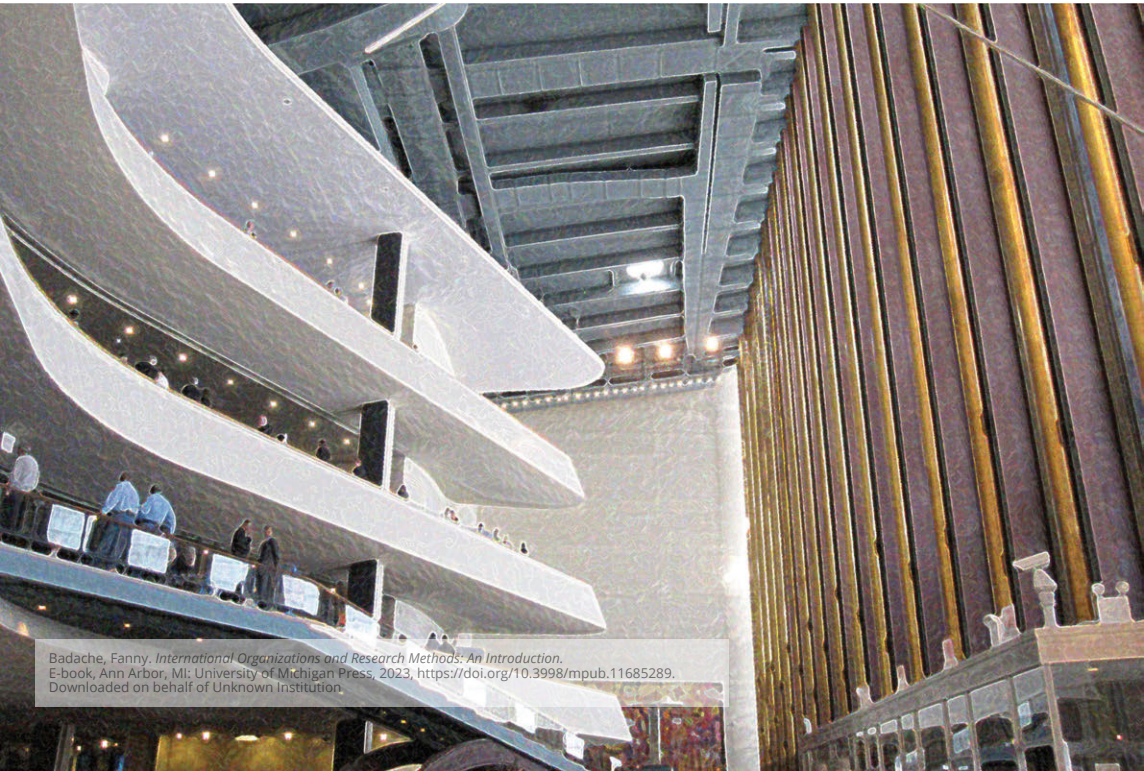
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND RESEARCH METHODS

AN INTRODUCTION

Fanny Badache, Leah R. Kimber, and Lucile Maertens, Editors



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International Organizations and Research Methods

Summary

Which methods are being used and in what ways? Do we need a specific methodology applied to the case of international organizations (IOs)? What are the concrete methodological challenges when doing research on IOs? This pioneering book answers these questions by compiling a broad inventory of the methods developed in the study of IOs under the five headings of *Observing*, *Interviewing*, *Documenting*, *Measuring*, and *Combining*.

Whether drawn by a specific research question or a general interest in IOs, students and researchers can find insights in this book to initiate and pursue a research project on such institutions. It provides an overview of what has been carried out so far assessing both well-established and more recent methods used in the social sciences and humanities. All contributions review a specific method (or combination of methods) in a few pages, pointing out the advantages and limits as well as providing concrete tips.

As a daily companion for academics and students alike, the book is a practical guide that can be used throughout the research process, from the definition of the question to data collection and generation, as well as during the analysis and writing phases. For bachelor students, the book proposes a first dip in the wide sea of IO scholarship by providing a strong basis to develop their methodological awareness. For graduate and doctoral students, it offers an overview of the various methods available to kick-start their own research on IOs and gives practical cues for the development of their projects. For IO scholars, the book encourages them to expand the pool of methods they use to pursue relevant and innovative research on IOs.

Overall it creates a space for scholars and students embedded in different academic traditions to reflect on methodological choices and the way they impact knowledge production on IOs.

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To those whose last chapter ended since we began this project
To those whose first lines were written during this journey

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To those whose careers have been at odds and are still precarious

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Abbreviations

API	Application Programming Interface
BIS	Bank for International Settlements
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CEE	Collaborative Event Ethnography
CGPCS	Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia
COW	Correlates of War
DA	Discourse Analysis
EU	European Union
EVS	European Values Survey
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
HQ	Headquarters
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ITU	International Telecommunication Unit
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Queer
MCA	Multiple Correspondence Analysis
MDGs	United Nations Millennium Development Goals
MEP	Members of the European Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

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OCR	Optical Character Recognition
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PHAP	Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection
PM	Permanent Mission
QCA	Qualitative Comparative Analysis
RDA	Reflexive Discourse Analysis
SDGs	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
SFC	Structured Focused Comparison
SNA	Social Network Analysis
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDPO	United Nations Department of Peace Operations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCEB	United Nations System Chief Executives Board
WBS	Web Based Survey
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
WTO	World Trade Organization
WVS	World Values Survey

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Foreword and Acknowledgments

Research is often—if not always—a story of informal relationships, friendship, luck, and (seizing) opportunities. This book project is no exception. The first seed of a book on research methods and IOs dates back to the spring of 2016 when Fanny Badache failed to find the right methodological handbook while starting her PhD dissertation. It was soon taken on as a collective adventure among four women (Fanny Badache, Emilie Dairon, Leah R. Kimber, and Lucile Maertens)—colleagues and friends—passionate by the research on international organizations (IOs) #IOGeeks. Scientifically, the idea of this book results from a two-fold observation. On the one hand, many IO scholars have recently called for a renewal in the way IOs are approached, stressing the need for innovative tools to capture the intergovernmental and transnational world. On the other hand, the same scholars have highlighted the difficulty to conduct research on IOs, due to the need for "discretion" and access barriers.[1] To contribute to these discussions, we felt compelled to bridge scientific networks (mainly divided by linguistic differences/barriers) and to gather scholars working on IOs but yet embedded in different academic contexts.

As a result, in the fall of 2017 a call for papers for an international workshop on the theme "Researching the United Nations: Rethinking Methods of Investigation" (RUN2018) was widely distributed. We successfully received more than 110 abstracts leading to a two-day workshop organized at the University of Geneva in June 2018 with more than seventy researchers from various countries and academic communities. The workshop consisted

1. See for instance the roundtable organized at ISA's annual conference in 2019 on "Knowledge Without Limits? On Data, Archival Access, Copyright, and Global Commons in International Relations Research."

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of fourteen panels and two plenary sessions.[2] A few months later, the project for the present book was launched.

This book has become the witness of ongoing discussions reflecting the importance of addressing research methods in IO studies. With interdisciplinarity and diversity as our leitmotiv, we gathered researchers from a variety of backgrounds (nationality, age, academic network, geographic and linguistic regions) around a common research object: international organizations that—for some of us still—embody institutions that hold the promise of peaceful global cooperation.

We first and foremost owe special thanks to Emilie Dairon who began the train ride with us and, even though she jumped off the wagon, remained alongside the adventure with her valuable and critical ear. We would also like to extend our gratitude to all participants in the RUN2018 workshop for recognizing the importance of discussing IO research methods and providing a solid basis for further reflection. In addition, we benefited from the expertise of paper discussants and keynote speakers on the use of methods in IO studies (in alphabetical order): Mélanie Albaret, Laëtitia Atlani-Duault, Michael Bauer, Irène Bellier, Mathilde Bourrier, Christian Bueger, Dakota Dakowska, Romain Felli, Simon Hug, Sandrine Kott, Nico Krisch, Sandra Lavenex, Marieke Louis, Birgit Müller, Ronald Niezen, Franck Petiteville, Bob Reinalda, Cécile Robert, Davide Rodogno, Tommaso Venturini, and Thomas Weiss. Furthermore, this conference could not have happened without the administrative and creative support of Blaise Dupuis, Géraldine Moynat, and Victor Sanchez.

Beyond the valuable comments and feedback from several individuals on the overall argument of the book, such as those present in the research seminar of the Groupe de Recherche sur l'Action Multilatérale (GRAM), the coherence and structure of this book have also benefited from the feedback of our students, friends, and colleagues, among which Edoardo Guaschino, Marylou Hamm, Michael Hutter, Emma Sofia Lunghi, Imène Torkhani, and Gaëlane Wolff who willingly played the role of first testees. We also dearly thank Céline Yousefzai and Gaëlane Wolff for their help in working on the part "75 Years of IO Studies: A Methodological Lens" and Massimo Pico for his valuable support during the finalization of the book. We also thank Emilie Dairon, Steffen Eckhard, and Bob Reinalda for their in-depth feedback on the introduction. Last but not least, we thank Elizabeth Demers, editor of The University of Michigan Press, for taking a chance in

2. For the detailed program, see the event website: http://www.unige.ch/run2018/

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supporting young audacious scholars, and Haley Winkle and Mary Hashman for their assistance in the final editorial stage, and Shana Milkie for her support in creating the index.

We thank our many financial sponsors who have believed in our massive project: the Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, the Fondation pour Genève, the Geneva School of Social Sciences, the Global Studies Institute (University of Geneva), the Institute of Political Studies (University of Lausanne), the Institute of Sociological Research (University of Geneva), the Laboratoire Triangle (Sciences Po Lyon), the Société Académique de Genève, the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), and the University of Geneva for supporting the conference; the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences of the University of Lausanne for helping us hire research assistants; and again the SNSF for committing to Open Science and providing free access to the content of the book.

We dedicate this book to all contributors; both visible and invisible. We hold a special place to the scholars who have signed one or multiple contributions, especially to those whose careers are at odds and still precarious, navigating professional injunctions and personal constraints. We hope these extremely competent scholars find professional stability to pursue their invaluable input to the world. To the invisible ones, we are particularly grateful to Bob Reinalda's unwavering support. His unconditional generosity exceeds any expectation in our competitive field—academia—without ever requesting to be in the spotlight.

And above all, what prevails with this book is deep-rooted friendship and respect for who we are as humans and women, engaged in academia and the world. We hold dear the countless hours discussing our respective research interests, our self-deprecating humor that made this adventure as light as can be, but also the genuine support in all matters of life foregrounded in team players' spirit.

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A major problem of research about international organization is to gain access to and responses from "live" participating sources, mainly secretariat officials and delegates. The experience of the research team varied widely. We are all deeply grateful to the many delegates and international officials who willingly and candidly responded to our questions. Others, however, were clearly more suspicious of our attempts at independent inquiry.

The Anatomy of Influence, p. viii

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Introduction

Rethinking Methods of Investigation and International Organizations

Fanny Badache, Leah R. Kimber, and Lucile Maertens

Scholars have studied international organizations (IOs) in many disciplines generating important theoretical developments. Yet a proper assessment and broad discussion of the methods used to research these organizations are lacking. Which methods are being used and in what ways? Do we need a specific methodology applied to the case of IOs? What are the concrete methodological challenges when doing research on IOs? This book compiles an inventory of the methods developed in the study of IOs under the five headings of *Observing*, *Interviewing*, *Documenting*, *Measuring*, and *Combining*. We do not aim to reconcile diverging views on the purpose and meaning of IO scholarship but to create a space for scholars and students embedded in different academic traditions to reflect on methodological choices and the way they impact knowledge production on IOs.

Why This Book?

Methods of investigation are ubiquitously discussed in today's social sciences. In addition to the many handbooks available on specific methods (i.e., interviews, survey research, discourse analysis, etc.), more systematic methodological discussions have recently emerged in international studies (see for instance Aradau and Huysmans 2014; Devin 2018; Klotz and Prakash 2008; Schmidt-Wellenburg and Bernhard 2020; Huddleston et al. 2022; Lamont 2022). However, the field of IO studies has yet to thoroughly explore these avenues.

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So far scholars researching IOs have had access to two types of publications. On the one hand, they can get ahold of several handbooks on IOs (see for instance Barkin 2013; Devin 2022; Hurd 2020; Karns, Mingst, and Stiles 2015; Reinalda 2013; Rittberger et al. 2019; Weiss and Wilkinson 2018), in which methodological questions are often not put to the fore. On the other hand, they can learn about a set of methods in manuscripts dedicated to specific approaches to studying IOs (see for instance Müller 2013; Niezen and Sapignoli 2017 for an anthropological approach).

This book does not intend to replace these volumes but rather supplements them by gathering a wide variety of methods with a specific focus on their applications in IO research. By bringing together junior and senior scholars from different disciplines (political science, international relations, anthropology, sociology, history, law, etc.) and academic communities in Europe, North America, Asia, and Oceania, our aim is to reflect upon the diversity and richness of the research on IOs conducted in the social sciences and humanities.

Whether drawn by a specific research question or a general interest in IOs, the book will help both students and researchers in kick-starting and pursuing a research project on such institutions. The book may be read as an introduction to the complex world of IOs presented in a condensed and accessible format. In doing so, it provides an overview of what has been carried out so far and constitutes a broad inventory of both well-established and more recent methods used in the social sciences. All contributions review a specific method (or combination of methods) in few pages, pointing out the advantages and limits as well as providing concrete tips.

As a daily companion for academics and students alike, the book is a practical guide that can be used throughout the research process, from the definition of the question to data collection and generation, as well as during the analysis and writing phases. For bachelor students, the book proposes a first dip into the wide sea of IO scholarship by providing a strong basis to develop their methodological awareness. For graduate and doctoral students, it offers an overview of the various methods available to kick-start their own research on IOs and gives practical cues for the development of their projects. For IO scholars, the book encourages them to expand the pool of methods they use to pursue relevant and innovative research on IOs.

International Organizations as Research Objects

Instated in a founding act (treaty, charter, legal status) and embodied in a material framework (headquarters, funding, and staff) (Smouts 1995), IOs

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constitute a coordination mechanism between members bringing "stability, durability and cohesiveness" in international relations (Duverger quoted in Archer 2014: 2). However, IOs are not solely a group of member states; they are inextricably tied to both their bureaucracies and the various (non-state) actors revolving around them (Weiss and Thakur 2009). IOs are also made up of a diversified network of individuals—from executive heads to staff members, as well as experts, diplomats, and civil society activists—constituting complex systems of interaction where multilateralism takes multiple forms beyond formal and institutional boundaries. We therefore do not essentialize IOs in this book but question them as actors, fora, and resources (Hurd 2020) that participate and set the stage for both intergovernmental and transnational cooperation. Such a broad definition helps embrace the complexity of IOs as research objects and encompasses the diversity of IO studies.

Existing typologies in the literature highlight multiple types of IOs by distinguishing intergovernmental from nongovernmental and hybrid organizations, with a growing interest in informal IOs (Roger 2020) and public-private partnerships (Andonova 2017). For instance, scholars have classified IOs based on membership (universal or restricted), competence or scope (general purpose or issue-specific), function (program or operational organization), authority (strongly or loosely binding, strong or weak in implementation), delegation (intergovernmental or supranational), and centralization (decentralized or centralized organization) (Rittberger and Zangl 2006: 10–12; Rittberger et al. 2019: 5–7). Although this introductory chapter does not adopt one particular typology to classify the IOs mentioned in the book, such typologies are nonetheless useful to define and delimit one's research project. They draw attention to specific characteristics helpful for case selection, comparison, contextualizing research findings, and discussing potential generalization.

The contributions to this book approach these diverse characteristics as methodological challenges rather than formal lines fixing the boundaries of IO studies. Indeed, they are not designed in a "one size fits all" approach: they acknowledge when a method is better suited for a specific type of IO *and* identify the challenges of its application in different multilateral contexts (formal/informal, governmental/non-governmental, etc.), addressing the issue of comparability between IOs. Likewise empirical illustrations build on fieldwork undertaken in all regions of the world and explore IOs with either universal or regional membership and with either thematic or more encompassing mandate(s). Not only does the book address this empirical diversity, it also values the different disciplinary perspectives. The contributions inform about the methods appropriate to answer a large variety of

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research questions including on the nature of IOs, the reasons behind their creation, their functioning and their role in world politics to name a few.

Methods as a Deliberate and Reflexive Stance in the Research Process

Scholars have access to a breadth of methodological tools to research IOs and have relied on different approaches when it comes to methodology. Indeed, methodology concerns the logical structure and procedure in scientific inquiry (Sartori 1970: 1033). Put differently, it relates to "the intellectual process guiding self-conscious reflections on epistemological assumptions, ontological perspective, ethical responsibilities, and method choices" (Ackerly, Stern, and True 2006: 6). IO scholarship accommodates a large variety of views on these reflections. This book focuses more precisely on method choices while raising issues regarding their integration in various methodologies.

In this vein we define methods as both technical and performative tools: they help collect, generate, and analyze data; they also construct particular accounts of the social world (Ackerly, Stern, and True 2006; Law and Urry 2004). In doing so, we approach methodological choices as constitutive of a reflexive research process: they have important consequences for the production and dissemination of knowledge. Drawing from Bellamy, Williams, and Griffin, who invited peacekeeping scholars to "be theoretically self-conscious and ask basic questions about what [they] are looking at and why, and what is excluded when [they] look at something in a particular way" (2010: 20), we enjoin researchers to be *methodologically* self-conscious. Whatever our ontological and epistemological traditions, one should consciously reflect on the methods one chooses and how one uses them to produce knowledge on the world and be aware as to what these methods allow to grasp or lead to ignore.

This reflexive stance ought to be adopted throughout the research process. On the one hand, by reflecting on how one's academic training and background influences the methods one selects, one can deconstruct the prejudices one may have on specific methods or methodologies. On the other hand, situating methods in their historical and disciplinary contexts helps reconsider the opportunities and challenges of their application in IO studies.

In this book, our focus on methods is therefore embedded in a broader thinking on the (various) goals of scholarship (making generalizations, understanding particular cases, etc.) and on the consequences of using particular methods for knowledge production (Bourrier 2017).

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IO Research Methods?

While acknowledging ontological and epistemological divergences on the role of IOs in international relations, the book calls for theoretical and methodological dialogue. To the question "are IOs a specific research object when it comes to methods?" the book reveals that IOs are both *banal* research objects in the social sciences and *peculiar* settings in which to conduct research. Overall, each method calls for a certain degree of specification to suit the context, adapt to the research object, and follow the researchers' increasing familiarity with their object. Hence if there are no such "IO research methods," the contributions to this book show *fluctuating degrees of methodological adjustment*. While all trace the broader use of a specific method in the social sciences and humanities, some insist on a necessary adaptation not only to apply one method to IOs but to benefit the most from its advantages in the context of a research project on IOs.

