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Introduction

In moments of enthusiasm (1944–48 and 1989–1995) intergovernmental organizations have arisen by the tens and NGOs by the thousands. This raises high hopes about the birth of an international community and a global civil society. In nearly every realm of human activity IOs have imposed new standards, established new norms and enacted new rules. Paramount organizations such as the UN, the World Bank, and the EU have been increasingly active for decades. They have been joined by more contested institutions like the WTO or the International Criminal Court.

Since 2010 a reverse trend has seen some states switch from a cooperative game to a power play. Although few governments dare to openly challenge the global security system (as Northern Korea does), or the capitalist system (as Venezuela does) prominent members of the G 20—the club for the wealthiest countries—have recently abandoned their defensive strategy to opt for an offensive stance. By contrast, authoritarian leaders have abandoned isolationism and neutrality to go far beyond their hinterland. The transgressions of international rules by Putin’s Russia, Xi Jin Ping’s China, and Erdogan’s Turkey have replicas elsewhere in Europe, Asia, South America and the Middle East, where Saudi Arabia and Iran are at war by proxy.

None of this is new, however:¹ the history of international institutions always follows the same process, with bifurcations. The first stage of the world system is a conflict between two or more states. Alliances are built to deter foes and avoid war. Belligerence is nonetheless triggered by “desperados” (so called in the early 20th century) or “rogue states” (as they have been known since the beginning of the 21st). Then, destruction is so terrible that governments pledge to prevent war happening ever again. At that stage, organizations are designed to provide global public goods (like security for all, trade for the richest, and development for the poorest). Finally, protest against their alleged partiality or an excess of secrecy favours the creation of countless NGOs of all sorts.

Such cycles have repeatedly occurred: during the 17th century (the treaties of Westphalia), in the early 19th century (the Congress of Vienna), after the two world conflicts (the Peace agreements, the League of Nations, then the UN), and following the end of the Cold War (the WTO, the OESC, the

1 One quote will suffice to show how such trends give a sense of déjà-vu, since the following sentence was written 20 years ago: “Many states, notably the United States, now resist the creation of IOs and hesitate to support those already in operation, citing the shortcomings of international bureaucracy, the costs of formal organization, and the irritations of IO autonomy. This is an ideal time for students of international governance to focus on the other side of the ledger” (Abbott and Snidal 1998: 5).

OICW, the EBRD, and the ICC). Whatever the logic or the ethics behind verbal commitments to make Order lasting, entropy jeopardizes peace-making and redistributive institutions from the very first year of each successive phase.

Before announcing the end of the collaborative turn in international relations, it seems reasonable to invert the problem. Of course, mavericks contest the world system inherited from the late 19th to mid-20th centuries—the more so when they had played a major role in previous periods, like Russia and Turkey during the 17th and 18th centuries.

This is not the point, though; however hostile to a “Western” and “post-colonial” system they pretend to be transgressors cannot resist the pressure exercised by IOs through a mass production of norms. Some governments can be reluctant to comply but they are not free to discard them. Even proactive states that designed the system may try to pull out of a treaty they have drafted. Alternatively, they can block negotiation rounds. In the end, though, they will come back to the negotiating table when there are guarantees that the system will work more smoothly and fairly—a pledge that implies the creation of new institutional bodies. This is the story of trade deregulation, the upgrading of the GATT into the WTO, or the transformation of the European Common market into the EU.

The Institutional Puzzle

We are reaching a stage in history where the situation is neither new, nor more challenging than it was in the past. Of course, non-Western “big men” are bullying their peers to return to less regulated times when their troops could invade neighbouring territories and remain unpunished. What the strongest leaders cannot do is to claim openly that their hands are not tied by global norms and rules. They may criticize universal principles such as the responsibility to protect or gender mainstreaming but they cannot eradicate every embarrassing norm. They can mistake “human rights” for “Western rights”, hence refusing military intervention to rescue people under threat. This will nonetheless turn inconsistent when the victims of a potential genocide matter more to them than to other powers. At any rate, transgressors of international law must concede the validity of the Geneva Conventions on prisoners of war, and civilians in wars. And even when they pretend counterfactually that they respect such Conventions, there will be occasions to support prisoners of conscience, or provide aid to refugees.

In democratic countries the room for manoeuvre of properly elected rulers is drastically limited by the myriads of commitments made by their predecessors, which would take decades to dismantle. Whatever their efforts and

notwithstanding the mass support of voters tempted by a “demarcation” from the non-national instead of an “integration” to the world market and to global institutions (Kriesi et al. 2008) neither Theresa May nor Donald Trump could easily withdraw from the tangled web of international agreements signed by their predecessors.

