

Coalesce or Collapse: Mandate Enlargement and the Expansion of International Organizations

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Why cooperate? In international theory and legal studies intergovernmental organizations have a limited capacity for partnership. When and where organizations do act together is allegedly left to the sole decision of intergovernmental organizations' member states: on the one hand, reversible military alliances and occasional single-issue collaboration cannot evolve into a multitasked and enduring cooperation; on the other hand, internal coordination between agencies' departments are not easily turned into external cooperation among distinct organizations.

That such statements remain uncontested in an academic debate still centred on states as the major actors of international relations is no surprise. To the opposite, their endorsement with no reservation by organizations' staff members is puzzling. Organizations' leaders repeatedly tell in face-to-face interviews and press releases that they operate within a definite mandate, and that the precision of their legal status leaves no room for interpretation. Some may add *mezzo voce* that confronting their membership rather than servicing governments is unaffordable for persons whose career is at stake and whose agency is endowed with limited resources by their principals. Therefore, scholars and actors' visions of joint ventures between IGO converge on two points: on sovereignty issues, cooperation is unlikely; in other realms, it is doomed to be restricted in time and space.

Against this classical account, it can hardly be denied that intergovernmental organizations (IGO) do cooperate on many occasions: they work together, at an accelerating pace, and on their own initiative. Although such facts are dissonant with most theories, they are not discarded by scholars. Realists themselves admit that organizations are more than "tools of statecraft", designed by states to foster cooperation in areas that are the least relevant to their security and respective survival¹. However, they do not go beyond paying lip service to the necessity of intergovernmental channels

at only one level: in their work, the provision of global public goods is assigned to hegemonic powers acting together (Waltz, 1979; 2004). Institutionalist work goes much further, and links regime building to a joint regulation of a specific field by complementary IGO (Keohane, 1982; Krasner, 1999); or, alternatively, they hold it for an elegant solution to excessive transaction costs (North, 1990; Keohane, 1984/2006). In spite of this, none of them seriously envisages that cooperation may “spill over” across regimes or grow beyond economic necessity. Rationalists stand in the middle of the road, viewing organizational cooperation either as a Nash equilibrium in prisoners’ dilemma games (Agarwall, Dupont, 1999) or as the consequence of a ‘rational design’ of international institutions whose adequate exemption and exit clauses are carefully calculated to balance the constraints attached to working with others and help discount the future (Koremenos, Snidal, 2004; Rosenberg, Milner). Nevertheless, they cannot explain why such ‘rational’ moves are denied with the utmost resistance by actors that are supposedly good strategists. Constructivists alone swim against the stream. They assume, first, that IGO are the “missionaries of our time”. They also view cooperation among such autonomous entities as a condition to consolidate their organizational culture (Barnett, Finnemore, 2004: 33) and duplicate their structures since “[o]nce created, international organizations, acting like the bureaucracies they were, used their authority to expand their control over more and more international life. Indeed, the majority of international organizations are now created by other international organizations.” (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004, 45). Moreover, instead of linking cooperative behaviour to a mere quest for power or money, constructivist work traces it to learning and identity-building. The caveat here comes from their late insistence on “recognition” and “reconciliation” (Wendt, 2004), a trend that may apply to states but is not evidenced at all in organizational history. Cooperative decision making is therefore uneasy to observe in organizations that are allegedly puppets (realist and neo-realist paradigms); agents (the principal-agency school); stock exchanges (liberal and neo-liberal scholars) or identity nexus (constructivism). In mainstream and even critical IR studies, cooperation between IGO is unlikely, marginal, bounded by their original constitution, crippled by a scarcity of resources, or conditioned to an adequate treatment of difference between organizations’ cultures and structures.

In this paper, we suggest an alternative solution to the conventional wisdom according to which *cooperation* is an exception to a rule of *competition* between organizations, with a possible subcase—a benign neglect towards a rival IGO. We do not share views that the latter is only possible if it is either forcefully denied or carefully bounded. In our views, IGO are not confidentially and occasionally coordinating their actions on specific issues in a limited span of time: they increasingly work together on full scale. Moreover, they don't have any choice: a rampant institutionalisation of the world compel them to adjust to contextual change. The main cause of this cooperative and institutionalising trend is the necessity to confront change in four directions: in technology (as the ITU did with the Internet); in philosophy (WIPO turning from the personal protection of inventions to the collective heritage of traditions); in the economy (a marginalized IMF making a great come back in recent years); and in the balance of power (the birth of the OESC at the very moment when the USSR started its fall).

Of course, such adaptive behaviour may imply drifting away from each organization's initial mission. By changing their agenda to cope with a new context—as NATO did with Afghanistan and the World Bank with the environment—IGO have a better chance to prove resilient. Since in a majority of cases new goals are simply added to previous tasks, however, IGO also expand the realm of their activities. External factors make expansion compulsory, but this expanding process is also engrained in bureaucracies, since such organizations display an inherent tendency to grow and preempt new issues (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004²). **A different question is how to extrapolate from such trends. According to Biermann,** interdependence between IGO will inevitably increase because the issues addressed by each are increasingly intertwined (2007). This is exemplified in at least two little connected areas: in the humanitarian field, the HCR now reach out “displaced” persons instead of limiting its operations to “refugees”, while the IOM moves towards protecting “economic” migrants and asylum seekers instead of confining to ordinary migrants; in the European security field, “[i]nter-organizational cooperation, increasingly moving beyond the dyad into more complex configurations, has begun to take the shape of a network, with a high density of links and a common perception of boundaries” (Biermann, 2007: 2). **On the contrary, Gehring and Oberthür “cannot put forward meaningful hypotheses as to the sufficient conditions under which institutional interaction is expected to occur” (2009:**

132). However, they themselves include among the mechanisms that trigger interaction what they call “jurisdictional delimitating” to limit encroachment upon neighbouring organizations’ jurisdiction whose governance areas are either interconnected or overlapping. Furthermore, they see “interlocking structures of international governance institutions emerging from institutional interaction” and forecast the constitution of “cooperative clusters” that may compare with competitive ones (2009: 149). Finally, “interaction” is not cooperation: as in the “principal-agent” theories, Gehring and Oberthür define a “source” institution and a “target” one, the activities of the former having “beneficial (synergistic) or adverse (disruptive)” effects on the latter (2009: 142); the study of interaction is not sufficient to assess the possibility of cooperation between organizations in the long run.

Consequently, in the process of adaptation **it is very likely that** IGO will one after the other trespass the boundaries that were initially established between them. They will henceforth **not only interact but fully cooperate** with each other, unless some will have a comparative advantage that could make them prevail over rivals in a competition for scarce resources—funding, member state support, legitimacy in the media. In that case, and in that case only, organizations that are ordinary very much risk-averse will bluntly look for hegemony, possibly with the encouragement of an hegemonic state. Note that hegemony is not paramount, contrary to what is the rule in security issues: in each particular realm one or several states are prominent due to the structure of their endowments—like Saudi Arabia and Iran in energy; Brazil and Indonesia in forestry; or India in fisheries. Because such hegemonic conjunctions are scarce, however, mandate enlargement for all may become an essentially uncontested imperative.

In line with this basic assumption the paper raises one research question and makes two major hypotheses. Our research question can be framed in the following terms: we want to know how the necessity, the capacity, and the willingness to engage in inter-organizational cooperation is leading to a growing institutionalisation of the world, and the multiplication of networks of what H. Jacobson once called “networks of interdependence”. In answering this question, we do not discard at once the possibility that “organizations are extremely reluctant to give up autonomy through substantial cooperation. Strong forces are needed to overcome this reluctance: resource dependence, issue density and duration and learning through failure are major ones” (Biermann,

2007: 4). On the contrary, we shall discuss these “strong forces” pushing towards “institutional demarcation” extensively in the following pages. However, we make the assumption that in dynamics strategies of insulation are counter-productive for IGO themselves: they may opt for strategies of pre-emption under the guise of a cooperative network, but this will lead to a very unstable equilibrium. The only logical outcome in the long run is a controlled mandate enlargement, a process in which each partner tends to optimise its comparative advantage in a Pareto-type utility function.

Our hypotheses are, first, that IGO’ staff members know that their organization’s survival may be at stake if they did not adapt to environmental change: they will henceforth seriously consider cooperation as a major goal and pursue it in spite of possible governments’ permanent representatives’ attempts to stop or slow down this trend. At least, states will tolerate it; at most, they will bandwagon. Eventually, for each particular agency more IGO interdependence will also mean more autonomy from their principals, the states. Our purpose is to corroborate or invalidate the assumption that *the resilience of international organizations stems from their successful adaptation to changing structural conditions through cooperation with others (HYP. 1)*. In other words, to be resilient, an IGO should also be adaptive. Reforming is not sufficient, since incentives to reform are justified by reference to the good old past (when a new-born organization had a clear mandate, and did not trespass it; when resources met ends with no waste); alternatively, it may be cosmetic (the will to reform is presented with much “ceremonialism” and little effectiveness, Hawkins & Jacoby, 2006). Adaptation, on the contrary, is an investment in the future: once achieved, it will change the structure, the goals, the technology, and the modus operandi of the organization, hence its perimeter.

Our second hypothesis stems from the first: the race to mandate enlargement in a competitive or, better, in a collaborative format, not only empowers the most adaptive organizations over their rivals; it also expands dramatically the overall organizational structure of the world. *The more cooperative IGO are, the most adaptive they prove, and the densest their network become (HYP.2)*.

Unfortunately, it is not easy to test such hypotheses since the literature on IGO cooperation is sketchy. That such topic has been little considered in spite of its growing relevance may be due to a lack of theoretical clarity, or, alternatively, to an excessive paucity of concepts. Reality is richer than assumed in most explanatory models, since

there are more than two basic strategies: competition and cooperation are but the two extremes along a continuum of different types of adaptation like collaboration, coalition, and coordination. On the far left of this axis, *competition* implies either defending the given mandate against potential or actual competitors or unilaterally pursuing mandate enlargement at the expense of other organizations: in the first case, lack of adaptation may lead to IGO' obsolescence; in the second case, hegemony may occur. Located nearby, *collaboration* means that IGO are forced to adjust to each other to avoid being worse off. A good example of that is the collaboration between the US and the USSR in order to avoid accidental nuclear war. We are speaking here of circumscribed partnerships: given its specific focus and the reluctance to cooperate, collaboration is limited and insulated. The risk, however, is that the partnership may eventually dissolve. One step further right, *coalition* is more solid: it implies that IGO are defensively conducted to work out joint programs and make scenarios in common; the risk, however, is that this partnership may eventually dissolve when threats disappear. *Cooperation*, in contrast, is based upon the recognition of mutual dependence but contrarily to coalition it is turned productively into longer-term based problem solving. Joining forces by pooling resources and skills for specific issues is undertaken in order to achieve desirable collective goods, whatever the transaction costs and the inefficiencies may be for each contributor, at least temporarily. A case in point is the cooperation between the IAEA (focussed on nuclear safety) and the WHO (in charge of health care) in the prevention of tropical diseases, since in this realm the two partners are acting beyond their original mandate. Finally, *coordination* is a hybrid construct which simultaneously implies both joint activities between organizations that are parts of the same international regime (like the UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNIFEM and the World Bank in development), and bounded cooperation among agencies belonging to the same paramount organization (e.g. the UN system, and OCHA in particular) or operating in closely related fields (e.g. the WTO's TRIPS and the WIPO's division on patents).

These forms of interaction are summarised in table 1, where quadrants substitute points along the same axis, and graph 1.

Table 1 and graph 1 about here

So far, we have just described varieties of joint activity as contributing per se to the international equilibrium. However, we should not discard the fact that whatever its form, joint action implies some enlargement of an organization's initial mandate. By *mandate enlargement* we mean either successive promotions of new goals whose consistency with the initial aims is progressively diminishing (as in the health department of the IAEA); or the progressive substitution of a recent objective to older ones (as in UNESCO, where immaterial heritage discreetly replaced culture in a span time of a generation). Consequently, at any point in time redundancy is always possible. The undesirable side effects of overlap are: the sidelining of one of the partners (e.g., WIPO in the intellectual property issue, to the main benefit of the WTO); an increase in waste and red tape (due to duplication of the resources attributed to the joint venture by each partner, as in the collective promotion of knowledge by UNESCO, the World Bank, UNICEF, etc.); relative deprivation (as in communication technologies, with ITU people resenting the domination of ICANN members); and even disorganization (as in emergency relief, when various specialists belonging to different countries try to coexist in a state of panic, from the tsunami crisis to the Haiti's earthquake). Since such inconveniences are always expected with fear by one or several partners, and because overlap threats increase along the collaborative continuum from the point of passive complicity to the point where proactive cooperation is activated, the probability to assess one organization's success by mandate enlargement standards seems weak. Conversely, the actual and immediate necessity of mandate enlargement overcomes its potential disadvantages, which is a strong motivation to enlarge without claiming it.