Researchers may have to adapt their methods to the specificities of the IO context, considering two intermingled dimensions: the way they approach IO research *and* the characteristics of the IO(s) under study. First, the book demonstrates that the methods researchers use—and the required adjustments—depend on their own definition and conception of IOs often in line with their academic background and the paradigms they subscribe to. For some, states are seen as the main actors in an intergovernmental perspective. They therefore question power politics within IOs and, in turn, the influence of IOs on governments. Methods used to analyze states' voting patterns, for example, inspired by the study of domestic politics and foreign diplomacy, must be reevaluated in light of the shift from national to international considerations (see part 4—*Measuring*). For others, IOs are conceived as a collection of individuals, professions, and practices. This perspective entails opening the box and using methods that unravel internal processes at play, not only those of government representatives. When doing so, the contributions hereafter emphasize the need to adjust methods to the specificities of the internal structures of IOs and to the characteristics of IO staff (see part 1—*Observing* and part 2—*Interviewing*).

Second, methodological adaptations relate to the wide diversity of organizations under scrutiny in IO studies. Three common specificities of IOs should be considered when fine-tuning methods to a research object: (i) IOs encompass a large variety of actors, (ii) they are multilevel organizations, and (iii) they are embedded in a complex political environment. Methodological adaptations result from a detailed assessment of the ways these characteristics may affect the research question and

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expected results. Concretely, this means that a researcher must map out the different actors involved in order to identify the most relevant types of interviews, the language(s) to use, and the power dynamics that will impact data generation (see part 1—*Observing* and part 2—*Interviewing*). It implies considering the institutional features of the IO(s) one intends to scrutinize in order (i) to adjust methods to its degree of formality, (ii) to adapt methods of data generation and analysis to the most fruitful IO artifacts and productions (see part 3—*Documenting*), and (iii) to find the right combination of methods (see part 5—*Combining*). If these adaptations might be marginal like in the case of computerized text analysis or prosopography (see part 2—*Interviewing* and part 4—*Measuring*), in other instances, such as participant observation or voting analysis (see part 1—*Observing* and part 4—*Measuring*), IO specific characteristics are critical features to consider to best use these methods since IO membership, multilevel action, and bureaucratic mechanisms require particular methodological adjustments. In other words, the book invites the reader to reflect on the spatial, temporal, and institutional context(s) in which research on IOs is conducted and its related methodological implications (Maertens et al. 2021).

Overall the empirical material emanating from IO research should become a solid basis from which we critically approach the data we collect and use. Data one generates is both contingent and revealing of (i) the varying types of access one is granted and (ii) the different ways IOs are willing to share but also produce and disseminate their knowledge and information. In this vein, contributors to this book point to concrete cues to be mindful of the manufactured nature of data. For instance, while statistical data is widely employed in the social sciences, when using IO statistics, one should be aware of the issues of standardization required for the sake of comparability between states (see part 4—*Measuring*). Likewise the documents an IO provides depict what is *made available* and *visible* (see part 3—*Documenting* and part 5—*Combining*). Power relations experienced when doing fieldwork may shape the generated data, while informing on the power dynamics instilled in IOs (see part 1—*Observing* and part 2—*Interviewing*). A critical stance on data is therefore indispensable for each step of the research process and for every type of method we use. Taking stock of the *visible* thus needs to come hand in hand with a thought process around the *invisible*. Paying serious attention to data generated by researchers, or provided by the IO itself, allows for a finer grained understanding of IOs.

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Seventy-Five Years of IO Studies: A Methodological Lens

To what extent have scholars discussed research methods in their studies of IOs? How do they present their methodology? Can we observe an evolution over the past seventy-five years? To answer these questions, we conducted a longitudinal study in which we analyzed a corpus of research articles on IOs from 1945, the year of the creation of the United Nations, to 2020.[1] The corpus is based on articles drawn from the seven most used and referenced peer-reviewed journals according to the contributors to this book. Since 1950 and following a five-year mark, we retrieved the articles addressing IOs and/or multilateralism in either the title or the abstract (see table 1 below).

The systematic selection led to a total of 455 articles. Figure 1 displays the number of publications in our sample over time while table 2 shows that the increased number of retrieved articles since the 1990s also results from the inclusion of new journals in our sample.

We analyzed our sample along three axes: (i) we looked at whether authors use first- and/or second-hand empirical data or if the article is mainly conceptual; (ii) we assessed whether authors discuss the methods used to collect, generate, and analyze their empirical data by coding the presence/absence of explicit methodological reflection in each article relying on the mention of "data," "methods," and/or "methodology"; (iii) we checked whether the articles have a section/subsection dedicated to the presentation and explanation of the methodology and methods employed. The findings point to general trends throughout the entire period and show significant evolutions over time.

Table 1. Methods in IO Studies: Surveyed Journals

Journal (year of creation)	Number of articles on IOs	Proportion in sample
International Organization (1947)	151	33,19
International Studies Quarterly (1959)	59	12,97
European Journal of International Relations (1995)	44	9,67
Global Governance (1995)	106	23,29
Critique internationale (1998)	22	4,84
Review of International Organizations (2006)	44	9,67
Global Policy (2010)	29	6,37
TOTAL	455	100

1. Similar endeavors were last carried out in the 1970s, see Alger (1970) and Dixon (1977).

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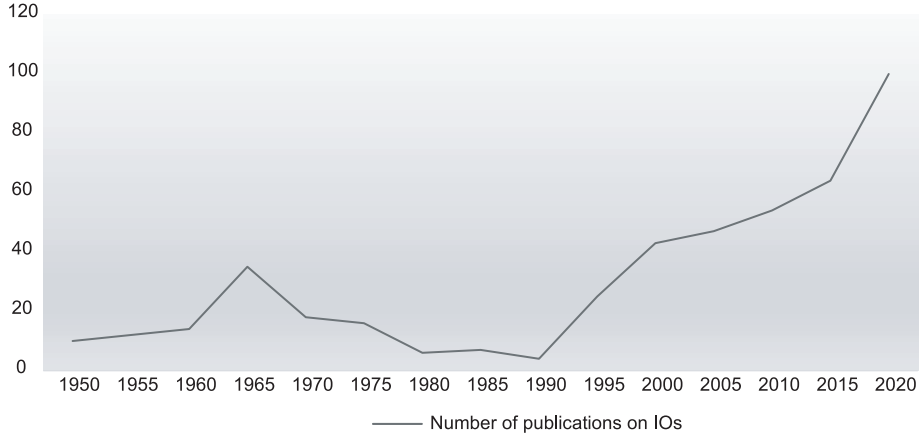

Figure 1. Number of publications on international organizations per year

Table 2. Methods in IO Studies: Sample Overview per Year

	Number of journals sampled	Number of articles on IOs
1950	1	10
1955	1	12
1960	2	14
1965	2	35
1970	2	18
1975	2	16
1980	2	6
1985	2	7
1990	2	4
1995	4	25
2000	5	43
2005	5	47
2010	7	54
2015	7	64
2020	7	100

First, we found that the large majority of publications on IOs, since 1945, relies on empirical data for their demonstration, with 84 percent of articles using first- and/or second-hand data. Our results then show that while most articles using empirical data propose a methodological reflection (almost 70 per cent), 30 percent of them contain a section or subsection dedicated to the methodology and/or methods the authors employed to conduct their research.

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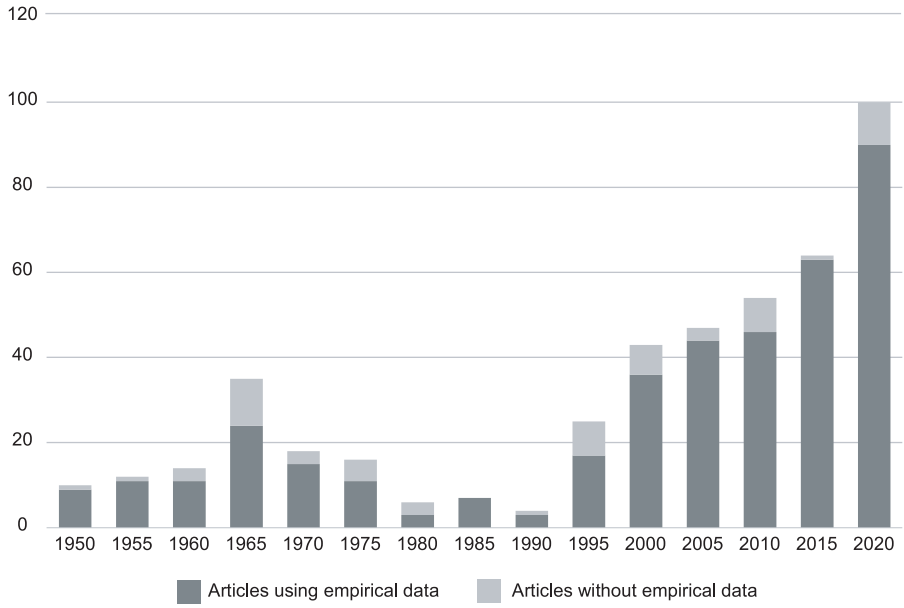

Figure 2. Use of data in articles on international organizations over time

Based on these three dimensions, the analysis also shows interesting evolutions over time. First in terms of the use of empirical data, over the entire period we notice that scholars have predominantly relied on empirical data in their study of IOs, as summarized in figure 2. In terms of methodological reflection and section, we observe that scholars have discussed research methods since the beginning of IO studies. However, we see a constant increase in this endeavor since 1995. Figure 3 presents the share of articles with methodological reflection and section over time. In particular, it shows that the increased methodological reflection is accompanied by a formalization in publications. Whereas articles published before 1995 barely have a dedicated methodological section, from this date on, the share of articles including such a section has more than doubled. In our view, this trend could reflect an increased formalization in the way research on IOs is conducted along with shifts in publication requirements.

In sum, we observe an increasing interest in presenting the methods used to produce knowledge on IOs. Our sample shows that explicit mentions of research methods are central to publications on IOs today. However, more is yet to be said and researched on whether dedicated sections actually suggest greater critical stances on authors' methodological practices. This book is

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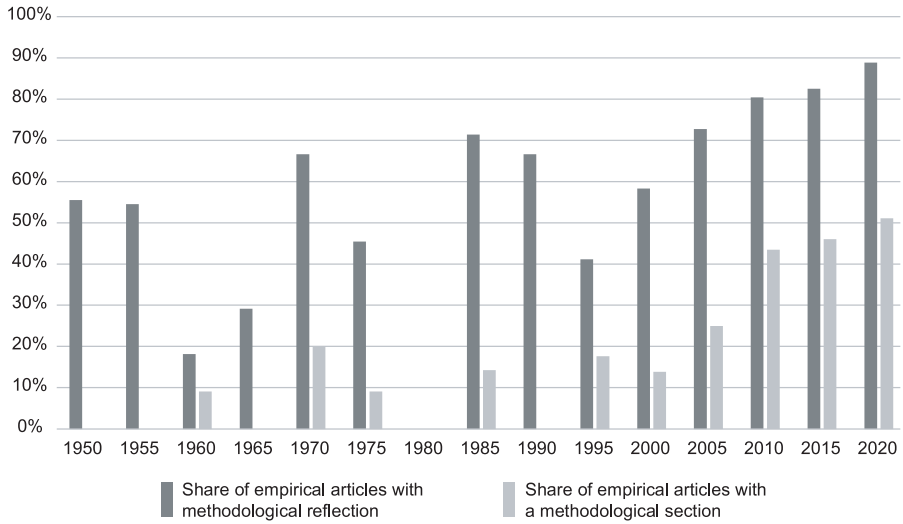

Figure 3. Evolution of the share of articles with methodological reflection and section

designed as a contribution to deepen methodological discussions and ongoing developments in the field of IO studies.

How to Read This Book?

The book comprises three types of contributions in each of the five parts entitled *Observing*, *Interviewing*, *Documenting*, *Measuring*, and *Combining*. Chapters present one method (or set of methods) and its application in IO studies. Boxes highlight more specific methodological tools and tricks. Interludes shed light on controversial or cross-method issues at the end of each section as a way to discuss the current debates around a type of method or "family" of methods. They typically build on the section's contributions and propose a more conceptual and abstract stance on the section's theme. While the book can be read in chronological order, its various contributions also have the merit to be read as standalone, valuable inputs.

How should researchers read this book? Methodological choices depend first and foremost on the research question to be answered. The book constitutes a roadmap to help navigate between different methodological options and select the most appropriate methods depending on the phenomenon one intends to research. Each chapter highlights the type of research ques-

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tions one method allows to investigate and the results one may expect to find by using that particular method. By providing a short description and concrete examples of a method's application in IO research, the chapters identify *what* the method entails, *why* it is relevant to study IOs, *how* one can apply that method to collect and analyze data, and *what challenges* one may face in applying that method. The chapters combine concrete examples based on the contributors' own research experience as well as illustrations found in the literature. The contributions also include a selection of additional readings to continue the exploration of each method.

While researchers may be leaning toward specific methods (for whatever reasons), the book helps validate the a priori choices related to those methods and suggests other (complementary) methodological avenues to answer the research question. Practically speaking, you may open the book to be introduced to a method you already know and may want to use, but you will also find key inputs and references to start a reflection on what else is possible since the book offers an introduction to a wide variety of methods used to research IOs. Other options may thus appear as more relevant to reach your research objectives (especially since research questions and methodologies go hand in hand). By touching on epistemological debates, this book can also help (re)formulate a relevant, feasible, and fertile research question.

To facilitate the navigation among the numerous methodological options IO scholars have at hand, the book is structured in five main parts that group a series of methods around similar methodological traditions and types of empirical material. The first one, *Observing*, includes methods relying on observation and addresses common challenges around access and confidentiality. The second part, *Interviewing*, gathers techniques to collect data through individuals with a specific emphasis on the useful adaptation for the specificities of the varying types of individuals involved with IOs. The third part, entitled *Documenting*, presents methods used to research IO productions, from their collection to their analysis. The fourth part, *Measuring*, addresses methods relying on quantitative data and the challenges to gather relevant, reliable, and comparable data. Finally, the last part, *Combining*, provides examples of studies in which two or more methods are jointly used and the advantages that result from such a combination to study IOs.

Interludes conclude each part by reflecting on the use of these methods in IO studies. They emphasize the debates and potential controversies around the selection of methods, their (not always necessary) adaptation to the field of IO research, and their constantly evolving uses. They show what borrowing and adapting methods from different academic fields can do to IO studies, as much as how the field of IO research revives and updates method-

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ological tools in the social sciences and humanities. Overall, the book sheds light on the variety and vividness of research on IOs, in terms of topics, methodologies, and academic traditions, and advocates for methodological openness and diversity to foster innovations in IO studies.

Limits and Avenues

The book intends to start an in-depth and inclusive conversation about methods in IO studies. Yet our suggested format with its condensed contributions and entry through methods has its quirks. For instance, structuring another book around diverging IO characteristics and different types of actors could bring additional insights to the methodological considerations raised in this one. While we have worked toward an inclusive book, integrating both a gender and a senior/junior balance, we must also acknowledge the underrepresentation of scholars from the Global South.

Despite our effort to address a wide range of methods and methodologies embedded in various epistemologies and theoretical stances, the book does not cover it all. There undoubtedly remain gaps and silences. We identify four main topics that the book does not touch upon sufficiently, mostly because of ongoing developments. Firstly methods revolving around the increased use of digital devices must receive greater attention in the future. We recognize the impact of social media, like Twitter, and the use of online platforms for research, but have not given an exhaustive account of the ways in which social media and Internet-based research can be fully beneficial to carry out politically salient and academically timely research on IOs. These platforms may inform about the ways IOs communicate, disseminate knowledge, and in turn interact with their so-called beneficiaries as well as with individuals around the world (see for instance Bjola and Zaiotti 2020). Analyzing how IO actors use different types of software, applications, and digital platforms could point toward new practices of coordination, cooperation, and collaboration.

Secondly and partially connected to the first point, the book opens the discussion on issues of research "at a distance," which deserves further attention in upcoming investigations (Bourrier and Kimber 2022). In particular, researchers may be put at a distance deliberately by IO actors or as a result of specific circumstances. This became ever more relevant in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic that propelled most scholars to think of their fieldwork differently. The impact of the pandemic on both multilateralism and academia under "home office" poses new challenges and questions

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(Maertens et al. 2021), calling for methodological innovations (on online research methods see for instance Fielding, Raymond, and Grant 2008).

Thirdly the book does not discuss behavioral methods, i.e., methods to empirically study "preferences, beliefs and decision-making" (Hafner-Burton et al. 2017: S2) that affect the choices of IO actors. They include various types of experimental methods such as survey-based and field experiments (for a review see Mintz, Yang, and McDermott 2011). These emerging methods may be useful to test causal relations and provide new hypotheses in IO research.

Fourthly the book only partially tackles the legal and ethical issues associated with doing research on IOs. We see four avenues for future discussions to take stock of old and new dilemmas in that matter. First, the generation and use of data on individuals revolving in and around IOs raise important ethical questions about the protection of personal data. While this is not new, the use of commercial clouds as storage systems and the commitment to open science bring additional elements to consider. Second, scholars are also increasingly exploiting online content to explore various dimensions of IO action; such use requires ethical consideration, especially when it comes to content made available online by individuals. Third, the legal and institutional obstacles to conduct research on and in IOs can be daunting. IO researchers should reflect on what the judicialization of science and access to public administrations is doing to IO studies and how to continue creating relevant knowledge on multilateralism regardless. Finally, the high connection between IOs and academia on the one hand, and the growing public attention given to research on the other invite us to think more critically about the normative effects of IO studies.

The book nonetheless introduces a timely discussion over the methods used to investigate IOs. We see it as a living document, which needs to be updated regularly. In this way we aim to inspire and encourage researchers to continue applying new methods and innovate methodologically, as there is a need to respond to ever-growing and ever-varying research questions raised by the constant evolution of IOs.

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PART 1

Observing

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Introduction

Observing

Fanny Badache, Leah R. Kimber, and Lucile Maertens

Observing international organizations (IOs) allows us to grasp the machinery of world politics by providing a better understanding of how these organizations work, their everyday enactment, and the power dynamics that structure relationships inside and outside the organization. To do so scholars hold a set of useful and well-established methods throughout the social sciences.

Historically, social scientists have developed methods based on observation to align data collection and data analysis by generating the fieldnotes that feed the analysis. Concretely speaking, the process of observation entails undergoing "thick description" to envisage all hypotheses, without foreseeing, and leaving all interpretations open for future (in)validation. Observation often calls for a certain degree of immersion leading researchers to experience—with varying intensity—the everyday of the observed. This section, entitled *Observing*, explores the various ways scholars can observe, sense, experience IOs, their advantages and challenges as well as the different temporalities at play.

Observing IOs helps investigate several questions. First, researchers can interrogate power dynamics among different actors. For instance, sitting with a civil society delegation during international negotiations is insightful to capture dynamics of inclusion and exclusion within IOs. Second, observing methods permit to answer research questions on the culture of an IO, by feeling at a bodily level the practices, routines, and experiences of individuals involved in IOs' work. Researchers can grasp IO daily activities from the very mundane ones that are often not considered of interest, even

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left behind in interviews, to the technical ones that embody professional practices, or to the most strategic ones potentially hidden from public view. Third, observing IOs allows us to question the meaning actors give to their missions. Studies carried out with observing techniques share a commitment to understanding the reality such as it is experienced by the actors. Observation contributes to uncover and explicate how people in particular work settings understand, account for, and manage their day-to-day situation.

