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International Organisations as Organisations: A Second Cut

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Paper for the Panel: International Organization: A Discipline of Its Own? The Study of IOs' Agents

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Abstract. *In a 1988 seminal paper, Ness and Brechin called for considering IOs as organisations. They tied successful explanation of international politics to adequate treatment of internal management processes boosted by specific technologies and know-how within a challenging environment. They also made the case for studying leadership and decision-making. More than twenty years later, this call is still unheard. Linking an organizational vision with strategic issues is an urgent task if one wants to build a new discipline focussed on IOs. This paper addresses the issue of borders shifting in the research on international Organizations (in the plural), and its contribution to a more accurate knowledge of world ordering (International Organization in the singular). Once a subfield of political Science or a section of International Studies –that was contained within the boundaries of the legal approach to world institutions (such as the UN–), it may now reach the stage of a full-fledged discipline. Increasingly drawing from Organization Theory and Management Studies, research on IOs definitely takes such bodies as baseline organizations with managerial problems like performance and resilience, leadership issues, and constraints on decision-making processes. Therefore, "agents" matter more now to scholars that was the case in the past, whereas "structure" must be understood as applying to the world order.*

Is the study of international organizations part of a Political Science subfield, International Relations? Or is it a discipline per se, as ambitioned by some International Studies scholars at the roots of professional association's specialized sections? Although epistemological warnings should deter us from splitting science into too many subdivisions, political goals may require the consolidation of a specific sort of knowledge when a window of opportunity is open (as shown by Kuhn, Feyerabend, and Latour).

Contrary to an observed trend towards knowledge fragmentation in Political Science (Almond 2002; Favre 2011), this paper does not claim that informal networks of scholars should translate into recognized disciplines for the sake of distinguishing them among a growing community of paper-givers, and legitimate their demand for series of panels in international meetings. It argues that postponing a sound epistemological reflection on how to address international organizations' birth and death, performance and resilience, discord and collaboration, precludes further progress.

Once a critical mass is achieved in a field of knowledge it usually becomes recognized as "different" from established and legitimate disciplines. For practical reasons if not for theoretical ones, scholars therefore enter into an epistemic community, and become aware of each other's works, which they read as a priority. Moreover, the boundaries of this subfield overlap with other disciplines, which in turn makes impossible to stick to the initial sector from which a new kind of object was first identified since it is now too limited to be satisfying. Translated into our own world, such a prediction tells us that, coming from Law, IO is migrating from PS to a new knowledge mix, made of Organization Theory (OT), Public Administration, International Relations (IR), Negotiation theory, Policy and Management Studies (MS). The legal approach predominated for centuries since most IOs of the past were *institutions*, established by ratified treatises that overruled national laws. A political science attitude saw them as copy-pasted national bureaucracies –with their separation from politics, their division of labour, their career agents, and a pyramid of norms–. Nowadays, the science of IO takes stock from applied research on ways to make public administration work despite its tendency to tolerate red tape, waste of resources, and insufficient Public Service Motivation (Anderfuhren-Biget & al. 2010) –woes that have been tamed in firms long time ago.

My point here is that viewing IOs from the two traditional angles of political sociology applied to institutions (i.e., the Weberian and the Durkheimian) may be comfortable since it spares efforts to justify the establishment of a new discipline, and privileges *method* (sociology) over *topic* (IOs). The same is true with international studies, because IOs are assumed to behave exactly as any other stakeholder does. In both cases there is no need to build a new discipline since a well-established one (either PS or IR) brings all the explanation needed, from within (political sociology) or from the outside (international theory). Among scholars, the epistemologically concerned or the cognitive miser may breathe!

The problem with this rational scholarly behaviour is the disappearance of major items from the authors' radars, like New Public Management, Public Service Motivation (Giauque and al. 2011), Strategic Planning (Reposter 2010; Mintzberg), Knowledge Management (Schulz 2001) and so on and so forth – not to speak of *pragmatic tools* such as scoreboards, economic models, logical frameworks for the action and Open Method of Coordination (Niedergaard 2006) considered as inevitable in IOs' governance (Wyatt 2004); or *theoretical tools* like simulations. Above all, relevant concepts like "meta organization" (Ahrne and Brunsson 2005); "organic organization"; "slack"; and "ambidexterity" (references to come) may be ignored. On the list of relevant topics it is fair to mention one noteworthy exception: leadership. Alas! The study of this ambiguous notion is either outsourced to political psychologists who lack legitimacy because they side at the margins of both PS and Psychology; or monopolized by organization specialists who own the issue.

Of course, psychological barriers must be brought down to join management studies, often underrated in PS due to their clinical methodology, and to their insistence on non political and non international objects – firms, workshops, offices, instead of social movements, political parties, interest groups, governments. PS and MS obviously have distinct objects, and therefore different levels of abstraction, for sure (macro- vs. micro organizations); however, they raise the same questions (how groups are led, how efficient and fair institutional designs are, to which extent an organization mobilize its potential among voters or consumers); they may even share the same methods (in-depth interviews, participant observation, content analysis, case studies). Such convergences advocate for a mutual interest, which could estrange them both from their main competitor, economics (be it bending towards rational choice or towards political economy).

