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► **To cite this version:**

Wolf-Dieter Eberwein, Yves Schemeil. If you cant beat them join them. World International Studies Conference, Aug 2005, Instabul, Turkey. halshs-00382605

HAL Id: halshs-00382605

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00382605>

Submitted on 9 May 2009

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IF YOU CAN'T BEAT THEM JOIN THEM: INTERORGANIZATIONAL COOPERATION

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(First draft – Comments are welcome. Not for quotation without the authors' agreement)

Abstract: The ability or inability of international cooperation has long been a challenged issue in international relations theory. International organizations as candidates for this particular kind of activity, however, have long been ignored by scholars, more interested in the study of international regimes and institutions. The following analysis starts with international intergovernmental organizations as its focus. The problem is to what extent they are actually more or less autonomous specialized agents, confronted on the one hand with their principals, the states, on the other with an increasingly complex environment. The latter is problematic as functional specialization in an interdependent environment enhances the likelihood of failure in performance. One way to overcome the problem induced by the growing complexity of the environment which international organizations are faced with is not just ad hoc collaboration or routine coordination but rather inter-organizational cooperation thereby gaining greater autonomy from the states and substituting some loss in their individual autonomy with greater independence and collective leverage. The paper analyses in greater detail the various adaptation strategies IGOs have chosen. As it turns out power, expertise and legitimacy seem to determine simultaneously the choice to either cooperate or not.

Paper prepared for presentation at the World International Studies Conference, Istanbul, August 24-27, 2005.

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1. Introduction: Why cooperate?

Why cooperate rather than compete? If international actors choose the first alternative, what is the kind, and what the scope of their collaboration? These research questions concerning cooperation represent still a puzzle for international relations theorists. Thus far no comprehensive theoretical approach is available explaining intergovernmental cooperation in a state dominated world. Therefore it comes as no surprise that a theory of cooperation between states in general, between intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) in particular is an underdeveloped issue area in the scholarly literature. In contrast, the practitioners in the IGO

world devote a lot of time and energy to address it: in every meeting there is the unavoidable topic on the agenda that Cox and Jacobsen (1973) call “boundary-decisions”. For the IGO agents this issue might be both a threat and a promise: either “infringements on the organization’s mandate” or “extensions of its own mandate”. Yet the states do not take full advantage of the cooperation framework that international organizations potentially provide them with. They seem prefer to minimize the possibilities of joint programs by the organisations themselves in order to maintain their control.

The study of cooperation between international organizations is therefore a challenging task. The more so, since the rare studies available display a strong tendency to make rational choice assumptions, in line with the “rational design of international institutions” project. Cooperation (i.e., between states) is a matter of balancing cost and utility. If the collaboration payoffs are small compared to the commitments made, intergovernmental cooperation is unlikely. The argument could be applied by way of analogy to IGOs. But how could one assess the shape of their “utility curve”¹ as they deliver global and public goods that are not divisible? States and individuals have a stake in the preservation of the environment, security, the protection of human rights, etc. In contrast to states lagging behind, IGOs seem to prefer more interagency cooperation rather than less, not necessarily because they are like it but rather as an unavoidable necessity for fulfilling their respective mandates. Rational choice models have difficulties to account for this discrepancy in desired and actual cooperation between IGOs which is neither zero (as predicted by some RC models of state behaviour) nor strong (as expected using public economy tools) but somewhere in the middle².

Whereas these postulated barriers to cooperation are endogenously determined there is also an exogenous factor most RC analyses of cooperative behaviour do not fully appreciate. They make strong assumptions about the level of support from the electorate or the “selectorate” (a more exclusive club of stakeholders). They tie the rulers’ propensity to cooperate with the ebb and flow of support for cooperation. If voters want interstate or interagency cooperation, then

¹ If there is one: according to a rational choicer, Michael Gilligan (2004), no contradiction exists between deepening an existing interstate cooperation and enlarging it to new member states (there is no trade off between broader and deeper cooperation). With one exception, the EU: this of course alleviates the convincing strength of the model. It nonetheless contributes to support our hypothesis on one point: within the ideal world of rational mathematicians states can gain from cooperation even if newcomers are less “cooperative” than the founding members of a multilateral coalition.

² Actually, it may even be argued that cooperation as such is the only global public good that states and IGOs try to deliver in multilateral forums. Consequently, their relative failure to apportion specific or secondary global public goods (such as a less polluted air) should matter less than their capacity to deliver a primary good, cooperation in itself (Schemel, 2000).

governments will comply and support more collaboration; if not, rational rulers will be reluctant or even opposed to it. Change on the part of the electorate seems to have taken place in the aftermath of 1989 as more and more political regimes became democratic adopting a more cooperative stance than their authoritarian predecessors. This is particularly the case in trade issues - a realm in which LDC's leaders were mostly responsive to a tiny elite of local industrialists needing trade barriers. Following the fall of the Berlin wall the present electorate eventually overruled this old "selectorate" (Milner & Kubota, 2005). As far as IGOs are concerned, the problem with this analysis is the observed caution of the states which precludes IGOs from better adjusting to each other's decisions because they fear to trespass their mandate.

Rational choice analyses are firmly grounded in economic theory which accounts to some extent to their shortcomings when applied to the IGO world. Admittedly, in economics specialization and functional differentiation are the dominant strategies of the firms. Their relevant operational environment consists of competitors, each of whom wants to keep if not enlarge its market share. A necessary condition for competition is that the goods and services are comparable or substitutable. This is at least in theory conducive to stability which characterizes an ideal economic order. According to the axiomatic belief of neo-realist theorists, international politics is reduced to the prevention of the loss of power, its maintenance or its enlargement in order to survive in such an anarchic system, the inter-state system can indeed be conceptualized in these micro-economic terms and competition (i.e. most prominently Waltz, 1979)³. This conceptualization of the international politics means focusing primarily on competition, market survival and market shares. International organizations - governmental or nongovernmental - can be conceptualized correspondingly as agents of their principals, the nations (Cooley & Ron, 2002). For these two types of actors, however, the economic analogy is only valid as long as they are service providers, competing for the same scarce resources allowing them to do so. But in reality, IGOs are not competitors in the classical sense. Functionally different each of them is active in a specific market which theoretically means that they are independent of each other or complementary in terms of their production.

³ It is noteworthy that Waltz is primarily interested in major powers, i.e. a maximum of seven nations (historically the maximum level ever obtained).

Even though it may be naïve to overlook the importance of power in international politics, states nevertheless are also preoccupied with the creation and maintenance of international order (Leca, 2000). The growing importance of international law⁴ is a clear evidence of this (List/Zangl, 2004:361-2). International governmental organizations have been created as agents to contribute to building the desired, and adapt to, the existing orders⁵. This is why states as well as international organizations differ in one fundamental way from firms: their goal is not just the maximization of gains (or power-which might be the case from a purely sociology of organisation's perspective) but also the production of norms and rules defining the international order at any time. In addition, neither the producer of, say, cars nor the consumer has to bother about the problems created by production as well as consumption. Resource depletion and air pollution are externalities neither the producer nor the consumers directly pay for. In contrast, states as well as international organizations deal with these externalities (i.e. air pollution or traffic jams).

International organizations, one could certainly argue, have to sell" what they "produce". But we are speaking here about a different type of production. On the one hand, they produce information, concepts and justifications of their strategies as how to intervene in the political, economic or social structures of societies and how. On the other hand they deliver services by actually intervening in those structures based on expectations about specific outcomes. That is to say that they are agents in the construction of order by simultaneously creating, specifying, diffusing and/or applying specific norms. Their primary role is thus normatively grounded. In this they differ from firms selling products on a market without aiming at changing their consumers' behaviour⁶. The normative foundations of the economic order are taken for granted.

IGO performance results from their interference in politics and societies. This intervention is a risky enterprise because the structures in which these organizations intervene are complex and very often badly understood. Development aid, for example, has been criticized as being a total failure, notwithstanding the fact that empirical research does not support this assessment⁷. The strategies of aid relied on the then state-of-the-art scientific knowledge which turned out to be

⁴ The number of conventions etc. has risen from 2000 in 1950 to approximately 55,000 by 2000 (List/Zangl, 2003:371)

⁵ We speak of orders in order to take into account the various domains in which specific IGOs are active.

⁶ No firm would advertise its product as a health hazard that should therefore not be bought.

⁷ There is a long-ongoing debate among economists which, thus far, has not produced any definite results. See among others the discussion by Ram (2003) and Ovaska (2005).

deficient. In Jessica Eihorn's (2001: 30) words, for example, the World Bank "absorbs and expounds the huge prescriptive literature on development without acknowledging that knowing the destination does not produce a road map for getting there".