This section includes contributions introducing the different ways researchers can observe an IO along three axes. First, contributors present the varying degrees of immersion implied by different observing methods (see chapter 1—*Direct Observation* and chapter 2—*Participant Observation*). Second, chapters and boxes unpack the entire observation process—before, during, and after. On the one hand, they explore the impact of space and material constraints, namely the architecture of a building, the table arrangements in negotiation rooms, the different devices positioned in halls, on both the study and the observer (see box a—*Observing spatial practices*). On the other hand, they discuss the observers' challenges regarding multipositionality having to sway among various roles (see box c—*Multipositionality*) or having to develop an awareness regarding one's own corporality in fieldwork, be it in office spaces (see box d—*Carnal sociology*) or remote areas triggering new ways of perceiving the world. Contributions then address the key moments when researchers decide to exit their fieldwork and their considerations for the relationships they have created (see box e—*Exiting fieldwork*). Third, contributors present data collection tools while observing. If taking notes has been the traditional form of data collection, contributions also account for interviewing techniques specific to fieldwork contexts (chapter 3—*Ethnographic Interviews*) and look at how pictures taken during observations can feed researchers' analyses (see box f—*Reversed photo-elicitation*).

While new modes of observing, such as digital ethnography (see box b—*Digital observation*) and the collaborative observations of international summits are increasingly being employed, the contributions give rich insight to understand the advantages of observing (in) an IO as well as the various challenges (Interlude I—*Frictions of distance and proximity: Observing IOs in action*).

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CHAPTER 1

Direct Observation

Kari De Pryck and Svenja Rauch[1]

Anthropologists suggest examining written material issued by or negotiated within international organizations (IOs) as "assemblages of discourses and practices, following their trajectories and histories" (Müller 2013: 8). Observation of multilateral negotiation processes, international conferences, and summits reveals how international agreements are being crafted and allows exploring the complex settings in which these processes take place. The method thus provides unique insights into the dynamics of multilateralism, generating a wealth of research data. While scholars tend to distinguish between direct (passive) and participant (active) observation, we focus in this chapter on the former (see chapter 2—*Participant Observation*).

What?

Participant and direct observation share many advantages and challenges, yet there is a fine line between the two methods: direct observers closely watch the plot unfolding from their seats in the audience or "behind the screen," whereas participant observers actively contribute to shaping the process. Direct observers may also use techniques such as "shadowing" by following the everyday life of actors (Czarniawska 2007). While participant observers have specific tasks to perform and responsibilities to assume, direct observers do not attempt to influence the international processes that they are studying and focus primarily on their research interests.

1. The views expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.

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Various authors highlight the contribution of ethnographic methods to the study of IOs. Focusing on the World Conservation Congress, MacDonald, for example, explores the role of meetings in negotiating organizational order. Kamau, Chasek, and O'Connor (2018) also highlight the "cast of characters" of and the "use of process and drama" in international negotiations. Similarly, Müller's fieldwork at the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (2011) examines the role of the organization in the construction of its discourse on agricultural biotechnology. The direct observation of international deliberations is thus critical "to witness meaning as it is being made, challenged, transformed and translated" (2010: 259). These studies share the ambition to reveal the practices, interactions, relationships, and networks thereof that underpin the work of IOs as well as the reports, decisions, agreements, and ultimately the norms that they produce. Anthropologists have "explored the headquarters of [international] organizations, analyzed the mechanisms of governance in daily practice, and followed the construction of an institutional identity in images and language" (Müller 2013: 4). Observing the "culture of negotiation" and consensus formation within IOs, with each of them constituting a "microcosmos" in its own right, allows us to reveal the interests and power dynamics that underpin these organizations (Abélès 2011: 20).

Direct observation, first, relates to *settings* (see box a—*Observing spatial practices*), i.e., the physical environment and the complex organizational culture in which international meetings take place. Different temporal and spatial dynamics can be observed, e.g., at the headquarters of IOs and in their regional or subregional hubs, or at international conferences that are hosted in different countries (Cragg and Mahony 2014; Worrall 2021; Verlin 2021). Second, direct observation allows identifying and tracking the main *actors* in the negotiation processes as they unfold. Different key players may determine the outcome of the negotiations at different stages, thereby gradually shaping their outcome. Weiss et al. (2009: 1) point to the interactions of three main groups of actors within the United Nations: member state representatives, international civil servants, and the "third UN" encompassing civil society organizations, academia, and other nongovernmental stakeholder groups. Third, and most importantly, direct observation generates data on the *practices* within an organization that are shaped through the interactions between different actors and their interests, and which are embedded in both the physical and cultural settings of the meeting venues as well as the overall geopolitical context.

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Why?

Müller highlights that organizational anthropologists "most of the time, [. . .] did not find their most precious materials in the official transcripts of sessions. They gleaned them in chance encounters [. . .], spontaneous interactions and by careful observation" (2013: 4). Direct observation thus allows closely watching how international processes unfold, examining the "give and take" of negotiations, rather than merely analyzing their outcomes. Complementing text-based analysis, direct observation can make "written documents speak by following the production of highly formalized and often opaque texts" (Müller 2013: 4). Such dynamics can hardly be accessed remotely and include observations on how negotiators and bureaucrats "work" the room, how actors interact both in different types of sessions—plenaries, breakout sessions, coordination meetings, side events, and encounters in the hallways. Being a passive observer of the process instead of an active participant allows us to identify the dynamics that shape a given text or decision, without having to acknowledge one's role in its production.

While intuitive observations may seem trivial, they support the analytical research work in capturing the atmosphere in the room, e.g., increasing political pressure during late night sessions and toward the end of the meeting. The various types of observation—during formal meetings and "floating observations" outside the negotiation room—reveal practices and rules within IOs and therefore prove valuable to put actors' behavior into perspective and to contextualize certain findings. Observing these "micro-social processes" generates valuable data on the "workings, networks, mechanisms of power and symbolic relations" and the "logics that guide [. . .] interactions" (Müller 2013: 4) between individuals. Focusing on people and their interactions, as well as on the settings and the rules in which they are embedded, provides "original bodies of knowledge" (Kubik 2009: 42) on the transactions within IOs and reveals the role of the "human" and "non-human" factors in multilateral entities.

Direct observation further facilitates the identification of potential interview partners. While a list of interviewees may have been established before the start of the observation period, a physical presence provides the opportunity to reconsider and extend the list of actors who appear to play an active role in the negotiations. The findings gathered through direct observation may also prove critical to complement interview data and contrast the perceptions that different actors may share about a given situation.

Lastly, direct observation allows benefiting from opportunities that may arise

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over the course of the observation period, such as other meetings being held back-to-back with the conference that the researcher has set out to study and/or linkages with multilateral processes or debates taking place in other fora. Being open to "ethnographic surprises" (Bayard de Volo 2009) and ready to embrace them can further shape the research project as data is being collected.

How?

Several elements should be considered when preparing for direct observation. First, depending on the research topic, the researcher needs to identify the most relevant site to observe: the assembly of an IO's member states? Its secretariat? A specific program or department? A field mission? An international summit? This question illustrates the "multi-sitedness" (Marcus 1995) of the international fieldwork, in that practices are rarely restricted to single situations but always extend to a multiplicity of sites (geographical, temporal, and social).

Second, researchers often do not choose the fieldwork, but the fieldwork chooses them. Because the timing is not always right and because financial constraints and language barriers come into play, the choice of the fieldwork is often contingent on finding the right occasion. Access can be obtained through personal contact with an insider and/or through an official request. It can be unlimited or conditioned. Conditions may take various forms: access can be limited in time and space (e.g., bound to specific meetings and rooms) and the data collection and communication can be subject to internal review and approval. While individual research (e.g., pursued in the context of a doctoral project) may slip through the net, collective projects are often bound to the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding. One should thus keep in mind that the process of getting access is time consuming and should be anticipated.

Third, new questions arise during fieldwork because IOs and summits are "sprawling" phenomena. Various meetings and conferences generally take place at the same time, forcing the researcher to select and prioritize certain venues over others (sometimes based on gut feeling). For instance, when attending an international summit, negotiations take place in plenaries and parallel sessions and sometimes even in the corridors and during lunches. Side events have also become increasingly interesting moments of deliberation. It thus often takes time to get accustomed to the configuration of international institutions and to identify the most relevant sites of observation.

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Fourth, the process of data collection/generation also requires reflection. Researchers generally use note-taking devices (e.g., a notebook or a computer) to "write as much of what transpires as possible" (Fine 2015: 533). Direct observation is a learning process through which the data intuitively reveals the most important (and sometimes unexpected) issues. Researchers may want to take notes and pictures of the material arrangements of the conference, the procedures guiding the unfolding of the event, the motivations that lead actors to agree or disagree, and the comments gleaned during breaks and the researcher's own impressions of the process. While it can be relevant to write down verbatims, the speed through which deliberations generally occur makes it difficult to be exhaustive. When discussions extend through the night, the concentration of the researcher also rapidly decreases, and breaks are required. Direct observation thus remains an experience of learning by doing, which shapes the questions that researchers seek to answer. Reflecting on the researcher's own role in IOs is critical in this regard.

What Challenges?

A few challenges have already been mentioned: the choice of the site, the conditions of access, and the selection of the important issues to record. We can add another three, pertaining to the analysis of the data gathered through observation.

First, because direct observation produces data about activities that usually take place behind closed doors (and sometimes even in secret settings), researchers must deal carefully with data collection and disclosure. In this context, IOs and universities increasingly ask researchers to provide information on data protection, to ensure that the identity of the individuals that are included in their studies will not be displayed without their consent. When investigating multilateral negotiations, researchers must also carefully treat any information that could impede on the process. A technique that is commonly used to circumvent these challenges is to complement findings from direct observation with other data, including interviews, personal accounts (such as biographies and books), official documents, and meeting records and webcasts (see part 2—*Interviewing*, and chapter 20—*Interviews and Observations*).[2] When working on global environmental negotiations, for instance, a particularly relevant source of information are the reports

2. http://webtv.un.org/ (accessed July 31, 2020).

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of the Earth Negotiations Bulletin, produced by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD).[3] IISD releases daily or weekly summaries of major multilateral negotiations on the environment and on sustainable development, providing relatively neutral records on the ongoing deliberations.

Second, direct observation is often criticized for being biased by the researcher's subjectivities and for providing an incomplete picture due to the wide range of factors to examine. While these critiques should not be a reason to discard this method—all kinds of knowledge are "situated"—the robustness of the findings can be increased by either complementing direct observation with other methods or by conducting collaborative event ethnography (CEE). CEE is an increasingly popular method that involves a group of researchers in the ethnographic coverage of an international event. By working collaboratively as a group, researchers can "better cover the multiple sites at, and thus make better sense of, a meeting" (Brosius and Campbell 2010: 247). Concretely, this means collaborating to cover events, share observations, and think through emerging questions and conclusions. CEE has for instance been used to cover "transnational mega-events" such as the Fourth World Conservation Congress in Barcelona in 2008 (Brosius and Campbell 2010) or the Twenty-First Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Climate Change in Paris in 2015 (Aykut et al. 2017).

Third, a last challenge pertains to the personal relationships that may develop between researchers and actors in the field. While proximity can be informative (one often learns more by listening to actors informally commenting about their work), it can also affect the research process. For instance, Bourrier (2017), in her work on the World Health Organization's response to the H1N1 and Ebola crises, recognized that she underestimated interviewees' emphasis on intraorganizational struggles to protect them and safeguard her access to the organization.

To Go Further

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BOX A

Observing Spatial Practices

Fiona McConnell

Focusing on spatial dimensions of international organizations (IOs)—from the architecture of buildings and design of meeting rooms to how bodies move around and interact in these spaces—brings to the fore assumptions about rules of behavior and sheds light on the nature of power relations between actors and how modes of politics are articulated in IOs. Not only does the design of IO spaces reflect expected modes of decorum that should be adhered to, but with many IOs essentially being members clubs, the demarcation of actors as inside or outside IOs has implications for access to space and how particular individuals behave within these spaces.

Following Massey's (2005) insistence that space is characterized by coexistence and multiplicity, I have been interested in the messiness and liveliness of politics in the UN's conference rooms in Geneva and New York. For inspiration in how to approach the UN as a "geopolitical site," I turn to literature in anthropology, geography, and sociology that has ethnographically examined the role of ritual performances and (in)visibility in political institutions (e.g., Rai 2010; Jeffrey and Jakala 2014). I have brought this work into dialogue with cultural geography scholarship on affective atmospheres (e.g., Closs Stephens 2016) to examine how the material and affective setting of the UN influences behavior by and interactions between state and nonstate actors.

Transcripts of speeches delivered at UN forums provide rather sanitized versions of these events. As ethnographers have argued, it is only by being in the room that you get a sense of interpersonal dynamics, shifts in atmosphere, and the rhythm of proceedings. I complemented ethnographic techniques of noting the comportment and interactions of participants with "thick

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description" that was attuned to how the architecture of the space (including aesthetics that create a feeling of overwhelming grandeur and the allocation of seating) influenced both the establishment of and reception to protocols, and shifts in atmosphere when diplomatic decorum was disrupted. I also engaged in spatiotemporal mapping (Nippert-Eng 2015) that involved producing sketches of where individuals—state diplomats, UN secretariat staff, and representatives of minority and indigenous communities—sat in the room, how they moved about the space at different times during these multiday events, and how patterns of interactions varied in different spaces of the UN building. By turning attention to how bodies move and interact in specific spaces, and how spatial dynamics influence affective atmospheres, emotional registers, and auditory rhythms of particular IO events, this provides a useful interpretive guide to approaching this "field."

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BOX B

Digital Observation

Mélanie Albaret

Although the issue of the digitalization of diplomacy is not new, the pandemic has led to a massive virtualization of multilateral debates. Scholars who used to observe IOs *in situ* have had to observe *digitally* (Eggeling and Adler-Niessen 2021; Vadrot et al. 2021).

While IO work usually takes place in both a spatial and political location, spatial unity disappears in online sessions. The actors no longer converge to the same physical location. Scattered across different places, they meet in virtual spaces, clicking on online platform links to participate in meetings and negotiations. The unity of the observation field is no longer ensured by spatial unity (nor is it by the unity of time since the actors may have recorded their statements in advance in some cases) but rather by common practices.

Digital observation can take different forms as highlighted by the following two examples. It can consist of observing IO online sessions from one's own office or home while the actors under study experience that same distance. Scholars and actors are in some way in codistance (Albaret 2022). This experience differs from another kind of digital observation in remote surveys where only the researcher is at a distance (Bouju 2015), for example when scholars follow the UN bodies official sessions via UNWeb TV.

The possibility of digital observation of IO work has several advantages beside the low financial cost. Scholars can continue the field survey and keep tracking the issues they are interested in even in the event of health or travel restrictions. Experiencing codistance, the researcher shares the daily experience of their respondents, at least in part. Scholars can witness in real time, along with the actors in the field, emerging practices due to the shift toward

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digitalization. However, these developments again raise fundamental questions regarding observations in IOs (see chapter 1—*Direct Observation*, and chapter 2—*Participant Observation*). Getting access to the digital platforms to participate in live online sessions often requires accreditation among other steps (such as sending emails to get the link to join the meeting), which can be time-consuming. The online presentation of self and one's own staging in front of the video must be carefully prepared. Scholars can also face daily updated ethical challenges because of the intrusion of private life in multilateral public meetings due to "work from home." The transition from in situ to digital observation involves a whole set of adjustments to the researcher's position and furthers the need for reflexivity.

Digital observation thus has several limitations. Some practices are no longer observable (especially corridor diplomacy or behind-the-scenes negotiations) or are invisibilized (reactions of people when the videos are cut, private discussions by chat that replace the low-voice discussions in the room for instance). Access to actors for informal discussions or interviews is made far more complicated. The distance and observing from one's familiar place (home, office) hinders the impregnation process that is essential to decrypt IO practices.

Digital observation can contribute to IO analysis in highly constrained situations provided it is firmly anchored in other data generation methods. It can also be deliberately chosen as an appropriate method to study issues such as the digitalization of multilateral diplomacy (Fielding et al. 2017; see box o—*Artifact Analysis*): such a topic may imply observing digital exchanges (within WhatsApp group for instance).

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CHAPTER 2

Participant Observation

Leah R. Kimber and Lucile Maertens

Participant observation provides a unique insider's view on global politics in the making. By enabling scholars to look behind the doors of international organizations (IOs), it can contribute to study how IOs produce documents, discourses, and artifacts; to grasp routine activities that shape decision making; to observe how power is exercised between IO members and different organizations; and to understand how IO staff navigate between daily constraints, informality, and hierarchy.

What?

Traditionally used in anthropology and sociology (Malinowski 1922; Whyte 1943), ethnography claims coherence and continuity between data collection and data interpretation by the same individual within a research endeavor insisting on "the crucial nature of manufacturing data" (Beaud and Weber 2010: 274). Among methods drawing on ethnography, participant observation is characterized by its participatory dimension, meaning that the researcher fulfills tasks specific to their assigned role. Concretely, it refers to the method through which the researcher generates data by not only being embedded but also actively participating in the activities under study while trying to embody the actors' lives to better understand them. Immersion provides the necessary material to produce thick descriptions to situate action in its context (Geertz 1973). In other words, participant observation helps explore and depict the reality such as it is experienced by the actors.

In political science and international relations, scholars have increasingly

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relied on participant observation to uncover hidden power relationships and reconstruct actors' strategies in accomplishing their daily activities (Burawoy et al. 1991; Schatz 2009). Scholars have used participant observation to study IOs through a variety of entry points like embedding themselves as interns within IOs' secretariats, joining a delegation during international negotiations, or integrating the "beneficiary communities" (Kimber 2020; Maertens 2016; Müller 2013).

Why?

On the one hand, participant observation provides an insider's perspective on the organization's functioning. First, researchers can reveal power asymmetries and configurations of multiple actors in constant renegotiation: they deconstruct a restrictive conception of an IO as a unitary actor by uncovering the diversity and complexity of actors' behaviors, strategies, and perceptions. For example, Bellier (2013) and Kimber (2023), who were both embedded as members of civil society delegations in charge of drafting proposals and tasks of coordination, enact this deconstruction: Bellier unravels the progressive recognition of collective actors in the production of international norms, while Kimber investigates inclusion and exclusion dynamics of civil society in intergovernmental negotiations toward the ratification of an international framework (2023). Likewise, hired as a research assistant at the United Nations (UN), Maertens captures the effects of the organization's hierarchy on its programs trapped between institutional collaboration and inevitable competition (2016). Fieldwork more broadly helps unpack the role of key individuals and relations of interdependence. Scholars may, for instance, investigate daily face-to-face interactions with what Nair describes as the "hanging out" technique, which proved useful in his study on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (2021).