Is sociology the solution? Well, it might also be a problem. One thing is to address IOs' issues as their agents do define and address them – i.e., to privilege agency over structures; another is to conflate the field to a pitiless battle of agents for power positions and valued assets and ignore the explanatory power of constitutional and contractual interactions. Seminal works such as 2006 Barnett and Finnemore' *Rules for the World* bend towards a Durkheimian understanding of the functioning of international institutions (although they view them as being Weberian) since organizations are regular patterns of behaviour embodied by agents who are led by moral aims and a "collective consciousness" of their responsibility to provision global public goods – and rip the benefits of their actions in the guise of jobs, promotions, and consideration) – as if the institutional design of IOs did not play any role to bind decisions and foster agents' compliance to their organization (Durkeim; Ness and Brechin 2008[1]). Moreover, sociologists are not prone to imagine various scenarios for the future, and tell which are the most or the less likely under what conditions in which contexts. This condemns sociologist to keep out of the current debate in IR about trends towards various sorts of world orders, with an undesirable consequence for IOs specialists: when reflections on IOs stop at the doorstep of global change their net contribution to historical explanation and their alleged scientific potential are minimized. As soon as sociological tools are privileged things are surely considered "processually". Nonetheless, the underlying "process" may be defined either as an

[1] « Organizational sociology begins with a Weberian view of organizations as rational collectivities with limited goals, and an orientation to action. They also involve power. People and groups create organization to produce something that they can themselves control [what I call a « Durkheimian » view)] » (Ness & Brechin 2008).

issue in social mobilization or struggle for power *within* organizations (what Barnett and Finnemore do[2]); or, alternatively, as the component of a larger trend of adaptation to a changing environment *surrounding* them (as Bull or Wendt did). Obviously, the latter stance confers a greater role to IOs than the first. A quick glance at textbooks and treatises suffices to display an imbalance between the two possibilities, which is detrimental to the autonomous decision making capability of international organizations as competitors to states and interest groups.

The purpose of this paper, and the whole panel in which it is presented, indeed, is multifold. Firstly, my aim is to review some promising ventures into a new understanding of IOs within Political science (part 1). Secondly, I'll try to find some ground for a science of IO that would reach out beyond PS, starting with the famous call for an organizational turn launched by Ness and Brechin in 1988 (part 2). Thirdly, I'll make an assessment of the possible contributions of OT and MS, compared to economics and sociology in order to reach a better understanding of IOs viewed from within (part 3). Finally, I'll argue that we should switch from International Law perspectives on IGOs to a more sociological "International Organization" global process, and climb the abstraction/scope ladders. In doing so, we shall extrapolate from the knowledge of IOs machinery a theory of world reordering. The result will be a substitution of process to structures, and International Organization (in the singular) to International Organizations (in the plural) (part 4).

Part 1. The study of international organizations as structures: a subfield of Political Science?

In this text, IOs are broadly defined as encompassing a large population of bodies varying in designs, scope, functions, and meanings: *administrations* (impersonal, meritocratic); *institutions* (established, sustainable, endowed with an enforcement power); *agencies* depending on States (their « principals »); adaptive *organisations* that evolve with a changing environment to accommodate agents' demands and resemble firms or « corporations » that have a transnational « market »; *regional economic institutions* (Goerz and Power 2012); *networks* of non governmental organizations, lobbyists, and academics (such as global interest groups, advocacy coalition frameworks, epistemic communities, and even Think tanks, Foundations, and Funds that are usually annexed or sidelined by intergovernmental organisations).

Such a variety in itself sustains my argument about a new field, since (a) its objects of study are diverse and numerous enough to justify large studies of their populations and sub-populations; (b) the sample of diverse formats is large enough to be processed

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[2] As Gutner and Thompson releventlly note in their critics of Barnett and Finnemore's seminal work : « Bureaucratic dysfunction can clearly impact an IO's performance in numerous ways. However, there are limitations to Barnett and Finnemore's framework when it comes to understanding IOP. First, *not all IOs have substantial bureaucracies* » (2010: 229, emphasis mine).

along solid methodological grounds, including statistics (Volgy 2008; Pevehouse 2004); (c) the new discipline will be structured by *common research questions*: what do IOs have in common that could single them out from other international actors ? Are their respective specificities related to particular explanatory variables? How to explain the birth, growth, specialization and impact of these "unlike-units" (to quote Waltz)?

Conventional knowledge compacts this long list of units and rips each of them of its potential originality. Political scientists conflate them with social movements (of which the so-called "Washington consensus"-based IOs and their opponents advocating "fair trade" are spectacular instances); national bureaucracies (examined through their policies rather than via the study of their agents); or political parties (examples abound, like ICANN advocating individual freedom versus the ITU combating the "digital divide", Schemeil 2012 a) (see also Hafton-Burton; Lefranc; Sommier; Pouligny; Simeand; references are forthcoming). Alternatively, political scientists may discard their importance due to their dual role in bureaucratic politics and power politics (Gutner and Thompson 2010: 229).

Such reductionist views confine IOs to ways of shaping opinions and disseminating them with little or no influence at all on their content and even less leverage on their relative weight –as if they were mere *containers* or even trivial windbags. Political theorists assess their absolute or relative lack of democracy, and set conditions for make them representative in a multicultural context.