Turning to the people, most citizens in the past were conscious of the big gap between their own political skills and the sophistication of their representatives in parliament or ministers in government, not to mention judges in courts. This is no longer the case. With the increasing quantity of information available on social networks, blogs, and websites, citizens get the false impression that they could manage a country as efficiently as experts do. They are convinced that they have enough insight into how governments and administrations work. But, of course, they do not! Making political decisions is much more complex than what people could possibly imagine.

Citizens feel even more estranged from international organizations than from national administrations. Although in the eye of the public IOs share with national bureaucracies a number of negative characteristics (lack of transparency, lack of practical experience of everyday life, lack of sincerity and even lack of honesty) they are off the radar of most ordinary people who feel less concerned about their outcomes than a handful of activists may be. At best, the myriads of IOs of every status are mistaken for some deceptive UN-style agencies. Everyone is sure that the UN struggles gamely with peace-making, peacekeeping and post-conflicts reconstruction. They suspect that IOs are the seats of behind-closed-doors meetings, informal arrangements, and unknown workload. IOs do not have a better reputation than national governments.

This is misinformation. The records of IOs are beyond doubt more impressive than states achievements. IOs frame or govern literally every act undertaken or opinion expressed in the daily life of ordinary citizens. Norms and standards apply to any kind of connection (plugs, chords, pipes, computers, telephones, and cars, as well as the Internet and the many uses we can make of it within ascribed limits). They condition the possibility or impossibility to convene meetings, which will be attended by how many people, in which room, with some tolerance or no tolerance at all for the possible presence of lead, asbestos, toxic particles, and for which number of attendants who will sit on flame retardant furniture, in venues that can easily be reached by handicapped people. They also dictate the edibility of food products, their price range, their composition and their type (fair trade, organic, gluten-free, etc.). Moreover, they compel critics to express their views in a politically correct way and impose a ban on potentially harmful attitudes when sensitive issues like race, religion, obesity, genocide, and so on are at stake. Even the most intimate acts of human life are under scrutiny, since schoolboys and girls as well as the weakest members of a family are

protected against bullying, inappropriate behaviour, and violence. In the case of Ebola, the interdiction by the WHO to bury kin is very invasive for local populations whose health authorities are only there for compulsory vaccines and temporary quarantines.

In general, people are prepared to accept global rules not by choice but by lack of familiarity with the way IOs work and the context in which they operate. They may have enough civic literacy and even some command of the idiomatic language of politics and diplomacy but they remain illiterate when confronted by the glossary that has currency within IOs. This deficit starts with acronyms (except for the UN, the IMF and the WTO). It peaks with a lack of knowledge about legal status, organizational chart and operational activities. While a surprising percentage of citizens interviewed in a survey are able to list 4 or 5 permanent members of the UN Security Council (Sche-meil et al. 2012), their awareness of what occurs elsewhere is very limited if not nil. Citizens who are very expressive in the public debate about refugees nonetheless continue to be unaware of the names and numbers of IOs operating in this field, their role and their achievements. Few people, if any, would be able to justify the intervention of the International Maritime Organization in the refugee crisis. They could not tell how the “IMO” differs from “IOM” (the International Organization for Migrations, itself deeply involved in the issue). Of course, contrasting the latter with the UN Higher Commissariat for Refugees (UNHCR) is beyond reach.

Transgressing states and protesting peoples know little about IOs. Such ignorance has severe consequences on the evolution of the world, while instead weakening a scientific field in which “international studies” actually “study” states rather than organizations. When they get scholars’ attention it is mostly as aides to States, or as ways to corroborate rational theories of IR (Glaser 2010). Few academics observe them from within, as organizational sociologists do (Ness & Brechin 1988; Reinalda et al. 2004). A handful of authors attribute them a propensity to build clusters overruling governments and citizens (Orsini, Morin & Young 2013). This book speaks of networks that could not be as easily disentangled as suggested by authoritarian leaders and authoritative authors. I try to fill the gap between sketchy political knowledge about IOs and their allegedly deep and real influence. I also help readers imagine just how much more intertwined the world could be when attention shifts from international organization in the plural to international organization in the singular (from static bodies of the past to a future-oriented process).²

2 In the last 25 years “What has emerged from the shadows of organizational theory to the forefront is the view of organizations less as entities or nouns and more as verbs, e.g. organizing” (Scott & Davis 2007) or “as embedded in dynamic processes... rather than static creations” (Ness & Brechin 2013: 16).