Second, participant observation provides a unique understanding of everyday practices, bureaucratic constraints, and organizational cultures by requiring researchers to perform tasks and assume responsibilities through which they experience IOs on a daily basis and at a bodily level (see box d—*Carnal Sociology*). For instance, embedded as an international civil servant within the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), Fresia decrypts the making of a common professional identity (2013). Researchers can also recount specific practices such as actors' negotiating techniques and network building (Riles 2001) while experiencing the same temporal and spatial conditions that constrain international negotiators and IO staff (Eckl 2021; Kimber

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and Maertens 2021). They can depict discourse production influenced by routine, discontinuity, and informality while identifying mechanisms of knowledge production and the impacts of staff beliefs, individual and variegated engagements, and day-to-day activities on the implementation of an organization's mandate (Atlani-Duault 2008; Autesserre 2014).

On the other hand, participant observation also facilitates collection of other types of data. First, it allows researchers to compile written sources through access to gray literature (internal documents in particular) and the intranet given only to IO staff, for instance. This way, participant observers can potentially trace back the evolution of a speech or the influence of different contributions through access to draft reports and comments from copy editors (see chapter 10—*Document Analysis: A Praxiographic Approach*, and chapter 25—*Process Tracing*), to unpack the selection process that disappears once the report is published under one logo (Gayon 2016). Second, during participant observation, researchers can retrieve artifacts (see box o—*Artifact Analysis*) and produce visual data: sketching the settings of negotiations, taking pictures (see box f—*Reversed Photo-Elicitation*) or collecting images produced by the organization under study (see chapter 9—*Visual Methods*). Third, it enables to conduct ethnographic interviews (see chapter 3—*Ethnographic Interviews*) and encourages positive answers to interviews requests.

How?

Preparing Participant Observation

First knowing "when" and "where" to conduct fieldwork is not only conditioned by the research's ambition but contingent on the subject and the organization. For instance, international summits are planned months, even years, ahead but occur over a few days, requiring availability and flexibility, which may not be compatible with university schedules. On the contrary, bureaucratic work and organizational culture might be less subordinate to specific calendars and rather rely on cyclical work (Eckl 2021). Each organization performs along its own rhythm and requires specific accreditation processes that the researcher needs to find out about to determine the right moment to conduct the most productive fieldwork. For example, to follow international negotiations, you may have to accredit your university the year before the summit: the lengthy bureaucratic process should not be underestimated. In addition, participant observa-

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tion within IOs may also involve travels that are all the more costly when immersion does not get financially reimbursed.

Second, researchers can take on different roles and positions to access IO perimeters. Most often they rely on internships, volunteer work, or staff positions within an IO (typically within their main secretariats or country offices), a permanent representation (or an embassy), or a delegation (be it governmental or within civil society groups, etc.). At a multilateral meeting, for instance, access depends on the type of badge—governmental delegation, civil society, press, and so on. This variety of access has consequences for the empirical material researchers can produce through participant observation. For instance, integrated as a civil society member, the researcher witnesses advocacy strategies disconnected from the secretariat's functioning; hired as an intern, they are at the heart of the secretariat's debates, meetings, and productions. Although one cannot always choose the acquired position and degree of participation, each position generates valuable data. Researchers must however ensure that the data generated through the given access is adequate and sufficient to answer their research question (see table 3 for a schematic overview), otherwise having to readapt the question. Concretely, accreditation is often the most laborious step. Such a process can take up to several months. While having prior basic knowledge about the organization and its actors is mandatory, researchers can facilitate their access by activating a network of contacts based on previous experiences, preliminary interviews, academic networks, or personal acquaintance. Finally, the researcher may also need permission from their institution, through a research ethics committee for instance, to conduct fieldwork.

In sum, preparing and anticipating temporal, legal, relational, spatial, and financial dimensions positively impact the quality of the generated data (Bourrier 2017; Louis, Maertens, and Saiget 2018).

Conducting Fieldwork

Once in the field, obtaining site maps and meeting programs helps navigate the spaces and provides information about the nature of the site. While researchers must learn to emancipate from key informers, colleagues, internship supervisors, and administration members can also be a daily resource for the study thanks to their knowledge of the system as well as their networks. Carrying out participant observation in an IO requires a personal investment not only in developing relations but also in acquiring certain skills, in particular linguistic ones: while a good command of English is

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Table 3. Data Generation and Participant Observation in IOs

Position in IO perimeters	IO Secretariat	Government delegation	Civil society groups	IO operational activities
Privileged relations with . . .	- IO staff - Delegates	- Member state delegates - National governments	- Civil society members - Civil society networks	- National and local partners - "Beneficiaries" - National and local staff - Expats
Privileged information on . . .	- Internal functioning - Organizational cultures - Staff practices - Relations between IOs - Meeting preparations and proceedings	- Hierarchies among member states - Relations between member states and IO staff - Negotiation strategies - Official statement elaborations	- Activities of advocacy, lobbying and networking - IOs' inclusion and exclusion dynamics of civil society - Relations with IO staff, members, and among NGOs	- Implementation of IO mandate - Perception of IO activities by their "beneficiaries" - Relations between national and international staff, IO staff, and local partners
Challenges	- Technocratic influence - Conflicting allegiance	- Identification with delegation preventing access to other members	- Access denial to member states and UN staff spaces	- Disconnect with IO HQ and international decision-making arenas

often indispensable, the research object can require speaking another language and being familiar with the organization's jargon.

In terms of what to observe, there is always something to pay attention to. While the researcher orients their observations based on the initial research question, we advise to be as exhaustive as possible by rigorously transcribing all information broadly related to the research object. The researcher may either discreetly take live notes or dedicate time slots to write down the observations of the day (e.g., right after working hours). Each observation should be transcribed with elements of context clearly distinguishing observation from potential interpretation. The notebook (be it traditional notepads or smartphones)—afterwards—becomes an essential tool to identify overlooked facts and expected anecdotes with no analytical significance: observations perceived as insignificant while taking notes may appear more interesting due to multiple occurrences when rereading them;

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likewise, an event considered a major turning point at the time may appear slightly different at a later stage. Also being open to disruptions, changes, and "surprises" allows the researcher to seize new phenomena as they unfold, potentially shifting the initial research question.

Finally, after a first familiarization phase with the field and a second longer observation period, the researcher needs to conclude the study. While considering (im)possible returns to the field, the researcher can reclaim their role by presenting preliminary results (see also box e—*Exiting Fieldwork*).

Analyzing Data

When analyzing data, the researcher should objectify the observations and be aware of the possible subjective biases and emotional factors (Beaud and Weber 2010). When it comes to restituting the final research, the notebook can be used in two ways: first, excerpts can provide "thick descriptions" recounting the context and the actors' whereabouts and voice; second, fieldnotes are compiled to account for repeated daily routines and mundane activities through which international politics are negotiated and IOs are enacted.

What Challenges?

IOs do not easily and willingly open doors, especially if the researcher has traditionally had a critical stance toward their missions (Weaver 2008: 14). First and concretely speaking, access is often a critical obstacle. IOs are safeguarded organizations, which operate away from public scrutiny in a controlled and controlling environment. Yet the relative openness/closing of an IO already sheds light on its functioning (Pomarède 2020). Conducting fieldwork within an IO may also include physical and emotional security risks as well as financial and practical issues (especially for observations in remote places, see box z—*Expeditions as a Research Method*). These challenges can be anticipated, but they often require adaptation, improvisation, or even revisiting the research project and key questions when the field is totally closed off.

Second, participant observation raises ethical issues regarding anonymization and the use of data generated in informal spaces during the study. For instance, how to include empirical material to which the researcher has gained access through sources they are not authorized to quote? This is especially important when fieldwork takes an informal shape through "hanging

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out" outside or at the sidelines of bureaucrats' or diplomats' professional habitats (Nair 2021). First, researchers should disclose their observation without needing to be specific about their research question. Second, they may use anonymization techniques where thick descriptions include multiple actors, events, or practices gathered within one fictional restitution, or where quotes are rephrased and not attributed (especially if recording was used to help notetaking during events where speakers were not fully aware of the researcher's practice, e.g., a plenary session during a negotiation). Another solution consists in matching the information gathered from other sources (see part 5—*Combining*). Overall, academic research does not aim at unveiling scoops (see box v—*Challenging Secrecy*), it selects sensitive information necessary for the demonstration while respecting ethical and legal rules when disclosing personal data where respondents can be identified (e.g., deleting names might not be sufficient to prevent identifying an individual).

Finally, researchers should account for their positioning and prepare their exit as the field may be transformed due to multipositionality and respondents' expectations (see box c—*Multipositionality*, and box e—*Exiting Fieldwork*). Long-term observations create personal relations with the respondents who often forget about the researcher's initial motive, especially in the context of "expats' bubbles" where professional and personal lives overlap and where the lines between formality and informality become blurred (Louis, Maertens, and Saiget 2018). Researchers can also be involved in the production of their own primary sources, in information sharing, and in producing an interpretation of events that can affect the respondents' perceptions. Yet by being reflexive of their own presence and seeking support from their advisor and their institution's ethical committee, researchers can subdue feelings of unease and learn from their impacts on IOs: it informs on the production process of discourses and artifacts while providing information on the organization's openness.

To Go Further

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BOX C

Multipositionality

Simon Tordjman

As multilateralism expands, the original and formal division of labor between intergovernmental decision-making processes and bureaucracies has given rise to composite situations marked by blurred individual trajectories and institutional positions that intersect various locations and systems of interaction. Multipositionality refers to the overlap of different roles performed by the same individual, like being a researcher *and* IO staff, an expert involved in a governmental delegation, or a civil society activist working as an IO consultant. Building up on earlier anthropological research strategies—including Marcus's "multi-sited ethnography" (Marcus 1995)—multipositionality can ground innovative research design and methodologies to capture the multiple belongings of actors involved with(in) international organizations and help unpack more global phenomena, including the construction of international regimes, decision-making processes within IOs, and their contributions to transnational circulation processes.

Often combined with participant observation, multipositionality provides opportunities to better grasp the informal dimensions of the informants' social networks and professional practices in their articulation to broader systems of interaction (Abeles 2011). For instance, new institutional arrangements within the UN system, such as the establishment of UN Women in January 2010, often tend to be analyzed as a combination of interstate negotiations and civil society activism, taking place at the headquarters level. Through a four-year-long experience as a policy analyst within UNIFEM/UN Women, both in New York and through assignments in country offices in Africa, Asia, and Central and Eastern Europe, I was in a

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position to observe and collect data about informal social networks that were active both within and outside institutional arrangements.

As it requires taking into account shifting physical locations, institutional belongings, and social positions of actors, research strategies based on multipositionality may yet raise additional challenges both in terms of what to observe and how to translate it into an academic publication. Whether they be embedded in national delegations as thematic or geographical experts, join multilateral agencies or programs as temporary consultants, or contribute to an NGO-led advocacy campaign, researchers become involved in the production of their own primary sources, in information sharing and construction of interpretations of events that can in turn affect the respondents' perceptions. Reflexivity then helps take into account the positionality of the researcher and the situatedness of knowledge (Haraway 1988). As a means to prevent excessive familiarization with the language or frames used by the informants, particular attention can be dedicated to both similarities and differences in the ordinary use of words, language, and references as well as professional and social practices across groups and locations.

Reversely, the ways in which professional informants respond to the publications and behave with the researcher may provide relevant research insights, especially from groups seeking additional legitimacy and acknowledgment from/in the academic sphere (Massicard 2002).

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BOX D

Carnal Sociology

Julie Patarin-Jossec

The ethnographer's body and the way it can inform on social characteristics such as age, gender, or race impacts fieldwork. "Carnal sociology" developed by Loïc J. D. Wacquant particularly emphasizes this articulation of corporality and the production of ethnographic knowledges. In the 1980s, Wacquant's three-year immersion in a Chicago boxing gym led him to an important insight: his body was not only "socially constructed" but also "socially constructing" in the field. Through his own boxing practice, his body became a mirror of the norms, values, and asymmetries that organized his field. The ethnographer's body was both a research object and a method of investigation.

Applied to IO research, mobilizing the concept of carnal sociology underlines the bodily dynamic of ethnographers' multipositionality: to focus on their body can lead the ethnographer to further reflexivity regarding their role in the field, and the consequences of this role in fieldwork data. In addition, it highlights IOs' power relationships and hierarchies that have the ethnographer involved as researchers in the same way as our informants.

Between February and June 2017, I realized an ethnography at a United Nations committee in Vienna. I started as a visiting social researcher and left the field as an active member of a member-state delegation. This progressive implication led to various changes. I ultimately became aware of three dimensions related to my body as an ethnographer that could shape data. First, being part of asymmetrical relationships in the field. As a temporary and new incoming delegate, I was not only part of a hierarchy including a head of delegation that would impose rules and assign me tasks that I was assumed to strictly follow. I was also in the precarious position of an ethnog-

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rapher asked to justify her presence as a researcher, making more difficult the contestation of my duties within the delegation. Second, being assigned gender attributes. As the youngest and only female delegate, the head of delegation assigned me sexist tasks such as using my "feminine charms" and "flirting" with male representatives from other delegations to obtain information (in the informant's words). This brings me to my third point: being sexualized. Informants assumed my heterosexuality, which influenced what they would define as my usefulness within the delegation.

In conclusion, any fieldwork is structured by social mechanisms that frame daily interaction, such as gender power relationships. And if those mechanisms are experienced by other delegates, and reveal the organization of the IO, they impact the very nature of collected data. The ethnographer's age, gender, and position in the field enable (or restrict) the access to persons, places, and events that entirely shape the analysis. Ethnographying an international organization is foremost a carnal process calling for reflexivity and self-awareness. Carnal sociology thus engages not only to develop a critical stance, but it forces to turn these mechanisms into heuristic material and to apprehend the ethnographer's body as a significant fabric of the knowledge resulting from the enquiry.

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BOX E

Exiting Fieldwork

Frédéric Mérand

From 2015 to 2019, I was an embedded observer in the cabinet of a European commissioner in Brussels. For a total of eight months, during stays of two or three weeks each trip, I crashed into meetings, interviewed the commissioner and his staffers, observed various interactions with the press, and listened to their conversations in the corridor. From the outset, I made it clear to each cabinet member, as well as to the commissioner, that I would be taking notes, but that no comments or situations that could help to identify them would be published without their consent. This agreement was formalized in an ethics protocol approved by my university. In exchange, people opened their door to me, gave me their time, and—I cannot silence this point—extended a friendship that far exceeded my expectations. Exiting such in-depth fieldwork proved to be an important aspect of the research project.

When I had a first draft of my manuscript, I wrote an email to each person, appending a list of all the direct quotes I wanted to use from them. In a detailed message, I asked them to delete the passages they didn't want me to insert or specify if they wanted to remain anonymous. I only sent them passages where they spoke, making sure they couldn't identify others. At that stage, I also made sure neither the institution nor their superiors could have access to the material. That first stage proved trickier than expected. Although I gave each individual every assurance that their confidentiality would be safeguarded, some of them were shocked that I had taken such detailed notes. They felt their privacy had been violated. I had to remind them that, as an ethnographer, I had to write everything down but that, of course, I had not shared anything with anyone but them. In retrospect, I should have started with a phone call.

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Then I convened a collective reading workshop in Forêt de Soignes, near Brussels. I sent everyone the full manuscript that they could read in its entirety. This was a second opportunity to delete or slightly redact quotes that I attributed to them, now presented in context. At the end of the day, they modified very few passages, usually to ask me to remove a swear word or to avoid hurting someone else. There was no censorship whatsoever. For most of the quotes, they even agreed that I would use their real first name. We went over each chapter together. It was a fascinating experience during which my twenty "subjects" helped enriching my analyses with new ideas and information, correcting my mistakes, proposing their own interpretations of certain situations, engaging in contradictory debate with each other about specific events. The book came out a lot stronger.

Often, scholars do not share their research findings with practitioners they either interviewed or observed. Having often been guilty of this neglect, I wanted to make sure I would, to use Marcel Mauss's expression in *The Gift*, "give back"—through this workshop and a copy of the book—to the people who had given so much of their time and trust to me.

Adapted from: Mérand, Frédéric. 2021. *The Political Commissioner: A European Ethnography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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CHAPTER 3

Ethnographic Interviews

Leah R. Kimber and Emilie Dairon

Ethnographic interviews, typically carried out during participant observation, allow researchers to engage with informants, in real time, to help unpack the field under study. It makes observations more robust, by allowing researchers to better understand the world they are immersed in through a dialogue that can clarify the actors' perceptions and practices, resources and constraints. This method is characterized by a situated moment of mutual engagement between the researcher and the respondent; it also entails a reflection by the researcher on their own positioning and reflexivity in the research endeavor.

What?

"Ethnographic interviews" as a composed term in the social sciences carries within itself two significant words. They both refer to a certain way of doing research and rest on a long disciplinary and cultural research heritage. On the one hand, *interviews*—which emerged from sociology in the United States (Beaud 1996)—have commonly been used to allow researchers to collect information, know-hows, and experiences linked to a particular research question. They rely on the relationship established between the researcher and their informants to produce, together, an understanding in a particular time and space.

On the other hand, *ethnography* is a method used to generate qualitative data. Originally used in "terra incognita," for the study of unknown cultures, its use in policy analysis is well-established since the School of Chicago in

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the 1950s. Drawing on an anthropological tradition, this method follows an inductive approach that calls for the creation of theory out of data, characterized by its back-and-forth movements between data and analysis (Becker 1958). In that vein, "the ethnographer participates, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives, for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions; in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned" (Flick, von Kardoff, and Steinke 2004: 225).

Ethnographic interviews thus lie at the junction between interviewing and ethnography work, reflecting a moment of verbal exchanges, where researchers meet and talk with informants (Hockey and Forsey 2012). The opportunities for such interviews—mostly carried out in times of participant observation (see chapter 2—*Participant Observation*)—vary according to the conditions in the field because they strive to be a "normal" and fluid interaction, to erase the artificiality of the interview situation (Olivier de Sardan 1995).

Drawing on a long tradition in the ethnography of aid and agencies (Lewis and Mosse 2006) and renewed in international relations (Louis, Maertens, and Saiget 2017), especially for the study of IOs (Bourrier, 2017; Kimber, 2023), ethnographic interviews are a well-recognized tool among IO scholars despite rarely being accounted for and defined as such (Kezar 2003). Ethnographic research often focuses on the conditions of access and disclosure of information during fieldwork in IOs (Dematteo 2011; Pomarède 2020) but rarely discusses the process of conducting the conversations that arise from being in situ. This method, often taken for granted, helps reveal the context of investigation.

Practically speaking, ethnographic interviews can take place spontaneously (e.g., a random meeting at the cafeteria, an interaction at the end of a formal meeting) or be planned by the participants. Similarly, and in both cases, they can emanate from a semistructured interview guide or rather be questions that spark out of a specific moment, in a nonstandardized way. Even if the questions preexist, a researcher may take the opportunity to launch a discussion on a topic with specific questions, tail an interviewee's flow on another topic, ultimately informing the researcher's question.

Why?