International scholars assume that IOs' differences do not matter since they all are the mere instruments of an intergovernmental balance of power. Accordingly, alternatives are reduced to two options: IOs may be viewed as simple tools (in the realist/neo-realist mindset) or as smart ones (within the institutionalist/liberal sphere). Constructivists and cognitivists may see them as *frames* and information *channels*, while post-positivists and post-modernists reduce them to simple *vectors* of norms and identities – a trend that is no less effective in downplaying their role. Principal/agency theorists sum up these views: IOs are either sticking to their contracts with their founding fathers or transgressing some of its clauses. In both cases, they are but a *contractual envelope*, another kind of tool, albeit more proactive in the second than in the first situation. Finally, European schools in IR and PS conflate international institutions with multilateralism, linking their performance and usefulness to the success of intergovernmental negotiations. Since such negotiations are failing by numbers (instances like the Doha Round or the Quartet's road map abound), they extrapolate IOs limitations from one particular function among many and, again, view them as instruments (Badie & Devin; Badie; Petiteville; Colson; Zürn and Zangl; references are fothcoming).

Such containment of consolidating, mushrooming, and increasingly inevitable structures lacks scientific ground. It nonetheless justifies a benign neglect for one type of stakeholders among many, most often ranked last in the list of global actors (a roster composed of governments, armies, courts, lobbies, multinational corporations, advocacy coalitions, epistemic communities, think tanks and foundations, NGOs, QUANGOS, etc.). This is why seminal works contested such views in the last decade (Reinalda and Verbeek 1999, 2004; Joachim, Reinalda and Verbeek 2009; Barnett and Finnemore 2006; Gehring and Oberthur 2009; Avant, Finnemore and Sell 2010). I'll come back to this soon.

Before doing so, it is of note that the most prominent sponsors of IOs in international Studies did not contribute much to the emergence of an autonomous field. Although most "institutionalists" insisted on the potential strength of IOs, they all came to this conclusion through a scientific judgment that relied on three pillars: "security first"; rational decision-making; a limitation of collaboration to states among themselves. Actually, advocates of international institutions as dedicated to them as Hedley Bull, Robert Keohane or Alexander Wendt (to take but some examples in three different communities of scholars) are obsessed with security issues. This was conducive to theory building, for sure – think of Keohane's *After Hegemony* or Ikenberry's *After Victory* to take but two examples. However, *anarchy* is in every case taken for granted, whatever its scope and meaning. Since IOs are about the production of overarching *norms*, they are in contradiction with such a basic assumption. Wendt himself, in his complex attempt to forecast a world government, imagines five scenarios to reach this paradise, all but one relying on security arrangements. Moreover, NATO is one of his few favourite IOs that are singled out at the penultimate step towards global peace (with the UN and the EU: Wendt 2003). Charles Glaser, who makes a balanced use of rational choice theory (a la Schelling) and neo-realism (a la Wendt), confines IOs within telling limits: they may bend decisions towards a defensive policy rather than investment in offensive behaviour: hence, they remain within the scope of neo-realism, because they are endogenous to the international system and not exogenous to it (Glaser 2010; Schemeil 2012 c). In short, most of these scholars address IOs as if they *should* be on an equal footing with states in war prevention to be recognized as authentic global players. Such examples tend to discard IOs as autonomous objects of knowledge in non-security related realms: what Abbott and Snidal call a case in "International Old Governance" in which IOs are confronted to states and vie with them for a *ruling* power, that they oppose to "Transnational new Governance" in which IOs interact with each other and with private actors like firms to *regulate* partnership (2010).

And if they were reckoned as global players (actors playing at the global level), they would not be global regulators (i.e., actors that contribute to the global order). There are two good reasons for such a limitation: the influence of regime theory (Gutner and Thompson 2010: 230); and the lack of impact of the world government scenario (Wendt 2003). When IOs are not part of the current debate about the future state of the planet, or do not find their proper place between international regimes, multilateral negotiations, and regional integrations (Schemeil 2012 a), they just become stealth institutions.

To sum up the arguments of this section: on the one hand, mainstream PS stance address IOs as political units or institutionalised social movements with no impact on the views they convey, which is misleading. On the other hand, IR specialists study IOs as if they were similar if not identical, and mix them with other global stakeholders, henceforth reducing them to an ancillary security function, which is both confusing and limitative.

Part 2. The study of International Organization as an internal process: beyond Political Science and International Studies?

In recent years, considerable progress made in organization studies. However, few organization specialists work on international organizations (IOs) and even fewer IOs scholars draw on Organization Theory (Smouts 1993, 1997; Devin and Smouts, 2011). Although two sociologists, Ness and Brechin, published as early as 1988 an influential paper in which they called for a change of view in addressing IOs, their invitation to "bridge the gap" between IR and OT still remains to be accepted. In their own words, the biggest obstacles to explanation came from an excessive scientific specialization.

> "At the extremes, Sociology takes a cynical view of organizations surreptitiously serving the cloaked aims of their individual masters; international Organizations studies take the naive view of organizations working inexorably toward the integration of the world community. Neither position is tenable. Here we wish to take some steps to bridge the gap, largely by identifying areas from organizational sociology that can be usefully applied to the study of international organizations (...) we select two major concepts from organizational sociology – environment and technology – which have emerged as critical correlates of performance. Finally, we deal with organizational goals and structures, two concepts that are central to organizational analysis, but less central to the issue of performance."