We shall test our two hypotheses on three lines. Firstly, successful adaptation presupposes *competence* (a short script for knowledge, ideas, operational skills, expertise, etc.) in dealing with the complex environment in which IGO work. However, organizations do not necessarily have such capabilities, although they may also be all considered as "knowledge-based" institutions: by pooling their knowledge they may simply expect that the margin of error or failure be reduced; or conversely, that blame can be distributed evenly in case of failure. Secondly, to be efficient IGO need resources and eventually some *power*. That is, the mandates or missions of these organizations

must be supplemented with sufficient endowments and some enforcement capabilities. Lastly, in order to succeed, they need to command some degree of *legitimacy*. If an IGO intervening on the field does not command enough support nor is perceived as satisfying basic needs its operations might actually fail.

To what extent can cooperation between agencies help solve these three predicaments? The underpinnings of our main hypotheses are that inter-organizational cooperation and mandate enlargement are not contradictory since they can *simultaneously* increase the knowledge base, the power, and the legitimacy of organizational agents. Thus, cooperation is a prerequisite to success in intervention, autonomy of decisions, and legitimacy of the outcomes. The joint production of global public goods and services, the protection of universal rights, and the capture of large-scale externalities can be enhanced by resolving, at least partially, the dilemma of the functional fragmentation of a complex environment. In addition, inter-organizational cooperation globally enlarges IGO's individual and collective power and legitimacy³.

Before going in depth into discussing these concepts and giving empirical examples of diverse sorts of relationships between organizations, three additional remarks should be made about methodology. Firstly, although the assumed inevitability of a "cooperative turn" sounds as a reminder of the "spill over" effect to which functionalist schools owe their fame in European studies, we consider change in the organization's agendas as resulting from human agency rather than organizational machinery. In our view, organizations' leaders must certainly struggle to enhance the realm of their activities; but instead of blindly obeying to a systemic constraint and although they may not realize the scope of their action they do it purposefully. Would they limit decision making to the domain covered by their original mandate, their organizations would close one after another: either the initial conditions that gave them life would have changed in the mean time (as with NATO at the end of the Cold War), or they would have fulfilled their mandate to such an extent that the issue originally addressed would now belong to history (as with the IMF now fully reimbursed by default states). Consequently, we do not nest the main cause of inter-organizational cooperation in the *internal* dynamics of bureaucracies and the demands expressed by staff members, as Barnett and Finnemore do (and, before them, Ness and Brechin, 1988; or, after them, Hawkins, Lane, Nielson and Tierney, 2006); beyond this important

factor, we see cooperation between IGOs as the outcome of their leaders' ability to satisfy *external* demands from three groups of actors: states' representatives, epistemic communities' experts, and NGOs' activists⁴.

Secondly, this statement should not be taken as privileging rational choice studies over constructivist paradigms: although such strategic imperative could be understood as a logical answer to change in initial conditions under the shadow of globalisation, we do not go that far. We simply assume that instead of opting for one strategy over alternative ones after having carefully weighed advantages and costs of each, IGO' staff members make day-by-day desperate efforts not to be sidelined: this is far from being a conscious strategy. In this attempt, they are permanently confronted to a "*cooperation dilemma*": *going it alone and risking suppression; or going along and provoking a merge*. The impossibility to opt for any of these strategies, in turn, helps explain some irrationality in their behaviour—e.g., why thinking about cooperation while never talk or write about it is so frequent, as also noticed by Rafael Biermann in his own research with which we share a number of conclusions—but not his focus on cooperation as starting beyond the relationships within a dyad, since most instances of collaborative action can be found in such bilateral contexts (Biermann, 2007). Additionally, although interstate cooperation will not be addressed as such here, the contradiction in states' attitudes towards IGO may find an ultimate explanation in the cooperation paradox: since they could not solve it, states have repeatedly created international organizations as instruments of cooperation in functionally specific issue areas while not taking full advantage of the collaborative framework provided by their creatures to boost collaborative attitudes in other realms⁵.

Thirdly, comparing international organizations requires specific tools. Although the problems raised in every study—like selecting sources and cases; interviewing respondents; comparing objects across cultures; and avoiding the various inductionist, ecological, and post hoc fallacies—all these epistemological traps are presumably multiplied in a multilateral environment. However, methodological choices are also simplified. Firstly, IGOs are more or less concentrated in a handful of international cities. Since academic research on most IGOs is scarce, doors are wide open to free investigation. Moreover, interviewing decision-makers differs from interviewing ordinary citizens (Cohen, NNNN): while opinion polls aim at finding attitudes and their

distribution among a representative sample, the main goal of meeting with staff members in an IGO is fact-finding, which in turn imposes to identify the persons who have enough authority to speak the truth, who weighs heavier than others, and who can dispatch investigators to knowledgeable collaborators; therefore, their statements about reality can be crossed-checked easily because re-interviewing people is always possible. Coding rules to classify answers and data about genesis, structure, culture, etc. may be complicated in principal-agent theories, for instance (Nielson, Tierney 2006), since in such cases assessing agencies' autonomy is at stake—one must know with some reliability if privileging some evidence and discarding contradictory facts may impact on the assessment. It is no longer an obstacle to research when its purpose is to identify actual decision-making processes and their much publicized outcomes—a new organisational identity, pre-empting a domain of competency, and carefully phrased to that end (like “mitigating climate change”, once a soundbite in a leader's speech, then an official motto). To help address the issues raised by this paper, we divided labour in two parts—i.e. security, humanitarian, and health issues on the one hand; the environment, finance and commerce on the other hand—each of us being more focussed on one of the two set of issues (and the related IO). Data were collected over a period of seven years. First, each of us conducted repeated in depth interviews within the IGO he best knew; secondly, we jointly or separately supervised research either completed by students during a joint undergraduate seminar in 2003-2004 (a starting point in the history of this research, and the time when a research seminar on these issues was inaugurated in our laboratory), then within master programs in which we had the opportunity to supervise dozens of graduate students' in Grenoble, Berlin, Beirut, and Geneva; finally, to check the reliability of our own academic investigations, we reviewed in-house documents (i.e., internal reports and circular letters, websites' posts and press releases), and used published testimonies from the actors themselves whenever available⁶. All in all, the number of IGO investigated in depth exceeds 30, while the number of interviews is over a hundred during a period of six years (a record that compares with Gehring and Oberthür's 150 cases of institutional interaction, 2009: 127)⁷.

In the remaining part of this text we identify the drivers of inter-organizational cooperation, link them to a particular strategy, mandate enlargement, and hypothesize that the aggregated outcome of such independent moves is an institutionalisation of the

world. To this end, the paper is organized as follows: we start with a review of some of the main scholarly work on international organizations' behaviour (section 1) before addressing problems resulting from the functional differentiation and division of labour within and among international organizations (section 2). We shall then analyse inductively derived strategies that international organizations have pursued or could pursue either to enlarge their area of competence, to increase their respective legitimacy basis through inter-organizational cooperation, or to shield themselves from others (section 3). Summing up our findings we will conclude by discussing some of the theoretical implications of our research and make some proposals about future work on various sorts of cooperation⁸ and strategies to adjust to changing conditions beyond the popular act of mandate enlargement (section 4).

Section 1. Current explanations of IGO's cooperation and mandate enlargement

In recent years, progress was made towards a better understanding of IGO autonomy and expansion. The issue was originally addressed by Ness and Brechin, who attributed it to a “*gap*” between the organization's technology and its mandate (Ness & Brechin, 1988)—a statement endorsed by Barnett and Finnemore who trace the failure of intergovernmental organizations to a “*mismatch*” between goals and resources. According to them, “IOs change for reasons that cannot be attributed to state demands or external pressures alone. Instead, IOs are active agents of their own change.” (2004: 156, 158). However, although the authors mention that IGO are “proactive” and “change and expand not only through adaptation but also because of creative agency.” (2004: 160, 167), they do not address the collaborative component of such self generated change, as if each IGO was isolated from the others⁹. Furthermore, in our view IGO cannot be described as bureaucracies, be it in the Weberian sense (an impersonal, efficient, and neutral meritocracy) or within the framework of organization studies (a source of waste, redundancy and inefficiency). Admittedly, being cosmopolitan and dedicated to the provision of global public goods, IGO may be more independent in judgment and more determined to service mankind than domestic administrations are. However, IGO sometimes produce a suboptimal delivery of outcomes due to transaction

costs and arbitrage between political “vote-buying” and efficiency in policy-making (Ness, Brechin, 1988).

In line with such statements, the « *Principle-Agency Theory* », which was recently applied to international organizations, starts from the twofold assumption that the balance between partners is asymmetric and unstable, with some agent’s leeway broadly accepted by the principal. Firstly, principals should logically withdraw their mandate when agents are no longer under control; secondly, agents carefully avoid an open confrontation with their principals, even when they have enough freedom to make autonomous decisions (the WHO and the WTO being good cases in point according to Cortell an Peterson, 2006: 270, 276); thirdly, while states provide for “discretion” and know that some “slack” is inevitable, they do no encourage “autonomy”. The difference matters, since « [d]iscretion is something the principal intentionally designs into its contract with the agent; autonomy is an unavoidable by-product of imperfect control over agents”; and because “autonomy is the range of independent action that is available to an agent and can be used to benefit or undermine the principal, while slack is actual behavior that is undesired.” (Hawkins & Jacoby, 2006). At first glance, such analytical distinctions and empirical observations undermine a model in which IGO are but mere *switchboard* or *stock exchanges*, since they have now the capability to behave strategically (Hawkins, Lake, Nielson, Tierney, 2006 : 5 ; Hawkins & Jacoby, 2006 : 200; Gould, 2006 : 286, 303). Introducing some nuance into realist and rational choice analyses it nevertheless reinforces the assumption that states are rational and homogeneous utilitarian actors. This covering postulate does not fit hypotheses and even data about coalition-building, policy change, and renegotiation or reinterpretation of the initial contract with their principal(s) that continuously and increasingly occur within IGOs, according to PA theorists themselves. If an IGO’s staff is unable to prevent “slippage” at headquarters (i.e., a tendency to drift away from the organization’s initial mandate and/or its current policy options) how could states representatives achieve control over them?

Other contributions to the debate also stress the need to focus on what Loewen call ‘institutional interaction’ between organizations behaving as firms (Loewen 2006) instead of public administrations, **whereas Gehring and Oberthür try to “elucidat[e] how an international institution can influence the normative development and the**

performance of another international institution.”, hence assigning to them an *efficiency* goal that prevails on the market as well as an *authoritative* goal that goes with bureaucracies (Gehring and Oberthür, 2009: 150, our emphasis). Dijkzeul and Gordenker’s claim that “even as officially independent legal persons organizations need to exchange goods and services to survive” (Dijkzeul and Gordenker 2003, 317) also seems to advocate indistinctly for cooperation and competition. However, among the “goods” and “services” so “produced” *prescriptive* statements (or speech acts) are prominent. Firstly, organizations develop concepts and strategies as how *best* to intervene in the political, economic or social structures of societies; they do not make such projects about each other as assumed by Gehring and Oberthür (and, if their plans interact the authors attribute it to “the causal mechanisms through which influence travels from one institution to another”, 2009: 126). We assume, to the opposite, that IGOs are all simultaneously affected by the struggle for relevance, legitimacy, and authority in the field. Secondly, being agents in the construction of the (partial) international orders they create, diffuse, and apply *norms* (Schemeil and Eberwein, 2009). This is also acknowledged by Barnett and Finnemore, who nonetheless conflate the “rules” and “norms” produced by IGO instead of disentangling the former from the latter, although they recognize that “rules define, categorize and classify the world” as norms usually do (2004).

Consequently, IGO are no competing firms but normative organizations, and the world stage is not a free trade market on which producers are vying for profits but a forum where norm disseminators are looking for guidance. Trivial as it is, this statement resonates with the opposite observation that IGO are not peaceful “bureaucracies” like public or state administrations, since there is no authoritative global government and no unified public employment at world level. Accordingly, neither competition on a market nor coordination between states suffice to depict, let alone explain, IGO’s adaptive and cooperative behaviour. To improve our knowledge of such behaviour we must switch to hybrid paradigms putting multilevel governance, policy mix, and complex interdependence between state and non state, for profit and not for profit actors at the core of international studies. In a world of rapid slippery from a simple division of labour between the public and the private, the domestic and the foreign, let us start with

the consequences of complex interdependence on IGO, before assessing their adaptive capacity.