These general remarks point to the overall problem of knowledge constitutive for the intervention dilemma of any social or political actor (an issue to which we will come back below). This dilemma will be more or less acute for the actors as a function of the specific logic of action which may be an obstacle to, or rather inviting interagency cooperation. March and Olsen (1998) identified two ideal types of logics of action (further refined by Risse, 2004:19-22) the "logic of consequences" and the "logic of appropriateness". The logic of consequences assumes cause-effect relationships such as for example the belief that military strength is the best guarantee for survival. It assumes that the cause-effect relations within a specific issue area are more or less independently from the environment. But this logic can lead to arms races, for example, which might finally lead to a war the armament efforts were intended to prevent. One implication might be what March and Olsen call the "competency trap". That is the specialists unconditionally operate along the lines prescribed by their knowledge and expertise. The result is the resistance to change and thus a lack of adaptation⁸.

The logic of appropriateness is based upon the assumption that it is moral or ethical to intervene somewhere even though the actors do not have specific knowledge as to the consequences their activities might have. The consequences could turn out to be counterproductive such as the unconditional support of victims in a given conflict area. It may be a cause of a conflict or its prolongation (see i.e. Lischer, 2003). This illustrates the second point made, that this kind of logic which is constitutive for the creation or maintenance of international order, may also be counterproductive due to the lack of knowledge as how to achieve the desirable end. Nonetheless, given the acknowledged lack of complete information, such an approach should be supportive of cooperation yet at the same time it could also lead to the rigid conviction that the imposed strategy is the best. The IMF could be a good example of this kind of conviction expressed in its various stabilisation programmes.

What is the crucial point to be derived from these preliminary remarks? International organizations, whether state or non-state, are designed upon premises which are necessary but problematic: first their interventions require *knowledge* about the complex environment in which they intervene but which they do not necessarily have although most of them are

⁸ As Maslow said, at one point : if you have a hammer, you treat anything as a nail !

considered as “knowledge-based” institutions. But, as we pointed out, one cannot exclude the possibility that by pooling knowledge the margin of error or failure can be reduced. Secondly, they need some *power* to be able to intervene effectively. That is, the mandates or missions must be supplemented with sufficient resources. And thirdly, in order to succeed they need to command some degree of *legitimacy*. If the agent intervening does not command some support nor is perceived as satisfying some perceived needs the intervention might actually fail.

To what extent cooperation between agencies help solve these three dilemmas? This is precisely our research question. We postulate that inter-organizational cooperation can in effect increase the knowledge base, the power and the legitimacy of the intervening agents. At first glance, cooperation is a prerequisite to both success in intervention, autonomy of decisions, and legitimacy of their outcomes. Functional specialization in an interdependent environment enhances the likelihood of failure in performance whereas the joint production of global public goods and services, the protection of universal rights, and the capture of large scale externalities can be enhanced. Moreover, one can argue that cooperation between organizations may collectively enlarge their individually restricted power and legitimacy.

There are also three plausible arguments, however, speaking in favour of the minimum of cooperation between agencies. First there could be the desire to avoid infringement on their principals’ power because the states pursuing diverging aims in different organizations would be opposed to the potential empowerment of IGOs that could result from their cooperating with each other. Second, IGOs themselves individually oppose an increased dependence on the knowledge and expertise produced and disseminated by other IGOs and their larger and composite epistemic communities in order to retain their autonomy. And, third, they may fear that rather than gaining in legitimacy they will either gain little’ or, what is also possible, experience a net loss. If the leading organization in a coalition of IGOs is also the core institution in a capitalist and free trade world disseminating its own individualistic values through its economic organizations and security alliances, agencies with a good record in cultural and humanitarian issues and cooperating with the former will loose their credentials among anti-globalization NGOs and demonstrators. Therefore, we must explain whether, and if so, how these two contradictory trends are present. This presupposes identifying the causes of both positive and negative factors determining interagency cooperation.

Before going further, it is necessary to give our own vision of interagency cooperation among IGOs. By doing so, we will emphasize primarily collaboration, cooperation and coordination

between international organizations. But it is also clear, that the intra-organisational dimension is equally crucial from the perspective of the process of adaptation of IGOs. As Dijkzeul and Beigbeder (2003a) have convincingly argued, both dimensions are in need of systematic research thus far lacking. Our core argument is straightforward: the greater the level of interdependence and complexity within and between societies and states, the greater the need to adapt by coordinating the activities within and between specific functional areas in order to achieve not only greater coherence, efficiency and effectiveness, but also to maintain if not increase the support of all stakeholders, hence increase the global level of legitimacy for a given international order or its change.

In this paper, we will ourselves to international intergovernmental organizations. The reason for excluding the NGOs from the discussion is obvious. In contrast to IGOs the former do not have a formal mandate accorded to them by an international agreement. NGOs therefore have to struggle to get access to the governments both nationally and internationally for influence. They also have problems as how to get organized, either as strong transnational organizations or as transnational networks in the form of coalitions (such as the consortium for the banning of the anti-personal landmines), confederations or federations (such as the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent). Cooperation and coordination among NGOs differs in comparison to IGOs⁹. Finally, the relationship between NGO and IGOs is asymmetric: NGOs are either patronized by IGOs, subcontractors of NGOs or act independently from them¹⁰.

In the following we firstly review some of the main shortcomings in the study of international organizations and develop the problems resulting from the functional differentiation and division of labour within and among international organizations; we then outline the different approaches that explain under what conditions and to what end strategies of cooperation, collaboration and coordination between international organizations help them to adjust to the ever growing complexity of their environment. Secondly, we present our empirical findings by analysing the various strategies that international organizations have developed either to enlarge their area of competence, to increase their respective legitimacy basis through inter-

⁹ This issue has been addressed by Lindenberg/Bryant (2001). Difficulties arise, among others because of different cultures of organizations from the same family such as Caritas, MSF or Oxfam. One could also point to new trends in particular the establishment of cooperative links between NGOs and the business world (cf. among others Baddache, 2005; Igalens/Queinnec, 2004).

¹⁰ Young (2000) has argued that the relationship between NGOs and their cooperating partners can lead to various alternative linkages: partner, subcontractors and possibly adversaries.

organizational cooperation or refrain from cooperative activities. Finally, we will sum up our findings and point to some of the theoretical implications.

2. Theoretical issues

In his classical study Inis Claude (1964:3) observes that “[T]he growing complexity of international relations has already produced international organizations; the world is engaged in the process of organizing”. He defines international organization as a process whereas international organizations are representative aspects of the phase that process has been reached at a given time (Claude, 1964:4). We prefer to understand by international organization (IO) the structural dimension, i.e. the various actors and the way they are linked or not. The process in turn can be understood more specifically as the interactions taking place among them. In their review article “International organizations and institutions” Simmons and Martin (2002:193; see also Martin/ Simmons, 1998) argue that the centrality of international organizations in the study of international relations has waxed and waned yet, as they postulate as well, that they deserve attention as agents because of their agenda-setting influence. In addition they also play a role as socializing agents. One of the problems is that the term “international organization” has been at least partially subsumed under the study of “international regimes”, and later, “international institutions” (with a strong component of international Law and a frequent stress on the UN system). The consequence is that the structural complexity of the individual organisations and the specific interdependencies among are lost out of sight.

Nobody would challenge the assumption that IGOs contribute (or are intended to contribute) to the creation and maintenance of international order. To realist and neo-realist thinking international institutions are rooted in the interaction of power and interest (op.cit:195). At the core is the issue of cooperation primarily among states and IGOs as their agents under the conditions of anarchy. Keohane (1984) and the research following suggested that cooperation is possible under specific conditions where states avoid short-term interests. A good example is the analysis by Rittberger (1990) showing under what conditions cooperation is facilitated. Among other scholars Koremenos et al. (2002) explored variations across institutions along five dimensions of institutional design which move into the specifics of the organizations. That type of research is assuming market failure leading to the establishment of such institutions.

The English school of international relations (see among others Bull, Wight) as well as more recently the Copenhagen school (i.e Buzan et al.) postulate an international society thereby leading to the study of norms and the resulting institutions indicative of the underlying normative structure evolving.

More recent developments, as Simmons and Martin (2002:201-203) argue, take increasingly advantage of theories developed in domestic politics, such as informational models from legislative processes, distributional models (allowing to build majorities in areas where major particularistic interest dominate, or addressing the issue of legitimacy where output legitimacy is more relevant than input legitimacy defining democratic processes. One could also add that the borders between international relations theory and comparative politics are increasingly becoming porous respectively less and less relevant (cf. Russett, 2003). Simmons and Martin (2002:205) conclude that this particular area of research has “furthered our understanding of the complex milieu in which institutions operate by systematically examining the relationships between governments, domestic coalitions, IGOs and transnational actors”

Their overall conclusion contrasts with the one Dijkzeul and Beigbender (2003b:5) draw in their overview of extant research: “despite their growth, international organizations have not received much theoretical and empirical attention over the last three or four decades”. They continue by stating that “over the” last two or three decades, the debate on international organizations has been characterized by a continuous lament that more and better study is required” (Dijkzeul and Beigbender, 2003b:9). They draw the conclusion that rather than posing the question why international organizations fail one should ask how they actually function. This goes clearly against authors such as Barnett and Finnemore (1998) who look at IGOs from the perspective of their dysfunctions. If Dijkzeul and Beigbender are right such a perspective presupposes a sound theoretical and empirical basis to start from-which we do not have. Their argument complements the dilemma of interdependence which the functional division of labour among organizations and actors implies, in that it is replicated within the functional organizations themselves.