In a nutshell, the two authors opened a new avenue for the study of IOs, putting it upside down (technology first) and inside out (environment first). They also switched from inputs (assigned goals) to outputs (actual performance). Although their contribution to knowledge is outdated (due to an excessive reliance on functionalism), their ambition remains valid.

One of their major insights is noteworthy: contrary to conventional wisdom IOs are not *tools*. They possess an original *technology* whose refinement tends to become an end in itself, to such an extent that the preservation of their structures and the justification of their social usefulness prevails over the goods they are expected to provision[3]. "Technology" mixes processes and procedures, patents and knowhow, as exemplified by the UNFPA's control of "non-coitally specific contraceptive technology", and CARE's ablity to tailor projects to the task (two success stories); or, alternatively, the World Bank incapacity to monitor population control due to an expertise reduced to calculating investment returns.

Ness and Brechin also put the stress on individuals (*leaders* and *staff* members) within groups, but compared to IR specialists they did it in the opposite way: instead of assuming that single persons are either embodying a whole nation (as done in realist schools), playing the rules by the book (an institutionalists' claim), or symbolize a collective identity (the constructivist creed), they endow them with great agency and freedom of action, locating individual behaviour, dedication to the common good, and selfish calculus at the roots of contingency.

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[3] « As organizations move through time they usually develop a commitment to a specific technology, for example, and most important, they come to be infused with value. For Selznick this amounted to the institutionalization of organizations. They are, in effect, transformed from simple tools of their creators into collectivities that are at least partly ends in themselves. Organizations are tools, to be sure, but in Selznick's classic phrase, they are recalcitrant tools of action. »

To conclude, the two sociologists very early advocated for an organisational turn based on a focus on *machinery*, *delivery*, and *agency*. They insisted on studying in detail individual IO's *comparative advantage* and *shared sociability*. These five dimensions were long ignored by political and international scientists specialists who privileged the study of collective actors acting as single units with little concern for their idiosyncrasies over dipping their hands in the dirty oil of IOs' engines.

In a forthcoming paper (Schemeil 2012) I follow suit, inviting to consider IOs as emblematic cases in a long trend process of world reorganization. In my opinion, IOs' performance depends on their institutional design, the context and conjuncture in which they operate, and the motives and motivation of their personnel. IOs are not only *effective* (as assumed by international scholars: they exist, decisions are periodically made, staff is appointed and paid, services are delivered to end-users, etc.), they are *efficacious* (end-users' needs are satisfied, at least partially) if not *efficient* (in a Pareto-efficiency way: any improved ratio of outputs on inputs would jeopardize the overall balance between utility and means).

Their performance is linked to their specificity: they are *hybrids* (a mix of private, public and third sector units); *dualistic* (decision-making process at every level is shared on an equal footing by experts, technicians, or judges on the one hand; militants, diplomats, or ministries on the other hand); and *ambidextrous* (short term- and long term concerns are simultaneously addressed, more about that in the remaining part of this paper). In short, IOs offer a unique opportunity to improve our knowledge on political actors, social movements, and normative activity concluded by the creation of values. They are at the crossroads of several subfields of PS – public policy and public administration studies, political sociology, governance, government and opposition, IR and even political theory. All this is evidenced by references to Hobbes, Kant, and Rawls not only among scholars, but also on IOs' websites and normative statements: for instance, the WTO's "specified and differentiated treatment" that is clearly borrowed from the *Theory of Justice*.

The literature on *performance* and *performers* is now expanding – an additional evidence of the necessity to focus on both, instead of sticking to corporate entities viewed from the outside. Of note are recent works from Gutner and Thompson (2010: 229) on "international organization performance" assessed by "beholders"; and Avant, Finnemore and Sell on "governors" (2011). Their merits are many, but one must be underlined: they link *IOs' management* to *world governance* through the daily activities of organizers. The science of IOs becomes more concrete and more human. IOs are inhabited by crowds of interesting people who make plans and mistakes, combine emotions with reason: as the "sentimental citizens" identified by George Marcus, these nostalgic organizations are vivid applications of the "affective intelligence" paradigm. Therefore, rational choice, strategic calculus, behavioural studies, and the history of ideas – that are very popular in PS – do not suffice to give an adequate explanation of IOs global role and status.

An obvious overlapping between IR as a PS subfield and International studies as a field per se aggravates the problem. Among academics advocating an encompassing knowledge of whatever is "international", drawing from history and geography is as legitimate as relying only on politics and economics. In a way, insufficient treatment of IOs stems from this enhancement of scope and the climbing of the abstraction ladder: on top of the world IOs exist, for sure, but they look tiny and their cob webbed organization is invisible. A good example is the much-needed combination of historical and genetic approaches – in other words, the addition of ontogenesis (the specific itinerary of a particular IO) to phylogenesis (the history of IOs as a population from the earliest times) gives us a full-fledged view on IOs. Bob Reinalda did much to combine both: in his works, IOs come from a genetic soup that favoured their appearance and growth at certain periods of time; these initial contexts also emulated specific developments in various realms (courts, knowledge-based organisations, security arrangements, global public goods provision, etc.), that had, in turn, a deep impact on individual IO (like the International Labour Office, which reproduced with some singularity the characteristics of the global movement).

