisms. It is therefore reasonable to consider other factors like *trust and multiplex relationships* that compensate for the missing design principles. AOSIS and its member states cannot be seen as an isolated network where the members do not interact through different channels, occasions and networks in different constellations and levels. The members and AOSIS exist as part of a network of networks that create multiplex relationships so that they eventually know each other so that trust relationships developed that make monitoring dispensable (Acuto, 2013; Pflieger & Rozenblat, 2010).

Another reason that could be considered as promoting voluntary contribution is the *issue* because mitigating of climate change is of highest urgency for SIDS. AOSIS has similarities with an “issue-network” (Sikkink, 1993, p. 412) or a “transnational advocacy coalition” (Stone, 2008, p.31) where the actors and members are united by shared values. Voluntary involvement is achieved through the belief in the goals of the organization (Sikkink, 1993). Further are transnational advocacy coalitions similar to AOSIS using strategies of moral judgement and a normative arguments to influence policy agendas (Stone, 2008). This is exactly what de Águeda Corneloup & Mol (2014) identified for AOSIS and interviewees in the Podcast Islands on Alert (2021) frequently emphasized. AOSIS is working with scarce resources and depends on donations, ambitious staff and negotiators like issue networks (ibid.). Similar in the case of AOSIS, is that the success of the issue networks depends on the ability to mobilize the members through messaging (AOSIS, 2021, Episode 8; Sikkink, 1993). AOSIS’ similarities with an issue network and social relationships between the members might therefore be able to explain why sustainable collective action could be achieved despite the absence of monitoring mechanisms and sanctions.

To sum up, the institutional design can only be considered as one factor helping to enable successful collective action in the case of AOSIS. There seem to be more variables next to the institutional design that attribute to the explanation of how AOSIS achieved sustainable collective action since 1990. The case of AOSIS shows that not all design principles must necessarily be present to overcome the obstacles that exist for international collective action.

## **5. Conclusion**

AOSIS is considered as a group of SIDS that was able to exert great influence in the international climate policymaking space. This is surprising because collective action theory suggests that cooperation within a group like AOSIS is likely to fail due to common obstacles caused by the group size and free riding. This thesis aimed at answering the Research Question *How did the AOSIS members states manage to successfully overcome the existing obstacles that prevail in international collective action?* Two subquestions were derived from this RQ. SQ1 asked *Which obstacles exist for small island states when they want to act collectively?*. The answer to this question was developed through a SLR. There are obstacles to participation caused by the lack of resources of most SIDS. The obstacles that SIDS face as individual actors are alleviated by pooling resources within AOSIS. Furthermore, there are obstacles to cooperation which verified Olson's idea that the group size may hinder collective action. Other than Olson proposed, not the tendency to free riding that is increased in a big group was the reason, but the conflict potential, that increases with more members and interests.

SQ2 asked *Can the institutional design of AOSIS help to overcome the obstacles and achieve sustainable collective action?*. The answer to this question was developed through a Content Analysis. Elinor Ostrom's (1990) eight design principles for successful long enduring self-governing groups provided a framework for conditions under which collective action can happen. AOSIS' institutional design was analyzed to examine whether the individual design

principles are present or not. The presence of all design principles would clearly indicate that the institutional design of AOSIS helped in sustaining collective action. Four of eight design principles could be identified so that no clear answer can be given to whether the institutional design was the main reason why the AOSIS member states are successfully cooperating since over 30 years. However, this does not indicate that the institutional design did not contribute at all but that four design principles might be enough or that other factors are relevant too.

Finally, the answer to the Research Question *How did the AOSIS members states manage to successfully overcome the existing obstacles that prevail in international collective action?* is indefinite. The institutional design contributed to the success of AOSIS as it allowed structured and efficient cooperation. The conflict potential of the group, caused by its heterogeneity was identified as the main obstacle to collective action. As conflict resolution mechanisms are absent can the institutional design not be considered as factor that helped overcoming this obstacle. To sum up, the institutional design facilitated effective cooperation, but it is likely that other factors contributed to this achievement, too. Which other factors might enable successful international collective action can be examined in another work.