From the interviewer's standpoint, the benefits are two-fold. First, the quality of information collected during ethnographic interviews is high, as

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it can help identify elements that usually "resist" to more formal moments of the research: unexpressed values, tacit knowledge, daily practices, and unspoken habits. Because researchers and informants are both experiencing a situation in real time, and because the researcher instills a "natural" and "spontaneous" conversation, a sense of mutual trust (a crucial aspect in elite interviews, Kezar 2003; see box j—*Asymmetrical Interviews*) emerges. That way, the interviewee is likely to disclose more information and to enrich the observation, e.g., by identifying other events that would be relevant for the research, or by suggesting that the researcher be in contact with other actors commonly referred to as the snowballing effect. In the context of IOs, at the "micro" level, it allows researchers to understand the variation in meaning among different individuals, according to their status (IO staff members, member state representatives, civil society actors), their institution (e.g., WHO, ILO, UNDP, etc.), their functions (policymakers, negotiators, administrative workers), or their sectors (development, humanitarian). At the "macro" level, it enables researchers to get a sense of the hierarchies (who works for whom under what circumstances), helps clarify a process, and comprehend particular acronyms and a specific jargon. At the "meta" level, it helps to triangulate data, stemming from observations and interviews.

Second, it allows researchers to develop a reflexive approach and to determine the biases they have when undertaking the study: "The reflexive researcher thinks through their own assumptions and how they affect the research project and shares some of these insights with the interviewed person" (Kezar 2003: 401). Acknowledging the biases is a first step, but managing them is part of the research (Olivier de Sardan 1995). Since the ethnographic interview is an engaged interaction, it helps researchers confront their own thoughts and prejudices, thus enriching the whole analysis. Typically researchers can ask questions to actors in the field about a phenomenon occurring in real time. Furthermore it can help shape the overall research question by finding out answers to questions defined prior to the observation or give way to reformulate them. This practice thus avoids misinterpretations and misunderstandings by the researcher.

In a nutshell, ethnographic interviews not only allow researchers to further open the box (Maertens 2016) but are also part of a larger strategy, combining several forms of data production to validate researchers' interpretation of social phenomena (Olivier de Sardan 1995; see part 5—*Combining*). On the one hand, while never used alone, they have value in making direct or participant observations more robust (see chapter 1—*Direct Observation* and chapter 2—*Participant Observation*). On the other hand, while not exclusive

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to other types of interviews, ethnographic ones—during fieldwork—can perfectly be combined with "one-shot" semistructured interviews or biographic interviews (see chapter 6—*Biographic Interviews*). To shed light on how international organizations *think* (Garsten and Jacobsson 2011), ethnographic interviews help give different in-depth cues and perspectives about the context under which IO actors go about their activities by exploring how they think and act inside the organization (Abélès 2011; Müller 2013).

How?

However ethnographic interviewing requires being reflexive, but also mindful and hence adaptive to the context.

Once access is guaranteed and conditions are defined, choosing to do ethnographic interviews with particular individuals, working in and around IOs, assumes that particular individuals have valuable information to understand the field under study. Ethnographers should follow the actors in their different sites of action to bring themselves closer to the subjectivities and singularities of each informant (Müller 2013) while building on their common experience (Spradley 1979). The choice of interviewees depends on the research question, but also on the windows of opportunity swaying between the formally planned with a specific time and place or the more spontaneous arising from an interaction.

In the former, questions are predefined, in an interview guide written on a sheet of paper which the interviewer may or may not have in their hand. In the latter, questions can be "open-ended" and emerge under the principle of "walking and talking." We might feel compelled to engage in a small talk with the person next in line at the UN cafeteria or share a random comment with someone passing—by attempting to fall naturally into the flow of their movement so as to find an entry point for continuing the discussion (Halme-Tuomisaari 2018).

Of course such adjustments imply having to spend time in the field, to get to know the people (Nair 2021) (and actors to get to know the researcher) and learning the codes around interactions in a specific ecosystem (Dairon and Badache 2021), hence acknowledging the influence of time and space (Maertens et al. 2021). What holds true in New York, for instance, may not hold true in Geneva nor in field duty stations. This might mean having to schedule a formal interview, arranged during a negotiation break, or engaging in a conversation, in an informal manner, on the way to the cafeteria on a coffee break. Selecting a "good" interviewee can thus appear as a tedious

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task, but this skill improves as the researcher's sense and confidence increases throughout their fieldwork (Beaud 1996).

Concretely speaking, carrying out ethnographic interviews requires availability and flexibility, as the opportunity for an interaction may arise at any time including at the end of a very long day, or just before another meeting. Heightened awareness of what has been said, the moments of a break between meetings, the ideal time of resuming the discussion are key to successful ethnographic interviews.

What Challenges?

We highlight three main categories of challenges, related to different stages in ethnographic interviewing:

Before: Selection and Preparation

Long immersion is key to being familiar with the field under study. Though it might take time for interviewees to move beyond the small talk—for they may become eager and more receptive once the researcher becomes familiar with the internal and external politics and is thus "fluent" enough to ask trenchant questions (Weaver 2008)—initial interviews and observations have value in identifying the key actors and the crucial moments.

During: Interview Questions and Expected Level of Information

Because interviewees might find it rude if a researcher relies on a written interview guide, they must memorize the sequence of questions or at least particular questions from the interview guide. Keeping up with the actors in their activity, by asking adequate questions for the given moment, allows researchers to retain their credibility in the field.

Researchers need to continuously adopt an inquisitive mindset to handle events as they unfold, for this mindset will help build their confidence in dealing with interviewees over time. First, as ethnographers tend to become native themselves, they need to ensure they have various sources of empirical material—not solely relying on the ethnographic interviews—to triangulate information. The researcher thus must continuously make themselves feel as a stranger while at the same time integrate the field as a native. Second, consid-

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ering that this is a jointly constructed relationship, the interviewee might also be tempted to give personal opinions on the research work, over the course of the interview, for instance. Interviewees may comment on the chosen methods or the choice of research topics, which the researcher must be ready to welcome politely without becoming defensive.

After: Transcribing and Interpreting the Material

Transcriptions are often an overlooked methodological challenge (Beaud 1996). As crucial information may not always be immediately transcribed on the spot, but rather in full, hours later, isolating ourselves in a restroom for example to take quick notes aside from informants can be helpful and even necessary. Finding tricks to remember the valuable input can go as far as taking quick notes and/or recording voice messages on a cell phone.

Finally, the challenge around ethics is prominent. The crucial question about ethnographic interviews thus relies on asking where did this information come from? When was it shared? In what context? Important information may be easily revealed in informal settings (i.e., "walking and talking") and used for research purposes without the informant explicitly being asked. In this case, it is up to the researcher to choose what to use in the research. Provided that there is no risk for the informant (anonymity) and for the researcher (no disclosure of confidential info that could potentially "close" the field for further research), it is common that researchers use information collected during moments when they were "not supposed to" do research. The "trick" of becoming close to the "natives" gives the researcher a privileged position and allows them to create ties to the point of creating friendships, but must not come at the expense of individuals' dignity and respect when mobilizing the information they provide the researcher with.

To Go Further

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BOX F

Reversed Photo-Elicitation

Leah R. Kimber

Taking pictures during fieldwork has been a common practice for social scientists in ethnography. Exploring society through photography encourages the researcher to "think with their eyes" (Becker 1974). Two methods have been traditionally at play (Meyer 2013): the use of photographs as a means of presenting social research where photographs are a set of data (Schwartz 1989; see chapter 9—*Visual Methods*), and the use of photographs as data generators called photo-elicitation. The latter is a long-established method in visual sociology and can be used in conjunction with qualitative interviewing (Hogan 2012). Here I suggest a twist in photo-elicitation to get researchers to "see" more of their own fieldwork.

Fieldwork in IOs can be tedious, for taking notes depends on the role we are assigned to as researchers (see chapter 2—*Participant Observation*). At UN headquarters in Geneva, I got into the habit of taking pictures with my smartphone to feed my notebook. They kept a visual record of the places I saw, revealed an atmosphere, a seating arrangement, and served as a memo. With no aesthetic intention, they had value in that they informed or reminded me of a certain context (Meyer et al. 2019).

The process of reversed photo-elicitation started after my immersion when I presented the pictures to faculty colleagues. My colleagues asked me questions about the field under study and used my pictures to clarify their own queries about my field. They were relying on my data to seek additional information and deepen the analysis I had provided. I thus experienced a turnover of the situation. I was now the actor—the data generator alongside my pictures—and my fellow colleagues, the researchers, were triggering the data. According to traditional photo-elicitation, I became the actor special-

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ized in the field who was able to provide additional information based on photos, hence calling this method *reversed photo-elicitation*. This undertaking enabled me to gain control over two processes: distancing myself from the field by having to explain and justify the reason I took a certain picture and shedding new light on my field through the input of peers. New ideas and theoretical approaches emerged.

From as a simple memo that kept track of what I was unable to describe rapidly in writing, pictures first became an illustration to reveal the "world" under study and then data generators for my peers who benefited from my photo-elicitation skills—thanks to my situated expertise—to develop a new outlook on my own research, all the more relevant in an inductive approach.

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INTERLUDE I

Frictions of Distance and Proximity

Observing IOs in Action

Birgit Müller

Anthropologists tend to observe international organizations in action, interested less in what they are than in what they are doing. This makes their approaches so diverse. When they observe the impact, the material and symbolic effects of international policymaking on concrete lifeworlds in situated places, the methods they use depend on their engagements in the field and pragmatically on the concrete questions that arise on-site. When exploring IO headquarters, anthropologists focused on the daily practices of governing and followed the construction of institutional identities through images and language. They closely observed the interactions, uncovered dissent among and between groups, and unpacked the emergence of disputes and the formation of consensus (see chapter 2—*Participant Observation*). Most of the time, they did not find their most precious materials in the official transcripts of negotiating sessions. They gleaned them in serendipitous encounters (Hertz 2010), spontaneous interactions, and through careful observation. The strength of ethnographic approaches is to take the time to understand, to dare deconstruct the seemingly obvious all of which by observing daily interactions and routines and by engaging with actors while keeping a distance (Müller 2013a).

Observing IOs: A Diversity of Approaches

From my own work on international organizations, it became evident that there is not just one toolbox but multiple approaches. Like any

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social scientist who relies on ethnography, I had to constantly review my methods. My first research on the WTO negotiations in Seattle in 1999 started out in the street, following and observing the different forms of protests, attending the side events, the staging of the counter summit and its articulations with the official event (Müller 2000). The next research was completely different. It took place at the heart of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations' (FAO) administrative headquarters in Rome. From within the administration, I followed the way in which one of the most controversial FAO reports—the SOFA 2004 on "Biotechnology. Meeting the Needs of the Poor?"–was produced (Müller 2011). I first started out by analyzing the report and then traced its social life in the institution by both interviewing administrators and talking to members of civil society organizations, as well as examining the hundreds of entries contributed to an online consultation (see chapter 3—*Ethnographic Interviews*).

The Material You Produce Depends on the Angle You Take

The methods and consequently the material that can be collected and generated depend on the angle taken for the research and the conditions of access to the field. When following a global event such as Rio+20 or COP21, international organizations do not appear as confined entities but rather as *dispositifs* (Foucault 1994) (assemblage or apparatus). They constantly attract new players, involving them as interlocutors, consultants, and experts and formatting them through forms of calculation, technical reasoning, and capacity building (Müller 2011). On the other hand, when intervening on the local level, international organizations represented by their experts appear as a single coherent actor producing normative frameworks and bringing into effect relationships of power and control from the metropolis to the remotest parts of the world.

The complexity of international organizations becomes all the more apparent during major multilateral events. To make even remotely sense of what was going on in the multiple forums of the Rio+20 Conference in 2012 and at the Climate Summit COP21 in Paris in 2015, we attended these events as a multidisciplinary team of anthropologists, historians, economists, and sociologists and produced collective event ethnographies for both forums. We prepared for the event together and then explored it from different angles. Some of us observed the negotiations themselves, while others were focusing on civil society events, the indigenous peoples' caucus, the

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closed meetings of the business sector, and so on (Dumoulin Kervran 2021;, Aykut, Foyer, and Morena 2017)

The cooperation with the other research teams allowed each team to go deeper in their analysis. Part of my own research, for instance, focused on the minute details of the negotiation of a seven-line paragraph in the Rio declaration. The paragraph dealt with the international governance of agricultural investments, an issue crucial in another international forum, the Committee of Food Security, where negotiations on guidelines were to begin in 2012. I knew the wider political context and hence could guess the implications of the interactions between the negotiators in the three-hour-long debate. The more subtle powerplays with language, intonation, and voice only became apparent when I analyzed the recordings back at my office in France together with the linguist Gilles Cloiseau (Müller and Cloiseau 2015). Combining anthropological observation and linguistic methods enabled us to uncover the ways in which negotiators interacted in a highly coded language, how they "performed," by exploring, playing with, and twisting the grammatical structures of the spoken language (see chapter 11—*Discourse Analysis*).

When observing the meetings of the business sector at the Rio+20 conference (Benabou and Müller 2015) and at the COP21 climate negotiations in Paris (Benabou, Moussu, and Müller 2017), again it was the serendipitous encounters that gave us the most interesting material for analysis. In Rio, for example, I found myself sitting around a table in a hotel ballroom with the CEOs of the world's top four mining companies, openly recording our table discussion on sustainability reporting for global ventures. The discussion revealed their dividedness on the central issue of international governance; should the states be imposing constraining regulations on corporations or rather should the corporations themselves be trusted to act responsibly?

Observing the effects of international governance on the local level again provided a different angle (see chapter 2—*Participant Observation*). I was conducting fieldwork in a Nicaraguan village when the Food Security program of the FAO was implemented there. I used material found on the Internet to reconstruct FAO's interventions into the conception of food sovereignty laws in Nicaragua. I then followed two FAO food security projects at the local level over several years, observing meetings, official visits, talking to farmers, and accompanying them to the fields (Müller 2013b).

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Observational Participation in IOs: Access, Positionality, and Ethical Considerations

Access to places where interactions take place and where relationships of trust can be established is crucial for ethnographic fieldwork as the different contributions to this book show. When an international organization is powerful, it has mechanisms to impose its standards and decisions at the global level and affect the interests of big businesses and capital holders. It then becomes difficult to gain access to them. Discretion is required. Doors to the negotiating rooms are closed to the external observer. Anthropologists are then asked to "do fieldwork without taking note" (Dematteo 2011). In contrast, the areas of "soft" international governance, such as the section of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) dealing with traditional knowledge (Bendix 2013), often seek to exchange with social scientists to circumscribe their fugitive objects and find ways and means to transform them into legal objects. As an expert on cultural knowledge, Regina Bendix was asked, for instance, to highlight how the delegates themselves went through processes of acculturation inside WIPO (Bendix 2013).

To access their field-site, social scientists take on a variety of roles, sometimes combining research with expertise (Fresia 2013) or, on the contrary, disengaging in order to conduct a more detached analysis. For some researchers, the difficulty consists of getting access to information in relatively closed organizations. For others who were able to immerse themselves, the challenge is to keep a distance and negotiate a way out of their role as experts (Mosse 2008; see box c—*Multipositionality*). As observers, they are rarely disconnected from the issues at stake. Their complex position, at times close up, at times remote, may lead the organization to expect a certain degree of allegiance and discretion from the researcher (see chapter 1—*Direct Observation* and chapter 2—*Participant Observation*).

The most difficult and ambiguous situation I put myself in as a social anthropologist of IOs was the observational participation (see chapter 2—*Participant Observation*) in the two-year-long negotiations on guidelines for responsible agricultural investment. From 2012 to 2014, I became a technical advisor and, in a few instances, even negotiated on behalf of the Civil Society Mechanism in the UN's Committee for Food Security. Not only did I clearly take sides in the negotiations, but I also had access to the strategizing of the Civil Society Mechanism and to its internal frictions, which I deontologically and ethically could not share with the outside world.

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The guidelines that we negotiated were only in appearance "soft" texts. As they defined normatively the direction that agricultural investments should take in the future, they challenged high economic stakes and were subject to fierce battle and high emotions. Practically and emotionally involved in the negotiations, I was unable to step back, observe, and write down not only my own experiences but also those of others. I accumulated mountains of material, lots of notes but few fieldnotes, and I have to date written little about this experience (McMichael and Müller 2014; Müller 2019).

Repoliticizing International Language

Most anthropologists who have studied international organizations do not define themselves as IO scholars. It is not so much the organizations as such that are of interest to them, but rather what happens among the people inside the *dispositif* of international governance. How are the ideas produced and how do they travel within international settings? (see box r—Studying Ideas) What are their impacts? Furthermore, how does the "real" world get translated into international language? Working with a linguist—as mentioned above—provides complementary theoretical tools to bring the international language to life (see chapter 10—*Document Analysis: A Praxiographic Approach* and chapter 11—*Discourse Analysis*). Etiquettes of speaking, acronyms, and an intense haggling around terminology and word choice leading to heavily coded and often opaque and "technical" texts (Riles 2000; Merry 2006) are deconstructed. For the outcome of negotiations, language practices can be deeply consequential (McMichael and Müller 2014). Each commitment made in a global forum slowly adds new layers of global governance and multilateral terminology and serves as a reference for future negotiations in the patchwork of international institutions, public or private (Biermann et al. 2009: 16).

Ethnographies following the political processes that produce technical and seemingly apolitical IO reports, guidelines, and so on are instrumental for understanding what is at stake. In the multiple forums, nonstate actors, representatives of corporations and civil society organizations, use the rules of the game of international institutions for their own purposes and also for their relations to the nation-states. Furthermore, in the life of projects on the ground, seemingly technical issues are repoliticized (Müller 2013b; Louis and Maertens 2021). What is experienced as antipolitics, as the dissolving of conflict in a discourse of harmony, is thus less an essence than a recurring practice of IOs that has to be observed "at work."

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PART 2

Interviewing

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Introduction

Interviewing

Fanny Badache, Leah R. Kimber, and Lucile Maertens

Since the development of IO studies in political science, international relations, and anthropology, interviews have been used as key entry points to the production of knowledge on IOs. Interviewing IO delegates, heads, and staff has allowed researchers to go beyond the written productions usually analyzed in law and history. In this second part, entitled *Interviewing*, contributions present the different types of interviews used to investigate IOs. Interviewing methods rely on the premise that interrogating individuals generate relevant scientific data. They gather different techniques flexible enough to be employed in various disciplines and epistemological contexts. Indeed, social scientists apply interviews for analytical or descriptive purposes, selecting the most useful type of interviews to answer their research questions. Three dimensions distinguish the different types of interviews: (i) the focus (an individual's life trajectory, the description of past events, professional practices, perceptions, etc.); (ii) the format (survey, semistructured, biographic, etc.) and its support (written document, face-to-face, online, etc.); and (iii) the interviewees' profiles and the subsequent impact on the relationship with the interviewer. The contributions give practical examples of different types of interviews and their applications while shedding light on the struggles specific to the case of IOs (see chapter 4—*Surveys*, chapter 5—*Semistructured Interviews*, and chapter 6—*Biographic Interviews*). They discuss the tricks of the trade for each interview method that does not only depend on the research question but also on the types of individuals they encounter, be it governmental delegates, high-level bureaucrats (see box

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j—*Asymmetrical Interviews*), staff members, so-called local beneficiaries (see box i—*Interviewing "Beneficiaries"*), civil society and private sector partners, and so on.