To sum up the arguments of this section: since it must be altogether objective and human, abstract and concrete, historical and genetic, local and global, the science of IO bypasses the two fields in which it was first developed as a subfield (PS and IR) and reach out for competing sources of knowledge (OT and MS). I shall now try to show how these new sources of insights might not only bring food for thought, but are inevitable.

Part 3. A fresh look at IO: Insights from a managerial turn

A handful of concepts that gain momentum within managerial studies help explain more comprehensively their role and status (a sociological concern), and the norms, goods, and services they deliver (an economical goal). Among them I'll give some insights about selected notions such as: mechanical versus organic/cognitive organizations; exploitation versus exploration; absorbed versus unabsorbed slack; learning/innovation and ambidexterity; not to speak of organizational culture and learning that I have too little space to address here (see Schultz).

Let us start with the first opposition, mechanical versus organic/cognitive organizations. A "mechanical" organization is a well-functioning machine; it is also a centralized, specialized, and fit to the task machinery. At best, authority and compliance help provisioning public goods fairly and efficiently. At worst, learning and individual creativity are limited or absent, the organization is reactive rather than proactive, as an "organic", knowledge-based organization should be. Mechanical organizations are performance-oriented, but the metric of performance relies on "outcome" instead of "process". As said by Gutner and Tompson:

> To address the issue of performance, as applied to the social world, is to address both the outcomes produced and the process—the effort, efficiency and skill—by which goals are pursued by an individual or organization (2010 : 231).

Putting the stress on process spares driving towards dead ends, like trying to measure success in terms of actual impact and responsibility of IOs decision-makers[4]. To

[4] « if goals are easy to achieve an entity might succeed perfectly well even when its performance per se is not very impressive. This helps us understand why performance is distinct from effectiveness, because the latter implies an ability to achieve specific outcomes or to solve problems without reference

evaluate IOs' processual performance scholars should switch from mechanical to organic units. An "organic" organization – sometimes called "cognitive" (Thoenig 2010),

Overall, this dichotomy reflects well-known distinctions, such as: Weberian/Durkheimian; rational hierarchy/organized anarchy; linear/non-linear logic; rational theory (based on strategic planning ex ante)/contingency theory (relying on adaptive behaviour ex post).

We come now to the second alternative, exploitation versus exploration (March 2007), which is the key to a proper understanding of what follows. To the best of my knowledge we owe it to James March, who in spite of is prominent status as a great sociologist and organization specialist is rarely quoted in the study of IOs. According to him:

> "Exploitation refers to refers to the leveraging of existing capabilities through activities such as 'refinement, efficiency selection, and implementation' while exploration refers to efforts to create future capabilities by means of 'search, variation, experimentation, and discovery' " (March 1991: 71, quoted in Schmitt 2010)

To be more precise, privileging exploitation entails the deepening of existing processes, seeking efficiency, creating value; whereas exploration implies finding new markets, looking for resilience, inventing new sources of value (Bierley and al. 2009). We must keep in mind that exporting this theoretical alternative to the science of IO is neither making improper use of an analogy nor importing a management model from the private national sector to the public international one. In effect, IOs staff members and permanent representatives do behave as if they had a "market" to exploit and control – the field of their operational activities on the ground, populated by needy end-users (e.g., refugees, starving populations, illiterates, victims of war, climate change, environmental pollution, nuclear dissemination, discriminations, etc.). However, as firms do, they must also have prospects about likely conditions of the world in the future – spent time in the making of strategic planning, political forecasts, scenarios about possible mandate enlargements, and new norms. While *exploitation* is at the roots of *performance*, *exploration* is the very condition of *resilience*.

Several problems stem from this distinction. Firstly, these goals are contradictory: the more you spend time, energy and money on capturing the rent that justifies your effectiveness, the less you spare enough assets to shape your future. Secondly, accommodating the past, present and future of the organization may be far fetching (or overstretching), since initial goals, current activities, and projects may lack consistency. Examples are IAEA seeds' selection by radioisotopes; WIPO's protection of traditional knowledge; UNESCO's certification of some water basins as parts of our world heritage, etc.

To be able to explore while exploiting its assets, an organization must accept a certain amount of "slack" – the fourth management concept that in my view should be brought to the science of IO. Slack comes from OT and MS, where it points out a discrepancy between inputs and outputs, which may overweigh an organization, therefore jeopardize its performance. Conversely, it may help to innovate (Herold and

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to the underlying capacity of the entity, the impact of complicating constraints, or the manner by which outcomes are achieved » (Gutner & Thompson 2010 : 232).

al. 2006), using this unplanned room for manoeuvre as an available margin of resource. It is often defined as a « cushion », a « buffer » of « uncommitted resources » than can be deployed and channelled to reach new goals[5]. There are at least three sorts of slack: *absorbed slack*, which equates "excess costs", those that matter more for rich organizations, whereas *unabsorbed slack* or "currently uncommitted resources" impact on the poorest (Tan and Peng 2003). There is also a third kind of slack, *potential slack* conceived of as assets that exceed productive needs and come from the environment of the organization (Bourgeois and Singh 1983).