2.1 International organizations and the consequences of complex interdependence

What is the role of international organizations, what are the consequences of growing international interdependence and how do they adapt to a changing international environment?

Dijkzeul and Gordenker (2003:315) taking growing international interdependence as a given, postulate that the particular problems involved in the study of international organizations is related to four issues that determine their activity: first, the division of people and territories into independent states, second, the functional differentiation among organizations; third, the division of labour among organizations and within them, and, finally, the separation of decision making and policy making from execution.

The first observation is fundamental: international organizations are not simply executing “orders” of the member states. They do have a life of their own. The second observation is crucial, since functional differentiation is equivalent to the double production effect postulated in the introduction. Each organization is active in a particular segment of reality. Functional differentiation corresponds to what constructivists identify as specific constructions of reality. This is definitely true but trivial. However, anything but trivial are the consequences of this statement. Every organization has a specific concept as to its particular domain of activity such as the Whaling Commission limiting itself to whales, the World Bank being endowed with the mandate to further economic growth and welfare, or Médecins sans Frontières as a medical organization primarily active in humanitarian emergencies. At this point it is irrelevant whether states define the mandate of a specific organization (as in the case of the first two) or whether the third has more or less autonomously defined what it does.

This functional differentiation more or less automatically leads to the intervention dilemma referred to above. This dilemma arises if a number of conditions are not met: 1. the functional area the organization is active in is more or less insulated from its environment even though parts of the environment may in effect be constitutive from a sub-systemic or systemic perspective; 2. the mandate of the organization is such, that it has means to intervene successfully, i.e. producing the expected results (reducing poverty, for example in a particular country) even though it is unclear whether the means are actually adequate; 3. the organization has the means to intervene successfully (money, personnel, time etc.) but due to lack of professional skills, legitimacy and support it fails to actually fulfil its mandate.

These individual problems taken together constitute the intervention dilemma. Reality can not be reduced to isolated cause-effect relationships, the underlying logic of organizational design. Successfully fighting the HIV/AIDS pandemic implies much more than distributing antiretroviral drugs. How complex that relationship is and what some of the consequences of the dynamics of this problem are has been analyzed in greater detail by the Population Action

International Report “The Security Demographic” (Cincotta et al., 2003). Following Donella Meadows (1999: 1) the problem is not necessarily a lack of knowledge, i.e. uncertainty, but rather that one of the problems in intervention is not that people do not know the leverage point to use but rather that “everyone is trying very hard to push it *in the wrong direction*”. Thus either the lack of knowledge or the wrong conclusions derived from valid knowledge can indeed lead to problems in any functionally well-circumscribed area.

The third issue relates to the division of labour among organizations following directly from the specification of the particular functional sector. The international system is a complex dynamic nonlinear system which is at the core of the problem of uncertainty referred to earlier. Dissecting the real world into different functional sectors leads to several follow-up problems. First, within a sector the problem of coordination may be recognized and practiced as necessary but does not work. To give one example, Minear (1999:300) cites the study commissioned by the UN’s Interagency Steering Committee (IASC) in charge of the humanitarian sector: “[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”. In other words, 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 organization itself¹¹, between organizations in the same functional area, and between organizations across different functional areas (a good example is the economic sector and the environment).

Turning to the fourth and final issue Dijkzeul and Gordenker (2003) raise, the separation of decision-making and policy making from execution refers to the fact that whereas at the top level of the organization strategic decisions are made, they still need to be transformed into concrete action plans which can then be executed. Good examples would be the Millennium Project with one of its goals: the reduction of poverty by 50 percent; or the Kyoto Protocol to reduce the CO₂ emissions by 2012 to the levels of 1990. These are clearly strategic decisions. There are several ways as how to go about in order to achieve these goals. How they are translated into concrete programs of action is but one part of the problem, another is how they are in fact implemented, and, finally, what the results are.

¹¹ A good example is what the secretary general of a big French humanitarian organization told us. In the first days of January he ordered the person in charge of fundraising to stop any further activities as the funds that came in were more than sufficient. The absorption capacity had been reached. The fundraiser, however, wanted to continue to do so, “just a little bit, as funds poured in so easily as never before.

The provisional conclusion to be drawn is that the issue of adaptation of IGOs to their changing environment is an area of research that needs further attention, taking into account both the internal dimension as well as the inter-organisational dimension (see Dijkzeul/Gordenker, 2003: 331-33). This inference follows directly from the assumption of growing interdependence. The linkage between terrorism which is anything but a new phenomenon and poverty (equally and old reality of international life) has only been “discovered” recently. Thus how international organizations adjust over time to the growing number of linkages that are more and more dense becomes crucial. We contend that part of the intervention dilemma with which states and international organizations are confronted with can be if not overcome but to some extent mitigated through adequate cooperation and coordination.

2.2 International organizations, international order and adaptation

Thus far we have only raised a whole set of issues implying that the study of international organizations is an underdeveloped field in IR. But before going into greater detail we have to narrow down the topic of inquiry. International governmental organizations are creatures of the states. As such they are genuine subjects of international law¹². They have a more or less clearly defined domain of activity, are formally as agents subject to the authority of the states, their principals. As such, they are constitutive elements of international orders (March/Olson, 1998), created by states and designed to contribute to that end. The problem arises, as March and Olson (1998:968) suggest, that “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”. *If interdependence and connectedness are present*, which is clearly the case, *adaptation occurs* (or rather should take place) at two levels: first internally, 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 clearly is. Thus, WHO had to adapt internally which the governments did as well by creating UNAIDS¹³. The process of internal adaptation, however, has to be put into perspective with the relevant environment. They also need to adapt externally in that functional

¹² See the first report on the responsibility of international organizations submitted to the General Assembly of the UN, A/CN.4/532

¹³ Another example would be the inclusion of gender based violence (GBV) in the reproductive health program by WHO.

divisions may turn out to be obsolete, either because the issue area is defined too narrowly (i.e. health issues) or because of the recognition of critical linkages across issue areas (health and environment).

IGOs have several mutually not necessarily exclusive options as how to adapt to these changing conditions. As they cannot change the environment as such nor overcome the inherent difficulties social systems as complex dynamic systems imply, they have several alternatives at their disposal: *competition*, *collaboration*, *cooperation*, and *coordination*. *Competition* implies mandate enlargement; *collaboration* means IGOs agree reluctantly to work out joint programs because this is the only way to reduce an existing threat-what “alliances” stand for, whereas the appropriate word in the non defence sector is “partnership”; *cooperation* is the best way to pool resources and skills and achieve desirable collective goals, whatever the transaction costs may be for each contributor; *coordination* includes both collaboration and cooperation, since it relies on coalitions against a possible harm (collaboration), and joint ventures to address an expected public good (cooperation).

Neorealist and neoinstitutionalist theories diverge on the role of cooperation: according to the former, there is no independent inter-organizational cooperation, because states cooperate through coalitions either with or without institutions; for the latter, states could not collaborate without the negotiating facilities offered by international fora, as shown by the failure of the balance of power mechanism at the end of the eighteenth century before the Congress of Vienna multiplied international conferences. In order to gain some further insight, we go back to two prominent authors whose reputation is but little connected to the issue of international organizations, Arnold Wolfers (1962) and Kenneth Waltz (1979).

In his famous book, *Discord and Collaboration*, Wolfers argues 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”, are “promises of future *assistance*”; Wolfers, 1962: 182). 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” (Wolfers, 1962: 27). The EU is a good example of an in principle indefinitely lasting inner-oriented cooperative framework, whereas NATO is limited in time determined by the existing threat. According to Wolfers cooperation, using our definition, will not take place.

What will be feasible is collaboration where IGOs are but “*corporate* actors”. They “play the role of *coactors* with the nation-states”, what we may call partners to use a UN sponsored understatement.

The second well established scholar that we want to revisit briefly is Kenneth Waltz. He claims that states themselves do not try to benefit from a division of labour between them because this sort of order would make them interdependent. This conclusion could easily be extended to IGOs, because they also “seek to control what they depend on or to lessen the extent of their dependency” (Waltz: 106). Nevertheless Waltz acknowledges that even if states do not cooperate deliberately, some of them (and for our purpose, specific IGOs) may be mechanically “selected” by the international structure because they display the most appropriate behaviour within the anarchic framework. If this is so, “states *alter* their behaviour because of the structure they form in interacting with others states” (Waltz, 1979: 93), among others through IGOs. Like states some IGOs will be “rewarded” because they fit the existing structure better than other organizations, the latter being “penalized” (Waltz: 106).