Methodological Solutions

Before going any further, a couple of comments about methodology must be made. Firstly, to give an objective account of the “real” world we need ontological assumptions. This is mine: procedure and substance are combined in any policy measure or act of speech. “Procedure” identifies decision-making designs, which open opportunities for agents to coin new norms and new rules. “Substance” is the final outcome of the organizational processes, targeting the common good. Even with benevolent intentions fierce opposition to the accumulation of power and the abuse of people’s rights is typically procedural. Even when scavengers keep the poor quiet redistributing wealth is a substantial goal. While obsession with the due process of law is one of the Greek city’s legacies, a focus on the substantive provision of goods can be traced to the Ancient Orient (Schemeil 2000) as if protection and provision were two sides of the same coin. Within IOs correct procedure is a prerequisite to fair substantial benefits that, in turn, justify that the rule be made properly and implemented by the book. Due respect for organizational processes seems rather formal. It nonetheless makes possible the coming of an international community acceptable to all.

Specific methods and techniques unfold from this ontological assumption. Outsiders like anthropologists or organization specialists need to be accredited before interviewing staff members. To understand what is concealed behind public statements we must access classified documents and be sufficiently aware of their meaning and context. Evidence can either be retrieved from IO websites or found through browsing IO libraries. It consists of minutes of proceedings, provisional drafts, non-tabled papers, and non-adopted drafts. Once scholars are admitted to the headquarters, they can observe behaviour and interpret statements.

To check with insiders (as “primary informers”) that our academic interpretation is close to reality, snowballing extends the list of people to be met. First contacts can introduce the interviewer to other officers who can in turn do the same. However, this strategy is mostly valuable if it is reproducible elsewhere: beyond the organization under review, investigators look for its social environment and the invisible network of international bodies to which it belongs. Such a process stimulates comparison. It facilitates causal inference until a predictive model can be designed from the expert’s field experience.

Testing the robustness of imaginary conjectures relies on foresight. We can predict that a weakened organization will make its comeback sooner or later in the great game of multilateral decision-making. In fact, there are a limited number of recipes for survival hence the solution eventually chosen by any staff rarely surprises scholars. However, two situations are prioritized

here: IOs whose very resilience is at stake and, at the opposite end of the scale, IOs that are so well established that few doubts can be raised about their future. Among the dozens of IOs directly or indirectly observed (either personally or through students' teamwork and other scholars' monographs), I have selected the most stringent cases to test my hypotheses.

In the first category (*challenged* IOs), the focus is mainly on the WTO, the IAEA, UNESCO, WMO, the WHO, IOM, and most Treaties Organizations. In the second group (*self-sustaining* IOs), major targets are the UNDP, UNEP, UNHCR, WIPO and ICANN. Note that NGOs (or quasi non-governmental organizations) are not the primary research target. This choice is deliberate, to avoid circularity since NGOs are embedded in organizational constellations rotating around IGOs. However some non-State actors are worth studying in depth, such as Amnesty, Oxfam, and VOICE, because they operate on a large scale worldwide with a variety of supports as well as resources accruing from their home government.

As will be discussed in the next chapter, causal inference will arise from a theory mix. Unfortunately, no theory could give me a satisficing explanation of the relationships I had empirically observed for years into dozens of organizations. Truly, agents face constraints and their deeds are framed by structures. This said, they always try to proceed rationally. If not, they must feel certain enough to overcome the many difficulties with which they are confronted daily. Since they are not fully constrained by the properties of the institution to which they belong they opt for the wisest decision at the time. To trace this stance to a sort of free agents' rational choice would be excessive. To see it with deterministic and structuralist lenses would miss all the peculiarities of personalities, moments, and historical paths. As will soon become obvious, neo-institutionalism (which relies more on IOs than on States) and constructivism (which links agreements to meaning) lack the strategic nature of IOs decisions.

While opting for one direction at a crossroads can be deliberate, the aggregated outcome of such options can look undesirable to some stakeholders (governments above all). So, my theoretical apparatus relies on a *limited rational choice model with uncertain outcomes*. Prediction cannot tell which alternative will finally be chosen; it can nonetheless say what "cone of possibilities" is open to decision-makers: several trajectories could unfold from the next move, as in a chess game.