Slack has many positive effects, like levelling structural obstacles; minimizing the impact of bad decisions; providing spare capacity to face emergencies and prepare for innovation; cooling down political tensions within the organization, and limiting "political posturing" (rivalries among agents) as well as the number of divisive internal coalitions; crystallising agents' loyalty, which can be "bought" with some tolerance for personal behaviour, hence reducing stress and increase sociability (Cyert & March 1963). Nonetheless, negative effects can also undermine the smooth functioning of an organization, among which: suboptimality, lack of efficiency, inconsiderate investments, postponing of necessary reforms, waste, complacency, lack of self-discipline; private capture of perks and golden parachutes, conspicuous consumption (Papadakis, Lioukas, Chambers 1998). Hawkins and al. brilliantly applied the concept of slack to IR in a 2006 book, in which several authors refine its meaning to catch up with recent developments in Principal/agency theory: they come up with slack as slippage", "shirking" or "ceremonialism" (Lake and Mccubbins 2006).

Finally, "ambidexterity" solves the exploitation/exploration trap, hence the performance/resilience trade-off. It may be understood as follows:

> « Ambidexterity is used as a metaphor for organizations that are equally dexterous at exploiting and exploring. An ambidextrous organization maintains a high degree of balance between exploitation (learning via local search, experiential refinement, and reuse of existing knowledge), and exploration (learning gained through processes of concerted variation, planned experimentation, and play)." (Simsek 2009: 597)

Moreover,

> "an organizational context may enable individuals to consider both exploitative and explorative aspects of their work; when they try to be effective (doing the right things), they also think about how to be efficient (doing the things right)." (Simsek, 2009: 602)

Whether as an individual skill or a collective asset, it makes room for "balancing" them and combining an « absorptive capacity » (within the IO) with a « networking capacity » (towards is environment). Its origins may be found in ordinary slack or organizational crises, whether it is positively related to organizational survival (Raisch, Birkinshaw, Probst, and Tushman 2009) or negatively related to it (Levinthal

[5] « A cushion of actual or potential resources which allow an organization to adapt successfully to internal pressures for adjustment or to external pressures for change in policy, as well as to initiate changes in strategy with respect to the external environment » (Bourgeois, 1981: 30); « The difference between the resources of the organization and the combination of demands made on it (…) providing resource buffers between parts of the organization. » (Cohen, March, and Olsen, 1972: 12); « Those resources, which an organization has acquired that are not committed to a necessary expenditure. In essence these resources an be used in a discretionary manner » (Dimick and Murray 1978); « various ways in which (visible an deployable) resources and energy that may be devoted to pursuing organizational goals have been channelled to other things » (Levinthal and March, 1993).

and March 1993; March 1991). Of course, efficacious leaders are supposed to be ambidextrous since they are selected for their paradoxical mindset as well as their ability to do several things simultaneously. Talking about ambidexterity is also addressing the issue of leadership, which is not owned by MS but certainly much debated there and more advanced than is the case in PS or IR.

Taken together, these concepts upgrade our knowledge of the reasons why an IO is both performing (at least, "processually") and resilient (so far) despite so many divergences with the rational model of a Weberian organization. Its sustainability resists the most publicized crises and the most criticized inertia since it gently combines slack with ambidexterity to achieve contradictory aims: balancing between hindsight, insight and foresight (or: past, present, and future); accommodating demands from external beholders and inside agents (or: their environment and the internal fabric of their normative activity); transforming IOs' local perimeter of action and contributing to an aggregate regulation of global sources of disorder.

So far, so good: the above discussion of MS concepts is an invitation to dig deep into the machinery of IOs. My advocacy for a new science of IO would be incomplete, however, if I were unable to provide guidance for the study of the fabric of the organization of the world through IOs networking.

Part 4. The science of International Organization as an external process: from discord to collaboration

Instead of going upstream (at the roots of organizations), let us make prospects downstream (and look for the bases of a new world order in the making). As previously said, this implies a shift from IOs in the plural to International Organization in the singular.