International organizations and the consequences of complex interdependence

Now that interlocking, intertwining and overlapping between international organizations are accepted both as legitimate topics and real processes, what are the theoretical consequences of this new recognition? Dijkzeul and Gordenker, taking growing international interdependence as a given, postulate that the particular problems involved in the study of IGO is related to four constraints that each determine on an equal footing the nature of their activity: firstly, geographic division of people and territories into independent states; secondly, functional differentiation among organizations; thirdly, division of labour among organizations and within them; and, finally, separation of decision making and policy making from implementation and execution.

Contrary to states, international organizations have been created to overcome the division of people and territories in order to solve problems that transcend the opposition between sovereign states¹⁰. Put differently, one could argue that international organizations have been created to overcome the inequalities that characterize the current community of states and bring about global justice. The second point rose by the two authors (functional differentiation) implies that each organization is attributed at creation a particular realm of responsibility, although activities in one domain are very likely to have repercussions in others as a consequence of the interdependence among the various functional sectors. The division of labour among them then creates a follow-up problem: they must at least “bilaterally” adjust to each other to pursue their own unilateral problem-solving activities. Obviously, HIV/AIDS, to take but one example, is not just a public health issue: it is also a political, economic, and security one. The final constraint Dijkzeul and Gordenker mention is the separation of decision making and policy making from their execution. We cannot analyze it in greater detail here but it is clear that it also has consequences for inter-organizational cooperation, since policies are formulated in more or less abstract action plans at the strategic level before being implemented on the ground. Whereas the design of action plans is primarily a function of knowledge and values; their execution rests on their interpretation and on the skills of

the personnel in charge, which, in turn, is conditioned to their degree of professionalization.

Taken together, these four issues lead to what can be identified as the ‘action dilemma’ of international organizations: watching the decisions made by other actors should they move or not, and to what extent, at what particular time? This dilemma arises when the four conditions enumerated below are simultaneously met: 1. the functional area in which an IGO operates is more or less unconnected to its immediate environment; 2. the resources of the organization do not match its needs as these can be inferred from its particular mandate; 3. the organization has the means to intervene successfully (money, personnel, time etc.) but lacks both the competence and legitimacy to actually fulfil its mandate; 4. the individual organization refrain from collective problem solving through coordination and cooperation with its peers. This dilemma is in itself a source of passivity, as is the international order when it is shaped as a complex dynamic and nonlinear system making uncertainty about the outcomes of IGO’ interventions in the economic, social or political fabric of societies as the rule of the game. This is a core issue in the process leading towards intervention or abstention. All parties involved in solving a problem (say a natural catastrophe) may sincerely recognize that a sound division of labour, once achieved, will soon requires some coordination without which the whole system will sooner or later fall apart. However, coordination alone will not suffice to guarantee that expected and desired outcomes will accrue to collaborative organizations. Even if the need to coordinate is acknowledged, it will not necessarily take place either within a given sector or across sectors if none of the collective actors has the means to enforce it. That problem should occur at three levels: within any single organization; between organizations in the same functional area; and between organizations across different functional areas (good examples are trade, and the environment)¹¹. Minear, for instance, (1999: 300) cites a study commissioned by the UN’s Interagency Steering Committee (IASC) in charge of the humanitarian sector as follows: “[t]he simple reality is that within the diverse UN family, no element has adequate authority to command, coerce or compel any other element to do anything”.

International organizations, international order and adaptation

IGO are constitutive elements of world order¹² created by states and designed to contribute to that end. Conversely, they also are structures produced by their environment: as March and Olsen suggest, “an interconnected and interdependent world produces histories in which changes in environmental conditions are automatically or unambiguously reflected in changing political orders and institutional arrangements”¹³. *When interdependence and connectedness are present*, which is clearly the case nowadays, *adaptation occurs* at two levels: first internally, IGO are functionally adapting to the requirements originating in the specific problem area for which they are competent. Thirty years ago, HIV/AIDS was not a public health issue, today it is. Thus, WHO had to adapt internally by way of inclusion but the governments did as well by creating UNAIDS¹⁴. The second level of adaptation is the international system itself. In structural terms, interagency cooperation or its absence thereof determines the overall consequences for the production of international order. According to Gulati, a precondition for inter-organizational cooperation is among others a function of both their centrality within the existing international order—i.e. a minimum of complementarity between the most “central” IGO—and the level of structural differentiation among them¹⁵. In other words, when centrality is relevant and structural differentiation is present among a set of international organizations, Gulati predicts an increase of each individual organization’s propensity to cooperate.

Actually, adaptation as a theoretical issue was addressed long before these recent work, in seminal texts that contributed greatly to the establishment of international studies as a field¹⁶. We discuss them briefly here in spite of their publication date since most of their theoretical insights are still valid for our purpose. In his famous book, *Discord and Collaboration*, Arnold Wolfers argues for instance that even though states are distrustful of each other, they nevertheless set up *collaborative* schemes in order to deter existing enemies (what their leaders usually call “alliances” or “collective defence arrangements”, can be rephrased as “promises of future *assistance*”)¹⁷. Such collaborative arrangements may “arise from a desire to *improve* relations within the cooperating group” which means that they are “inner-oriented”. But they may also be the result of the intention to *meet a common external threat* by cooperative effort. In this case collaboration is “outward-oriented”¹⁸. Collaboration may occur anyhow, in which

case IGO may operate simply as “*corporate* actors” or as *co-actors* with the nation-states—note the possible difference in autonomy. Under these conditions the unintended effect may be that in the longer run coordination or even cooperation may emerge.

Kenneth Waltz acknowledges that even if states do not collaborate, some of them (and for our purpose, specific IGO) may be mechanically “selected” by the international structure because they display the most appropriate behaviour within the anarchic framework. If this is the case “states *alter* their behaviour because of the structure they form by interacting with other states”¹⁹. By analogy, one could infer that IGO-like states—will be “rewarded” if they fit the existing structure, whereas those that do not will be “penalized”²⁰.

Whereas Wolfers argues that collaboration is the outcome of rational decisions, Waltz considers this process more or less as a mechanical one given the unequal distribution of power among states. Both authors emphasize the role of power leading to collaborative moves or, in more general terms, to adaptation processes²¹. This kind of logic can be applied as well to the relationships between IGO themselves. The IGO world also opposes powerful ones (the UN with its Security Council and its Courts, the IAEA, the WTO, the World Bank, and possibly the IMF) with less powerful organizations relying on soft power (UNESCO, WHO, WMO, ILO, FAO, WIPO). The question is whether the same logic applies across all the issue areas.

Power is relevant not only as a means of IGO’ survival, but also as a relational property linking them to the states. Adaptation in terms of increasing cooperation between agencies presupposes new degrees of freedom with respect to their principals, as a precondition for engaging in inter-organizational interaction. Arguments derived from principal-agent theories based in political economy show that international organizations try to get around this conditional power issue (Cooley and Ron, 2002: 9-18). This is due to the fact that the principal-agent relationship is not unidirectional because both sides depend from one another, as shown by Hawkins, Lake, Nielson and Tierney (2006). Whereas the principal wants the agent to execute certain directives, the accountability of what the agent does has a feedback effect on the principal. The agents have been delegated certain prerogatives reflected in their mandate and their initial endowment. The more specific the mandate of an organization is, the more limited its range of action: the more general the mandate, the greater the ability of the organization

to define its specific activities—that is the greater is its autonomy (Lake and McCubbins, 2006). In addition, the greater the relevance to the principals an issue area is, the more specific and limited the mandate will be. Take, for instance, the security domain: it is of course highly salient to states. Therefore one would expect only limited delegation of authority in this realm. Conversely, in technical areas such as the weather or telecommunications the delegation of authority can be fairly large simply because technical issues can be insulated from political interests²². Organizations such as the various UN Funds do have limited resources: they may have a limited budget, or limited fungibility between budget lines, or only specific budgets funded by particular states whose apportion is conditioned to their sovereign demands. In such cases, IGO's power will be limited. If, however, they can rely on a regular budget such as the WHO, their power is enhanced.

The power issue is obviously at the core of IGO relationships with their member states, but this is not the unique concern of their leadership: performance matters, a simple fact that put them in competition with NGO. Cooley and Ron have elaborated on the reciprocal dependency characterizing the principal-agent relationship. They argue that any IGO is facing competitive and contractual relations since “in a market environment, characterized by uncertainty, its interests will be shaped often unintentionally by material incentives”²³. According to their provisional findings, this contextual constraint would lead them to give their survival the top preference. The side effect of such a priority is suboptimal performance: when the expected results are unsatisfactory, the agent has every interest to withhold information about them, as does the principal. Paradoxically this may come close to a kind of organized hypocrisy²⁴. The authors nevertheless do acknowledge that competence in terms of performance is a precondition for survival while at the same time arguing that structurally the predicted result of performance will be suboptimal²⁵.

Power and performance are directly linked with legitimacy. Without any moral support, no organization is able to achieve any material aim. IGO are permanently confronted with this issue as the states and—more recently—NGOs demand greater accountability by pointing out IGO' alleged lack of internal democracy and external transparency. Ironically, the adaptation of IGO through cooperation makes them stronger: the trade-off might be a further decrease in transparency while at the same time

enhancing their ability to resist critics collectively. In other words, auditing and evaluation may force IGO into cooperation in order to enhance their performance and to gain greater legitimacy. Becoming part of a network of institutions enables them to discard any responsibility in the current woes of any specific country, and allows them to benefit from any collective achievement independent of their actual contribution to the outcome.

In a seminal paper, Barnett and Finnemore have dealt extensively with the issue of individual pathologies of international organizations. Their interest is in the internal structural conditions that have both consequences for IGO' individual performance as well as for their ability to engage in inter-organizational cooperation. What they once considered as pathologies can be reinterpreted in more general terms as specific modes of adaptation. In their famous paper, they mentioned first the *irrationality of rationalization*, which means inappropriately adjusting existing procedures norm and rules. But what may seem irrational from a bureaucratic perspective may turn out to be a useful adjustment of existing rules. The second pathology is *bureaucratic universalism* meaning that standards and rules are applied uniformly across problems without taking into account the case specific conditions. The IMF, for example, inappropriately applies standardized formula of budget cuts plus high interest rates irrespective of differences in context. This in fact suggests a lack of adaptation where the means trump the end. The *normalization of deviance* means that an exception to the rule over time eventually becomes routine. In our own vocabulary, this is probably less an indication of pathology than a sign of adaptation. Taking the World Bank as an example, one could argue that its inclusion of "good governance" dimension in its programs was at the onset a deviance from its economic mandate; or, the then High Commissioner of Refugees, Ogata, included internally displaced persons in its programs on the Balkans, even though they were not included in its mandate. The fourth pathology is what Barnett and Finnemore call *insulation*²⁶. That means that an organization shuts itself off from feedbacks of the environment which may lead to what March and Olsen have identified as the "competency trap": the professionals get more and more efficient but loose out of sight that their environment has been changing, so that their activities tend to become obsolete if not inappropriate²⁷. The FAO may fall into this category (Fouilleux, 2009). The final pathology is what Barnet and Finnemore describe as *cultural contestation*. This

“pathology” corresponds to a loss of legitimacy, justified or not. That is the case when Western humanitarian IGO active in Muslim areas are denounced as US agents.

These pathologies seem to converge towards one particular strategy of adaptation: the implicit striving for autonomy, either defensively through insulation, or proactively by the attempt to reach out bureaucratic universalism through rationalization, or through the normalisation of deviance—i.e. including modes of action that were previously not considered as acceptable or legitimate. The exception is cultural contestation. In this case the legitimacy of the organization in cause is challenged externally which may in fact reduce its independence and freedom of action. In Gehring and Oberthür’s recent paper, little is said about strategies, since interaction is conditioned to an homology or heterogeneity of forms (i.e., membership, mandate, governance, and technology). However, decision-makers must adjust to change and the resulting interaction between the organizations they rule may be either cognitive (close to Barnett and Finnemore’s “rationalization”), normative (“cultural contestation”), behavioural (“normalization of deviance”), or systemic (Gehring and Oberthür, 2009: 146-7). Being “insulated”, or remaining what Oran Young once called a “free-standing organization” (Young, 1989: 52-54) in such an overall process of cognitive change, import-export of management tools and ideas, or Governments’ endorsement of new norms, may not be easier in the latter explanation than it is in the former. Consequently, the most probable policy path will be mandate enlargement (an external process) or nesting (an internal one), both being good instances of “interaction through commitment” [to a norm] and the impact of influence and legitimacy on “efficiency” (Gehring and Oberthür, 2009: 135-143).