Conducting interviews is valuable in the study of IOs, with the numerous research questions that can be answered through interviewing falling into three categories. First, interviewing techniques help gather information about past events and individuals' life stories. For instance, they help recollect decision-making steps, trace back international negotiations, map out an organization's life course, and track the production process of an IO report. They also provide systematic data on the profile of interviewees when using surveys designed to study the socialization of IO staff (see chapter 4—*Surveys*) and biographic interviews digging up individual's professional path (see chapter 6—*Biographic Interviews*). Second, interviews generate relevant data to study perceptions. By asking IO actors about their views on their own daily activities, researchers can uncover the meaning that these actors give to their practices, their shared background knowledge, and their vision of the organization. Used with different individuals of the same IO, interviews capture critical features constitutive of an organizational culture while producing data on power dynamics and hierarchy as they are experienced and recollected by IO actors. Third, interviews are relevant methods to investigate institutional discourses, professional narratives, and more generally how IOs present themselves to the world. By focusing on the relationship between the interviewee and the interviewer, researchers can learn about professional habits and individual characters, while identifying the public image an IO (especially through its spokesperson or head) or a specific department intends to display.

This section gathers chapters presenting different types of interviews. Boxes stress important challenges readers should pay attention to when it comes to the set-up of a (collective) interview and relationships with and among interviewees (box h—*Focus Groups*) as well as the practical struggles of conducting interviews in different languages (see box g—*Languages and Interviews*) or using online platforms (see box k—*Online Interviews*). Since they involve individuals, interviews also raise important ethical questions: researchers should reflect on their own role and potential impact as interviewer as much as be vigilant when analyzing and quoting interviewees (see Interlude II—*Controversies in Interview Research*). While new modes of interviewing, such as using voice messages, are constantly being developed, readers can build on these contributions to select, adapt, and exploit interviewing methods in combination with other relevant methods for their research projects.

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CHAPTER 4

Surveys

Clara Egger and Monique J. Beerli

Surveys are widely used in contemporary society to know, govern, and serve populations, from censuses and public opinion polls to clinical trials and consumer experience studies. They are, however, far less common when it comes to unpacking global governance and the critical role individuals play in determining IO action at different levels. With handbooks on survey research abound, this contribution draws from ongoing research on aid workers to situate the interest and intricacies of doing survey-based research on IO professionals.

What?

Historically, surveys emerged as an instrument of government (Desrosières 2010), first used by nascent state administrations and then social reformers (Converse 1987). From the 1930s onwards, surveys made their way into scientific practice, notably in the social and medical sciences.

Though commonly reduced to its initial definition as a quantitative research tool adept in the "systematic" collection of a large quantity of information on a "sample" of individuals, surveys have been subject to methodological pluralization. This is best evidenced in their adaptation in mixed methods and experimental approaches. Putting aside discrepancies in *how* it is used, survey research rests on two key premises. The first assumes that the characteristics, behaviors, attitudes, and past experiences of individuals can be analyzed through the administration of well-formulated questions (de Leeuw, Hox, and Dillman 2008). The second premise is that findings result-

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ing from the study of a representative population are generalizable to the identified population as a whole, thereby making sampling so important.

In IO studies, the use of surveys is fairly recent and rather rare. In addition to the general difficulty of administering a survey, this absence may be explained by the fact that IR scholars rarely put the individuals who represent (i.e., delegates) or work for IOs (i.e., secretariat staff, consultants, civil society or private sector partners) center stage. As a result, we lack a macro-perspective on the trajectories, attitudes, interests, and practices of individuals who make IO action possible.

Why?

Echoing emergent calls to bring professionals into the study of IOs and global governance fields (Kauppi and Madsen 2013; Seabrooke and Henriksen 2017), we find surveys particularly useful in answering three sets of questions. Moreover, once built, survey-based datasets can then be disseminated among researchers, either to make comparisons across populations or address new research puzzles.

Q1: What characteristics define IO professionals as a population?

Professionals, understood broadly as individuals who earn a living from their activities, are central protagonists in all forms of IO action, from diplomatic encounters to the design, implementation, and evaluation of international public policies. Though UN diplomatic and elite bureaucratic staff have received some attention in recent years,[1] IO professionals remain relatively understudied as a population. Capturing diversity and hierarchy within IO professional ranks, a survey can provide a macro-level description of an organization's workforce—the scope of which depends on sampling. Though not exhaustive, possible variables include: (1) personal information (i.e., nationality, age, civil status); (2) socioeconomic status (i.e., income, education, occupation); (3) professional experience (i.e., previous jobs, contractual status, job satisfaction); and (4) ideational values and preferences (i.e., economic/political/religious/moral attitudes). Additionally, datasets can be compared and contrasted to assess the (non)specificity of IO professionals in relation to other populations. For example, to understand the social

1. Most recently, see for example Pouliot (2016) and Yi-Chong and Weller (2018).

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construction of international peacebuilding, Goetze (2017) used web-based survey (WBS) methods to describe the experiences, professional trajectories, political values, and working environments of UN peacebuilders.

Q2: How are socio-professional hierarchies within IOs structured?

Building from descriptive data on IO professionals belonging to different hierarchical grades, surveys can be used to shed light on socio-professional hierarchies in IOs. By collecting data on professional mobility and status alongside socioeconomic indicators, we are able to map status and inequality in relation to social class, gender, nationality, profession, organizational loyalty, and so forth. Survey data reveal what resources are necessary to succeed, professionally, in an IO setting. Hierarchical grades can potentially be analyzed in relation to conflicts of interest, as in the case of Mele, Anderfuhren-Biget, and Varone's (2015) study on what determines whether international civil servants defend the national interest of their country of origin or the international interests of the IOs they work for.

Q3: How do IO professionals' preferences and attitudes help explain international public policy dynamics?

The intensified pace of globalization has led global governance to adapt, both in the norms and policies it produces and the way governance is practiced, to meet challenges raised by the increased interconnectedness of economies and societies. Could some policy shifts and/or policy inertia be explained by individual or collectively shared preferences? In giving heed to the subjectivities of IO professionals, a survey can build a transversal connection between the individual, the organizational, and the systemic level. Analyzing survey data on employee job satisfaction from an organizational management perspective, Giauque, Anderfuhreng-Biget, and Varone (2016) have, for example, shown how individual perceptions of stress and turnover intentions can potentially impact IO performance.

How?

To give a brief overview of how to conduct survey-based research, we address five major considerations.

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Selecting, Wording, and Ordering Survey Questions

Overall, a good survey proposes a limited number of coherently formulated and structured questions. Three issues deserve particular attention: how to select, how to word, and how to order questions.

Choosing which questions to include in a survey depends on the core research focus. Based on our research objectives, our questionnaire incorporates two main types of questions: 1) questions specific to the humanitarian field—i.e., *What is your main motivation for working in the humanitarian sector? How many years have you worked in the humanitarian sector?*; and 2) general questions about participants' socioeconomic status, beliefs, and values—i.e., *How important is it for you to live in a country that is governed democratically?*. Regarding the latter, we have drawn questions from the World Values Survey (WVS) and the European Values Study (EVS), both recognized for their scientific rigor—a strategy also deployed by Goetze (2017). Within both surveys, we sampled questions with a demonstrated predictive and convergent validity over time, meaning they were replicated several times from 1981 to 2008 to control for survey-related biases such as social desirability[2] or recall bias.[3]

In terms of wording, open-ended and closed-ended questions ideally need to be balanced, unless survey research is coupled with, for example, qualitative interviews, thereby reducing the need of open questions. Closed-ended questions are easier to analyze but may come off as irrelevant or oversimplified to a respondent. One way of overcoming this difficulty is to build on other surveys and organize a survey test run before officially administering it.

Finally, question order is of critical importance in designing a survey as preceding questions have been found to have a strong influence on answers given to subsequent ones. The first section is composed of icebreaking questions that allow respondents to smoothly enter into the survey's topic. Starting with descriptive questions about the respondent's current position or employment history, for instance, can be good icebreakers as they are fairly uncontroversial and easy to answer. The following sections transition to the core focus of the survey. Lastly, the ending section often offers respondents the possibility to comment on their perception and evaluation of the relevance of the survey's questions. More difficult or intrusive questions regarding, for example, a respondent's political ideology or religious beliefs can be

2. The tendency of the respondent to provide answers that appear as socially accepted even if they do not fit with their own opinions.

3. The difficulty to recall past experiences.

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put at the end, with the hope that they will not dissuade the respondent from finishing the survey.

Survey Length and Completion Time

Survey length and the articulation of questions require careful consideration and compromise. With many researchers falling into the trap of asking too many questions, a good strategy is to start with an exhaustive list of questions followed by a reassessment of priorities and compromise to then shorten the list. This strategy could however become more complicated as the number of active research partners (and competing interests) increases.

Researchers also need to be attentive to the amount of time it takes to complete the survey, as time-consuming surveys run the risk of discouraging participation. When respondents are not remunerated, we advise an approximately twenty-minute WBS. Keeping completion time under thirty minutes is particularly important for professionals working in high-pressure environments who are persistently pressed for time. Face-to-face surveys are also an option and can last longer as IO professionals are more accustomed to being interviewed for forty-five to sixty minutes.

Sampling Techniques

Often in IO research, scholars are dealing with spatially dispersed and partly undetermined populations, making sampling a challenge. In our case, our interest in assessing diversity drove us to prioritize a global sample of aid professionals working in diverse locations. But how exactly can we go about sampling? Multiple pathways exist, though we view the following two sampling methods as the most ideal:

(1) *Quota sampling*: Use an available dataset cataloguing relevant organizations, such as the Yearbook of International Organizations dataset (UIA 2019), or a self-made dataset, such as the Humanitarian Organizations Dataset (Egger and Schopper 2022) when a ready-made one is not available to then select a representative sample of organizations. Survey distribution will subsequently be negotiated with each chosen organization.

(2) *Convenience sampling*: Use readily available mailing lists, such as the Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protec-

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tion (PHAP)[4] mailing list, or social media groups, such as the "International Humanitarian and Development Professionals" LinkedIn group.

Distribution Strategies

Depending on the selected sampling technique, several distribution techniques are possible, each with advantages and trade-offs (see table 4).

At the end of the day, researchers should weigh the pros and cons of each distribution strategy to arrive at a decision that is most compatible with their interests and resources.

Data Analysis

There is no specific method to analyze survey data per se. Relevant qualitative and quantitative options need to be identified depending on the num-

Table 4. Surveys and Distribution Techniques: Advantages and Tradeoffs

Distribution Techniques	Advantages	Tradeoffs
Direct access through organizational actors	Robust, organization-wide sample; Nourish practitioner-academic exchange; Inexpensive; High response rate	Time consuming; Risk of access refusal; Potential intervention in research design; Biased responses due to feeling of organizational surveillance/control
Indirect access through networked intermediaries	Less time consuming; Inexpensive; Ability to reach an organizationally diverse population	Biased sampling; No control over respondent selection; Low response rate
Indirect access through social media platforms	Less time consuming; Inexpensive; Easy to disseminate; Ability to reach an organizationally diverse population	Biased sampling (exclusion of individuals not on social media or in social media groups); Inability to isolate "nonhumanitarian" respondents

4. PHAP is a member-based network of self-declared humanitarian professionals allegedly made up of 10 percent of the global population of aid workers, open to individuals with at least two years of "relevant experience" in the humanitarian sector.

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ber of respondents, the sampling technique used, and the question design (i.e., open-ended or close-ended) and the overall objectives of the research (explore the attitudes of IOs staff, identify their determinants, or draw inferences). Based on these criteria, several strategies can be identified. As in qualitative content analysis, open-ended questions are best analyzed using deductive or inductive coding techniques. Descriptive statistics can be used to analyze answers to close-ended questions, focusing on a small sample of IO staff. Closed-ended questions collected on a large sample, however, are more amendable to methods used in statistical analysis, such as cross tabulation or regression analysis, to establish intervariable relationships or pinpoint patterns and probabilities. The exact type of analysis to be performed depends on the response scale used (i.e., nominal, ordinal, interval, or ratio).

What Challenges?

Just as with every method, survey-based research necessarily involves a number of challenges.

Sample Representability and Survey Reliability

No matter the sampling method, determining the representability of the sample population and the reliability of survey results is a major obstacle in survey research. Due to the absence of macro-data on humanitarian professionals, a gap that our research aims to fill, and the fluid boundaries of the sector, it is impossible to get an a priori sense of sample representativity. Our inability to measure the representativeness of our sample population then makes it difficult to assess the reliability of our results. The best way of dealing with these challenges is to avoid overgeneralizing, while condoning an iterative approach whereby the accumulation of knowledge will serve to improve future survey studies.

Access

Gaining access to a global population of professionals, characterized by a strong degree of geographic and institutional fragmentation, is a complicated endeavor. The essence of this fundamental problem stems from the fact that we are unable to contact potential respondents directly, meaning

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we must either seek formal authorization from an IO that will distribute our survey to their staff or operate through an intermediary. Inherent to the study of transnational professional populations, our only resolve is to accept these access constraints.

Survey Language

Working on a transnational population that is exceptionally diverse in terms of language and culture makes the survey's language a matter of concern. In light of our respective linguistic capacities, we initially started with an English and French version of the questionnaire. However, our fear is that participants, especially entry-level national staff, might not feel comfortable enough with either. In order to ensure participation across hierarchical levels, one strategy is to translate the survey into the four other official working languages of the UN. If, at the analysis phase, a low response rate among low-level national staff is observed, a follow-up strategy might be to pick two or three country-specific cases, translate the survey into the dominant local language, and redistribute the survey. Although translation comes with its own costs and issues, it would help to offset nonparticipation due to language barriers.

Question Inflexibility

Surveys are, by nature, definitive. Unlike in semistructured or unstructured interviews, the researcher cannot experiment with the way they formulate their questions or adjust their interview guide in a piecemeal fashion. If you realize a question is incomprehensible or creates confusion once the survey has been diffused, your only option is to throw out the first set of responses and start from scratch. However, this might be costly and potentially compromise your reputation and legitimacy. The best way of dealing with, or rather avoiding, this challenge is to spend sufficient time proofreading and testing survey questions. Using questions from high-quality surveys may also be a good strategy depending on the focus of the research.

To Go Further

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BOX G

Languages and Interviews

James Worrall

Interviewing in your mother tongue presents enough challenges when engaging in research within international organizations—from register, framing, and specialized language (jargon), through to neologisms, contractions (acronyms), and different techniques (Miles 1970). Interviewing in a foreign language is a challenge of a different order of magnitude. There is much to think about, from the philosophy of language itself to the practical minutiae, in order to ensure that you are understood and that you truly understand the nuances within responses to your questions.

International organizations are usually multilingual in orientation—even when one or two languages become dominant for day-to-day work. Some IOs such as the Arab League work only in Arabic, although many staff and diplomats also have proficiency in English or French. Despite officials often having command of multiple languages, it makes sense to interview someone in their own language if at all possible.

There is a clear relationship between thought and language, so it is important to be aware of the nuances of how language is used, because as Slavoj Žižek suggests, "word is murder of a thing" (1991: 59). Many languages have multiple graduated words that can have considerably different meanings. *C'est compliqué* in French appears to simply mean "it's complicated." Yet in some contexts its meaning stretches as far as saying it's "oversophisticated" or even "perverse." Therefore the phrase *pas si simple* is used to get across the English meaning of "it's complicated." This example points to possible confusion exacerbated in IOs. As complex evolutionary cross-cultural spaces, they develop their own meanings for common words and ideas in the languages in which they work, such as the invention of the word

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"comitology" for the work of committees within the EU, or the use of *actual* to mean *current* (Fredriksson et al. 2006). Researchers conducting interviews must acquire a sound awareness of how the specific language is used, as well as how it has evolved within an IO and be mindful of the ways multilingual staff even mix together different languages in the same sentences. This means that researchers should not be shy in seeking clarifications from interviewees, even if interviewing in their mother tongue!

These issues mean that the researcher should question their linguistic abilities—what might get lost in translation? Balancing the benefits of interviewing someone in their mother tongue with the level of fluency required to avoid loss of vital nuance might therefore necessitate working with an interpreter, which can cause its own potential issues.

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BOX H

Focus Groups

Marie Saiget

Focus groups can be defined as a collective interview of a small number of participants in a formal or informal setting. This method allows the researcher to understand perceptions, ideas, and feelings, to analyze narratives on/in world politics (Stanley 2016) and to investigate the representations and strategies of the populations targeted by international organizations (IOs) (Saiget 2015). However, it is not a standardized practice: choices vary when it comes to participant recruitment (people from the same interknowledge group or who do not know each other), interview facilitation (directive, flexible, role-playing games), and analysis (exhaustive analysis or focus on sequences; interpretative and qualitative, or quantitative analysis) (Garcia and Haegel 1996: 392). Neither does it have the same functions (basic or applied research uses; as a therapeutic or social intervention technique) (Frey and Fontana 2019). Despite these differences, focus groups all value collectively constructed discourses: interaction among participants is seen as a productive setting to study shared views as much as discrepancies in a defined group.

While focus groups are used by researchers, they are also by IOs and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to collect data on the perceptions of the "beneficiary" populations to evaluate the impact of their programs or give them insight into the social realities on the ground. If researchers can benefit from IO focus group practices to gain greater access to the groups targeted by IO programs and their perceptions, the quality of the data one collects may for several reasons not always be satisfying. In my research experiences with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Cameroon (2010), on the one hand, and CARE International in Burundi (2013), on

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the other, the process constrained my choices both in recruiting participants and in developing methods of data collection. Furthermore, the conditions of the focus groups were strongly affected by the translators' skills (the field coordinators whose competence were limited) (see box g—*Languages and Interviews*), so much so that participants repeated the same story time and again. The story resembled the "success story"—a narrative put forward by the NGO (the "Set Speech" obstacle; see box i—*Interviewing "Beneficiaries"*).

Yet in Burundi, this hurdle became an opportunity that proved to be insightful on the methodologies employed by CARE International and the context of interaction between aid workers and the populations targeted by the NGO's interventions. Analyzed reflexively, these focus groups provided less accurate knowledge of the realities of the persons I met than information about how these audiences conformed to the NGO's expectations. They revealed the influence of this technique on the way individuals performed the role of "beneficiaries." In addition, participants in the focus groups were able to express requests of various kinds that were not necessarily related to the project, thus instrumentalizing focus groups to advance their own agendas.

To conclude, using focus groups to understand IO practices has advantages for several reasons. By using their own practice in a mirror effect, it highlights the complex social interactions between IOs and their "beneficiaries." It also shows the power and limitations of this technique as a mode of intervention and knowledge production on the social realities IOs intend to change.

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CHAPTER 5

Semistructured Interviews

Mélanie Albaret and Joan Deas

Carefully prepared and used, semistructured interviews are a valuable method of data collection and data triangulation. When researching international organizations (IOs) in which informal and closed processes are frequent, they are sometimes the only way to obtain information.

What?

The semistructured interview is a qualitative research method that consists of collecting data on facts and representations discovered during oral exchanges. It is meant to seek out the world views of respondents in a flexible manner, in relation to a fixed research objective (Bryman 2012). Semistructured interviews establish a social relationship in order to induce direct interaction with another individual, who is simultaneously the researcher's interlocutor and subject of study (Allès et al. 2016: 159).