This thesis contributed to the understanding of the conditions under which collective action can be successful. The case of AOSIS shows that factors and strategies to achieve international collective action go beyond Ostrom's original eight design principles. Furthermore, no prior research focused on the institutional design of AOSIS as a reason for their stable cooperation. Existing literature primarily examined the negotiation strategies and external factors while only few investigated the internal functioning of AOSIS. Therefore, information about AOSIS internal processes were scarce. A limitation of this thesis is that the analysis relied on secondary data, as no original data (for example through interviews) could be collected due to limitations in budget and time. In a more comprehensive work with more time and resources, interviews could be conducted to explicitly ask for the design principles.

## 6. Literature List

- Acuto, M. (2013). *Global Cities, Governance and Diplomacy: The Urban Link (Routledge New Diplomacy Studies)* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://www.routledge.com/Global-Cities-Governance-and-Diplomacy-The-Urban-Link/Acuto/p/book/9781138221703>
- Ansell, C., & Gash, A. (2008). Collaborative governance in theory and practice. *Journal of public administration research and theory*, 18(4), 543-571.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mum032>
- AOSIS (n.d.-a.) *Chair Goals 2021-2022*. Retrieved, 10.06.2022, from <https://www.aosis.org/about/chair-goals-2021-2022/>.
- AOSIS (n.d.-b.). *Chair of AOSIS*. Retrieved 10.06.2022, from <https://www.aosis.org/about/chair-of-oasis/>.
- AOSIS (n.d.-c.). *Document Library*. Retrieved 10.06.2022, from <https://www.aosis.org/document-library/>.
- AOSIS (n.d.-d.). *Member States*. Retrieved 15.03.2022, from <https://www.aosis.org/about/member-states/>.
- AOSIS (n.d.-e.). *Staff*. Retrieved 10.06.2022, from <https://www.aosis.org/about/staff/>.
- AOSIS (1999). *Communique. Third Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)*. Retrieved 16.06.2022, from <https://www.aosis.org/aosis-heads-of-state-and-government-reaffirm-priorities-on-sustainable-development-climate-change-and-oceans/>.
- AOSIS (2000 a.). *Report of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) Workshop on Climate Change Negotiations, Management and Strategy*. Retrieved, 16.06.2022, from <https://www.aosis.org/aosis-holds-a-workshop-on-climate-change-negotiations-management-and-strategy/>.

- AOSIS (2000 b.). *Statement by the delegation of Jamaica on decision-making procedures*. Retrieved 16.06.2022, from <https://www.aosis.org/decision-making-procedures-and-information-sharing-for-the-biosafety-clearing-house/>.
- AOSIS (2001). *Report on the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) Workshop on trade, sustainable development and small island developing States*. Retrieved 16.06.2022, from <https://www.aosis.org/aosis-workshop-on-trade-sustainable-development-and-small-island-developing-states/>.
- AOSIS (2002 a.). *Communique. Forth Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)*. Retrieved 22.06.2022, from <https://www.aosis.org/communique-of-the-fourth-heads-of-states-and-governments-of-aosis/>.
- AOSIS (2002 b.). *Inter-regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Summit on Sustainable Development*. Retrieved 16.06.2022, from <https://www.aosis.org/inter-regional-preparatory-meeting-for-the-world-summit-on-sustainable-development/>.
- AOSIS (2003). *AOSIS statement to the 11<sup>th</sup> Session of the CSD on the discussion on the preparation for the 10 year review of the Barbados Program of Action*. Retrieved 16.06.2022, from <https://www.aosis.org/aosis-prepares-for-the-the-10-year-review-of-the-barbados-program-of-action/>.
- AOSIS (2004). *Report AOSIS Briefing from Executive Secretary of UNFCCC*. Retrieved, 16.06.2022, from <https://www.aosis.org/unfccc-executive-secretary-briefs-aosis-on-preparations-for-cop10/>.
- AOSIS (2005). *Communique from the Fifth Summit of AOSIS Heads of State and Government*. Retrieved 16.06.2022, from <https://www.aosis.org/communique-from-the-fifth-summit-of-aosis-heads-of-state-and-government/>.
- AOSIS (2007). *Report. AOSIS Preparatory Meeting for UNFCCC COP13/CMP3 St Kitts-Nevis*. Retrieved 22.06.2022, from <https://www.aosis.org/aosis-prepares-for-the-cop13-cmp3-of-the-unfccc/>.