The three determinants henceforth identified by every authors under review—power, performance, legitimacy—do not operate separately. Indeed, the propensity for inter-agency cooperation is not only determined by power considerations; perceived complementarities of organizations in terms of their competence will also determine their propensity for inter-agency interaction; finally, the need for legitimacy preservation or enhancement will determine the level of inter-agency cooperation.

Each international organization has a different mandate. Nevertheless, as we have argued above they are less isolated in their own niche than rivalling with one another. They compete for the proper consideration of their mandate as having the priority over other goals in the whole set of issues that need to be resolved by international

institutions. This implies a competition to consolidate their relative position in the hierarchy of organizations, which will determine to a considerable extent the allocation of the scarce resources accruing from governments. Such necessary means will be attributed according to the perceived problems each IGO is supposed to resolve, its recognized expertise, its legitimacy, and the political priority that states attribute to each of them. The problem is therefore to know how the postulated functional necessity for inter-agency cooperation is reconciled with their objective to survive and possibly to expand instead of being merged into larger institutional frameworks. Adaptation is the answer and thus implies the choice of the strategy that accommodates best the interdependence of their functionally circumscribed area of activity with the recognized perimeter of other organizations.

Conceptually, we can distinguish between two adaptation strategies, a defensive and an offensive one. A “niche” organization, fairly specialized and small, and predominantly concerned with the maintenance of its autonomy vis-à-vis other organizations, is likely to adopt a *defensive* strategy. Relatively powerful organizations are more likely to pursue an *offensive* strategy to gradually extend their mandate. These two options are likely to be chosen by organizations’ leaders where the primary driving force is “bureaucratic”—i.e., organizational survival. That kind of approach is akin to the postulated struggle of states by neo-realists such as Waltz, in order to retain if not to improve their relative position in the international IGO’ hierarchy of power²⁸. Even though power calculations may play an important role the functional imperative needs to be emphasized as well. In the case of offensive adaptation, the outcome can be either a strategy of partnership that more or less mechanically occurs out of the perceived necessities to solving specific problems; or, alternatively, a more indirect approach relying primarily on a quest for influence within a group of organizations whose neighbouring mandates necessarily imply some overlap.

Although the rationale of an adaptive behaviour is to maintain or improve the relative position of each individual organization, restructuring the linkages among different IGO will also have consequences for the overall structure of international cooperation. Accordingly, global institutionalisation must be discussed in parallel with sectorial cooperation, **a point that will be raised in section 4.**

In the following empirical exploratory investigation we shall give empirical evidence of the two types of adaptation strategies, on the one hand; and of the constraints of power, performance, competence and legitimacy on the other hand, in order to evaluate the relative contribution of each of these factors to the overall explanation of interagency cooperation.

Section 2. How international organizations adapt: an empirical overview transition

The defensive approach: autonomy first?

Growing interdependence can paradoxically lead to the greater empowerment of each individual IGO. Given their inalienability one would expect their emancipation from the states, their principals. In reality, however, IGO seem reluctant to grasp this potential opportunity. Rather than trying to gain some greater freedom of action, they seem to be generally concerned most with preserving governmental support. To decide against the will of their members is not attractive at all, but rather deterring. In order to avoid conflicts, IGO Secretariats take great care to check that the permanent representatives are actually expressing the views of their home governments. Even within the WTO whose contenders stigmatise as the most adamant organization towards deviating states' behaviour, the Dispute Settlement Body's panellists are not political judges punishing outlaws; they are professional experts informing their shareholders. They simply assess the wideness of the gap between their shareholders' previous commitments and their current behaviour.

Because conventional wisdom within IGO is that cooperative ventures are dangerous, our interviews with IGO' staff members and permanent representatives converge toward the same conclusion: there is some *formal* collaboration between IGO if, and only if, such cooperation is *substantively* unavoidable. Consultations exist because specialists dealing with one particular aspect of a global issue whose competence is needed to achieve diplomatic consensus are spread out across several institutions. To give but one example, intellectual property issues are debated in several IGO: namely, the WTO, the WIPO, and to a lesser extent, the WHO and the FAO, each having its own legitimacy to address them. Inter-organizational cooperation seems,

according to our interviews, not to be the result of a *deliberate* political strategy of individual IGO to enhance their relative power but rather akin to a *mechanical* process—as Waltz suggests—ending in the progressive extension of the original mandate. As time passes out, the legal initial boundaries separating each IGO from all others do no longer reflect the current realities of concrete policy fields. Therefore, specialized agencies tend to intervene with little consideration for the discrepancy between the complementarities of their original specialisation and a potential ensuing change in the balance of power between them.

Consequently, adaptation strategies explicitly designed to construct inter-organizational cooperation structures seem to be the exception rather than the rule. Undesirable outcomes like overlap and waste will in turn compel IGO to scale up joint efforts beyond complementary programs. Such inference is much in tune with a widely shared general assumption in the theoretical debates that cooperation is only feasible if the outcome is mutually advantageous and if there is no alternative to producing a global public good²⁹. Defensive adaptation, on the contrary, suggests that IGO strategists do not see a priori inter-organizational cooperation as advantageous. There are, first of all, internal barriers within their own structure. When launching a new program the experts in a given organization never involve all the possible stakeholders from the beginning for the simple reason, as several of our interlocutors stated, that progress would be impossible with too many partners. Each division in each organization concerned tends to resist innovation in order to protect its own turf and to keep its part of the budget because new projects inevitably imply a reallocation of the available resources. Conversely, the internal reluctance if not resistance to change is so high that inter-organizational cooperative moves are likely to reduce cooperation within the individual organization itself.

These *internal* barriers are, secondly, exacerbated by the fact that the secretariats are excessively cautious with respect to, if not defiant towards overlapping bureaus and liaison officers who cope with *external* obstacles to cooperation. Perceived differences in culture, finance, and efficiency help explain this lack of confidence in potential partner's goodwill. There are many examples of such an assumed need for discretion and reservation. During trade negotiations, for instance, WTO officers are cautious in their statements because they fear UNCTAD representatives' critique of

their allegedly liberal ideology. Under the same circumstances WIPO agents keep a low profile in negotiations with other IGO thereby hoping to escape the jealousy of others because of their organization's wealth³⁰. Physicians from the WHO are not welcome in discussions on intellectual property due to a protracted tendency to equate the protection of patents with crimes against medical deontology or even human rights. WHO delegates allegedly torpedo any UNEP attempt to adopt a new approach in the study of environmental impact on sanitary conditions, because they fear this could subordinate specific health issues under environmental ones. Thus, they limit their involvement in this realm to "environmental health"—a subfield of medical knowledge—rather than envisaging an innovating approach that could lead to closer cooperation with environmental specialists in the "health and environment" issue area. Finally, facing an adamant U.S. government that supports ICANN unconditionally, ITU's technicians take any opportunity to revamp their relative power over the Internet and justify it on technical grounds (i.e., standards of telecommunication), leaving to ICANN the political ambition to extend a free worldwide web, and the juridical protection of individual rights to WIPO.

(transition)

The offensive approach: assumed mandate enlargement

It is taken for granted in the literature that IGO cannot fulfil their specific original mandate in a globalizing world while sticking to their initial mandate. This may be due to the awareness of linkages between what had been previously ignored, or because some of the activities have become obsolete. In the early 1990s security and defence institutions (like the UN and NATO) were confronted with both issues: the traditional functions of peace keeping (UN) and deterrence (NATO) were no longer appropriate to counter the new security challenges. At approximately the same time economic and financial institutions like the IMF and the World Bank could no longer ignore humanitarian, environmental, and developmental issues. A former managing director of the World Bank, Jessica Einhorn, gives an accurate view of this IGO predicament. According to her, the problem at the World Bank is that "[w]ords like 'comprehensive' and 'holistic' have come into common use as the bank struggles to encompass its agenda"³¹. As a consequence, the organization had to put its specialized goals into

perspective with other goals being pre-requisites of its own success such as free elections, or well-functioning state institutions. In the aftermath of the Cold War, the World Bank could no longer be satisfied to deal exclusively with international economic issues but had to take into account a whole variety of domestic political problems as well, which were, at least initially, not part of its mandate. This is reflected in Einhorn's statement:

*“Fundamentally committed to open trade, the bank initially emphasized loans to build public infrastructure (...) It believed such projects could do the most to trigger development (...) The bank then learned lessons along the way (...) and money became the vehicle for policy advice, displacing the old notion that foreign capital alone would spur (...) development (...) Economists observed a correlation between economic growth on the one hand and literacy and low population growth on the other, and eventually they accepted these and other social goals as essential inputs to development (...). By describing social goals as inputs rather than results, the bank cleared the path for a cumulative piling on of tasks over the decades, including issues of governance, participation by the poor, and anti-corruption.”*³².

The accumulation of tasks seems not only to be a major threat to the World Bank, but also to every IGO, forced against the will of its leaders into a growingly albeit unending “holistic journey”. Such a “catch-all” trend is likely to entail some loss of legitimacy since the expectations about performance will outgrow actual outcomes as a function of the growing gap between more and more diffuse goals and an unchanging knowledge about how to implement each of them. To get around this potential dilemma the organization can redefine its mandate in such a way as to benefit from its inclusion without being siphoned off in this process. For instance, contrary to its constitution (its “Articles of Agreement”) the World Bank eventually decided to address corruption issues albeit in a “non political” way, and to limit its intervention to sponsoring free elections and good governance in the countries that were most stridden by this economic woe.

Given its offensive strategy the extension of the World Bank's original mandate and the elaboration of its programs on corruption is twofold: first, the global linkage between economic development and political reform which eventually leads the bank “fostering democratization movements” and supporting “community empowerment” is a redefinition of its activities that “would have been considered off-limits for Bank funding in the past” when the Bank stuck to its questionable assessment of “the state as

providing a neutral space between market economy and civil society”³³. However, departing from its initial mandate is in turn boosting the hegemonic trend of the Bank since it can no longer just “issue statements about unacceptable high-levels of corruption while distancing itself from the leadership changes and political turmoil that result”³⁴. To solve this new problem, the follow-up must be delegated to other IGO (and even left to some NGO). Rather than going it alone and bear the costs and critics of the potential pitfalls of mandate extension the organization now reaches out to other institutional partners who will take care of some of the components of the global problems they initially had the mandate to solve selectively. Since “the [World] bank’s role is now growing in matters such as biodiversity, ozone depletion, narcotics, crime and corruption”; these issues, all “rooted in a global concern”, will be better addressed through a sound cooperation with, respectively, UNDP, UNEP and UNCD³⁵. According to Einhorn, again,

*“there is no compelling reason as to why the bank should consider judicial reform as a development task under its umbrella rather than passing the job to an organization staffed by lawyers and judges. (...) Similarly, the bank’s great vision and (much maligned) adoption of cultural heritage as a development objective would stand to gain if such an objective could be farmed out to an organization with more corresponding interests.”*³⁶

This kind of strategy automatically produces unexpected spill over effects, and ends up in “confused” or “unrealistic” mandates³⁷ eventually resulting in “tentative” actions”³⁸. There is also the risk to being trapped in a maze of intellectual inconsistencies, which the World Bank experienced when “[I]t assume[d] that certain ways of organizing society are more worthy than others, while arguing that this is not an inherently political decision”³⁹. This is not all: the World Bank also had to become sensitive to environmental issues, due to the growing pressures of its stakeholders, mostly the United States Congress⁴⁰, this being facilitated by the existing departure from its former technical and neutral stance⁴¹.

The lessons of such examples is that cooperative moves are both tempting and problematic for IGO. On the one hand, a mandate enlargement strategy is conceived as the unavoidable path to greater freedom of action relatively other organizations, if not states themselves (as already said, we shall not discussed the latter issue here). This may be achieved through joint ventures. On the other hand, such endeavours could eventually

legitimize IGO's claim to integrate existing specialized agencies and programs under the roof of a new paramount institution (like the "World Environment Organization" or the "Economic Security Council" called for by several major powers in recent years and still on their agenda). Thus, empirically, complex issues will not necessarily be resolved through mandate extension nor inter-organizational cooperation but rather by the creation of a new institution, which may in turn contribute to even greater fragmentation of complex issues-hardly an improvement in existing agencies' empowerment.