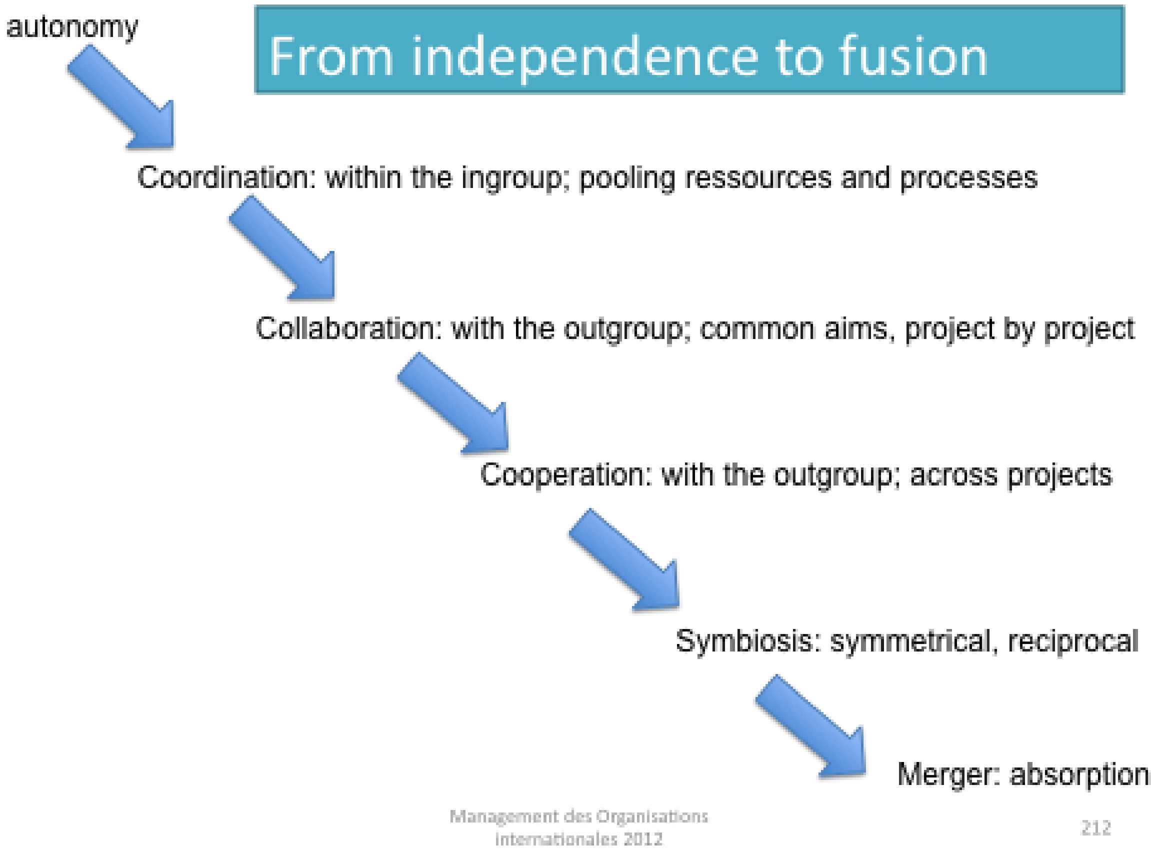
The graph below shows how IOs may network and aggregate to "rule the world". Based on the "coalesce or collapse" paradigm (first developed with Wolf-Dieter Eberwein in 2005: Eberwein & Schemeil 2010) it is focussed on one presumed IOs' basic need: being as independent from peer organizations as possible. Note that this does not entail a claim for independence from their stakeholders, noteworthy their member states (IGOs) or their constituency (NGOs) among dedicated militants. To the opposite, IOs' agents protest against outside visions of their work describing them as being motivated by a search for *discretion* (in the means used to reach their goals, a non divisive issue) or *autonomy* (which implies liberty to set new goals). To the external investigator they oppose their organization's constitution and pledge to stick to it. Note, also, that modelling the interactions between IOs instead of interactions between governments is not conditioned on the preliminary adoption of a "world government" scenario. Such a teleological end of history (Wendt 2003) is not part of a program to upgrade the study of IOs into a science of IO. Actually, the mechanical processes that push IOs staff towards controlling for undesired encroachment and turn it into acceptable overlap may well stops at a "mesopolitical" level, in the middle of the road from micropolitics within IOs to world macropolitics.

This meso level is harbouring "collaborative entities". I use this concept to define, depict, and explain private and public institutions or networks whose very existence depends on their cooperative capabilities. Actually, mesopolitics actors are mushrooming; they are differentiating as well, so as to modify deeply the existing division of labour between them; finally, their relationships are denser instead of becoming more tense. Since they are mutually adjusting and due to their permanent quest for an enduring status in an unstable world, they proliferate at a rhythm unexpected by their founding fathers. Very few disappear or soft-pedal for long periods of time. Accordingly, they all are vying for power with the big fish - the major nation states. Moreover, they add a new type of cooperative arrangement to the two existing ones: alongside inter-individual and intergovernmental coordination schemes, "multilateral" cooperative frameworks matter.

What are the consequences of the growing space of mesopolitics on domestic and intergovernmental politics? Since States are coordination entities, originally called for by individual actors and communities when and only when they failed to solve most collective action problems and try to select the most appropriate level of coordination to reduce their transaction costs, IOs come as the immediate upper level of coordination and accommodation of contradicting demands. Because there is a growing imbalance between the increasing number of calls to enhance basic individual rights and their unsatisfying implementation worldwide, IOs open new windows of opportunity to private actors claiming that their home state must adopt like-minded norms and enfranchise people. Moreover, as IGOs' and NGOs' offers on the global consumer market of basic rights are exponentially growing and overbidding, there is virtually no end to the spiral of demands for empowerment. Demand will always lag behind offer because the harsh competition between mesopolitical actors predominantly concerned about their own survival is conducive to an ever-expanding bunch of new claims. The IOs' answer to this empowerment trap is to encroach on one or several neighbour organizations' territory and force them to cooperate.

Endowed with some discretion to implement their constituents' decisions (be they governments or militants), any individual IO is likely to extend its mandate and adjust for changes in its environment that outdate its initial goals and perimeter of action. I gave number of examples of such mandate enlargements in previous texts (Schemeil 2010; 2011; 2012, a, b, c), noteworthy WMO, IAEA, WIPO; but new instances are attested in the course of surveying IOs and entering into the universe of new ones. Hence, most conceivable itineraries (as in graph 1) may be used by IOs according to their global *sociability* and their degree of *specialisation*.