The Network Growth Model

No theory actually predicts what kind of unit an institution will become in the future, how it will get there, within which global framework. Models of IOs trajectories are merely descriptive. Designed to reach a global explanation they eliminate some alternatives among others³. They often assume a rhetorical reasoning: IOs are administrations; administrations are bureaucratic; therefore, IOs are bureaucracies that supply the world population with new activities even when there is no demand for them (Barnett and Finnemore 2004). In a nutshell, IOs can invent new procedures but they cannot create smart solutions and transform the context in which they operate.

Admittedly, this explanation meets Karl Popper's requisites for a scientific theory of the social world. Avoiding incorrect predictions is conditioned to a preliminary elimination of errors one by one to make the realm of the untrue shrink. But what we need is a predictive model able to forecast what IOs will inevitably do most of the time all other things being equal. The only unknown parameter is when, exactly, their final resolutions will be released?

This is a delicate matter: social scientists have not yet endorsed modelling (and the explanatory parsimony at the heart of it) as an epistemologically correct way to work. It is therefore unlikely that they consider predicting as and advancement of research into historical and cultural processes.

There is one last question to ask: is it wise to write a book on the future of a multilateral multi-stakeholders world when leaders of democratic countries withdraw from international organizations and multilateral negotiations? When the UK leaves the EU while the US leaves TPFTA though not NAFTA and denounces INF (Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty) if not NATO, then something is rotten in the kingdom of Denmark (the world community).

Beyond the fact that such withdrawals may just be temporary suspensions of participation or attempts to reshuffle the international system without subverting it there are two more substantial answers to this question. To start with, military alliances have always been more flexible and less resilient than any other sort of international agreement. So, leaving one or shutting it down is not significant. The Americans dismantled SEATO, ANZUS and CENTO decades ago, while the Russians replaced the Warsaw Pact with the CIS. Hence, what happens in the field of security should not disregard predictions made in other sectors where global public goods must be provisioned. This

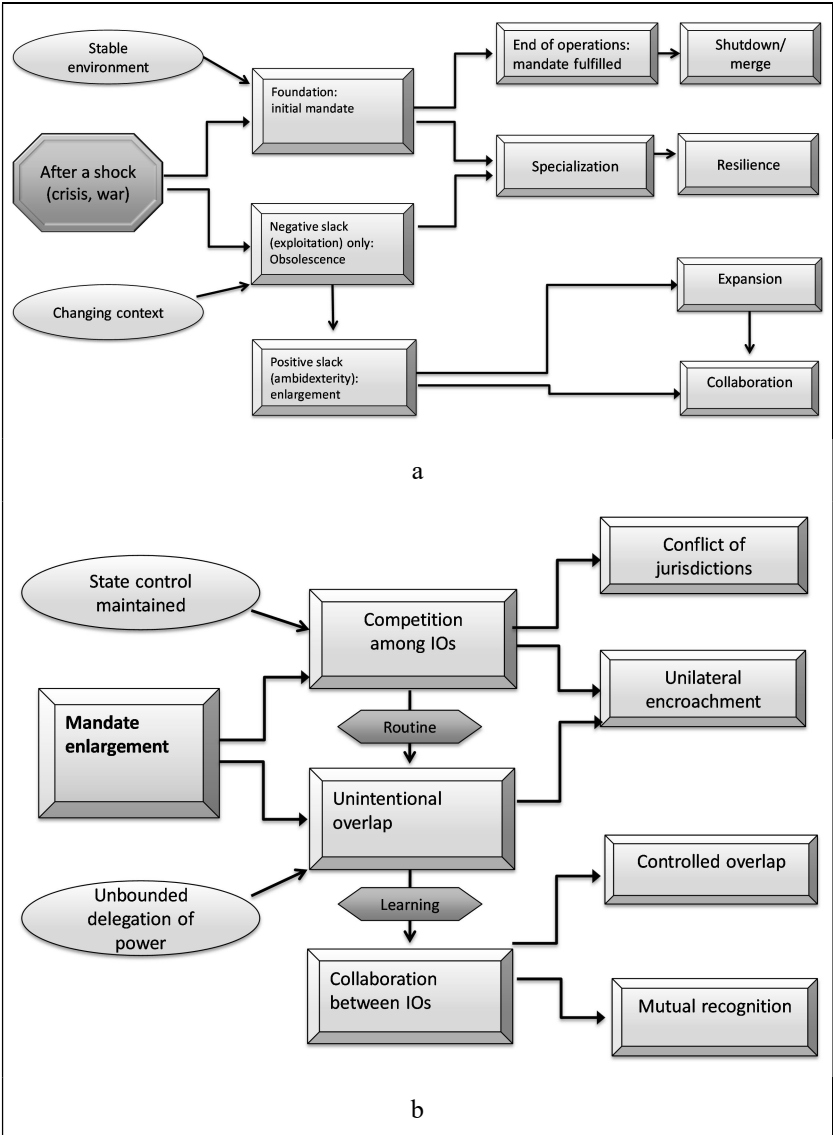
3 As in this seminal text: “[t]his type of constitutive explanation does not allow us to offer law-like statements such as ‘if X happens, then Y must follow’. Rather, by providing a more complete understanding of what bureaucracy is, we can provide explanations of how certain kinds of bureaucratic behaviour are possible, or even probable, and why” (Barnett and Finnemore 1999: 701). Here we must go much further towards finding causes.