Scholars traditionally distinguish them from close-ended/structured interviews (the same questions are asked in the same order and the interviewees must choose their answer from a limited number of responses), and open-ended/unstructured interviews, which proceed freely from an initial question. Semistructured interviews also encompass a variety of practices, from ethnographic interviews (see chapter 3—*Ethnographic Interviews*; Spradley 1979; Beaud and Weber 1997) to focused interviews (Merton et al. 1956) or in-depth interviews (Bryman 2012).

With the opening of international relation studies to other social sciences—including qualitative sociological studies—in international relation studies in the 1980s, semistructured interviews have become a com-

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mon qualitative method to analyze international organizations. It enables the researcher to enjoy the benefits of a direct, in-person exchange with those highly mobile and hard-to-reach populations (IO staff, national diplomats, experts, etc.), who would otherwise be cross-nationally dispersed (Efrat 2015). Scholars who have studied IOs from various perspectives, such as from that of the European defense policy (Mérand 2008), IOs as international bureaucracies (Bierman and Siedenhüner 2009), the role of states in a specific institution (Freedman and Lemay-Hébert 2019), and the role of experts in IOs (Littoz-Monnet 2017), all chose this method.

In the literature (e.g., Rubin and Rubin 2012; Kvale 2012; Gubrium and Holstein 2002), a set of good practices seems to prevail about four particular potentially challenging issues related to semistructured interviews: access and logistics issues (entering the IO "sanctum," bridging the insider-outsider gap, sampling frame, networking, and time and cost issues); ethics and confidentiality (Informed Consent Forms [ICF], recording, anonymity, culture of secrecy, trust and intimacy issues); power dynamics (researching the powerful, building and sticking to interview guides, positionality, social status and gender issues, control and manipulation); data analysis and use in the final work (quality/reliability/validity, transcribing, triangulating and verifying, coding/CAQDAS/quoting).

While the exercise appears specific and delineated, it is not always easy for students and scholars to find their way as the practices, uses, and presentations of interviews fluctuate, partly due to the uncertainties the exercise generates (Kvale 2007: 8; Platt in Gubrium and Holstein 2001: 51) and to the debates interviews have triggered in social sciences (e.g., Bourdieu 1993; Mayer 1995). This chapter provides insight on frequently asked questions and steps taken in the semidirective, or semistructured, interview process while studying IOs, and not meant as a widely applicable formula.

Why?

Semistructured interviews can be used in a variety of ways depending on cases and research temporality.

First, exploratory semistructured interviews aim at constructing, specifying, and refining the research object and opening up the field of investigation, which is often difficult when it comes to IOs (Abélès 2011: 22). Exploratory interviews enable researchers to question the feasibility of the research and assess the physical access to the IO, which helps design an often costly and time-consuming "entry strategy."

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Second, semistructured interviews are also of an informative nature. Because a large part of IOs' work is based on informal discussions, oral exchanges, and behind-the-scene operations, semistructured interviews are often the only viable conduit to discovering factual data, accessing certain types of information, and reconstructing a course of events or decision-making processes. They proved to be relevant for the study of hard-to-reach fields, such as the humanitarian space in Somalia (Egger 2016) or the UN Security Council (Adler-Nissen and Pouliot 2014).

Third, semistructured interviews can have a more comprehensive dimension because they allow researchers to get a good grasp on practices and representations, and to understand networks of alliances and interpersonal enmities and affinities between and within the IOs' actors. Through interviews, Vincent Pouliot was able to make sense of the codes and implicit processes of the multilateral diplomatic cliques at the UN and NATO (2016).

Last but not least, semistructured interviews are often combined with other data collection methods (such as archives, grey literature, or participant observation). Interviews are of a complementary nature and help triangulate other sources or interviews and contextualize facts, speeches, or observations made by the researcher (e.g., Guilbaud 2015; Adler-Niessen 2013).

How?

Once preliminary work has been completed (research question and objective, readings), the interview subjects are to be identified. While statistical or probability sampling best serves research topics using quantitative methodology, purposive sampling is the most common method used in qualitative studies (Bryman 2012). It includes general, snowball, and theoretical samplings. IO actors are not homogeneous in their behaviors toward the researcher, and the response rate can fluctuate immensely. Thus the choice of sampling method often needs to adapt to empirical constraints: access to and familiarity with the field, respondents' status, culture of secrecy, research topic's sensitivity, and so forth.

Although a lot of contact information can be accessed through various open-source mediums such as the UN Blue Book, permanent missions (PMs), embassies, consulates, and UN websites (Albaret and Placidi-Frot 2018), snowball sampling (sometimes complemented by contact with a key informant) often appears as the best-suited method to access "hard-to-reach" respondents in "closed," secretive, and/or sensitive fields such as IOs or PMs. Relying on respondents' own personal and professional networks

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allows the researcher to capitalize on trust and better bridge the insider/outsider gap.

Scholars can use different methods to contact interviewees depending on their identity (nationality, seniority, rank) and experience. Email, phone calls, WhatsApp, headed letters, and physical requests on site can be used simultaneously or alternatively. Researchers should be "politely persistent" (Aberbach and Rockman 2002: 673), have a short written and oral presentation of the research ready for use, and be prepared to repeat it on many occasions to various intermediaries. Contacting the respondents in their mother tongue when mastered, "getting a badge" to access the facilities in order to "know the house" and be seen around, and/or relying on institutional credibility and prestige usually facilitate access.

A flexible semistructured interview guide identifying a limited number of "essential" questions should be tailored to the specificities of the IO field and the targeted people (staff categories, diplomatic rank). Open-ended questions and asking "how" and not "why" (Becker 1998: 58) usually generate better receptivity from respondents. Icebreaker questions help establish a trusting environment and convince the participant to answer more sensitive questions later on. Since some IO staff and diplomats are professional communicators, it may prove challenging to frame the discussion, refrain from being carried away from the main topic, or interrupt the respondent. Hence the interview guide may contain "structuring" questions to rekindle an interview, along with "follow-up" and "specifying" ones to get the respondent to elaborate his or her answer (Bryman 2012: 476).

The relationship that is established during an interview is seldom characterized by full confidence and symmetry. ICF (which has different status depending on the country and the university—ranging from compulsory to not required) is supposed to reassure the interviewee by providing him/her with a guarantee of legal protection in case of breach of confidentiality. Specifying the rules of anonymity and agreeing on either the possibility or the interdiction to record the interview also help build confidence.

Recording "facilitates the use of a conversational style and minimizes information loss" (Aberbach and Rockman 2002: 675). Not recording, however, can sometimes have a positive impact as it provides more freedom to respondents. Whether or not the interview is recorded, the researchers must take handwritten notes. A field journal should be established to recall the context and details of each interview (Beaud and Weber 1997). As the exercise is intense, limiting the number of interviews per day and freeing up time for transcription the same day to avoid loss of information are essential practices.

Transcription is a retrospective translation of the spoken into the writ-

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ten word. It is mandatory to enable a systematic analysis and scientific use of the data collected. It allows more thorough and repeated examination of the respondents' answers, enables coding and quoting, helps correct the researcher's biases, and opens up the data to public scrutiny by other researchers. Depending on the nature of the study (i.e., discourse analysis versus content analysis), the transcription concerns the whole interview (taking into account silences, hesitations and verbal tics), or sections when large portions are not useful to the research. (Bryman 2012). The data collection is then transformed in an academic analysis through data handling and interpretation. By coding the interview transcriptions, scholars organize data, compare them and go beyond description by integrating them into a conceptual and/or theoretical analysis (Gibbs 2018).

What Challenges?

Although we have already considered several potential difficulties, two issues appear to be particularly challenging.

Power imbalance, also referred to as "double trouble" (Welch et al. 1999: 3; see box j—*Asymmetrical Interviews*) can be further exacerbated by the researcher's social status (gender, age, citizenship, institutional affiliation, etc.). The asymmetry between the interviewer and the respondent can also be reversed, when respondents are for instance young, on precarious contracts, are locals or interns . . . (see box i—*Interviewing "Beneficiaries"*). In order to limit the impact on the data collection process and avoid potentially harmful and ethically questionable experiences, scholars must reflect on the "interviewer effect" (Hyman 1954) and pay attention to the presentation of oneself and one's research project. Having prior knowledge of protocol and getting an idea of common social practices help define the positions one can (or cannot) take as an interviewer. For instance, the definition of the adequate place for an interview differs according to the respondent's identity. Interviews with precarious or vulnerable IO staff would take place under better conditions out of the office. Interviews in the field respond to still other logics (Dauvin and Siméant 2001).

Another objection to semistructured interviews is that the collected data would be "subjective and imprecise" (Rathbun 2008: 685). The method would lack rigor. Using semistructured interviews is also costly and time consuming. The data obtained must be processed with care. These challenges present sharply in IO studies due to the contrast between the high staff turnover and the important circulation of diplomats and state repre-

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sentatives (which aggravates issues of cost and time) and the small circle of multilateral activity (that strengthens the secret imperative for most of its actors). Very restrictive anonymity requests can complicate the use of the interview content, raising the question of the relevance and even possibility of the data use.

To overcome these challenges, the researcher could opt for a modest approach by considering semidirective interviews as complementary to other data collection sources, and in order to triangulate data. Holding multiple meetings and interviews with the same respondent optimizes data quality and builds trust. Another way to overcome the challenge of data reliability would be to study the same IO for a long time. It would then build memory that may be lacking among the authors' interlocutors, providing researchers with more perspective on the data collected in semidirective interviews. In any case, a clear explanation and contextualization of the researcher's methodological choices and constraints needs to appear in the final research.

To Go Further

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BOX I

Interviewing "Beneficiaries"

Lucie Laplace

This box focuses on interviewing IO "target population": individuals who receive assistance in various forms. IOs select "beneficiaries" according to their perceived level of vulnerability and the characteristics of the local context (Corbet in Ribémont 2016). Scholars must reflect on the so-called beneficiaries' identity construction, the challenges of such categories, the resources they provide and the mobilizations they produce. Interviewing these individuals requires a reflexive posture to consider and mitigate the unbalanced relation—to the detriment of the informant—which has consequences on the data interview. Depending on the research question, the researcher must choose the most suitable methods of investigation (survey interview, semistructured interview, life trajectory, repeated interviews, collective interviews, or focus groups), while identifying a relevant place (answers may differ if the interview is conducted in the IO building, a public space, or another place chosen by your respondent). At the beginning of the interview, you may explicit your link to the IO. After agreeing on the anonymization process, you may ask them to choose another name. There are two main challenges in interviewing "beneficiaries": (i) getting access to them depending on institutional constraints and (ii) the "Set Speech" obstacle.

IOs often have a restrictive communication policy (such as the signature of a nondisclosure contract), both with the researchers and their "beneficiaries." There are two coping investigation strategies: (i) meeting IO requirements and (ii) reaching directly the beneficiaries in intermediate safe spaces (through partner organizations or in the public space). For example, since the UNHCR did not respond to my requests to connect with the beneficiaries, I implemented an alternative strategy, namely attending NGO workshops and public events for refugees.

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Some respondents are used to adapt their speech within the institutional framework creating a form of "Set Speech" obstacle. Their testimonies are therefore close to those given to the organization, which then provides information about the IO functioning. If the field is "saturated," respondents may also show fatigue and exasperation signs (Clark 2008). After several meetings, you may encourage respondents to show less reticence (without making them lose face as beneficiaries and consequently threaten their resources). To do so, you may display skepticism in order to encourage them to raise the limits of the organization and express their specific knowledge about the IO. Like in other interview contexts, make sure that the person feels comfortable: show empathy, flexibility, and proximity through cultural and/or linguistic knowledge while considering their daily life experiences and practices though "bottom-up" and "top-down" approaches to avoid populist bias (Olivier De Sardan 2005) and to identify the implications of the IO policies.

Finally, you may also anticipate as much as you can about the possible spread of your field materials and of your analysis, at least by applying the "Do No Harm" principle (Hugman and al. 2011).

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BOX J

Asymmetrical Interviews

Emilie Dairon

As much as the researchers are prepared to undertake an interview with informants on international organizations (IOs), it may fall off their hands and take a totally unexpected turn. This can happen especially with "dominants," i.e., high-level officials such as directors-general, ambassadors, and so on—to paraphrase Conti and O'Neil (2007: 63)—people who inhabit the highest strata of the IO world. What has been studied in elite research holds true in interviews with IO leaders: since interviews are social interactions, the power asymmetry between researcher and interviewee can lead to an unbalanced relationship. The sense of "losing control" in elite interview is well documented (Conti and O'Neil 2007). Its manifestations include the interviewee wanting to control the frames of interaction (location, conditions; Laurens 2007), wanting to control the frames of experience (enhancing seniority and position of power; Laurens 2007), or just not showing commitment (Kezar 2003).

It happened to me once with an IO leader. It was unexpected: I already interviewed this person a year before and this encounter was cordial and informative. The second interview was undertaken jointly with a coauthor and we immediately felt that it was not going as we expected. The interviewee seemed annoyed to have to spend time with "students" (as his secretary announced us) between two meetings with ambassadors. During the discussion he was deciding everything: the language, the topics, and their order. We left the room after thirty minutes of discussion, with the feeling of a failed encounter.

This experience led me to think of adaptation strategies, and I see three moments when mitigation plans can be implemented to avoid this experi-

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ence. The first one would be a preventive strategy: before the interview, make sure that the conditions are gathered for a fruitful interaction. Write your introduction (e.g., email or letter with official logo of your institution) carefully, paying attention to your title (prefer "researcher" to "applicant"). Like other interviews but with an extra care, prepare your questions in advance; if possible, go and check the location in order not to be late or impressed by the building. A second mitigation strategy is to try to retake the lead during the interview: either turn the "pillars of intimidation" into assets (e.g., talking about the interviewee's impressive results), or place yourself into the expert position, in order for the informant to see you as a peer (Kezar 2003) or to consider the interview as gratifying (Laurens 2007). Finally, if despite these strategies the interview still leaves you with a bitter taste, do not reject its outcomes because of a feeling of despondency (Conti and O'Neil 2007). From an epistemological point of view, it is very informative to analyze why this specific interaction was "odd." A final advice would be not to be afraid of interviews with IO elites: most of the discussions with high-ranking individuals are fruitful; and in any case, combining interviews from several levels of hierarchy is a good strategy to approach your research object.

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CHAPTER 6

Biographic Interviews

Monique J. Beerli

Every day, thousands of people across the globe get up, get dressed, and go to work . . . for an IO. In fact, IOs would not have much agency beyond the parchments that establish their rational-legal authority if it were not for privileged and precarious individuals acting in their name. As Yi-Chong and Weller poignantly remind us, "IOs are not only the world of powerful states but also a world of many 'puzzled' people whose daily life is to assess options and make choices" (2018: 7). To enter into the situated, lived, and imagined worlds of individuals that "make up" IOs, this chapter offers up biographic interviews, or life stories, as a methodological lever.

What?

Grouping together a wide range of approaches from autobiography and autoethnography to oral history and life history, biographic research is characterized by its unrivaled concern with "researching lives and the stories people tell about them" (Merrill and West 2009: 2). Through direct and indirect observation, biographical research reconstructs an individual's life, past, present, and foreseen future, recognizing the agency of individuals in creating meaning while capturing their dynamic interplay with sociohistorical forces. Combining the objective and subjective, in-depth interviews represent just one of several tools amenable to biographic research.

By default firsthand, retrospective narratives lured out of subjects and coproduced with an inquirer, biographic interviews—or life story interviews—have a scattered disciplinary past. Now prominent in a wide

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range of fields, biographic interviewing is most deeply rooted in the methodological worlds of history and sociology. Slowly since the mid-twentieth century, the conjuncture of multiple intellectual moves—from the advent of social constructivist theories to the rise of postcolonial and feminist thought to a revived historical interest in the everyday—has led to a "biographical turn" in the social sciences. Creating a space for the historically undocumented and the socially marginalized to be weaved into or against grand narratives, this biographical resurrection has enabled a more pluralized, multilevel view of politics, economy, and society.

As far as IOs go, biographical approaches are on the rise, with researchers turning to interviews to reconstruct the career trajectories, untangle the complex identities, and trace the practices of the individuals embodying IOs (Emmerij et al. 2005; Pouliot 2016). Reflections on the epistemology, practice, and ethics of biographic interviewing in IOs and global governance research, however, remain rather scant (Roth 2015: 9; Dezalay and Garth 2002).

Why?

While the expansion of IO studies as a subfield has been coupled with an undeniable pluralization of methodological research strategies, as this handbook clearly corroborates, biographical interviewing continues to occupy a marginal position. Yet if we take seriously the claim that the lived experiences, trajectories, and worldviews of ordinary individuals constitute the sociological flesh and bones of IOs, life stories act as a powerful instrument for accessing micro-realities that ultimately shape global governance.

Though biographic interviewing need not be exclusive, leaving the possibility of incorporating biographic questions into a more traditional qualitative interview, it is particularly adept at bringing the agency and subjectivity of individuals into the analytical foreground. Sensitive to the socializations, education, beliefs, career aspirations, experiences, perceptions, collegial relations, and personal relationships of IO professionals, biographic interviews offer insights into micro-level dynamics that condition meso- and macro-level phenomenon, such as change and stability in IOs or transformations in international order. Endowed with the potential to disrupt dominant ontological framings of IOs and pluralize global governance lifeworlds (Roth 2015), biographic interviews perform the dual task of disruption/reconstruction through four types of enactments: personifying, informalizing, historicizing, and unclosing.

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Personifying IOs. Close your eyes and imagine the United Nations. What comes to mind? Perhaps an azimuthal projection of the globe cradled in olive tree branches, long rows of state flags, or the newly renovated Security Council chamber for the UN connoisseur. But what about the UN workforce? Like the unidentifiable civil servant holding a briefcase portrayed in Magnús Tómasson's sculpture *Unknown Bureaucrat*,[1] the IO workforce is, for the most part, faceless (Reinalda, Kille, and Eisenberg 2018). By asking interviewees about personal matters, such as their youth or what motivated them to pursue an international career, biographic interviews give the means to personify and deimpersonalize IOs (Emmerij et al. 2005; Yi-Chong and Weller 2018).

Informalizing IOs. On paper, IOs appear as disembodied, impersonalized rational politico-bureaucratic machines governed by formal rules, procedures, and processes. In principle, subordinates report to their hierarchical superiors, organizational policies are respected, and professional misconduct is reprimanded. However, the reality of how IOs function is far more complicated, often left out of official records that build an appearance of coherence and order. Supporting a nascent impulse to study IOs not as they should function but as they do function (Littoz-Monnet 2020), biographic interviews open up insights into informal practices and relations that structure the everyday life of IOs (Roth 2015).

Historicizing IOs. Many individuals pass only fleetingly, for the duration of a summer internship or a short-term consultancy, through the doors of an IO office. Others, however, spend years if not their whole careers there, like a fly stuck to the wall. Albeit to varying degrees depending on career trajectories, biographic interviews targeting the past work experiences of interviewees help fill in the historical gaps that official documents fail to convey or conveniently omit. Life stories force a dialectical rereading of formal documents as primary registers of IO activities, as they nuance and complicate grand historical narratives about IOs and global governance (Reinalda 2021).