GRAPH 1: International Organization as the possible outcome of IOs strategies



Note that scholars often privilege competition over collaboration, on a parallel with states' uneasy interdependence and rarely address IO's collaboration (exceptions are Keohane 1998; Gehring and Oberthur 2009). When they do, they search for barriers to collaborative behaviour. For instance, some will insist on "forum-shopping" practices that induce IOs into competitive policies (Busch 2007) and put IOs' role at the bottom of their priorities since states assess their "approach to universal (UN) multilateralism versus selective club (G20/IFIs/WTO) multilateralism", and ask how to categorize countries "as stabilizers, hedgers, or transformers?" (Alexander and Cooper 2010). Although IOs matter ("Is there a sense of rise or fall in setting the rules of the international system?"), they are but national governments options[6].

Consequently, there I much to do before reaching a satisfying level of knowledge on IOs, conceived as proactive and collaborative agents of change in IR that could trigger an "orchestration" of world governance (Abbott and al. 2010). Alternative models should be tested, to overcome the limits of existing ones. For instance, the model schematized in graph 1 may be criticized as tautological, since IOs that are compelled to merge into a superior and integrated unit loose their autonomy: their journey

[6] In Alexander and Cooper 2010, chapters of the book « analyze different models of international cooperation, the states that have most actively challenged the existing order, and leading and emergent international institutions such as the G-20, the nascent regime for sovereign wealth funds, the International Atomic Energy Agency, and the entities organized to foster cooperation in the war on terror ». Safe for the IAEA, this is a drift from a focus on classical IOs.

towards independence therefore stops at less margin for manoeuvre for each individual component of the new Organization, although the latter will be consolidated compared to other actors of the world system. Such a graph has but on merit: it makes visible the net contribution of international organizations to International Organization. Coalescence and networking of the "unlike-units" are at the roots of a new world order (Schemeil 2009; 2012 b).

To sum up the arguments of this section: in the mesopolical space IOs matter as much as states but they may better meet individual and collective claims since they operate one level up and enrich the variety of targets of popular demands. In this process, they must opt for collaboration or competition: most will choose to cooperate, if only to secure their middle ground position between two ends – dreamed autonomy and undesired merger.

Concluding remarks

In this paper, I have tried to give ground to a science of International Organization(s) as a discipline of its own, which could encompass or substitute studies of individual IOs. To deserve such a treatment it should explain how international organizations contribute to world order while doing business on a day-today basis. Furthermore, IOs should neither be mistaken for security arrangements on the UN model, nor confused with sovereign states, let alone other usual stakeholders of world politics that matter less and have a much more limited scope of activity.

Above all, the field should include three levels of action and interaction: firstly, the relationships between IOs and their stakeholders (the usual content of mainstream studies on IOs whether fed by political science approaches or international studies perspectives); secondly, the internal machinery of individual IOs (for which management Studies and Organization Theory are of great help); thirdly, the aggregate outcome of IOs' interactions among themselves (a dive into the world order contested and sketchy subfield of IR, see Gehring and Oberthur 2009). In the first case, IOs are *agents* of principals, instruments of governments (IGOs) or social movements (NGOs); in the second and third, they are *actors* of their own fate. These statements are summed up in the following table.

(Table 2 about here)

Of course, this paper is based on a counterfactual argument (which makes it

Object	Method	IOs status
The relationships between IOs and their stakeholders	Political science /+ International Studies IOs from the outside	IOs as agents
The internal machinery of individual IOs	Management Studies + Organization Theory IOs from within	IOs as actors
The aggregate outcome of IOs' interactions among themselves	World Order, Global Studies IOs from above	IOs as drivers

"unrealistic" as well as "non realist" in international studies vernacular): it is most likely that such a discipline will follow the path already dug by negotiation studies – whose founding fathers still regret sixty years after the lack of consistency (Dupont 2011)– instead of being recognized as a form of independent knowledge. Efforts to advocate the legitimacy of a new field are not turned towards full success: they claim that International Organization as an object cannot be monopolized by any established discipline. Internationalists and political scientists have a stake in it, for sure; but this is nonetheless true of organization theorists, specialists of public administration and management scholars who all can benefit from this move towards better fluency in basic knowledge about IOs and IO. Additionally, IO is not merely determined by States, especially powerful ones, not to speak o hegemonic entities. This is often true, but not in any circumstance. There are contexts in which IOs manage to shape outcomes with little influence of major stakeholders, noteworthy when cooperative, integrative and regulatory negotiations prevail over conflictual, distributive, and interest-driven negotiations (Dupont 2004; Graz 2012).

To sum up the argument of the paper, to better address international organizations multiple faces, one should combine disciplines and trespass their boundaries instead of sticking to existing subfields of PS, IR, OT, MS. Logical and psychological barriers to such a thought experience towards establishing a new branch of knowledge should be overwhelmed, despite their truth content – every discipline introduces a new artificial discontinuity in the continues texture of reality; every move towards more naturalism is debatable. Otherwise, the study of IOs would remain a study of a stealth organization process, as there is a "stealth democracy".

Starting from Ness and Brechin's seminal paper on IOs as organisations, this paper refreshes and completes their intuitions, then try to make testable statements about the likely content of a full-fledged science of organization as both structures and processes. Of course, this text is a provisional draft, which may simply call for a third cut in incoming years.

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