argument would not suffice per se to discard counterfactual observation. In reality, the best defence for the “network growth model” (NGM)—or the way I have designed it here—relies on the very theoretical principles on which it has been built.

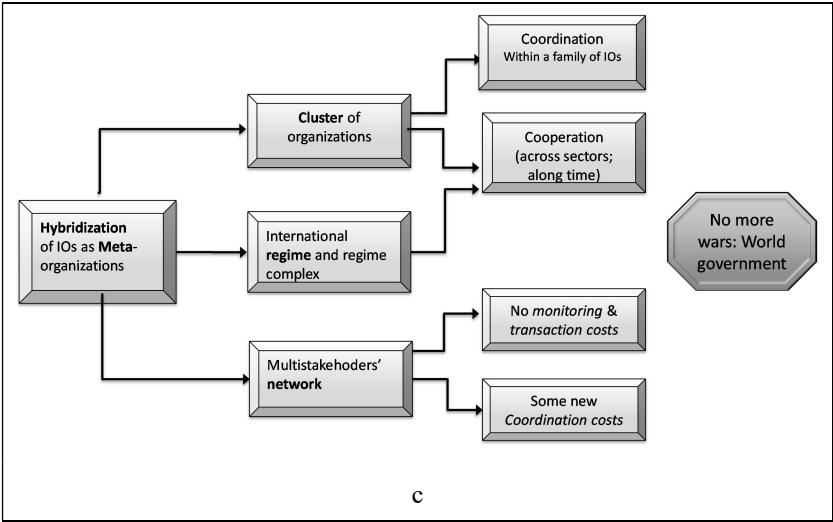
At this preliminary stage of discussion before entering into details in chapters 12 and 13 let us say that the NGM comprises several *bifurcations* that each generate path dependency. The three folders of graph 1 symbolize the race to networking as a prelude to the progressive institutionalization of the world. Assuming that IOs result from conflict resolution (Ikenberry 2001), a return to the situation *ex ante* once the environment is stabilized would normally bring two outcomes: either closing them because the goals for which they had been created are achieved or reshuffling their mission in line with their explorative capabilities. The second alternative occurs more frequently than the first: confronted by a change in their environment compared to when they were established, most IOs enlarge their mandate. Therefore, they inevitably stray across the perimeter of activity of other organisations. They can either increase their specialization to remain resilient or they can expand their mandate to better perform within a coalition of neighbouring organizations.

Staying on track increases the risk of being shut down or merged, whereas ever-expanding helps to resist change through collaboration with other IOs. In both alternatives, overlap results from expansion. “Ambidextrous” leaders who exploit their comparative advantage over rivals and explore future activities altogether know how to make the best use of any maladjustment of means and goals. They convert negative slack (waste and excess capacity) into positive slack (time to imagine new products and services). Prone to learn quickly, they can transform the conditions under which decisions are made and the norms orienting policy measures. At some point, they will switch from risk aversion to risk-taking and stop controlling their boundaries to start establishing joint ventures with peer organizations, other non-national institutions and non-state actors. Engaging in collaborative behaviour they end up becoming parts of new sets of IOs, which eventually may lead to a new stage in world history—a dream of no more wars come true with the birth of a world government.

Graph 1 can be read table by table (a, then b, then c) or synoptically (much like the Japanese or Egyptian scrolls). It represents several itineraries resulting from successive turns at each crossroads. Branching off from the main road depends, first, on the state of the environment (is it stable or critical?); second, on the style of leadership (is it structural or transformative?); third, on the relations with other stakeholders inside (its membership) and outside (its partnership) the organization.



Graph 1a and b. The Network Growth Model: An IOs race to collaboration—a triptych. Source: a) & b) adapted from Schemel, 2013 a.