Towards complete adaptation: Partnership and harmonization

One step further coordination and collaboration, and closer to actual cooperation, IGO may opt for partnership. Yet this particular strategy seems but a simpler way of adjustment between agencies than cooperation itself, which we have defined previously as the best way to pool resources and skills to achieve desirable collective goals, whatever the transaction costs may be. The issue areas where the priority of coordination seems to be highest are, among others, sustainable development and the environment. This field also includes non-UN organizations (the EU, the CE, the OESC, NATO) next to UN organizations (IMF, the World Bank, the WTO, etc.), and numerous NGOs as well as the private sector. To set up "partnerships" between various institutions (IGO, NGOs, and corporations) within the UN system an organization must create, first, a specific office to serve as the interface between it and its "partners"⁴². Examples are numerous, like the "Money matters" initiative within the UNDP involving private pension funds, or the UNCTAD program for small and middle sized enterprises (EMPRETEC). Once some basic agreement has been achieved a shuttle begins between the IGO involved. Preparatory committees work out joint drafts proposals for forthcoming conferences⁴³. The various UN coordination offices meet continuously devoting considerable time for the coordination of the various specialized agencies⁴⁴. A non-exhaustive list of these offices is listed in table 2.

Table 2 about here

A variant of this strategy of mechanical cooperation can be best described as “*harmonization*” of procedures, statistical methods⁴⁵, the use of emblems, logos, and standards. Harmonization may either be of the outward oriented partnership type or used as inward directed harmonization. These schemes look very much like collaborative processes, which fall short of full-fledged cooperation. As mentioned in the Joint Inspection Unit 1999 report

“The Inspectors wish to underline, however, that sharing information and harmonizing policies and procedures should not necessarily lead to the adoption of one single set of standard guidelines for the whole United Nations system. In fact, many agencies caution that the diversity in their mandates and activities would probably not allow them to agree on anything but very general principles, and that excessively rigid procedures must be avoided at all costs. Others, however, stress the need for some common point of reference from which each Organization can make appropriate decision.”

One conclusion as to how the UN system handles its coordination problems is obvious: some agencies must be especially created to coordinate other agencies’ operations and programs ; however, each eventually fails to serve as an effective system-wide coordinating mechanism due to its incapacity to solve funding problems. At that point, they tend to become super think tanks, like UNEP and its predecessor, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD): both were “superimposed on existing inter-organizational systems”⁴⁶. “[N]either UNEP nor CSD were given primary responsibility to take on operational functions that might interfere with the work of others” like UNDP and the World Bank⁴⁷. Coordinating agencies are not cooperative organizations because they are deprived of the means to implement the collective recommendations that they jointly made. Since they have little resources of their own to *perform* well they only play a “*performative*” or *symbolic* function. UNCTAD facing the more powerful WTO is a good example of such an adjustment of the weaker to the stronger organization⁴⁸. Clearly, the lesson to be drawn from experience is that cooperation is an asymmetric activity, be it within or outside the UN system. UNEP and to a lesser extent UNDP as “*coordinating*” agencies are less powerful than their “*cooperative*” partners (the World Bank, the International Maritime Organization, the UN regional economic and social commissions, etc.)⁴⁹.

The indirect approach: influence, not power

Cooperation is asymmetric since inter-organizational networks of the hegemonic kind have not been established. Such networks should be established around core IGO, primarily the World Bank and the WTO. The saliency of these two organizations is so great that unlikely partnerships may be nonetheless built, such as the connection between the World Trade Organization and the High Commissioner on Human Rights-“trade related humanitarian issues” being jointly addressed by delegations of both institutions. The WTO is also constitutionally linked to the WIPO in the case of “trade related intellectual property” problems (TRIPS). WIPO has the administrative experience and the capacity to deal with such issues, altogether with a practical possibility to implement joint plans, whereas WTO derives its power from the Dispute Settlement Mechanism. As far as drug patents are concerned, the WTO is also connected with the WHO, when pandemics in poor countries justify exemption clauses to the existing trade agreements. The WTO and the FAO manage jointly the Codex Alimentarius, each relying on its own norms (“food availability” versus “food security”, itself a far cry from NGO’s aspiration to “food sovereignty”).

Normally the WTO prevails in every case because its decisions are mandatory and not just recommendations: it is therefore the most powerful organization of the network. In most cases, however, knowledge and experience rest with WTO’s partners who are the only ones able to assess the feasibility and the originality of the proposals presented. Their influence may surge from the fact that the proposed measures are unpractical; or they may already exist but are ignored and have never been implemented. Of course, in the real world it is difficult to make a clear-cut distinction between “powerful” and “influential” organizations. Nonetheless some of them, such as the WTO (or the World Bank in the networks to which it itself belongs with UNESCO, UNICEF, UNIFEM, etc., and where its funding mandate gives it leverage on the others) remains dependant on less powerful organizations because of their being functionally complementary. Knowing this, WTO’s (or World Bank) staff members may be convinced that the impact of a pending decision on partner institutions needs to be reviewed. They know that a red line exists that cannot be crossed without undesirable consequences, such as retaliation or defection in future partnerships. Infringing on another IGO’s prerogatives also challenges the member states’ power. Actually,

governments never fail to remind IGO's secretariats that any decision must fall into line with the organization own rules-rules that cannot be bypassed by decisions made in another forum⁵⁰.

In this process, institutions operating in the same realm tend to turn their occasional collaboration on specific projects into a permanent working relationship. Admittedly, the most "powerful", endowed with some enforcement capacity, will have the last word. However, those that are endowed with moral authority will use this resource by making intellectually solid proposals such as suggesting new norms. As a rule we may hypothesize that *the less powerful they are, the more creative and imaginative they tend—one could also say need—to be*. IGO that are neither linked to growth, development nor defence adopt innovative concepts hoping that these will lead to the implementation of new norms to be enforced later on by the most powerful IGO. The cooperation between institutions with hard power and institutions with soft powerful is therefore the most probable success route for the promotion and dissemination of new concepts and norms (Schemeil & Eberwein, 2009).

What Judith Kelley accurately wrote when studying the cases of minority rights in former socialist countries that were candidates for EU membership, supports this proposition:

*"[T]he relationships between the OSCE, the CE and the EU often became intertwined because the EU relied on the OSCE and the CE for evaluation and information (...) It is quite possible (...) that the EU would not have framed the issues [of naturalization, stateless children rights, etc.] the way it did without the OSCE involvement or—more generally—that the softer actors influence the content of norms that the more instrumental actors apply."*⁵¹

Whereas *deterrence* concepts developed within security organizations (like the UNSC, the IPC, NATO, ASEAN, etc.), and *arbitrages* made by "economic" institutions (such as the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO) involve some actual *power*, institutions like UNESCO, UNEP, the WHO, the ILO, the IPCC active in the social or environmental issue areas rely more on *knowledge* to benefit from a pervasive *influence* (table 3).

Table 3 about here

In the next section we will now suggest a number of tentative explanations of this evolving division of labour among IGO in the context of the changed international balance of power system.

Section 3. Discussion and theoretical implications of our survey

Conceptually the different forms of cooperation among international organizations can be delineated clearly. In reality, however, the distinction between collaboration, cooperation, and coordination is difficult to measure with precision. The same is true with respect to possible explanations for the different types of adaptive strategies individual organizations have chosen to pursue. Nevertheless, as our survey revealed it is hard at this stage to think of a single and simple causal model accounting for the strategy selected. In addition even consciously designed adaptation moves can produce unexpected outcomes.

In this section we will draw some preliminary conclusions both from the perspective of each individual organization as well as from the inter-organizational perspective. The former is intended to show that in an increasingly complex international environment power alone is no guarantee for organizational decay or growth. At the structural level the individual adaptation strategies can produce unintended outcomes. **The latter**

Expertise and Power – the organizational dimension

It seems that IGO's staff in general prefer above all to retain their independence or autonomy (Reinalda & Verbeek, 1998). Collaboration, cooperation and/or coordination are not among their highest priorities. Theoretically, they should indeed compete in order to retain if not to enhance, their respective status in the hierarchy of the IGO community. In that sense their behavior may be compared to that of the states. Yet their power base is by no means the predominant or exclusive condition accounting for their ability and willingness to adapt to the changing environmental conditions. As a general proposition we suggest that IGO can *turn their weakness into strength and their lack of autonomy into room for manoeuvre* by choosing the adaptation strategy that is the most

appropriate to their role, structure, culture, and status within the international community. A corollary to this general proposition is that such objective can be obtained if and only if IGO successfully *convert their expertise and legitimacy into power*. Every international organization independent of its original power status with which it has been endowed by the states can in effect prevail and improve its position by using these two resources whether or not it lacks sufficient material and financial endowments.

To corroborate this statement, we shall give some examples of its accuracy. The first case is UNESCO: it can be compared to a big entrepreneur who is unable to reimburse its creditors because the debt is too big. The creditors will therefore be lending even more money to keep the enterprise alive hoping that it will recover in order to recoup their investment. Within the IGO system, UNESCO is too costly to be bypassed, let alone be substituted by an alternative institution. As the organization is not properly funded to fulfil its mandate it will desperately search for additional resources, like a recognized expertise in the promotion of education. To achieve this end, two basic assets are required: money *and* legitimate ideas. UNESCO succeeded in creating such a legitimate idea with its comprehensive programme “education for all”. This concept was finally adopted by the UNESCO member states in Dakar and Djomtien, after a long negotiation cycle extending over ten years. Since education is a shared competence with UNICEF and the World Bank, UNESCO had to mobilize its membership, including southern G77 countries and related groupings to make its views prevail over its partners’ orientations. However, given the strong linkage between development and education, the World Bank was the ideal candidate for financing education at large as an “investment in human capital”. Thanks to the cooperation between the two organizations, the G8 governments finally supported the programme. The lesson is clear: even though UNESCO is weak and poor it succeeded in convincing the rich and powerful World Bank to fund its own programme because education for all would contribute in the long run to the development objective of the bank⁵². Even though the latter is one of the most powerful IGO its heads were obliged to endorse norms they did not share. On the contrary, the World Bank was forced to operate under the “humanistic” UNESCO umbrella in order to pursue its own much more restrictive “elitist” approach to education. As a positive side effect of this option the World Bank profited from the legitimacy of UNESCO concept of equal opportunity for all, and its

accumulated expertise on basic mass education to boost its own economic strategy supporting primarily elite formations the engine of growth.

Independently of the status of weakness or strength, any international organization can therefore enhance its relative position through the production of new ideas or, in other words, by *widening its knowledge base through cooptation*. A well established but small and highly specialized IGO can increase its position on the norm market by providing a given epistemic community an institutional basis from which to disseminate its knowledge, and ideas about appropriate solutions. A second case in point is the World Meteorological Organization, which upgraded its position in the network of international actors by offering UNEP and IPCC a platform for their knowledge on hydrological and climate change issues. Although the cleaning of the Mediterranean has been achieved by UN/UNEP and in spite of the prominence achieved by the UN sponsored conferences on ozone layer depletion and climate change⁵³ the success achieved was primarily attributed to the WMO for two reasons. First, the WMO managed to include water in its mandate allowing it to integrate the hydrologist community impatiently lining up at its doorsteps; and second, it succeeded in linking draughts to one of its possible causes, climate change, which eventually accommodated the IPCC experts. A comparable strategy was pursued by the WTO that reached out to the legal specialists on intellectual property working for the WIPO. They were thereby offered a unique opportunity to make international law with the understating that this may in the future have an impact on national legislation (VVVV). Actually, experts could combine the relative strength of WIPO treaties in the course of ratification and the WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanism's outcomes.

The accumulated knowledge within an organization, noteworthy when it is validated by states and NGOs as amounting to real competence, is a necessary condition for "marketing" its ideas by reframing *a simple and specific issue into a complex problem*. This contributes to enlarge the existing power base of individual IGO as in the case of "intellectual property", a label covering heterogeneous issues: copyrights on creative work and industrial designs; patents; folklore; radio emissions; and Internet domain names. WIPO succeeded to have its mandate enlarged through the institutional merger of two formerly independent "bureaux". In this process, the WIPO managed to keep some control of these new fields, which were simultaneously explored by the

WHO, FAO, and UNESCO—all of them vying for the hegemonic power with the WTO itself. WIPO consolidated its position relative to the WTO (as its main partner within the TRIPS agreement), and offered a common denominator to the three other organizations. This extended mandate considerably redefined the “intellectual property” issue beyond American expectations (since the U.S. government tried hard to confine property issues to the WTO, and Internet management to ICANN, each strategy conceived to eliminate the major actor of the field, the WIPO and the ITU).