The competition between IGOs for survival and independence follows the same path as the competition between states. Competition is therefore arbitrated by the existing structure. IGOs such as the WTO, the World Bank, the IMF, and the WIPO tend to predominate for a simple reason: they emulate the hegemonic states’ preferences for a liberal economic system. According to Waltz, cooperation is not due to rational choice. Cooperation is automatically brought about by a chain of factors which lead states and corporate actors to adjust their behaviour to fit as precisely the existing structure. The theoretical expectation is that cooperation between international actors is not an *ex-ante* phenomenon but results *ex-post* from the sequence of decisions which eventually reach the point where states (and therefore IGOs) cooperate with one another without having planned it.

We seem thus to be faced with two contradictory explanations of international cooperation. The first postulates cooperation as rational and intentional decisions of states (Wolfers) whereas the other assumes it to be the mechanical and structural outcome in an organized world through emulation where power is unequally distributed among states (Waltz). The question is what they share in common, and second, whether they are really that different. First of all, both authors limit themselves to the issue area of security. Only if the assumption is tenable that the various issue areas are structured hierarchically with security on the top are their arguments about the limits of cooperation valid. Since Keohane and Nye (1977) published their analysis

of complex interdependence that assumption can no longer be upheld. A different argument relates to the intentional vs. mechanical explanation. If structural determinism is equated with emulation that does not at all contradict the notion of intentional behaviour. It simply means that the most powerful actors adjust rationally to the existing structure as the result of their rational calculations in order to survive¹⁴, cooperation being possibly unintended but certainly not mechanical!

For empirical purposes the problem then boils down to two related issues: first of all, which strategies these two authors do explicitly or explicitly suggest in terms of collaborative behaviour? And second, does the same logic apply to all the issue areas? Wolfers suggests two distinct strategies, the outward and the inward directed one. Adaptation in terms of the first option occurs, when states or IGOs perceive a common outside threat or-which is an element Wolfers seems to ignore-when they want what one could call upgrade the common good. Adaptation occurs if a set of actors share a compatible normative outlook. Second, adaptation may occur in the inner-directed fashion. Whereas Wolfers had in mind a protective collective move against a common external threat, this notion can be enlarged as to include the decision by two or more states or IGOs to solve a problem which requires joint action (i.e. water and health). If Waltz is in fact correct states as IGOs only collaborate in order to maintain their power status. Therefore power considerations should be the core determinant of state and IGO collaboration or cooperation.

What is enlightening in these early theoretical approaches is the distinction between major and minor actors. It seems possible to apply the same logic to the relationships between IGOs themselves, thus opposing powerful ones endowed with some hard power (the UN with its Security Council and its Courts, the WTO, the World Bank, and possibly the IMF); to less decisive organizations relying on soft power (UNESCO, WHO, WMO, ILO, FAO, WIPO). Accordingly, the “actors” whose behaviour would explain most of the “deviation” from the predicted situation would be the more prominent IGOs, whereas the less influential IGOs would be in the position of “coactors” with a *residual* capacity of influence. As a consequence one would expect corresponding processes of adaptation where major international organizations also will tend to cooperate with states to buttress or enhance their own influence, less influential IGOs would collaborate with the prominent states for the same purpose: preserving whatever impact they may have on world affairs.

¹⁴ In other words, logically the intentional and mechanical argument are not directly compatible as they relate to different analytical levels (individual vs. structural).

Turning to the second point what is paradox is that, history teaches us that *there is more substantive cooperation without a specific threat—as understood by traditional notions of security—than with it*: IGOs do cooperate but they do not necessarily consider cooperation either as a prerequisite for or as a threat to their survival¹⁵. There are areas of potential cooperation outside the narrow confines of the security domain where IGOs cooperate simply in order to upgrade their conditions of work and increase their chances of success. As most of them are not in the security issue its dominance can be contested. This does not imply that power is irrelevant. On the contrary, power is relevant if divergent notions of orders prevail. Does this mean that international organizations are just instruments of the states where IGOs are the agents of their principals, the states? Arguments derived from principal-agent theories, based in political economy show that that international organizations try to get around this conditional power issue¹⁶. The principal-agent relationship is not unidirectional because the former are to some extent dependent of the latter. The main point is that agents have been delegated a certain amount of power reflected in their institutional design, i.e. the type of their mandate and their endowment. The more specific the mandate of an organization is, the more limited its range of action. The more general the mandate the greater is the ability of the organization to define its specific activities, that is to say its autonomy. In addition, the greater the relevance of an issue area to the states is the more specific and limited will the mandate be. The security domain is highly salient to states. Therefore one would expect only limited delegation of authority. In technical areas such as the weather or telecommunications the delegation of authority can be fairly large simply because as Mitrany has suggested technical issues can be insulated from political interests¹⁷. If, the organization such as the various UN Funds do have limited resources (concretely: a limited budget), their power is limited. If however it can rely on a regular budget such as the WHO its power is enhanced.

Turning to performance Cooley and Ron (2002:13) argue that “in a market environment, characterized by uncertainty, its interests will be shaped often unintentionally by material incentives”, meaning that IGOs (as NGOs) are faced with competitive and contractual relations. This, according to their provisional findings, would lead them to give their survival

¹⁵ This argument could be based on the notion of relative gains which, however, has been contested both on theoretical as well as empirical grounds.

¹⁶ See the discussion and the references on this particular issue by Cooley/Ron (2002:9-18)

¹⁷ 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.

the top preference with the side effect of suboptimal performance. This means that the agent has any interest to withhold information as does the principal when the expected results are unsatisfactory. Performance of IGOs is not limited to contractual activities or any activities involving the funding and managing of specific projects. IGOs also respond “to normative and cultural forces that shape how organizations see the world” (Barnett/Finnemore, 1998:703), they are also involved in the process of norm creation, dissemination and socialization. One could well accept the argument of suboptimal performance and the strategy to withhold information. Yet this particular issue is related to two different aspects: on the one hand the fundamental issue of uncertainty related to their specific area of activity, on the other hand it is related to the organisational structure. In the latter case as Dijkzeul/Gordenker (2003: 322-23) have shown, there are inherent problems due to the tension between the organization’s strategic level and the actual people in the field, the classical issue in any organization. Performance can be to some extent substituted externally by drawing upon on the existing epistemic communities.

Performance is directly linked to legitimacy. Without any support nor legitimacy no organization is unable to achieve anything. IGOs are permanently confronted with this issue as the states and—more recently—NGOs demand greater accountability by pointing out their alleged lack of internal democracy and external transparency. Ironically, the adaptation of IGOs through cooperation makes them stronger and by the same token reduces transparency while at the same time the closer they get, the more able to confront critics they are. What follows from this statement is this that some IGOs might be forced into cooperation in order to enhance their performance and to gain greater legitimacy. Becoming part of a network of institutions enable them to discard any responsibility in the current woes of any country, and to benefit from any collective achievement whatever their contribution to the outcome.

We can now turn to the adaptation issue IGOs are faced with. Barnett and Finnemore (1999) deal extensively with this issue by focusing on the “pathologies” of international organizations. We will use their arguments, and expand them to more general strategic options. Each of these five pathologies which do actually capture only specific cases can be contrasted with their “non-pathological” counterparts.

First there is the *irrationality of rationalization*, thereby meaning that their regular procedures, norms and rules are applied under false premises the result being that means generally considered to be efficient (successful elections) turn out to produce counterintuitive results, an

issue treated at some length among others by Cortell and Peterson (2001). A good example of that are free elections considered to be a necessary condition for democracy. But they can be complicating rather than facilitating the transition to democracy. This was the case in Bosnia-Herzegovina where the premature elections actually legitimized the opponents of the transition to a federal state. One would expect that particular pathology to be more likely in highly specialized organizations.

The second pathology is what they call *bureaucratic universalism*. This strategy is more or less similar to the first pathology as the example they present: in the handling of the Asian financial crises “the IMF inappropriately applied standardized formula of budget cuts plus high interest rates”. The alternative in this case could be two complementary strategies: either expansion of the organizations competence or cooperating or coordinating with other organizations having the missing qualifications and competences.

The third is *normalization of deviance* which means that exceptions to rules over time become routinized. Whether we are dealing with a pathology is open. It could rather be that the existing rules are no longer efficient and adequate and are thus the result of organisational learning; Taking the World Bank as an example one could argue that their inclusion of “good governance” dimension in their programs was at the outset deviance given its economic mandate or as the then High Commissioner of Refugees, Ogata, included internally displaced persons in its programs on the Balkans, even though that fell outside its original mandate.

An interesting fourth pathology is what they call *insulation*. That means that an organization shuts itself off from feedbacks of the environment. This may not necessarily be pathological per se but rather a necessity to shield the organization off from political pressures of the various particular interests. As an example one could take the reform package submitted to the EU council with its “purely” 300 or so technical measures to be taken which then became the Single European Act. March/Olsen (1998: 956) talking about the competency trap where 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 obsolescent¹⁸.