Graph 1c. The Network Growth Model: An IOs race to collaboration—a triptych. Source: c) ©the author, 2019.

A simple glance at this graph leaves little doubt about the relevance of leadership style: while the FAO was long stuck in a quagmire the IAEA managed to resist hegemonic pressures and competition with ad hoc inspection bodies. The former was plagued by the pusillanimity of its reactive head and so remained isolationist for decades; the latter was fuelled by the proactive behaviour of its Director General who greatly emphasised collaboration with other IOs much beyond its field.

It is obvious that turning liabilities into assets eventually depends on the flexibility of workload assignment under stress. Confronted by unexpected challenges, positions become vulnerable. Reshuffling the chart reflects environmental turbulence. Administrations, corporations, and intergovernmental organizations do it their way: national bureaucracies can resist change forever or nearly so; private firms must instantly adjust, moving people to other positions, buildings, and cities, or laying them off. As for IOs they give agents whose jobs are threatened leeway to invent goals and frame new norms.

Enlarging a mandate is not without risk. Most IO heads either stick to the Constitution of their organization or merely pay lip service to it. Enhancement can be rewarding when expansion satisfies a significant proportion of members' visions of the future of the organization. It may also be unavoidable: once similar activities have been pursued for a while by several IOs, division of labour becomes compelling whether or not it had been

planned at the outset. A good case in point is a refugee crisis, which involves several regional organizations (either European or Pan-American), domestic bureaucracies and NGOs, plus the IOM, the UNHCR, and many other IOs (more about that later).

Encounters with other staff, diplomats, advocates, lobbyists, and activists are subtly conducive to increasing collaboration. They also transform IOs, which become hybridized. Eventually, individual organizations will join a set of IOs called a “meta-organization” (the UN family, or within it, the Food group composed of FAO, WFP, Codex alimentarius, HACCP, the Joint FAO/IAEA program, etc.). This meta-organization can take different guises, such as an informal and temporary cluster, a simple or complex international regime, or a true network.

Eventually, a basic law of the transformation of discrete bodies into homogenous networks emerges from the heterogeneity of the field. Its explanatory variables are not “perform to overwhelm not to be shut down” but “learn to be resilient, adapt or perish, coalesce or collapse”.

The Spirit of the Book

Such keywords would probably suffice to make plain how and why this book differs from the excellent literature available after decades of ignorance. Let me nonetheless detail its added value.

Handbooks help to establish a new subfield and legitimate interdisciplinary investigation. In recent years, many have been published to which readers can refer for details as well as exhaustive reviews of contextual issues. Thanks to such achievements my current research can focus on specific questions without going in depth into syntheses. Exhaustive depictions of real cases would certainly give some flesh to the model to the detriment of parsimony. Since IOs and interorganizational cooperation specialists are members of an epistemic community worldwide they share the same background and have the same knowledge about the realm of our studies. Rather than completing the state of the art or reinforcing references to the same sources I offer a concise and topical discussion.

To succeed I need the cooperation of my readers. They are asked to fill the gaps in my presentation by digging into the encyclopaedic knowledge that has given visibility to this field and the community of scholars working herein.

Among the unavoidable sources of enlightenment about IOs and their mutual collaboration some are especially useful for their reliance on History or Organizational Studies. This is the case of Bob Reinalda’s Routledge History of International Organizations (2009), Routledge Handbook of

International organizations (2013) and Ashgate Companion to Non-State-Actors (2011). Rafael Biermann and Johan Koops' Palgrave Handbook of Inter-Organizational Relations in World Politics (2017) and Dennis Dijkzeul and Dirk Salomons' International Organizations Revisited (2022) offer extensive coverage to the cooperation issue. Bob Reinalda's contribution to the field is also manifest in the three-volume series of collective works he edited with colleagues from 1998 (Autonomous Policy Making within International Organizations, with Bertjan Verbeek) to 2004 (Decision Making within International Organizations) and 2008 (International Organizations and Implementation: Enforcers, Managers, Authorities—with Jutta Joachim and Bertjan Verbeek).

The following content has been thought out along numbers of international meetings in which presentations were prepared for delivery without being systematically published after the meeting. Therefore, I cannot easily refer to them, although I may on occasion put readers on to papers if they have been at the root of my argument or when they are freely downloadable. Working papers that were eventually published (quoted from their public version) and my own work in progress are both excluded from the quotations.

The countless student essays and PHD work supervised for nearly two decades are not always cited in full, unfortunately, although they have consistently contributed to the making of this book.