Under what conditions does collaboration among the institutions in a regime complex occur? I argue that the institutional topography of the regime complex carries the answer to this puzzle. Specifically, hierarchy and functional differentiation among the component institutions of a complex shape how they collaborate with each other. While hierarchy facilitates inter-institutional collaboration, functional differentiation has a more nuanced, non-linear effect, with collaboration first increasing in the functional similarity of institutions and then decreasing for highly similar institutions. Hierarchy also enhances the positive effect of functional similarity on cooperative interactions. I empirically explore my argument using the regime complex for the global governance of private security as a case study. Using a unique dataset of inter-institutional collaboration among the institutions involved in the regime complex, I trace the development of hierarchy, differentiation, and inter-institutional collaboration within the complex between 2000 and 2020. To test my theoretical argument, I use statistical analysis on a dataset of directed institution-dyads. I find that hierarchy and functional differentiation have shaped the patterns of cooperative relations among the institutions involved in the global governance of private security in ways predicted by my theory. The paper contributes to scholarship on regime complexity, global governance, and private security governance.

Oliver Westerwinter is a Senior Research Fellow at the Department of Political Science at the University St. Gallen, Switzerland. From September 2021 until August 2022, he is also a Visiting Fellow at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies at the European University Institute. His research interests include transnational public-private governance initiatives, intergovernmental organizations, informal governance, institutional design and effectiveness, institutional complexity, global governance, international security, and research methods. He received his Ph.D. in Political and Social Sciences with a focus on international relations and research methods in 2014 at the European University Institute.