The final pathology is what Barnet and Finnemore describe as *cultural contestation*. They see this as an internal division of the organization, where the UN in general may be a good example. Cultural contestation has also an external component which is fundamental for its

¹⁸ That could also be due to the irrationality of rationalization or bureaucratic universalism.

legitimacy, as already noted. If an IGO is identified as a “Western agent” whatever it does may indeed lead to contestation, not only within the organisation but also in relation to other potential cooperation partners or in terms of not finding the support by the envisaged beneficiaries.

Gulati (1999) has argued that interdependence favours cooperation as a function of prior cooperation among them, their joint centrality and the level of structural differentiation among them. We can specify this general observation based on our foregone analysis in terms of three general propositions. The first one reads that:

1. The propensity for inter-agency cooperation is determined by power considerations.
 - 1.a The more powerful an IGO the more likely it is to envisage cooperation if this contributes to enhance its predominance;
 - 1.b The less powerful an IGO the more likely it is to envisage cooperation in order to enhance its capacity to act.
2. The propensity of inter-agency is determined by the need to gain legitimacy irrespective of the power of the individual IGO.
3. Inter-agency cooperation increases their autonomy vis-à-vis their principals, the states.

We will turn next to our empirical findings which will lead us to further refine the crude propositions just outlined.

3. Adaptation Strategies of IGOs – The Empirical Investigation

The empirical part will proceed in several steps. We will elaborate the various strategies of adaptation through cooperation. This is necessary as the issue is not simply to account for the mechanics of it but rather how it comes about and evolves. The first is *mandate enlargement*, the second we have called *preserving autonomy?*, *enhancing legitimacy*, *partnership and harmonization*, *influence vs. power*, and *from weakness to strength*. These were inductively derived problems as they can be observed in reality. A more systematic theoretical evaluation will be postponed until the end.¹⁹

¹⁹ To this end, we collected data during the last three years. First, each of us conducted repeated in depth interviews within the IGOs he best knows; secondly, we jointly or separately supervised research either completed by students during a joint undergraduate seminar in 2003-2004, or done by graduate students in Grenoble, Berlin, Beirut, and Geneva; finally, to check the reliability of our own academic investigations, we reviewed some in-

3.1 Mandate Enlargement

In general the overall conviction prevails that IGOs cannot fulfil their specific original mandate in a globalising world because of the increasing linkages between all sort of issues. In the early 1990s security and defence institutions (like the UN and NATO), as well as economic and financial ones (like the IMF and the World Bank) could no longer ignore humanitarian, environmental, and developmental issues nor the institutions in charge of them. A former managing director of the World Bank, Jessica Einhorn, recently gave an accurate view of this IGO predicament. 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” (Einhorn, 2001: 32)²⁰. As a consequence the organisation had to put its specialized goals into perspective with other goals pre-requisites of its own success such as free elections, a well-functioning state institutions, etc. In the aftermath of the Cold War, the WB 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 (2001: 23-4) 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.”).

The accumulation of tasks seems to a major threat not only to the World Bank, but to every IGO, forced against the will of its leaders into a growingly albeit unending holistic journey. This would actually entail the loss of legitimacy as expectations about performance could in no way be matched with actual performance given the gap between diffuse goals and the

house documents (like websites and press releases), and used published testimonies from the actors themselves whenever they were available. To name but a few IGOs under review: the WTO, WIPO, WMO, WHO, UNESCO, UNEP, UNDP, UNCTAD and ITU.

²⁰ Here is indeed a vast area of investigation for the constructivists: the constructed “holistic” realities the actual professionals in charge struggle to give any practical meaning in order to be capable to implement them at some stage.

knowledge and means as how to implement them. Therefore, to prevent the loss of control of the organization if it would address too many related issues at the same time, the tendency is to redefine the 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.

The problem with this extension of its original mandate and the development of its work on corruption is twofold: first, the global linkage between economic development and political reform which eventually takes the Bank as far as “fostering democratization movements”, or “community empowerment”, is far cry from its institutional rules that “would have been considered off-limits for Bank funding in the recent past”, and a flawed assessment on “the state as providing a neutral space between market economy and civil society” (Marquette, 2004: 415-8). Moreover, the Bank cannot just “issue statements about unacceptable high-levels corruption while distancing itself from the leadership changes and political turmoil that result” (Marquette, 2004:426), leaving to other IGOs (and NGOs) the solutions of this new problems.

Such spillover is conducive to “confused” or “unrealistic” mandates (Weiss, Forsythe & Coates: 255) resulting in, “tentative” and “confused” actions (Marquette, 2004: 426). There is also the risk to be trapped in a maze of intellectual inconsistencies. This is what 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” (Marquette, 2004: 419). 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 Congress (Nielson & Tierney, 2003), this being facilitated by the existing departure from its former technical and neutral stance²¹.

Interesting to note is the fact that rather than going alone and bear the costs and critics of the potential pitfalls of mandate extensions the organisation can reach out to other institutional

²¹ 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 & Coates: 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, IGOs may be rigidified by an excess in cooperation.

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] banks role is now growing in matters such as biodiversity, ozone depletion, narcotics, crime and corruption”; these issues, all “rooted in a global concern” (Einhorn, 2001: 32), will be better addressed through a sound cooperation with, respectively, UNDP, UNEP and UNCD. According to Einhorn (2001: 33), “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.”

Cooperative moves are therefore tempting, and sometimes unavoidable, but dangerous for IGOs. Becoming more autonomous is of the essence of such a move but the path to greater room of manoeuvre via joint programs is nonetheless strenuous, the more so because cooperative actions might benefit other IGOs. In the end this might legitimate their claim to integrate existing organisations under a the roof of a new institution (like the “World Environment Organization” or the “Economic Security Council” called for in recent years by several major powers).

3.2 Autonomy First?

Growing interdependence could possibly lead to the greater empowerment of each IGO agent. This would mean emancipation from their states/principals. In reality, however, the IGOs seem to be reluctant to benefit from this potential opportunity. Rather than trying to gain some administrative leeway, IGOs agents are vying for governmental support. The very perspective to decide against the will of their members is not attractive at all, but rather deterring. The members of IGO Secretariats take great care to check that permanent representatives are actually expressing the views of their home governments. Even within the WTO whose contenders stigmatise it 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 gap between their shareholders’ previous commitments and their current behaviour.

Because the conventional wisdom within IGOs is that cooperative ventures are dangerous, our interviews with IGOs' staff members and permanent representatives converge toward the same conclusion: there is some *formal* collaboration between IGOs if, and only if, such cooperation is *substantively* unavoidable. Consultations exist because specialists of one particular aspect of the global issues under review whose competence is needed to achieve diplomatic consensus are distributed across several institutions. To give but one example: intellectual property issues are debated in several for a 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 calculus to enhance an individual IGO's relative power but something like a *mechanical* process leading to the progressive extension of the original mandate. Because the legal and somewhat artificial boundaries separating each IGO from the others do not reflect distinct policy fields that do not actually exist, specialized agencies tend to intervene into each of these fields with little consideration for resulting changes in the balance of power between them. Much overlapping and waste occurs in this process which eventually compels IGOs to scale up joint efforts beyond complementary programs.

Academics differ on the explanation of such cooperative trends (see *infra*, 3.3). Whatever their convictions may be, they all believe that some cooperation will exist when it promises to be mutually advantageous, and if there is no other way to produce a global public good²². But reality is different: according to our interviews there is a lack of cooperation at every level. Moreover, the deficit of collaboration seems even bigger *within* international agencies, than *between* them. This internal fragility jeopardizes external attempts to launch joint projects. Reluctance to change is so high that successful moves may be conditioned to *less* collaboration, not to an increase in the level of cooperation. For instance, when launching a new program experts in organizational projects never involve all the possible stakeholders within their own network at once. To quote them, no progress would be possible with too many partners since each division in each organization concerned would tend to resist innovation, protect its own territory, and monopolize any available budget for such projects.

Viewed from within, secretariats are excessively cautious, if not defiant towards overlapping bureaus and liaison officers. Perceived differences in culture, finance, and efficiency help explain this lack of confidence in other organizations' goodwill. During trade negotiations, for

²² 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. » (107).

instance, WTO representatives are cautious in their statements because they expect UNCTAD personnel to criticize their allegedly liberal ideology (see Finger/Magarinos-Ruchat, 2003:147-50). Under the same circumstances WIPO agents keep a low profile, hoping to escape the jealousy aroused by the wealth of their organization²³. WHO's physicians are not welcome in discussions on intellectual property due to a protracted tendency to equate the protection of patents with crimes against humanity. WHO's health specialists 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 venturing into a new promising realm open to cooperation with non doctors on "health and environment".