Knowledge or expertise may be a *necessary* condition for an IGO to demonstrate its importance but it is not a *sufficient* one. In fact expertise can lead to insulation. A case in point is the FAO. Since the 1960’s excellent agronomists have been working closely together by numbers. Yet in the 1990’s they all missed the opportunity to get involved in the global negotiations on agriculture and trade barriers conducted within the framework of the WTO. They also refrained from connecting themselves to the WMO where irrigation issues were debated. Whatever the reasons for this isolationism, the FAO progressively lost its leverage on multilateral decisions dealing with hunger and growth of the primary sector’s output⁵⁴. It even lost control of seeds and vegetal or animal species engineering, which was transferred to the WIPO, due to the latter bandwagon effect of WTO’s victory.

Needless to say, as crucial as the role of knowledge may be, a necessary boundary condition for its transformation into power is that this strategy does not interfere with state interests. This is first of all related to a situation where the consequence would be the unwelcome mandate enlargement of an IGO. For instance, a lot of expertise has been accumulating over the years within NATO by its coordination committee (COCOM). At the time the Berlin Wall fell, the COCOM had supervised the export of dual use technologies to communist countries. Even though NATO’s mandate was reinterpreted in order to free it from its initial exclusion of out-of-area activities, COCOM was so to speak “outsourced” to a “quasi non governmental” forum, the Wassenaar Arrangement—a loose grouping of governments represented by persons and shaped as an NGO.

Still different was the reaction of the states when WHO, UNEP, the UNHCR, and the IAEA moved into the armaments field in the year 1996. Their objective was to observe and evaluate the impact of depleted uranium weapons on human and economic life. To this end, the UN first established the Scientific Committee on the Effects of

Atomic radiation (UNSCEAR) that had been created in another context, which involved some of its agencies: the World Health Organization, where depleted uranium and ionizing radiations cancer fears are under review; the UNEP that benefited from several channels of information on these topics, particularly on the ground (noteworthy in Iraq and the Balkans), to increase the public awareness on the issue; the IAEA, endowed with its more confidential International Nuclear Information System, a forum harbouring studies on precedent nuclear disasters including Chernobyl. The UNHCR adopted a more critical stance in its special reports on child and other casualties allegedly due to the debated use of depleted uranium weapons in the Gulf war. This cooperation was directed against the UN hegemonic founding fathers, the United States and its Allies on two of the major post Cold war military theatres. As was to be expected the states strongly opposed these activities. In the end this cooperative venture failed; even the highly specialised IAEA was unable *to convert its expertise into power*.

Summing up the arguments, knowledge or expertise is a critical determinant in the relative weight of an international organization. Knowledge is a commodity that can be converted into power or influence only when states do not object to the transformation of expertise into excessive leverage. Prior to stretching out IGO's boundaries is the successful marketing of new concepts that suggest the necessity of integrating several functionally specific issues in order to address them globally and convert ideas into norms-the prerequisite of a mandate enlargement. Accepting it will be, at least, tacitly or implicitly accepted by member states for the sake of efficiency, which, in turn, end up into the upgrading of an organization's status from a *functional* or *local* role to a more *general* or *global* mandate that is linked up with some other specialised agencies and programs. This is how the process is spiralling into more cooperation, and more overlap, although the actors involved did not purposefully aimed at such an endgame.

If some organizations upgrade their status once their original or additional goals are reached, either individually or in combination with some other organizations, this will have consequences for the structure of the whole system of international organizations. One of the consequences is the sidelining of not the downgrading of initially predominant IGO. Such a development is beyond the control of the individual organizations concerned. Both the IMF and the World Bank are telling cases. The WTO

as an auxiliary institution tends now to challenge them as powerful members of the club of its founding fathers. In other words, agencies tend to overcome their principal while claiming that in becoming more *general* in outlook they are only fulfilling their *specific* functional mandate. This phenomenon can also be observed for regional organizations such as the European Union, the inter-American organizations, the Arab and Islamic ones, the Central Asiatic institutions, etc. They all tend to duplicate functions of global institutions by continuously expanding their own mandate in order to adjust to the pace of global system change⁵⁵. The risk, of course, is to institutionalize more and more heterogeneous activities compared to the good old time when each IGO was endowed with a homogeneous mandate. Some of the structural consequences will be addressed in the next section.

Explanations and Interpretation: the structural-systemic dimension

Individual IGO's adaptation strategies inevitably affect the whole problem solving structure states have set up through the creation of international organizations. As we have already mentioned, one's organization's upgrading may imply one or even more than one organization's downgrading. In other words, the individual adaptation strategies will have consequences for the overall structure of international organizations. From a theoretical point of view this raises two interrelated issues: first how does the adaptation process occur; and second, what is the impact of that process? If the previous propositions are plausible, the consequences of the individual adaptation strategies are a state of unstable equilibrium, i.e., potential turbulence in the system of international organizations due to their changing position in the overall vertical and horizontal structural arrangements among them.

In other words, to characterize this system we assume a dynamic process. There are two complementary interpretations as to the dynamics of this process of change: adaptation as a *policy driven* process and adaptation as a *politics' driven* process. In the first case, adaptation strategies are based upon the functionally perceived needs or necessities. Power considerations may still play a role but they do not dominate. In the politics' driven process, however, even though functional considerations are also important the adaptation strategies are conceived in such a way that at worst the loss of

power is avoided and at best the organization's individual power position is improved. The main driving force in this case is the competition among the various organizations for the problem solving dominance.

The most plausible form of a policy driven system is a *spill over process* of adaptation the neo-functionalists have had in mind. This kind of process in the form of issue enlargement, issue deepening or issue replacement occurs almost naturally, or mechanically. This means that a certain number of organizations operating in overlapping issue areas agree to implement jointly specific changes which, as a consequence, may compel other organizations in neighbouring realms to adapt in turn to new approaches because additional organizations adjust to the changes initiated in order to avoid turbulences. This process starts at the periphery of high politics before migrating from one sector to the next until it reaches the core of the (international) polity. Examples are trade and intellectual property issues: once limited to an exchange of goods with maximum protection for the producer and inventor, they now expanded as far as to include trade in services, investment, and eventually (although this is not yet achieved) the political culture of a country (via movies, education, vocational training, administrative cooperation, etc.). In this process, there is a permanent reshuffling of the division of labour between IGO, each having no choice but to justify its place in the system, and then advertise to be known as a legitimate actor in the very activity for which it was created. It is also a *concatenation effect*, since institutions never die: when they come short of fulfilling their mandate, a new initiative is taken to rejuvenate their mission. Whether this spill-over process is comparable to the downgrading of politics or whether this process goes hand in hand, as the neo-functionalists argued, with a process of politicisation, is open. This would suggest two parallel structural settings, one where the functional necessities are so obvious that institutions become immune or shielded from political interests; the other where they become hostage to political interests.

This inevitable intervention of politics comes into play when specific functional needs are widely acknowledged but where there is no simple or single functional solution a priori or where a specific solution is disputed. Thus politicisation occurs through the construction of new issues and their political legitimisation. How do these new issues arise? One possibility is that they result from organization learning. But this learning process may be coupled with a strategy of survival. Both are reflecting IGO

competition for new areas of activity with the objective to find allies in these ventures. They compete for labelling issues (like “global warming”, “global initiative”, “human security”, “food security”), setting the agenda, framing the debate, and phrasing the statements made at the global (i.e., UN) level (like “all poor children would have access to quality primary education within a decade”). They call on new stakeholders (like “traditional communities”, and “future generations”). They “admit past failures”, and “pledge to try again”⁵⁶. How these new overarching concepts are converted into institutional rearrangements is therefore not determined a priori.

A very specific individual strategy is *specialisation*. Specialisation is an enhanced division of labour. This approach provides IGO with a “brand name”, and gives them a greater impact on the “market” for their “products” (this being a new version of the “innovate or perish” iron law). Specialisation makes them irreplaceable. IGO like the WMO, and the WHO can market weather, climate, draughts, and pandemics forecasts. The WIPO is emerging on the “regulating the Internet” and “fighting the digital divide” scene with an increasingly known brand name of its own. Again specialisation may a priori exclude greater cooperation or, in contrast, favour greater inter-agency cooperation. Specialisation leads structurally to greater heterogeneity, which may either imply greater fragmentation or, alternatively, new opportunities for collaborative if not cooperative strategies.

To illustrate this last point, take the UN sponsored “Committee on Bioethics”. As told in its website, “[I]n March 2003, representatives of a number of United Nations organizations and specialized agencies established the U.N. Inter-Agency Committee on Bioethics to promote *coordination and cooperation* among themselves and other regional and international inter-governmental groups that deal with *the field of bioethics, including its human rights aspects and other related issues*.”⁵⁷ This is quite an enlargement, indeed: once “related issues” are understood as intellectual property and trade in services issues, each of these three sets of problems is dramatically complex in itself. Cloning, experimenting on foetuses (and animals), trafficking human organs, attributing intellectual property rights to “inventors”, etc. seems the most difficult to handle. One thing is clear, however: the IGO that are associated in this enterprise take the opportunity of an emerging global problem to progress in their search of a renewed legitimacy and to give a new impulse to their mandate. The text explicitly lists the FAO,

ILO, UNHCR, UNESCO, WIPO, and WHO, with an interesting precision: “[O]ther international organizations are participating as *Associate Members*”, a way to give them a minor status although possible associate members like the WTO, INTERPOL, the OESC, the Council of Europe, or the World Islamic Organization could play a major role in that matter.

In structural terms this dynamic politics’ driven process is likely to entail *normalization* (or “*politically correctness*”), that is the establishment of a common set of concepts extensively accepted as truths and accordingly taken for granted by all players, even those who did not believe in the idea when it was first raised. Epistemic communities and advocacy coalitions elaborate and propagate ideas that migrate from one field (say, gender) to a multiplicity of others such as guarantying children universal rights (e.g., an equal access to education for girls and boys); allowing women a combat role in the military, or the pleading for “biodiversity” and even “socio-diversity” (an Indian invention at the WTO to protect the village culture of the subcontinent in manufacturing and trading textiles). Normalization provides an overarching conceptual framework to explain why cooperation may be a good substitute to competition. This is so because normalization is a proof that the sort of “structural power” advocated by Susan Strange (Strange, 1996) –i.e., a power to frame international negotiations and agreements that is so diffused and scattered among so many stakeholders that it is more and more difficult to trace its origins-exists.

The sustainability of an IGO’s strategy of adaptation will therefore depend on the extent to which it will succeed in *institutionalising new structural configurations*. An illustration of success is the creation of the WTO. After the failure of the International Trade Organization in 1948 and several decades of the GATT as a substitute to it, the WTO was eventually established in 1994-5, some fifty years after the end of World War 2 and the San Francisco and Bretton Woods Conferences. To scale down again this powerful machinery would be difficult if not impossible today. To the opposite, a World Environment Organization is still pending, a proof that the objective of institutionalization may also encounter resistance. Thus far, to give but one example, WMO has resisted attempts to create an encompassing environmental organization that the UN, UNEP and several governments calls for. The new institution would in effect deprive meteorologists of some of their power because it would threaten their

organizational culture, established long time ago in an international institution that existed decades if not centuries before the UN endorsed it as one of its specialised agencies. For the time being, attempts to build up a unique “environmental” institution around a “global public good” (hence justifying sacrifices from potential partners) failed—suggesting that institutionalisation is empowerment (albeit not at the same rate for every partners).

Section 4. Summary of our findings and suggestions for future research

In this paper, we started from the assumption that *cooperation is a necessity for an organization's survival, which in turn depends on a capacity to adapt rather than on a necessity to reform; and that the occurrence and depth of cooperative attitude are conditioned to an organization's capacity for mandate enlargement*. Additionally, we have shown that this dynamics gives birth to a sort of institutionalisation process through which norms are disseminated, their support organizations being either empowered or sidelined in the process.

To draw a parallel with the well documented spillover effect, we may call this new trend a *spiralling effect*, since at each stage of the normalization/institutionalisation process the unstable equilibrium achieved between global organizational actors is higher and deeper than one circle earlier. Of course, such a dynamics create winners and losers. IGO that successfully impose to their principals (the states) an enlargement of their mandate and force potential rival organizations to collaborate with them will benefit from a consolidated status: accordingly, they will use their newly-acquired influence to legitimate or re-legitimate their action. IGO suffering from insulation, or, alternatively, from undue overlap, and are threatened by a merging process may be downgraded if not eventually shut down. In spite of this theoretical expectation, real organizations display a great reluctance to cooperate with others. The solution of the contradiction between theory and reality may be that some IGO are concerned with the prospect that cooperation may weaken their position in the inter-organizational competition for power and influence, which translates into limited mandates and diminishing budgets. Lacking a guarantee that enlarging their mandate to the point where overlapping with other IGO's assignments become conflictual, quite a number of

organizations are reluctant to engage in collaborative, let alone cooperative ventures-or they do it with caution.