- AOSIS (2019) *Statement #COP25 prep underway in the Caribbean*. Retrieved 16.06.2022, from <https://www.aosis.org/cop25-prep-underway-in-the-caribbean/>.
- AOSIS (2021). Episode 2. Alliance Assemble!. In *Islands on Alert*. Retrieved 20.06.2022, from <https://www.aosis.org/aosis-islands-on-alert-episode-2-alliance-assemble/>.
- AOSIS (2021). Episode 8. Final Episode. In *Islands on Alert*. Retrieved 20.06.2022, from <https://www.aosis.org/aosis-islands-on-alert-final-episode/>.
- Arshad, A., Engert, S., Geiger, C., Londob, G., & Rubin, S. (2019). The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) during the COP 18 negotiations. *European Journal of International Management*, 13(5), 678-699.
- Ashe, J. W., Lierop, R., & Cherian, A. (1999). The role of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) in the negotiation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). *Natural Resources Forum*, 23(3), 209–220.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-8947.1999.tb00910.x>
- Benjamin, L., & Thomas, A. (2016). 1.5 To Stay Alive? AOSIS and the Long Term Temperature Goal in the Paris Agreement. *SSRN Electronic Journal*.  
<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3392503>
- Betzold, C. (2010). ‘Borrowing’ Power to Influence International Negotiations: AOSIS in the Climate Change Regime, 1990–1997. *Politics*, 30(3), 131–148.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9256.2010.01377.x>
- Betzold, C., Castro, P., & Weiler, F. (2012). AOSIS in the UNFCCC negotiations: from unity to fragmentation? *Climate Policy*, 12(5), 591–613.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2012.692205>
- Bjermeland, M. (n.d.). *The story of 1.5 - CICERO*. Cicero. Retrieved 25.03. 2022, from <https://cicero.oslo.no/en/understanding-one-point-five/the-story-of-15>.

- Black-Layne, D. (2021). *AOSIS Opening Statement at UNFCCC Virtual Subsidiary Body Meetings*. Retrieved 16.06.2022, from <https://www.aosis.org/climate-sbs-2021aosis-opening-statement-at-unfccc-virtual-subsidiary-body-meetings/>.
- Brewer, A. (2004). Regional cooperation in the South Pacific and climate change. *Asia Pacific Journal of Environmental Law*, 8(1 and 2), 153–175. <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/agispt.20050821>
- Carruthers, P., Grey, O., Mahlung, C., & Siegele, L. (2020). Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). In *Negotiating Climate Change Adaptation* (pp. 27-47). Springer, Cham.
- Castro, P. (2020). National interests and coalition positions on climate change: A text-based analysis. *International Political Science Review*, 42(1), 95–113. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512120953530>
- Corbett, J., Ruwet, M., Xu, Y. C., & Weller, P. (2020). Climate governance, policy entrepreneurs and small states: explaining policy change at the International Maritime Organisation. *Environmental Politics*, 29(5), 825–844. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2019.1705057>
- Cox, M., Arnold, G., & Villamayor Tomás, S. (2010). A Review of Design Principles for Community-based Natural Resource Management. *Ecology and Society*, 15(4). <https://doi.org/10.5751/es-03704-150438>
- Chasek, P. S. (2005). Margins of Power: Coalition Building and Coalition Maintenance of the South Pacific Island States and the Alliance of Small Island States. *Review of European Community and International Environmental Law*, 14(2), 125–137. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9388.2005.00433.x>
- Christoff, P. (2016). The promissory note: COP 21 and the Paris Climate Agreement. *Environmental Politics*, 25(5), 765–787. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2016.1191818>
- de Águeda Corneloup, I. (2011, May). *Small Island Developing Countries in Climate Negotiations* (Master's Thesis). SemanticScholar.