Although it is a matter of "routine" now²⁴, there are very few cases where cooperation is praised. It is so because transaction costs are anticipated, and because new projects are allegedly taking money away from existing ones, a belief which raises anxieties rather than raising hopes. Nonetheless cooperation is a fact, and it has an impact on the level of autonomy in decision making that accrues to the most cooperative IGOs. Actually, the very process of cooperation between states that most IGOs agents find so difficult to handle also opens to them unexpected avenues. This happens wherever there is a lack of coherence in the arguments used in various organizations addressing similar or related issues by representatives of the member states. It may actually happen that different negotiators belonging to the same country but having different backgrounds will use contradictory arguments instead of complementary ones. Engineers, physicians, meteorologists, lawyers, economists, bankers, artists and academics cannot address the same issues in the same way in separate and repeated negotiation rounds. In spite of hopefully identical governmental instructions, they more often than not contradict each other²⁵. This is the reason for the new tendency where ambassadors are assigned the task to check the consistency of the statements made by the national representatives in each separate negotiation forum. Yet not even ambassadors cannot bypass the heads of meteorological services in the WMO nor the heads of the Intellectual property Office within the WIPO, to take but two examples. Given the need for an overall coherence, the Secretariats of some of these

²³ 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.

²⁴ WTO interview, 30-6-05.

²⁵ WIPO interview, 30-6-05.

organizations may therefore individually or jointly impose conditions for cooperation that minimize systemic inconsistency, and this may be tacitly accepted by the governments involved in the negotiation.

That means that there is some free space for innovators within IGOs' staff", who are temporarily able to impose their own views with the tacit acceptance of the state representatives in their organization. As evidenced in many organization and management studies, "organizational slack" is therefore an unlikely but nonetheless real source of what could be called "autonomous coordination" between IGOs.

3.3 Partnership and Harmonization

Partnership is another strategy IGOs may opt for. Yet this particular approach seems closer to a simple adjustment between agencies than cooperation as we have defined it in section 2.2 ("the best way to pool resources and skills and achieve desirable collective goals, whatever the transaction costs may be for each contributor"). However, two remarks should be made here: first, as most UN agencies are independent from each other coordination is therefore primarily an internal necessity; secondly, the issue areas where coordination needs highest priority such as sustainable development and the environment, involve major non-UN organizations (like the IMF, the WB, the WTO, the EU, the CE, the OESC, NATO, etc.), numerous NGOs, and private sector lobbies. To set up a "partnership" between various institutions (IGO, NGOs, and corporations, especially within the UN system, an organization creates, first, a specific office to serve as the interface between it and its "partners". Examples are numerous, like the "Money matters" initiative within the UNDP involving private pension funds, or the UNCTAD programme for small and middle sized enterprises (EMPRETEC). Once some basic agreement is achieved the shuttle begins between the IGOs involved. Preparatory committees work out drafts proposals for forthcoming conferences²⁶. Secondly, the various UN coordination offices meet continuously, therefore devoting considerable time to coordination between the various specialized agencies²⁷. A non exhaustive list of these offices and their tasks is listed in table 1.

²⁶ Of course, there is a "Bureau for the Prepcoms" which coordinate 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.

²⁷ 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

 Table 1 about here

Another final strategy of mechanical cooperation is best described as “*harmonization*” of procedures, statistical methods²⁸, uses of emblems, logos, and standards. Harmonization may either be of the outward oriented partnership type or used as inward directed harmonization. But these schemes look very much like collaborative processes which fall short of a 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.”

What can we learn from the way the UN system handles its coordination problems? One conclusion is obvious: some agencies must be especially created to coordinate other agencies operations and programs, but each eventually fails “to serve as an effective system wide coordinating mechanism” due to its incapacity to solve funding problems (see table 1). At that point, they tend to become some sorts of super think tanks, like UNEP and its predecessor, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD): both were “superimposed on existing inter-organizational systems”²⁹. This is why “neither UNEP nor CSD were given primary

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 & Coate, 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 & Ouedraogo, 1999). Yet as is well known this kind of partnership is clearly limited and does not necessarily translate into inter-organization cooperation.

²⁸ 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.”

²⁹ However, it made possible cooperation with other IGOS, 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

responsibility to take on operational functions that might interfere with the work of others” like UNDP and the World Bank (Weiss, Forsythe & Coate, 254-5). Coordinating agencies are not cooperative organizations because they are deprived of the means to implement the collective recommendations made. Because they have little resources of their own with which to *perform* well they only play a “*performative or symbolic* function. 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.).

3.4. Influence vs. Power

Despite this lack of imperialist stance networks of partnership have been progressively established. They are now centered around a core of a few IGOs, primarily the World Bank and the WTO. The saliency of these two organizations is so great that unpredictable partnerships may be coined and even crystallized like the organic connection between the World Trade Organization and the High Commission 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 has the power vested in the Dispute settlement mechanism. As far as drug patents are concerned, the WTO is also connected with the WHO, when pandemic in poor countries justify exemptions 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”).

Nevertheless the WTO eventually prevails in every case because its decisions are mandatory and not just recommendations. 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 a suggested measure. Such a measure may be unpractical; or it may already exist but ignored and never implemented.

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 subregional organizations, institutions and programs of the Hemisphere.” (OAS website).

Of course, it is difficult to make a clear-cut distinction between powerful and influential organizations in reality. Nonetheless some of them, such as the WTO or the World Bank “are more equal than others”. The fact still remains, that most organizations are complementary. Knowing this, staff members are also convinced that reviewing the impact of any forthcoming decision on neighbouring institutions needs to be taken into account. They know that a red line exists that cannot be crossed. Infringing on another IGO’s prerogatives also challenges the member states’ power, since governments never fail to remind the secretariats that any decision must fall into line with the organization own rules that cannot be bypassed by decisions made in another forum³⁰.

In this process, institutions operating in the same realm tend to turn their occasional collaboration on specific projects into a permanent and paramount symbiosis. Admittedly, those that are endowed with some enforcement capacity will have the last say and be called on as the final decision makers. However, those which are endowed with moral authority will make use of this resource by making intellectually solid proposals or suggest 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 have—to be. IGOs that are neither linked to growth, development, and defence adopt innovative concepts hoping that these will lead to the implementation of new norms to be enforced later on by the more powerful IGOs. The cooperation between hard (powerful) and soft (less powerful) institutions is the most probable success route for the promotion and dissemination of new concepts and norms.

What Judith Kelley (2004: 450) 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

³⁰ 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 an 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.

generally—that the softer actors influence the content of norms that the more instrumental actors apply.”

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, and the WIPO) involve some actual *power*, “social” and environmental institutions (like UNESCO, UNEP, the WHO, the ILO, the IPCC) rely more on a pervasive *influence* (table 1).

We will conclude the analysis by suggesting a tentative explanation of this evolving new division of labour among IGOs in the context of the changed international balance of power system.

3.5 From Weakness to Strength

Why and how do international organizations adopt different adaptation strategies? Did they mechanically enlarge their area of competence because of the interconnectedness of the issues due to the advanced process of globalisation? Or is it intentionally conceived as a means to enhance their respective legitimacy basis? Although a more rigorous theoretical framework needs to be developed, we feel never nevertheless confident in making some first suggestions as to the different strategies available. For that purpose we will distinguish two main types. The first one we will call turning weakness into strength; and the second “transforming expertise into power”. These are listed in table 2.

Table 2 about here

Firstly, as shown in table 2, softer institutions may try *to turn weakness into strength*. They can achieve this end through various means, like resources substitution, a widening of their knowledge base, or a true division of labour. Secondly, softer IGOs may try *to transform expertise into power*. To this end, they may switch from the formal level to an informal network within which their added value will be greater (e.g., HELI, a joint UNEP and WHO program); alternatively, they may try to turn an apparently simple issue into a complex one (this being the case between WIPO, UNESCO, and the WTO with “Traditional Knowledge, Genetic Resources and Folklore”); they also can call on NGOs and QUANGOS to de-institutionalise an already institutionalised issue (WHO and FAO attempts to phase out patents

issues from the WTO-WIPO meetings. Finally, playing on the functional-general- continuum is a strategy open to some of them (like the U.N. Inter-Agency Committee on Bioethics).

As for the capacity *to turn weakness into strength*, IGOs which choose this strategy can be compared to big entrepreneurs that cannot be forced to reimburse their creditors because their debt is too big, which in turn leaves no alternative for the creditor than lending even more money to the debtor to keep its business alive and recoup its investment. Within the IGO system, organizations such as UNESCO are too costly to be bypassed, let alone be superseded, although they are not properly funded to fulfil their mandate and are desperately searching for new *resources to be substituted* to their own means. Promoting education requires two basic components: money, which can be provided by the World Bank; and legitimate ideas as they are debated in depth within UNESCO. Because the World Bank is the sole operator on the ground, and since there is an admitted linkage between education and development, lending money to governments to help them build schools, recruit teachers, and reform educational programs, its managers may believe that they can push their own ideas, like “investment in human capital”. This is the case of the comprehensive programme “education for all” UNESCO had developed.