Additionally, the states as principals seem to be much less inclined than the most adventurous IGOs to encourage their cooperative tendency. One of the well-known reasons of this reluctance is their eagerness to retain their control over their agents; a less publicized one is that the states prefer to see them constrained within the limits of their original mandate even when they endorse some bounded and possibly reversible enlargement. Paradoxically, both the IGOs and the states call at the same time for cooperation if not for a real symbiosis of those organizations that are addressing intertwining issues. Both states and IGOs are therefore willy-nilly pushing into the same direction towards more cooperation, the latter being more inclined to pay lip service to the cause of states' pre-eminence (and agencies' specialization) than the former openly accept IGOs' freedom of coalition. So far, states have had the last say, and whatever possible was interagency cooperation (and cooperation between governments' permanent representatives within these institutions), it ultimately took place under the shadow of power. However, in the long run the germs of a system more centred on IGOs exist. Whereas states' leaders are inclined to think that they can decide on the level and substance of the adjustment process, IGOs' staff members are unconsciously or subconsciously drowned into the maelstrom of the institutionalisation process. Both resist *ex ante* every paramount scheme for cooperation, and both eventually contribute to establishing and legitimating new cooperative webs.

As we argued international organizations are involved in a tough competitive process among themselves and with their principals for survival if not growth. This process is complicated by the simple fact that the changing environment will recurrently beg the question whether the problem solving capacities of the individual organizations are adequate and/or whether the priorities are in fact the right ones given the changes under way. This is both the problem the IGO as well as the states are fundamentally confronted with.

In this competition IGOs are faced with two options: bargain some of their individual autonomy for more collaborative relationships with other IGOs (this is primarily an individual decision); in contrast IGOs can exchange some of their assets against other currencies (power, expertise, legitimacy). Admittedly, the nature (policy- or politics-driven) and the rate of the exchange (how far one can buy power with expertise) matter; but only to some extent. If the exchange is policy driven, inter-agency cooperation is probably easy to

achieve when autonomy is not the predominant concern of the IGO since the resulting cooperation or collaboration responds to functionally perceived requirements by all those involved in the process. Nevertheless, if the process is politics' driven, cooperation or collaboration may also be the outcome, since the process of globalisation is subtly but inescapably imposing limits to both states' and IGO' leverage and autonomy. The result of a politically driven process will possibly be a reinforcement of specific cooperation networks but they will be more difficult to institutionalize than those that were traditionally based on functional policy priorities.

Assuming that one way out of the structurally inescapable a priori functional fragmentation of the international order is inter-organizational cooperation we have suggested three major sets of factors that determine both an organization's status as well as its propensity to adapt. First, power (or influence): the more influential or powerful agencies are also those which are the more likely to pursue a more proactive strategy either through enlargement of their mandate or through the cooptation with agencies in order to complement missing assets, in particular expertise and legitimacy. Less powerful agencies in contrast are more likely to pursue defensive strategies through autonomy preservation or, if inevitable, by collaborating selectively with others, or consenting to some coordination between substructures..

Expertise (or knowledge) is a second factor that plays a critical role in explaining which adaptation strategy is chosen by an individual IGO. As expected, international organizations are by definition knowledge-based institutions. In a world getting more and more complex, expertise is an asset that can be converted into power⁵⁸. This conversion is completed if each individual organization is successful in "marketing" specific ideas or concepts that become integrated into the political debates and become worldviews. Alternatively, specialisation in expertise is another path an organization can take, thereby becoming an inevitable service organization for other IGO. Knowledge may be produced either internally by the organization itself or through a coalition with epistemic communities.

Of the three variables legitimacy is probably the most difficult to grasp: contrary to power, there is no easy test such as observed compliance to assess its scope; contrary to expertise, it is not a property of the organization itself but a relational property linking the organization to its principals and/or to the wider public (in particular the NGO community

and the media). Yet once the organization has a certain amount of recognized legitimacy this asset can trade with other organizations for resources as easily as knowledge or influence.

Adaptation strategies: an invitation to further research

Finally, in line with the growing interdependence and overall expansion through interaction hypothesis, we have also discussed the meaning of adaptation in an international context. Far from being homogeneous and automatic, adaptation is a complex process through which international organizations face their initiators, the states; and their rivals, other IGOs, as well as lobbyists, activists and experts. Consequently, there is no simple explanatory model accounting for the individual adaptation strategies that are actually pursued. Nor is there a priori any clear-cut causal linkage between power, expertise and legitimacy, on the one hand, and the adaptation path chosen on the other hand. What we already know, however, is that the overall structure of cooperation is the aggregate and unintentional outcome of individual strategies adopted by different actors with diverging motivations but facing the same constraints and responding to them with a limited range of behaviour. This cooperative trend is determined by the different if not even contradictory and independent moves of each IGO, which in the end converge towards cooperative and interdependent networks. Cooperation does not stem from a well ordered process of mutually adjusting wills; it seems rather to be the result of the heterogeneous mechanisms produced by the many interactions between world actors.

As a consequence, further research is faced with the challenge of identifying consistency and directivity in the overall adaptation process of international organizations. What we have found so far are tactical moves and minor changes in routine activities all conducive to systemic changes at the global level of cooperation. With no one noticing it, relationships between IGOs slightly and gradually moved from indifference to mutual exchange of information, then to dialogue, before eventually reaching the level of true participation in joint projects. In that process, the transition from one phase to another is conditioned to learning and imitation of successive strategies. Cooperation may appear easier, or at the very least less complicated than usually claimed and more rewarding than expected in a world where the balance of power concept—although it never really fitted fully the reality of

international politics (Schroeder,)—is allegedly the core determinant of international actors' strategies.

Whether intended or unintended, inter-organizational cooperation has become a central fact in the daily life of international organizations. It seems that these agents are learning faster than their principals still caught in the illusion of their centrality in international politics. The most advanced IGOs on the way towards autonomization and institutionalisation, for instance, recently opted for an alliance with NGOs (Schemeil; 2009). In this process of “mutual recognition”, in which the intergovernmental institution opens its doors to non governmental activists who soft-pedal their critics, a reinforcement of the two kinds of organizations occurs: this means that the states will have increasing difficulties in trying to retrieve their power and control over the former, and ban the latter from access to major decisions taken within multilateral forums—the more so when NGOs become display more professionalism than advocacy, and learn how to reach out supports within IGOs. As a consequence, organizational networks become even denser, more heterogeneous and multi-levelled,, i.e. more difficult to control by states representatives.

Of course, the usefulness and accuracy of this paper will be tested in further research: if we were right, it should be possible to extend, complete, precise, and refine our theoretical perspectives, and they should also help generate new observations. In particular, we should keep in mind that our model privileges a level of analysis located between the standard explanatory one (the states) and an utopian world order. Of course, the scope and consistency of this meso level will much depend on the evolution of the micro system of states, on the one hand; and a macro change of system, on the other hand. Assessing the likeliness of these parameters (to speak as James Rosenau does, 1990: 79, a “parameter” being a “wellspring of continuity” slowly changing compared to rapidly evolving variables) is still beyond reach, especially at the right end of the continuum (the evolution of world order). Since it is easier to start from the states, and although we did not claim that assessing IGOs' autonomy was an objective, their growing resilience is nevertheless a prerequisite from which most of our conclusions derive. If this assumption is too far-reaching, then the nation may state strike back: states may monitor IGOs' empowerment when providing them with resources assigned to specific programs, instead of granting each agency unconditional funds to help it achieve its own general objectives at the pace and to the extent its rulers wish. It is ever possible that states still keep or retrieve at any time whatever will remain of their veto-power to block IGO from better

performance. Will governments veto IGOs' decisions rather than endorse them? Will IGOs gain enough autonomy from their founding fathers "beyond regulation" to reach a new level of world order (i.e., more complex, durable and stable than the present international equilibrium)? Although it is still too early to guess which theoretical predictions become reality, the answer may be found in the necessity and the capacity for IGOs to adopt a universal mandate and edict norms, either performative (telling what justice as fairness should be) or substantive (providing global public goods).

Table 1:

Or: mandate enlargement as an adaptive strategy

Inter-organizational links	<i>Internal/Interagency</i>	<i>External/Across organizations</i>
<i>Occasional/Restricted</i>	competition	partnership
<i>Limited/Bounded</i>	coordination	coalition
Extended/Open	collaboration	cooperation

Graph 1: types of interactions between organizations: from competition to harmony

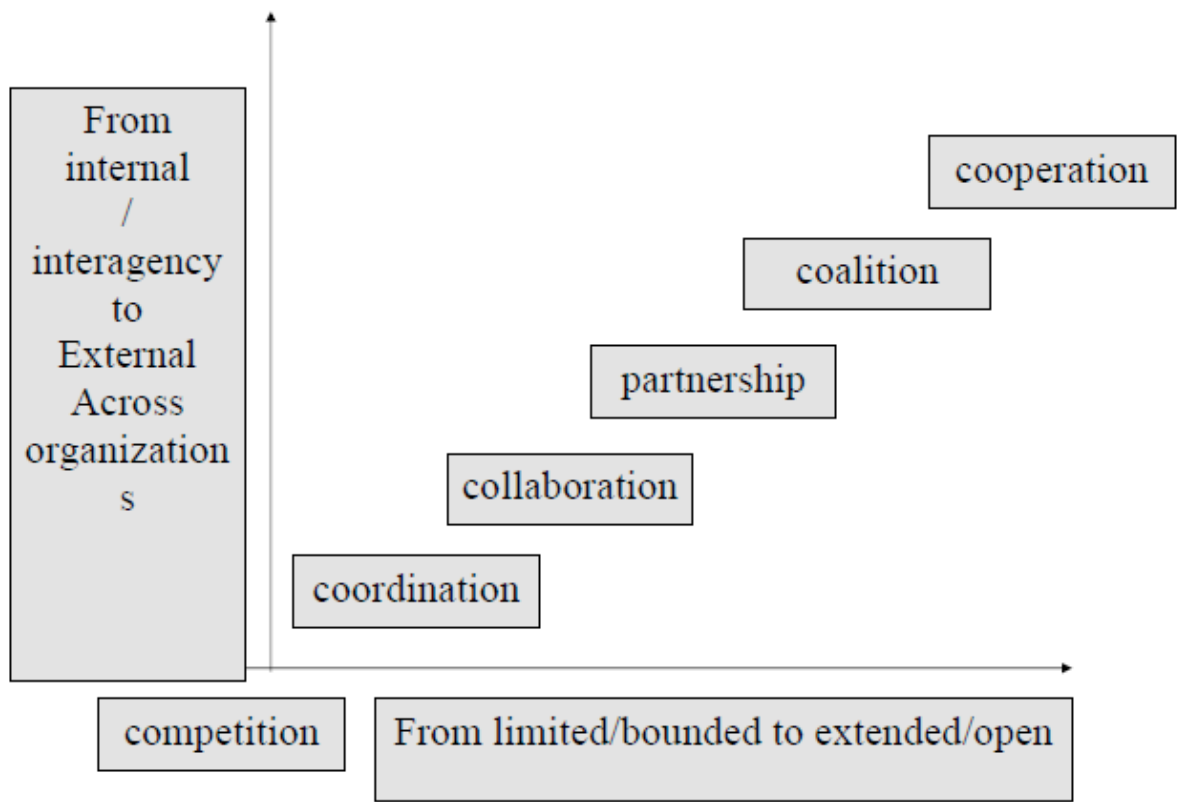


Table 2: The Impact of Globalization on IGO

Problem	Preferred solution	Major dilemmas	Salient issues
Changing global environment	Adaptation (unilateral)	Lacking or inadequate <i>Knowledge</i> ; Insufficient and contested <i>power</i> Lack of legitimacy	Performance/intervention /outcome
Actors' Changing strategies	Adjustment (mutual)	Functional spill over and mechanical redistribution of power	Issues linkages; actors' connectedness
New co-actors	Division of labour (organised)	Autonomy or cooperation	Principal/agents interactions

Table 3: Power or Influence: Two Political Cultures

Area	Powerful/instrumental* IGO	Influential/softer* IGO
Trade	Free trade (WTO, NAFTA, EU)	Fair trade, cultural exemptions (UNCTAD, UNESCO)
Labour	Social laws undermine trade agreement (WTO)	Social rights are universal (ILO), ban on child work (UNICEF)
Intellectual property	Protection of business and individual rights (WTO, WIPO)	Basic needs, health rights (WHO); cultural & world heritage (UNESCO)
Education	Investment in human capital (WB)	Education for all; gender equality in Primary & secondary education (UNESCO, UNIFEM)
Economy	Growth without inflation (IMF, G8, OECD); best practices; alleviating poverty (WB); debt relief (UN)	Sustainable development and people-centred development (UNEP); global public goods and good governance (UNDP)
Environment, Climate and Weather	Energy shortage as the biggest concern (IEA, OPEP); Weather forecasts are protected as elements of Intellectual property (WIPO)	Mitigating Climate Change as the main goal (IPCC); Free and reciprocal access to national weather forecasts (WMO)
Health	Universal vaccination, HACCP (UN); access to market (WTO); Safety chain alimentation (HACPP, Codex Alimentarius)	Precautionary principle (EU), food security (FAO)
Human rights	Minority rights as a condition for admission (EU = “conditionality” *); caring for refugees an asylum-seekers (HCR)	Minority rights as a moral imperative and an economic asset (OSCE, CE = persuasion”); Caring for migrant and displaced persons (IMO)

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Endenotes

¹ Jervis, 1999, 43, assumes that realists accept “that cooperation and the presence of institutions are correlated”; however, “it does not follow that cooperation can be increased by establishing institutions”.