<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Small-Island-Developing-Countries-in-Climate-Corneloup/80c47abbb823b985249f86a77db9174404a47031>

de Águeda Corneloup, I., & Mol, A. P. J. (2013). Small island developing states and international climate change negotiations: the power of moral “leadership.” *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics*, 14(3), 281–297.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10784-013-9227-0>

Deitelhoff, N., & Wallbott, L. (2012). Beyond soft balancing: small states and coalition-building in the ICC and climate negotiations. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 25(3), 345–366. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2012.710580>

Erbach, G. (2015, March). *Negotiating a new UN climate agreement: Challenges on the road to Paris*. (PE 551.347). EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service.

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/Reg->

[Data/etudes/IDAN/2015/551347/EPRS\\_IDA\(2015\)551347\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/Reg-Data/etudes/IDAN/2015/551347/EPRS_IDA(2015)551347_EN.pdf)

Given, L. M. (Ed.). (2008). *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. Sage publications. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909>

Gormley, W. T. (1986). Regulatory Issue Networks in a Federal System. *Polity*, 18(4), 595–620. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3234884>

Grote, J. (2010). The Changing Tides of Small Island States Discourse – A Historical Overview of the Appearance of Small Island States in the International Arena. *Verfassung in Recht Und Übersee*, 43(2), 164–191. <https://doi.org/10.5771/0506-7286-2010-2-164>

Hardin, G. (1968). The Tragedy of the Commons. *Science*, 162(3859), 1243–1248.

<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.162.3859.1243>

Harkes, I. H. T. (2006). Fisheries co-management, the role of local institutions and decentralisation in Southeast Asia : with specific reference to marine sasi in Central Maluku,



- Indonesia. Dissertation. Leiden University. Retrieved 22.06.2022, from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4385>
- Harris, P. G. (2007). Collective action on climate change: The logic of regime failure. *Nat. Resources J.*, 47, 195. <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/narj47&div=11&id=&page=>.
- Heileman, L. I. (1993). The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS): a mechanism for coordinated representation of small island states on issues of common concern. *Ambio*, 22(1), 55-56. <https://pascal-francis.inist.fr/vibad/index.php?action=getRecordDetail&idt=6474139>.
- Hillman, A. J., Withers, M. C., & Collins, B. J. (2009). Resource Dependence Theory: A Review. *Journal of Management*, 35(6), 1404–1427. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206309343469>
- Hoad, D. (2015). Reflections on small island states and the international climate change negotiations (COP21, Paris, 2015). *Island Studies Journal*, 10(2), 259–262. <https://doi.org/10.24043/isj.331>
- IPCC. (2022). Impacts of 1.5°C Global Warming on Natural and Human Systems. In *Global Warming of 1.5°C: IPCC Special Report on impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels in context of strengthening response to climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty* (pp. 175-312). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781009157940.005
- Jaschik, K. (2014). Small states and international politics: Climate change, the Maldives and Tuvalu. *International Politics*, 51(2), 272–293. <https://doi.org/10.1057/ip.2014.5>
- Keohane, R. O. (1984). *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. Princeton University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7sq9s>