UNESCO’s concept was finally adopted by the member states in Dakar and Djomtien, after a long negotiation cycle extending over ten years. Hotly debated in the World Bank it finally got the main support from the G8 governments, UNESCO mobilized its membership, including southern G77 countries and related groupings, as well as UNICEF to endorse this project. Because education is a shared competence of the three IGOs, UNESCO and the World Bank are willy-nilly compelled to get along together by their respective stakeholders with the explicit approval of UNICEF. Hence, the weak and poor UNESCO succeeded in making the rich and powerful World Bank funding its own programme with the tacit acknowledgement that in the long run reaching cultural objectives contribute to lowering the mortality rate, increase the proportion of women in the workforce, level up health, and therefore foster social mobility as well as unlock economic development (Sperling, 2000: 7-8, 13). In this case, the powerful IGO was obliged to endorse values it did not share at the outset. Rather the World Bank is thereby forced to operate behind the “humanistic” UNESCO umbrella in order to pursue its own much more restrictive “elitist” approach to education.

A second strategy consists in repeated attempts by an IGO to *widening its knowledge base*. Here, a strongly established but discrete and specialized IGO increases its saliency thanks to an epistemic community in search of an institutional basis from which to promote its ideas. A

good case in point is the World Meteorological Organization with UNEP 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 change with their related Conferences (see Luteracher/Sprinz, 2001) the WMO collected the gains associated with these successes. How was that possible? First, the WMO managed to extend its mandate from weather to water, integrating the community of hydrologists impatiently lining up at its doorsteps; secondly, it succeeded in establishing the linkage between draught to one of its possible causes, climate change which eventually accommodated the IPCC's experts.

The WTO reached out to intellectual property legal specialists working for the WIPO. They were thus offered a unique opportunity to make international law with the understating that his may at some day have an impact on national legislation. Actually, experts could balance the relative strength of WIPO treaties in the course of ratification, and the WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanism's outcomes. Conversely, the FAO offers a counterfactual case: excellent and numerous agronomists working closely together since the sixties were apparently not able to connect themselves in the nineties either to the WTO where negotiations on agriculture and trade barriers were conducted; or to the WMO where irrigation issues were debated. Whatever the reasons for such an unexpected isolationism, the FAO progressively lost leverage on multilateral decisions dealing with hunger and reasonable growth of the primary sector's output (Fouilleux). It even lost control of seeds and vegetal or animal species engineering which was passed on the WIPO, due to the latter bandwagon on the WTO's victory.

When there is less proximity between cooperating institutions, or when the distance between their mandates is too great, the optimal strategy is *to turn to the good old division of labour* which benefits the less powerful of the two IGOs. This is exactly one of the reasons which saved NATO from a painful reflection of its identity when, after the Cold War many former adversaries applied for membership to the Organization. Another reason is that in the nineties, civil strife and civil wars broke out due to the dissolution of the Soviet Empire. Particularly crucial were the wars on the Balkans, not to forget the new Islamic terrorist threat. Almost overnight humanitarian affairs emerged prominently on the NATO agenda not only because of the changing nature of threats but also because the "Atlantic" organization alone had the means to intervene wherever and whenever considered necessary. Since regular armies were at the time reluctant to play a humanitarian role instead of preparing for a war (Lindemann) and because

the European Union was lacking the military capabilities to intervene in Europe (Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia), and elsewhere (Afghanistan, Iraq), NATO found itself a niche in the new world, and achieved an enviable new status instead of just disappearing with the conjuncture that justified its creation. Here, the unlikely combination of regional politico-economic (EU) and military (NATO) as well as a global (UN) organization joined forces which gave new legitimacy to the alliance many had already declared to have become obsolete.

Nonetheless, *converting expertise into power* is not necessarily successful once the states clearly oppose its advocates. This is the issue we will now take up. The former coordination committee within NATO supervising the export of dual use technologies to communist countries, COCOM, was “outsourced” to quasi “non governmental” forum, the Wassenaar Arrangement. This low profile institution was complemented in 1996, when the UN with WHO, UNEP, UNHCR, and IAEA moved themselves into the armaments field combining their respective legitimacy to justify their move into governmental prerogatives, but this attempt was not a success story. Their goal was to watch out the impact of depleted uranium weapons on human and economic life. To this end, the UN put again to the fore their Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic radiation (UNSCEAR) once created in another context, and involved some of its agencies like the World Health Organization where depleted uranium and ionising radiations cancer fears are under review; the UNEP to benefit 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; and the IAEA, endowed with its more confidential International Nuclear Information System, a forum harbouring studies on precedent nuclear disasters including Chernobyl; finally, the UNHCR was able to adopt 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.

Such cooperation was directed against the UN hegemonic founding fathers, the United States and their Allies on the two major post Cold war military theatres. In addition this cooperative venture was lacking the necessary knowledge and if there is an epistemic community, it remained and remains quite discrete. Last, among the partners only one is actually mandated to address such issues, albeit in a modest way, the IAEA. In spite of its inspections in Iraq the agency does not seem to take the lead on this joint venture, no more than the HCR whose participation was the least predictable. Playing the game of an intelligent division of labour, the UNHCR and the UNEP penetrated into a realm from which they were fully alien so far. Not even the IAEA was in a position *to convert its expertise into power*.

Another case in point is the strengthening of Health and Environment Linkage Initiative (HELI) launched by UNEP which initially encountered some resistance from WHO. HELI is described as “a global effort by WHO and UNEP to support action by developing country policymakers on environmental threats to health”, a program that “encourages countries to address health and environment linkages as *integral to economic development*” (HELI website). UNEP discovered the economic domain as the lever to reach out the epistemic community of economists, demographers and planning ministries. Instead of providing plans to spend funds, UNEP suggested to save money which would depend on the investments made in public utilities such as water adduction. UNEP also emphasized children welfare, thereby winning paediatricians and public health specialists on the ground as additional allies. The first conference convened with the HELI spirit took place in Amman (Jordan), March 2005, and it was cosponsored by the well established CEHI (Children’s Environmental Health Indicators Initiative). This conference “assessed and quantified the health, environmental, and economic costs and benefits of water efficiency measures”, and [D]emonstrated clearly the inverse relationship between increased water consumption and reduced diarrhea incidence”; “Quantified the health benefits (in disease and in money terms) which would accumulate from additional liters of water which could be made available to people through water efficiency”; “[D]emonstrated with benefit/cost analysis that investing in water efficiency will bring about favorable health and environment benefits.”³¹ This advantage/costs idiom allows UNEP to make the best use of the formal/informal scale; at the formal end, the WHO; and to a lesser extent, UNEP; at the informal one, their joint venture, HELI. This informal status allows HELI to provide both organizations with its own added value, expressed in the language of utility-a currency that conventional international wisdom reckon as legitimate.

Let us turn now to another tactic where expertise is turned into power. In this case the strategy chosen is cooperation between IGOs intended to *upgrade a simple and distinct issues into a single complex problem*. This may indeed also enlarge the existing power base of an individual IGO or a whole group. This seems to be 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, etc. WIPO succeeded to deal with all these issues

³¹ “The expert consultation noted outstanding breakthroughs: the demonstration of quantifiable linkages between increased water consumption and incidence of diarrhea; a well defined process for identifying, quantifying and valuing the environment and health benefits of various policy options; and the utilization of a combination of risk assessment and economic valuation tools to facilitate decision-making. The consultation drew plans for further development for incorporating environment and health considerations into policy-making at the national and regional level.” (HELI website)

although they were initially debated separately. WIPO succeeded to have its mandate enlarged through the institutional merger of several formerly independent “bureaux”. In addition to patents on technical inventions, the issue of medical drugs and genetic species recently came to the fore; parallel to the intellectual property system, a new field was opened on “traditional knowledge and expressions of the folklore”. In this process, the WIPO managed to keep some control of these new fields, which were simultaneously explored by the WHO, FAO, and UNESCO which all were vying for the hegemonic power of WTO. WIPO consolidated its position towards the WTO (as its main partner within the TRIPS agreement), and offered a common denominator to the three other organizations, whose extended mandate became known as being part of the “intellectual property” issue.

The meaning of “intellectual property” has changed tremendously, to the main benefit of the organization that had it as its basic concern from its inception. World cultural heritage, material and immaterial patrimony; experiments on living organisms whether human, animal, or plants; collective knowledge including non Western medicine and medical treatments, traditional and religious songs, sayings, and poems; traditional textile and architectural designs: all became known as part of an “intellectual property” problem. What is new, of course, is not only this snowballing mechanism but the more complex level on which so diverse issues are now debated. Including traditional knowledge is not just adding up a new field to existing one, it is a challenging undertaking for those who will try to combine Western and non Western conceptions of creative activities. They are sometimes converging, and most of the time opposing on several standards such as individual or collective property, public or private goods, unlimited or limited application, effective although non scientifically explained or experimentally tested techniques, grand fathered or protected genetic inventions, etc.