² “Bureaucracies adapt to new circumstances and challenges, drawing from experience that has become encoded in rules and embedded in the organizational culture. They also expand, taking on new missions, mandates, and responsibilities in ways not imagined by their founders.” (Barnett, Finnemore, 2004, XX).

³ Four arguments that will not be discussed here as such could be advanced against the postulated necessity of inter-organizational cooperation. Firstly, in order to retain their autonomy, IGO themselves resist dependence on the knowledge and expertise produced and disseminated by other IGO as well as their larger and composite epistemic communities. Secondly, they may fear gaining little or, even worse, experience a loss of credibility rather than gaining in legitimacy. Thirdly and closely related to our second point, if the leading organization in a coalition of IGO is also the core institution in a capitalist and free trade world disseminating its own individualistic values, at least some of the members of this coalition might lose their credentials among international nongovernmental organizations and their supporters³. Fourthly, and equally relevant, IGO have to avoid infringing on their principals’ prerogatives and power, an uneasy task since the latter pursue diverging and sometimes contradictory aims in different organizations.

⁴ Barnett, Finnemore, 2004, view international bureaucracy as permanently expanding due to the predominance of organizational culture among staff members. Incidentally, their explanation of cooperation between organizations rests on factors that do not play such a role in our own conception: according to us, managers’ know-how is more diverse than in their opinion and it cannot be reduced to a proficiency in bureaucratic matters only, since they also are excellent diplomats, good strategists and creative innovators (Schemeil, 2004)

⁵ Jervis, 1999, 43, assumes that realists accept “that cooperation and the presence of institutions are correlated”; however, “it does not follow that cooperation can be increased by establishing institutions”.

⁶ For the use of case studies, which are the basic material for the present studies, see “Case Study Methods”, in the book edited by Detlef Sprinz and Yael Wollinsky-Nahmias, 2004. (add methodological references from your reading list in Geneva last year?)

⁷ To name but a few IGO under review for the purpose of this project, we have worked as extensively as possible on the WTO, WIPO, WMO, WHO, UNESCO, UNEP, UNDP, UNCTAD, ITU, OCHA, HCR, the IEAE and NATO; we also have much relevant information about a large number of other IO, like ICANN, IMO, the ICRC, UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNITAR, IMF, the World Bank, ICT, FAO, XXXX as well as the E.U, the African Union, The Arab League, the OIC.

⁸ Cooperation *between* international organizations is our main focus here, but it remains evident that cooperation between member states within organizations as well as intra-organizational dimension of cooperation between IGO’ components are equally crucial from the perspective of adaptation. According to Diejkzeul and Beigbeder (2003), for instance, both dimensions are in need of systematic research lacking thus far.

⁹ The words “cooperation”, “coordination”, and “collaboration” are not included in the index of the Barnett and Finnemore’s book about international organizations (2004).

¹⁰ Young even argues that to exist IGO must overcome the preference for the ‘zoning’ system that states display in anarchy (Young, 1989, 39).

¹¹ Even if agreement exists at the strategic or policy making level, the implementation of a jointly agreed upon program may not work: this would noteworthy be a consequence of the separation of decision making and policy making at the international level from

implementation made at the domestic level. Good examples would be the Millennium Project, with the reduction of poverty by 50 percent; or the Kyoto Protocol to ceil the CO₂ emissions by 2012 to the levels of 1990. These are clearly strategic decisions: how they are eventually translated into concrete action plans is but one part of the problem, the other part is whether the implementation of these action plans leads to the desired outcomes.

¹² March and Olsen 1998.

¹³ March and Olsen 1998, 968.

¹⁴ Another example would be the inclusion of gender-based violence (GBV) in the reproductive health program by WHO.

¹⁵ Gulati 1999.

¹⁶ See the article by Legro and Moravcsik who show that the varieties of neorealist theories that have reservations about the possibilities of cooperation are in fact integrating “non realist” arguments, thereby trying to amend a paradigm that is confronted with a number of anomalies.

¹⁷ Wolfers 1962, 182.

¹⁸ Wolfers 1962. The EU is a good example of an in principle indefinitely lasting inner-oriented cooperative framework, whereas NATO is in principle limited in time determined by the existing threat.

¹⁹ Waltz 1979, 93.

²⁰ Waltz 1979, 106.

²¹ According to both authors, collaboration is primarily induced by the perception of a common threat. Whereas Wolfers largely ignores the possibility of “upgrading the common good” which is implied in the notion of human security for example, Waltz assumes that states—and by analogy—IGO collaborate in this realm, but only in order to maintain or enhance their power status almost unconsciously through emulation.

²² This is definitely not the case when new technologies emerge where basic strategic decisions with political and economic far-reaching consequences are taken. See for example the discussion about the new information technologies such as the Internet or mobile phones.

²³ Cooley and Ron 2002, 13.

²⁴ The term comes from Krasner in his analysis of the institution of sovereignty (Krasner 1999,19).

²⁵ Performance is an abstract criterion, which is related to two different aspects: on the one hand, there is the fundamental issue of uncertainty related to the specific area of activity—the lack of knowledge. On the other hand, performance is related to the organizational structure itself, a major issue being—according to Dijkzeul and Gordenker—the inherent tension between the organization’s strategic level and the actual people in the field²⁵. Leaving the latter issue aside, the first issue is even more complex because performance implies much more than a “technical” dimension. Performance also is a response to the normative and cultural forces that reflects their view of the world as it is and how it should be

²⁶ Barnett and Finnemore 1999, 703.

²⁷ March and Olsen 1998, 956. That could also be due to the irrationality of rationalization, or bureaucratic universalism.

²⁸ It should be stressed, however, that this reference to Waltz in opposing defensive and offensive strategies is little related to the distinction between “offensive realism” and “defensive realism” —although, according to Jervis, the latter is more prone than the former to make room for cooperation (Jervis, 1999).

²⁹ According to Waltz, however, international structures are not markets: hence, states cannot make common efforts to achieve « the joint production of goods for their mutual benefits. » (1979, 107).

³⁰ Actually it is so rich that its former Secretary General proposed the cancelling of state contributions to its budget. This proposal was rejected because the majority of the member states were determined to retain some control of the organization’s policy.

³¹ Einhorn 2001, 32. Here is indeed a vast area of investigation for the constructivists: the constructed “holistic” realities the actual professionals in charge of them struggle to give any practical meaning to, in order to be capable to implement them at some stage.

³² Einhorn 2001, 23-4.

³³ Marquette 2004, 415-8.

³⁴ Marquette 2004, 426.

³⁵ Einhorn 2001, 32.

³⁶ Einhorn 2001, 33.

³⁷ Weiss, Forsythe & Coate: 255.

³⁸ Marquette, 2004: 426.

³⁹ Marquette, 2004: 419.

⁴⁰ Nielson & Tierney, 2003.

⁴¹ In the same realm, with the creation of UNEP, “[T]he Commission on Sustainable Development was dropped into an even more complex and somewhat chaotic multi-organizational system” (Weiss, Forsythe and Coate 2004, 254). That is to say, the legitimate desire to upgrade environmental activities within the UN system ended up in some organizational mess itself detrimental to the new agency and its officers. To this ever possible organizational failure, cooperative agencies must add a “creeping politicization”, which may drift them away from their goals, upgrade conditionality criteria, and paralyze their activities, as happened to the WTO in Seattle and Cancun. Rather than gaining in flexibility and capability to adjust to a new context, IGO may be rigidified by excess in cooperation.

⁴² One example of this process of cooperation between UN and non-UN structures is the WTO’s SG participating regularly (four times a year) to the UN structure of coordination, whereas less prominent members of the WTO’s Secretariat are invited from time to time to attend specific meetings (WTO interview, 24-1-07).

⁴³ Of course, there is a “Bureau for the Prepcoms” which coordinates the work of the preparatory committees (the BGLS Guide for NGOs, 2003, 23). This shows how challenging coordination is, since coordinators themselves have to be coordinated.

⁴⁴ There is at least one domain where cooperation is more or less taking place automatically: organizing joint conferences, like the Earth summit, the Rio Conference, and world symposiums on women, climate, AIDS, biodiversity, etc. This is of course a privilege of the UN system. Nevertheless, several non-UN and even non-governmental organizations join the UN agencies in these ventures. The private sector is also invited to contribute, bringing ideas, funds, and products, like the “Partners for Development Summit” held by UNCTAD in 1998. This same organization also sponsors country conferences, such as the 1995 summit on Uzbekistan, jointly organized with UNDP and UNIDO, and global summits like the 1999 “World Alliance of Cities Against poverty” co-sponsored by UNDP and HABITAT (Weiss, Forsythe and Coate 2004, 251). Actually, its intense activity in the cooperation business seems proportioned to its decaying operational capability since 1995 at the time the WTO was established. Because this kind of cooperation bypasses the “routine” exchanges of views, the word used to describe this kind of collaborative framework is not cooperation but “*partnership*” (Mezzalama and Ouedraogo, 1999). Yet as is well known this kind of partnership is clearly limited and does not necessarily translate into inter-organization cooperation.

⁴⁵ According to ESCWA website, “The Statistics Coordination Unit coordinates the activities of the “Comparable Statistics for Improved Decision-Making” subprogram, which aims to improve the statistical capabilities of countries in the region [South-East Asia] for informed decision-making and improve the availability and timeliness of comparable statistical information. These activities are conducted in collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division and other United Nations international and regional agencies for the use of harmonized statistical concepts, methodologies and questionnaires compatible with internationally recognized statistical standards. This contributes to the development of reliable,

timely, standardized and customized national and regional statistics and indicators needed by policy makers, analysts, decision makers, public and private enterprises, researchers and regional and international organizations in the region.”

⁴⁶ However, it made possible cooperation with other IGO, like the Organization of American States (OAS) created in 1996 “to suggest the establishment and monitoring of effective collaboration and coordination mechanisms among the OAS, the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and other bodies, agencies and entities of the United Nations system, along with such bodies, agencies and entities of the inter-American system as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), and other regional and sub regional organizations, institutions and programs of the Hemisphere.” (OAS website).

⁴⁷ Weiss, Forsythe and Coate 2004, 254-5.

⁴⁸ Finger and Magarinos-Ruchat, 2003

⁴⁹ To put it bluntly, organisations focussed on “development” issues are less powerful than organisations dealing with commercial and technical ones.

⁵⁰ This is why conventional wisdom among diplomats ban debates on trade related matters out of the WTO precinct. There is only one exception to this tacit rule: governments sometimes assign a political mandate to their local representatives, requiring them to adopt different stances in separate trade negotiations rounds. Actually, trade issues show that the division of labour between institutions may be more related to governmental will than to the Secretariat’s wishes. Developing countries for instance tend to select old UNCTAD as the appropriate arena to defend their views when trying to reach a domestic audience and prove their determination to their fellow citizens and the opposition, while negotiating discretely and with some flexibility within the actual trade forum, the new WTO. DCs’ representatives nevertheless feel at home within UNCTAD, and only within this IGO (interview with a former PR to UNCTAD, 30-06-05). Trade issues can therefore be discussed both in *political arenas* and *diplomatic forums*, according to the current needs of government leaders.

⁵¹ Kelley 2004, 450.

⁵² Sperling 2001, 7-8, 13.

⁵³ See Luterbacher and Sprinz 2001.

⁵⁴ Fouilleux 2005.

⁵⁵ Beyond this, they also are bureaucracies, and as told by Barnett and Finnemore (2004, 43), “bureaucracies, by their nature, tend to expand in both size and scope of tasks.”

⁵⁶ Sperling 2001, 7.

⁵⁷ Emphasis added. Reference missing (website).

⁵⁸ Schemel, 2004.