- King, A. D., & Harrington, L. J. (2018). The Inequality of Climate Change From 1.5 to 2°C of Global Warming. *Geophysical Research Letters*, *45*(10), 5030–5033.  
<https://doi.org/10.1029/2018gl078430>
- Kinkaid, E., Emard, K., & Senanayake, N. (2019). The Podcast-as-Method?: Critical Reflections on Using Podcasts to Produce Geographic Knowledge. *Geographical Review*, *110*(1–2), 78–91. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gere.12354>
- Larson, M. J. (2003). Low-Power Contributions in Multilateral Negotiations: A Framework Analysis. *Negotiation Journal*, *19*(2), 133–149. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1571-9979.2003.tb00772.x>
- McNamara, K. E. (2009). Voices from the margins: Pacific ambassadors and the geopolitics of marginality at the United Nations. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, *50*(1), 1–12.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8373.2009.01376.x>
- Mead, S., & Wewerinke-Singh, M. (2021). Recent Developments in International Climate Change Law. *International Community Law Review*, *23*(2–3), 294–309.  
<https://doi.org/10.1163/18719732-12341479>
- Nurse, L., & Moore, R. (2007). Critical considerations for future action during the second commitment period: A small islands? perspective. *Natural Resources Forum*, *31*(2), 102–110. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-8947.2007.00143.x>
- Oculi, N., & Stephenson, S. R. (2018). Conceptualizing climate vulnerability: Understanding the negotiating strategies of Small Island Developing States. *Environmental Science & Policy*, *85*, 72–80. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2018.03.025>
- Olson, M. (1965). *The Logic of Collective Action. Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Ostrom, E. (1986). An agenda for the study of institutions. *Public Choice*, *48*(1), 3–25.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00239556>
- Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Ac*

- tion* (Political Economy of Institutions and Decisions). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511807763
- Ostrom, E. (1993). Design principles in long-enduring irrigation institutions. *Water Resources Research*, 29(7), 1907–1912. <https://doi.org/10.1029/92wr02991>
- Ostrom, E. (2008). Tragedy of the commons. *The new palgrave dictionary of economics*, 2. <https://hdl.handle.net/10535/5887>
- Ourbak, T., & Magnan, A. K. (2017). The Paris Agreement and climate change negotiations: Small Islands, big players. *Regional Environmental Change*, 18(8), 2201–2207. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10113-017-1247-9>
- Panke, D. (2012). Small states in multilateral negotiations. What have we learned? *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 25(3), 387–398. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2012.710589>
- Pfeffer, J., & Salancik, G. R. 1978. The external control of organizations: A resource dependence perspective. New York: Harper & Row.
- Pflieger, G., & Rozenblat, C. (2010). Introduction. Urban Networks and Network Theory: The City as the Connector of Multiple Networks. *Urban Studies*, 47(13), 2723–2735. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098010377368>
- Provan, K. G., & Kenis, P. (2007). Modes of Network Governance: Structure, Management, and Effectiveness. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 18(2), 229–252. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mum015>
- Provan, K. G., & Milward, H. B. (1995). A Preliminary Theory of Interorganizational Network Effectiveness: A Comparative Study of Four Community Mental Health Systems. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 40(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2393698>
- Robert, G., Williams, O., Lindenfalk, B., Mendel, P., Davis, L. M., Turner, S., Farmer, C., & Branch, C. (2021). Applying Elinor Ostrom’s Design Principles to Guide Co-Design in Health(care) Improvement: A Case Study with Citizens Returning to the

- Community from Jail in Los Angeles County. *International Journal of Integrated Care*, 21(1). <https://doi.org/10.5334/ijic.5569>
- Schwebel, M. B. (2017). Gathering at the AOSIS: perceived cooperation among Pacific Small Island States. *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics*, 18(2), 215–228. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10784-017-9379-4>
- Shibuya, E. (1996). “Roaring Mice Against the Tide”: The South Pacific Islands and Agenda-Building on Global Warming. *Pacific Affairs*, 69(4), 541. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2761186>
- Sikkink, K. (1993). Human rights, principled issue-networks, and sovereignty in Latin America. *International Organization*, 47(3), 411–441. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020818300028010>
- Slade, T. N. (1995, March 28). *Statement by on SIDS and Energy for Sustainable Development* [Statement]. <https://www.aosis.org/statement-by-aosis-on-sids-and-energy-for-sustainable-deelopment/>.
- Sopoaga, E. S. (2003, June). *AOSIS recaps the 18th session of the Subsidiary Bodies to the UNFCCC*. AOSIS. <https://www.aosis.org/aosis-recaps-the-18th-session-of-the-subsidiary-bodies-to-the-unfccc/>
- Sorkar, M. N. I. (2020). Framing Shaping Outcomes: Issues Related to Mitigation in the UNFCCC Negotiations. *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 13(3), 375–394. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40647-020-00280-9>
- Stone, D. (2008). Global Public Policy, Transnational Policy Communities, and Their Networks. *Policy Studies Journal*, 36(1), 19–38. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0072.2007.00251.x>
- Taylor, M. A., Clarke, L. A., Centella, A., Bezanilla, A., Stephenson, T. S., Jones, J. J., Campbell, J. D., Vichot, A., & Charlery, J. (2018). Future Caribbean Climates in a