What the WIPO has to do to complete this upgrading of its original mandate and therefore its control on any joint venture between several IGOs is *to institutionalise the new system*. This is an additional strategy where cooperation is converted into power. The 1994-5 creation of the WTO after the failure of the International Trade Organization in 1948 and several decades of the little institutionalised GATT is a good case in point. Once institutionalised, any temporary balance of power is fenced against attempts to modify it: the WTO is a much more formidable machine than the GATT was, in part because it will be quite impossible to de-institutionalise. On the contrary, the WMO resists attempts to create an encompassing environmental organization that UNEP calls for, because the new institution would deprive meteorologists from their power over what matters much nowadays, not to speak of a threat on their

organisational culture since they existed as an international institution long before the UN endorsed it as one of its specialised agencies. So far, attempts to build up a unique “environmental” institution around a “global public good” (hence justifying sacrifices from potential partners) failed—a proof that institutionalisation is empowerment (but not at the same rate for every partners). It also shows that the strategy presented above (turning simple issues into a complex one) is not warranting success for those who initiate it.

To succeed, all these aforementioned strategies must be compatible and accepted by each actual or potential partner, to say the least. They must also transform the status of every IGO, upgrading it from the *functional* or *local* aspect attached to specialised agencies and programs to a more *general* or *global* mandate. Compared to the movement which led to the simultaneous creation of two global systems of organisations (the San Francisco and the Bretton-Woods organisations, if one assumes that the WTO should have been born with the IMF and the WB), this is a reverse process. Ancillary institutions tend now to challenge their creator—in other words, agencies tend to overcome their principal while claiming that they are just fulfilling their functional mandate in becoming more general. When applying to regional organisations such as the European Union, the inter-American organisations, the Arab and Islamic ones, the Central Asiatic institutions, etc. this process is duplicating their functions as they themselves continuously expand their own mandate to keep the pace of the global systems change. Hence, they lose their local aspects to become more global. The risk, of course, is to inaugurate more and more heterogeneous activities compared to the good old time when they were endowed with an homogeneous mandate. However, this heterogeneity per se is a source of cooperation, since it opens more windows of opportunity for every strategies described above.

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.*” (our emphasis). 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 difficult to handle. One thing is clear, however: the IGOs 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 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.

4. Explanations and Interpretations

Before concluding we want to briefly review the different explanations that emerged from our analysis thus far.

4.1 A First Cut: Strategies of Adaptation through Cooperation

To resolve the cooperation dilemma IGOs may adopt various strategies, whether in isolation or combined. There are several reasons for the underlying rationale to opt for a risky cooperation to gain more autonomy instead of losing control over its protected domain of activity:

- *A spill over or percolating effect*: changes willingly made in agreement between organisations that operate in a unified realm compel other organisations in neighbouring realms to adapt to the new rules because change in one sector initiates either turbulence or imitation in other sectors. This is quite mechanical (or “functional” as European specialists use to say), and centrifugal since it 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 at the lowest custom right and with maximum protection for the producer and inventor, 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.).
- *a snowballing or structural effect*: the growing connectivity between issues in a global world is a source of organisational overload and overlapping activities. In this process, there is a permanent reshuffle of the division of labour between IGOs, 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 substitute them without replacing them. This was for example the case with UNICEF “Girl’s Education Initiative” which did not put an end to UNESCO’s efforts in the same direction.

- *construction of new issues, or learning effect*. IGOs are rivalling to create new fields and to find allies in these ventures. They compete for labelling the issues (like “global warming”, “global initiative”, “human security”), 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” (Sperling, 2000: 7).
- *a specialisation effect* under various guises (such as a division of work between conception, review, and operation, or along the lines of each of the several aspects of the same issue; or at each stage of the production of a common good). This trend provides IGOs with a “brand name”, and gives them a greater impact on the “market” of their “products” (this being a new version of the “innovate or perish” iron law). Once confidential, IGOs 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.
- *normalization (or “politically correct”) effect*. 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 etc. thereby accommodating communitarian demands because a world enriched with women’s contributions in every sector will also be enriched with religious, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity. From there one can move to any issue such as pleading for “biodiversity” and even “sociodiversity” (an Indian invention at the WTO to protect their village culture in manufacturing and trading textiles, etc.). This but one example of the “structural power” advocated by Susan Strange (Strange,), a power so diffused and scattered among so many stakeholders that it is more and more difficult to trace its origins.

4.2 A Second Cut: Why do IGOs cooperate?

The various IGOs are, one could generally infer, obviously respond through collaboration and coordination to the growing interdependence which represents a permanent challenge to their activities. That will actually increase the perceived need for coordination and cooperation within and across specific issue areas. In that sense the original proposition is almost trivial. Yet the consequences are not in terms of the strategies of adaptation chosen. It seems that complex calculations on the part of the IGOs come simultaneously into play where none of these three factors – power, competence, and legitimacy - dominates. In the case of cooperation one finds that they tend to substitute each other's comparative advantages but only if the costs are not excessive in terms of autonomy, resources delay and expertise. One can even see that the lack of power is not the only decisive factor facilitating cooperation. Legitimacy based on knowledge is also a tradable currency.

The states as principals seem to be much less inclined than the IGOs to accept coordination. They tend to keep them constrained within the limits of their original mandate. But in the “global compact” they call at the same time for cooperation if not a real symbiosis of those IGOs addressing related issues. Conversely, IGOs do their best to act within the framework of their original mandate in spite of technical difficulties to adopt new ideas, dictate new norms, and implement decisions on their own in a realm of shared competencies. Both states and IGOs are therefore pushing into the same direction of more cooperation, the latter more inclined to pay lip service to the cause of states' pre-eminence and agencies' specialization.

Ultimately, states have the last say, and whatever interagency cooperation (and cooperation between governments' permanent representatives within these institutions) is possible, it takes place under the shadow of power. The truth of the matter is that globalisation is subtly but firmly depriving both states and IGOs of their autonomy. Both must adapt to this dramatic change in their environment, the theoretical question being: why choose adaptation through cooperation rather than any other strategy? The subsidiary question is: why states prefer indirect cooperation via IGOs rather than a direct dialogue with other states?

One possible answer, the one we propose, is that cooperation is the aggregate outcome of individual strategies adopted by different actors with diverging motivations. The strength of the cooperative trend we have found is just this: even contradictory and independent moves converge towards cooperative and interdependent networks. There is no need to assume that each state and each IGO rationally does assess its own utilities, before adjusting to the set of

other actors' preferences, particularly those of the hegemonic power of the time. Cooperation does not stem from an orderly system of mutually adjusting wills, it is the result of the chaotic and heterogeneous mechanism that is produced by the many interactions between world actors. Consequently, there is no single explanation of the nature and degree of cooperation achieved, and we are doubtful that further research will find consistency and directivity where we have found so far tactical moves and minor changes in routine activities all conducive to a systemic change in the global level of cooperation. Learning is also important because 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 is allegedly the core determinant of international actors' strategies.

Inter-organisational cooperation whether intended or unintended has become a central fact in the daily life of international organisations. And it seems that these agents are learning faster than their principals still caught in the illusion of their centrality in international politics. This illusion is due to the fact that they cannot unilaterally impose their will upon others, the reality, however, is that they still have some veto-power to block IGOs from better performance.

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TABLE 1: UN Coordination Offices and Programs

Administrative Committee on Coordination (now <i>Chief Executive Board for Coordination (CEB)</i>)³²
Committee for Programme and Coordination
Health and Environment Linkages Initiative (UNEP & WHO)
Inter-Agency Committee on Bioethics
Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality
Inter-Agency Standing Committee
Information Systems Coordination Committee
International Trade Centre
Office for Inter-Agency Affairs
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries
Inter-Agency Task Force for African Economic Recovery and Development
Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (later known as the Inter-Agency Meeting on Women and Gender Equality)
Inter-Agency Steering Committees³³
Statistics Cooperation Unit
Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq
Inter-Agency Support Unit & UN Resident Coordinator System (UNEP)

Source: Francesco Mezzalama, Khalil Issa Othman & Louis-Dominique Ouedraogo, *Review of the administrative committee on coordination and its machinery*, Geneva, JIU, 1999 (JIU/99/1). UN, UN agencies, and other IGOs websites.

³² According to its website, "IACSD was established by the ACC following the Earth Summit (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development--UNCED) which was held in Rio in 1992. The IACSD is mandated to identify major policy issues relating to the follow-up of UNCED and advise ACC on ways and means of addressing them so as to ensure effective co-operation and coordination of the UN system in the implementation of Agenda 21."

³³ Examples are the ISCORDS (Interagency Steering Committee on radiation Standards) and the Asia-Pacific UN Interagency Steering Committee for the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)

Table 2: Two Political Cultures

Area	Powerful/instrumental* IGOs	Influential/softer* IGOs
Trade	Free trade (WTO, NAFTA, EU)	Fair trade, cultural exemptions (UNCTAD, UNESCO)
Labour	Social laws undermine trade agreements (WTO)	Social rights are universal, ban on child work (ILO)
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)
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) ; food availability (WTO)	Precautionary principle (EU), food security (FAO)
Human rights	Minority rights as a condition for admission (EU = "conditionality" *)	Minority rights as a moral imperative and an economic asset (OSCE, CE = persuasion")