- World of Rising Temperatures: The 1.5 vs 2.0 Dilemma. *Journal of Climate*, 31(7), 2907–2926. <https://doi.org/10.1175/jcli-d-17-0074.1>
- Torraco, R. J. (2005). Writing Integrative Literature Reviews: Guidelines and Examples. *Human Resource Development Review*, 4(3), 356–367. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484305278283>
- UN. (n.d.-a). *About Small Island Developing States | Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States*. Un.Org. Retrieved 16.03.2022, from <https://www.un.org/ohrlls/content/about-small-island-developing-states>
- UN. (n.d.-b). *Bureau of the AOSIS | Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States*. Un.Org. Retrieved 15.03.2022, from <https://www.un.org/ohrlls/content/bureau-aosis>
- UN. (n.d.-c). *Groups of Member States*. UN.Org. Retrieved 22.06.2022, from <https://www.un.org/en/model-united-nations/groups-member-states>
- UN. (n.d.-d). *Parties and Observers*. Unfccc.Int. Retrieved 22.06 2022, from <https://unfccc.int/parties-observers>
- UN. (n.d.-e). *Regional groups of Member States | Department for General Assembly and Conference Management*. UN.Org. Retrieved 10.06.2022, from <https://www.un.org/dgacm/en/content/regional-groups>
- UN (2015) *Paris Agreement*. Retrieved 22.06.2022, from [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english\\_paris\\_agreement.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf).
- UN (1961). *Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations*. Retrieved 20.06.2022, from [https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/9\\_1\\_1961.pdf](https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/9_1_1961.pdf).
- UNEP. (n.d.). *Small island developing states*. UNEP - UN Environment Programme. Retrieved 21.03. 2022, from <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/oceans-seas/what-we-do/working-regional-seas/small-island-developing-states>

- Williams, D. (2011, November 15). *Statement at opening of the 2nd Inter-sessional of UN Conference on Sustainable Development* [Statement]. <https://www.aosis.org/statement-at-opening-of-the-2nd-inter-sessional-of-un-conference-on-sustainable-development/>
- Wilson, D. S., Ostrom, E., & Cox, M. E. (2013). Generalizing the core design principles for the efficacy of groups. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, *90*, S21–S32. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2012.12.010>
- Wong, P. P. (2010). Small island developing states. *WIREs Climate Change*, *2*(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.84>

## 7. Appendix

### Appendix A: Codebook

#### SQ1 Systematic Literature Review

**Results of open coding:** Circumstances that promote or hinder collective action/cooperation among SIDS and AOSIS member states.

Code	When to use
Barriers	Barriers, obstacles and limitations that exist for SIDS, AOSIS, small states when they want to act collectively/cooperate in international climate policymaking
Member states/SIDS	Which characteristics are attributed to Small Island Developing states/ AOSIS member states
Motivations	Which motivations exist for SIDS to be a member of AOSIS
Opponents	Which actors oppose AOSIS goals and hinder the achievements of AOSIS goals?
UN	How is the UN (climate policymaking) system structured?
Goals	What are AOSIS goals?
Freeriding	Indications about free riding within AOSIS

#### SQ2 Content Analysis

##### Institutional Design Principles (Ostrom, 1990)

Each of the 8 institutional design principles that Ostrom identified was assigned a code.

Code	When to use
Structure/Design/Characteristics AOSIS	Indications about how AOSIS is structured, characterized perceived
1_boundaries	Clearly defined boundaries: Who belongs to the network and has access to the resources?
2_benefits&costs	Proportional equivalence between benefits and costs: How are contributions rewarded? How are benefits and costs balanced?
3_rules	Collective-choice arrangements: Were changeable, well-fitted, operational rules established?
4_monitoring	Monitoring: Are there monitoring mechanisms to safeguard rule compliance and detect free riding? Who is monitoring and at which costs? How are the costs and benefits balanced?
5_sanctions	Graduate Sanctions: What happens in cases of non-compliance, free riding, or breach of rules?
6_conflictresolution	Conflict resolution mechanisms: Were mechanisms for fast, low-cost conflict resolution established?
7_recognition	Minimal recognition of rights to organize: Is AOSIS recognized by external authorities (e.g. governments) and possess certain authority for self-government?

8_nestedenterprise	Nested enterprise: Is cooperation happening at different levels within the network?
--------------------	--

## Appendix B: Selected Articles SLR

Nr.	Article
1	Ashe, J. W., Lierop, R., & Cherian, A. (1999). The role of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) in the negotiation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). <i>Natural Resources Forum</i> , 23(3), 209–220. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-8947.1999.tb00910.x">https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-8947.1999.tb00910.x</a>
2	Betzold, C. (2010). ‘Borrowing’ Power to Influence International Negotiations: AOSIS in the Climate Change Regime, 1990–1997. <i>Politics</i> , 30(3), 131–148. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9256.2010.01377.x">https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9256.2010.01377.x</a>
3	Betzold, C., Castro, P., & Weiler, F. (2012). AOSIS in the UNFCCC negotiations: from unity to fragmentation? <i>Climate Policy</i> , 12(5), 591–613. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2012.692205">https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2012.692205</a>
4	Chasek, P. S. (2005). Margins of Power: Coalition Building and Coalition Maintenance of the South Pacific Island States and the Alliance of Small Island States. <i>Review of European Community and International Environmental Law</i> , 14(2), 125–137. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9388.2005.00433.x">https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9388.2005.00433.x</a>
5	de Águeda Corneloup, I. (2011, May). <i>Small Island Developing Countries in Climate Negotiations</i> (Master’s Thesis). SemanticScholar. <a href="https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Small-Island-Developing-Countries-in-Climate-Corneloup/80c47abbb823b985249f86a77db9174404a47031">https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Small-Island-Developing-Countries-in-Climate-Corneloup/80c47abbb823b985249f86a77db9174404a47031</a>
6	de Águeda Corneloup, I., & Mol, A. P. J. (2013). Small island developing states and international climate change negotiations: the power of moral “leadership.” <i>International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics</i> , 14(3), 281–297. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1007/s10784-013-9227-0">https://doi.org/10.1007/s10784-013-9227-0</a>
7	Deitelhoff, N., & Wallbott, L. (2012). Beyond soft balancing: small states and coalition-building in the ICC and climate negotiations. <i>Cambridge Review of International Affairs</i> , 25(3), 345–366. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2012.710580">https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2012.710580</a>
8	Jaschik, K. (2014). Small states and international politics: Climate change, the Maldives and Tuvalu. <i>International Politics</i> , 51(2), 272–293. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1057/ip.2014.5">https://doi.org/10.1057/ip.2014.5</a>
9	McNamara, K. E. (2009). Voices from the margins: Pacific ambassadors and the geopolitics of marginality at the United Nations. <i>Asia Pacific Viewpoint</i> , 50(1), 1–12. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8373.2009.01376.x">https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8373.2009.01376.x</a>
10	Ourbak, T., & Magnan, A. K. (2017). The Paris Agreement and climate change negotiations: Small Islands, big players. <i>Regional Environmental Change</i> , 18(8), 2201–2207. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1007/s10113-017-1247-9">https://doi.org/10.1007/s10113-017-1247-9</a>
11	Schwebel, M. B. (2017). Gathering at the AOSIS: perceived cooperation among Pacific Small Island States. <i>International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics</i> , 18(2), 215–228. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1007/s10784-017-9379-4">https://doi.org/10.1007/s10784-017-9379-4</a>
12	Wong, P. P. (2010). Small island developing states. <i>WIREs Climate Change</i> , 2(1), 1–6. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.84">https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.84</a>