Unclosing IOs. Given their focus on individuals or groups as primary units of analysis, biographic interviews provide the heuristic means to traverse or dismantle the organizational boundaries of IOs. If participant observation and interviewing have drilled holes into the edifices of IOs, biographic interviews engage in acts of perforation but have the added feature of drawing transversal lines across institutional spaces to better capture the circulation of people, ideas, knowledge, and policies (see box r—*Studying Ideas*). Destabilizing the closed container image of IOs, life stories reveal

1. Sculpted by Magnús Tómasson; photo by Varfolomeev via Creative Commons.

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porosity by making visible "revolving doors" (Seabrooke and Tsingou 2020) between sectors, institutions, or scales classically conceived of as separate from one another.

How?

Lending themselves to multiple uses, biographic interviews can be conducted in a more or less structured manner, in formal or informal settings, multiple times over the course of an individual's life or in a single instance, with or without a recording device. In comparison to more generic qualitative interviews, biographic interviews are particularly intimate, interactionist, and intrusive (Demazière 2008: 19; Merrill and West 2009: 18). Focused on individuals and their lifeworlds, they create scenarios that will necessarily challenge one's neutrality and are marked by asymmetric power relations (Demazière 2008: 17–20). Given these specificities and lessons learned in my own research experience (Beerli 2018), there are at least three aspects of biographic interviewing that demand special attention: self-presentation, interview settings, and question framing.

Presenting the self. Negotiating and maintaining entry into the lives of others passes through many unspoken forms of communication. As the impression you give will mold the type of relation you are able to establish (Demazière 2008), be attentive to how to carry yourself. For starters, adapt your attire, dressing more or less formally based on your knowledge of the field and the nature of the meeting place. Charged thoughts may reverberate in facial expressions and body gestures so try to suspend judgement when receiving narratives, practicing a strategy of empathetic listening. Sit in a relaxed fashion, maintaining direct and engaged eye contact, but with a softened, relaxed gaze. When possible, create parallels between yourself and your counterpart, but refrain from talking too much. Also, don't be too discouraged when interviewees remain reserved or respond unkindly to questions, as IO professionals are not accustomed to speaking about work and their private lives with strangers.

Setting the stage. Settings can have interactional effects so give some thought to the location of the interview, privileging sites that offer privacy and create an environment of ease, intimacy, trust, and release. In a first instance, let the interviewee propose a meeting spot, as they are likely to suggest a familiar place where they will feel comfortable. More often than not, you will be asked to meet at their workplace. Avoid meeting rooms or public office spaces such as a cafeteria or coffee corner, though, where exposure,

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interruptions, and competition for shared spaces will create time constraints and favor self-censorship. Guaranteeing privacy while giving you a glimpse into everyday work life, well-concealed individual offices are more ideal settings. Outside locations, such as coffee shops or restaurants, are another possibility. Try to avoid meal-time meetings, especially for a first interview, though, as dining can be distracting. The most intimate of conceivable locations, private homes will occasionally be opened to you, notably when dialoguing with retirees or people with whom you share personal ties. When a face-to-face interview is not possible, opt for a video call over a voice-only call. If ever the setting is off-putting, no matter the location, just end the interview early and reschedule for another time, in another place.

Cultivating moderate egocentricity. Invariably anthropocentric, biographic interviewing encourages respondents to narrate events through their experiences (Merrill and West 2009). To cultivate moderate egocentricity, without awakening the narcissist or paralyzing the timid, opt for question formulations that emphasize human agency, even when talking about global politics and policy processes. If, for example, researching agenda-setting processes, ask your interviewee "what role did you and your team play in framing women's reproductive rights as a global issue?," not "what role did UN Women play?" Having already forewarned your interviewee about your use of a biographic method, begin with questions such as "Can you tell me about your current role/position?," progressively working your way toward more intimate discussions about life choices, events, and relationships. Without seeming insincere, end an interview by valorizing your interviewee's story and thanking them for opening up.

What Challenges?

Incommensurate with other types of interviews, biographic interviews delve deep into the realm of the personal, the intimate, and the secretive. As they navigate through the dilemmas of infiltrating and writing on private spaces (Arthur and Kurvet-Käosaar 2015), biographic interviewers will undoubtedly encounter at least three challenges, whose consequential effects can be, at the minimum, partially mitigated.

The missing, the fuzzy, and the false. Life stories are prone to be incomplete and even slightly embellished (Bertaux and Kohli 1984). This makes it all the more important to gently steer interviewees to speak to life events that are of greatest interest to the researcher. Yet if there is a considerable temporal distance between past experiences and the present or if the interviewee's

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memory is incomplete, important details may be forgotten and fuzzy. When confronted with gaps, try asking your interviewee the same question at a later time by email or over the phone; when possible, triangulate interviews with other sources (i.e., other interviews, organizational reports, grey literature, etc.). But don't kill yourself over getting the "full story" as the devil isn't always in the detail. Always slightly orchestrated, narratives might contain exaggerations, inaccurate accusations, intentional silences, and distortions. As opposed to confronting an individual about misrepresentations, consider such tales in relation to sensemaking processes and the relational positionality of the storyteller in a particular social space.

Emotional debris, self-awareness, and oversharing. As interviewees dig into the personal and the intimate, making connections between their inner and outer worlds, they may be brought to confront emotionally charged situations from the past or dive into a state of self-awareness. For individuals in high-stress, demanding working environments, biographic interviews can offer individuals an opportunity to self-reflect on the paths they've followed, sometimes resulting in personal breakthroughs and expressions of gratitude. Playing an unlicensed therapist can be quite time-consuming and delicate, though, as interviewees are more likely to tangent and maybe overshare about psychological issues, relationships, and the like. When interviewing IO professionals such as humanitarians or peacekeepers who are hypermobile and/or traumatized by close encounters with death, destruction, and suffering (Roth 2015), the researcher may be confronted by heavy emotional debris. In such instances, move away from the position of an opportunistic, time-pressed data-hunter, recasting yourself as an empathetic listener. In moments of emotional intensity, let the conversation take its course. No matter how irrelevant things may seem, avoid rushing to your next question, which might leave your counterpart feeling vulnerable and used. Unsure of where a conversation might lead, it's best to allow yourself ample time, say two or three hours, for each interview.

Ethics. Approaching personal lives as gateways into IO and global governance lifeworlds comes with great ethical considerations and responsibilities. Whether or not imposed by a research ethics committee, ethical awareness should guide your practices throughout each stage of research—not just at the beginning or the end. Before beginning an interview, work out how the material can be used, navigating between your intentions and the interviewee's concerns. When writing and preparing to publish, you will likely need to fully anonymize your interviewee's identity to protect their privacy and avoid causing them or people they mention reputational and professional harm. This is particularly necessary when the "dark side" of IO

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life had been exposed. Just changing or omitting an interviewee's name won't always be sufficient for guaranteeing external as well as internal anonymity (Wiles et al. 2008). Depending on the scenario, you may have to avoid specifying for what organization, when, and where your interviewee worked. When deciding how to handle intimate details laid bare in an interview, be utilitarian, only divulging sensitive information when it is truly essential for your argument.

Though not for every researcher, biographic interviewing—when done with sensitivity, respect, patience, and social awareness—offers a unique entry into the multiple realities of IOs through the perspective of the individuals that incarnate them.

To Go Further

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BOX K

Online Interviews

Leah R. Kimber

Semistructured interviews hold no secret for social scientists in qualitative research: they capture participants' experiences in their own words and reveal the context and meaning of their actions (Seitz 2016). If well-established, research partnership (researcher and participant) allows for a successful and detailed qualitative interview. Participants may share feelings, thoughts, experiences, and anecdotes while relying on trust (Seitz 2016). Because the interaction also relies on nonverbal communication, the literature—see Goffman and Garfinkel to mention the precursors—recommends face-to-face encounters. However, in some cases, "traditional" face-to-face interviews—the "gold standard" (Deakin and Wakefield 2013)—cannot be conducted. Dating pre-COVID-19 already, researchers have had to come up with viable alternatives to minimize the impact of time, space, and access (Janghorban et al. 2014; Deakin and Wakefield 2013). Online interfaces that provide simultaneous video calls appeared as the technological solution to overcome travel costs and busy time schedules. Online interviews also allow research to become more inclusive by integrating participants in various locations, with various schedules. Recent publications (see Bourrier and Kimber 2022 for extensive bibliography) have addressed these methodological benefits, but also underlined their disadvantages, namely call disruptions, pauses, inability to read body language, and loss of intimacy, image blurriness, communication delay (Seitz 2016), or even the possibility to withdraw from the conversation by clicking a button (Janghorban et al. 2014) or faking a disruption. For international organization research, working on the United Nations may imply giving up that "gold standard" and making online communication the sound alternative, in particular for

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interviews with civil society members around the world. Though initially reluctant to using online platforms, I emailed my informants suggesting virtual interviews to avoid time and financial constraints—in hopes to increase participation thanks to greater flexibility (Janghorban et al. 2014). Surprisingly, my online interviews were more fruitful and detailed than face-to-face ones. First, in line with what I had observed at the UN, online communication is a common tool in the organization's daily practices, as it is free and easily accessible with Internet connection. Video calls thus reproduce face-to-face meetings where holding a phone is replaced with holding a tea mug. Second, virtual meetings were mostly scheduled on personal free time and carried out from home in the participants' comfort space (Seitz 2016), making for a more intimate exchange. People were "hosting me" in their living room or office. Third, even if the interviewees might have known and trusted me, a sense of anonymity settled due to the screen, making it easier to express themselves in an uninhibited way (Janghorban et al. 2014). Fourth, online interfaces are not immune to communication disruptions or delays, the interviewee's sense of urgency and the researcher's discomfort to interrupt the participant's thought process makes interviewees talk continuously making my role as interviewer almost secondary. I felt less compelled to follow-up on answers due to rare pauses. In sum, virtual meeting platforms for simultaneous interviewing processes should not only be considered as negative alternatives but rather as productive means to generate robust data.

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INTERLUDE II

Controversies in Interview Research

Annabelle Littoz-Monnet

Interviews are a "method" of data collection or generation that is today widely used in research on international organizations (IOs). What interviews are; the way to handle the interviewing process; how best to analyze, evaluate, or interpret the interview "text"; and how to apprehend power relations during the interviewing process have been widely debated among scholars using interviews. Clearly, doing "interviews" in itself does not say much concerning a project's research design, unless the questions above are also addressed. Yet existing insights in the literature too often solely concentrate on the *practicalities* of research drawing on interviews, focusing on how to choose whom to interview, how to gain access, and how to establish a good "rapport" with the interviewee. While relevant, such questions are often addressed without prior consideration of the *epistemological status of the knowledge created through interviewing techniques*, thus creating some confusion in methodological discussions. Diverging conceptions on the relationship between the interviewee and the interviewer have fed a number of controversies concerning interviews and their interpretation. First, such conceptions have informed competing conceptions of "validity" in relation to interview knowledge. Second, they have also resulted in debates over the kind of power dynamics that might be at play during interviews, and in the process of interpreting them.

Debates on Validity

Until the 1980s, most of the literature on interviews engaged with "how" to ask interview questions, how to avoid bias both during the interview as

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well as during the process of analysis of the interview "data," and how best to ensure that research projects—based on interviews as the main method of data collection—were overall considered scientific. While not unproblematic, such insights have legitimized the use of interviews in social sciences.

Informed by a "positivist" approach, such insights see interviews as informative. Scholars, conceived as "minors" who unearth knowledge already there (Kavele and Brinkmann 2009), conduct interviews in order to discover new factual data. Knowledge is conceived as given, and the role of the scholar consists in collecting objective evidence on social reality. Albaret and Deas tell us that "semi-structured interviews are often the only viable conduit to discovering factual data, accessing certain types of information, and reconstructing a course of events or decision-making processes" (see chapter 5—*Semistructured Interviews*). Such assumptions have informed projects aimed at process-tracing events, processes, or "reveal" the points of views of certain groups of actors. When this is the case, scholars aim to access such views "as they are," assuming that the discourses of those interviewed can be accessed in an objective way.

As an effect of such assumptions, books on methods informed by this perspective have focused on the "interviewer's effect" (Hyman 1954) as well as the "reliability of the interviewee" and how best to control for these. "Validity," from this perspective, is about asking the right questions, in the right way, and whether the interviewee offers truthful answers.

In order to address the first concern (the "interviewer's effect"), existing advice has focused on research design. The suggested recipe consists in focusing on the "scientificity" of the research methodology, which translates into the formulation of "unbiased" interview questions. Students have been advised to formulate "nonleading" questions that will not distort the interviewee's responses (McCracken 1988). Questions should restrain, the word goes, from "putting words in the mouth" of interviewees. The emphasis has also been put on making interviewees feel at ease, in the hope that this would provide for a more honest conversation and thus access to "true" knowledge. While positivist approaches acknowledge that scholars who do interviews may not be "neutral" or objective, such bias is seen, however, as entirely quantifiable and controllable (Mosley 2013).

In order to address the second concern (the "reliability of the interviewee"), existing insights point to the lack of neutrality of interview data, focusing on ways to "control" for this (for instance, Rathbun 2008). From this perspective the partiality of interviews is a problem. Insights have focused on memory failures, arguing for instance that "the older the witness, and the further from events they are, the less reliable the information" (Rich-

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ards 1996: 200) or on interviewees' deceptive strategies, when someone strategically misremembers their accounts (Mosley 2013). In the context of IO research, this may occur when highly ranked bureaucrats for instance stick to an "official" discourse and do not reveal the politics behind the agendas of their organizations. Positivist scholarship on interviews here proposes triangulation as the golden solution, that is, cross-referencing across interviews conducted with different actors *and* between interviews and other forms of data. Davies for instance tells us that "the optimum solution appears to be a triangulation triad of primary sources (interviews, published first-hand accounts; and documentary sources (published or archival)), with published secondary-source information available" (Davies 2001: 78). Such combination, the argument goes, makes for a powerful and rigorous research design (Richards 1996).

Such questions, however, are relevant only when interviews are conceived as *informative*. When the value of interviews is seen as a manifestation of the interviewee's views of social reality, the "lack of validity" of the interviewee account is no longer seen as a challenge to be overcome. Instead researchers can ask themselves new questions: how are such understandings produced, or what are the effects of such understandings? Rather than being concerned with a possible "misrepresentation" of reality by interviewees, their stories are seen as an exercise of sensemaking in a specific sociohistorical context, that is valuable as such. In IO research, the study of representations has informed new agendas on the way IO bureaucrats look at specific governance problems or how such conceptions vary across IOs (Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Fresia 2009; Pouliot 2016; Beerli 2018). From this perspective, "bias" does not need to be excluded and the interview text does not need to be "controlled" against other types of evidence. Triangulation becomes redundant.

In the same way, interpretivists acknowledge that researchers *need to make sense of* their interview material. Interviews do not "speak for themselves" and need to be interpreted. This is unavoidable to the act of writing. Interviews are, as put by Beerli in her discussion of biographical interviews in this volume (see chapter 6—*Biographic Interviews*), "dialogical," "interactionist," and "intrusive." For interpretivists, the positionality of the researcher (what positivists call, in their own terminology, the "interviewer's effect") affects the production of interview knowledge, as well as its interpretation. But of course the question then goes, how can we tell a good from a less convincing interpretation of an interview, if interview stories (and social reality more generally) can only be apprehended from the perspective of the researcher?

One avenue consists in making the positionality of the researcher, as

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well as the decisions made by the researcher during the research process itself, explicit. Leander for instance argues that "strong objectivity" consists in being reflexive about the researcher's "presence in framing research" as well as the research process itself (Leander 2016). This implies discussing how our identity, stance, or emotions may affect our relationship to our research object as well as our research endeavor. A feminist researcher who examines IOs' institutional cultures will ask certain questions but also see certain asymmetries in gender relations that another researcher might miss. Not only the questions to the interviewees but also the questions to the *interview text* are affected by the positionality of the researcher.

By the same token, researchers who are interpreting the interview text in light of a specific *theory* should discuss how their theoretical standpoint may illuminate their object but also close alternative interpretations (Kvale 1996). A marxist interpretation of international bureaucrats' mindset will pay more attention to their economic vision of individuals and shared assumptions about the global economy more generally. This "lens" is not problematic as such, as it makes it possible for researchers to see things that might not be visible to others. It should, however, be made explicit. The first advice, thus, consists in making the researcher's epistemological, theoretical, political, or emotional stance transparent.

The second avenue consists in interpreting the interview text in light of the political, social, and historical context in which the text is produced. Paying attention to "context" may point for instance to the structural conditions that may constrain the interviewees when they speak. This mode of interpretation acknowledges that reality exists "beyond words" and recognizes the effects exerted by objective structures. Bourdieu, when discussing the interpretation of interview text, alerted us to the need "to understand the conditions of existence of which they (the interviewees and their words) are the product of" as well as the "the social effects which the relations of the fieldwork (. . .) can themselves exert" (1996: 30). In what he called a "realist construction" of interview text, "conversational analysis reads each discourse not solely in terms of its specific structure of interaction as a transaction, but also in terms of the invisible structures that organize it" (Bourdieu 1996: 27). Prior knowledge of these objective structures is, thus, a condition for the interpretation of the interview text.

These different contexts of interpretation, as described above, serve to make explicit the questions posed to the text. But this does not suffice. The interpretation of a text also includes requirements of credibility. Precise observations and logical argumentation are also necessary, even when interviews and the scholarly work that interprets them are conceived as cocreated

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knowledge. Several interpretations of interviews are possible but not *any* interpretation.

Debates on Power Asymmetries

Paying attention to the interview process and the relationship between the researcher and the interviewee therein calls for a reflection on power relations, which are central in this relationship. A second controversy emerges when one considers this relationship from the perspective of power asymmetries. Most insights tell us that in the context of "elite interviews," the power asymmetry plays in favor of the interviewee. Richards for instance tells us that "by the very nature of elite interviews, it is the interviewee who has the power" (Richards 1996: 201). Highly ranked officials can be difficult interlocutors who skillfully convey an official discourse and control both the format and the direction of the interview, as underlined by Dairon in this volume (see box j—*Asymmetrical Interviews*). The identity of the interviewer may also exacerbate this asymmetry: researchers who are young, female, or coming from an underprivileged social background can find themselves in a dominated position more frequently (Alles et al. 2016).

But IO interviews can also be with nonelite officials, like local staff or beneficiaries. And mainly I would argue that the question of power, *even in elite interviews*, is not straightforward. When one places the interview relationship within its scholarly context, it becomes clear that the interview takes place *for the purpose of the interviewer*. As put by Kvale, the idea of an interview dialogue "gives an illusion of mutual interests in a conversation, which in actuality takes place for the purpose of just the one part—the interviewer" (Kvale 2006: 483). Given this, the idea of a genuine and even emancipatory interview dialogue is illusory. During the interview, the interviewer, who asks questions, sets the agenda. In light of this interaction, advice given to researchers on "how to gain trust" during interviews must be critically examined. We hear for instance that "the first question, crucial in initiating the exchange by gaining the respondent's trust, must not be too delicate or naïve" (Alles et al. 2016: 118). But creating trust during the interview also serves the researcher's purpose to "obtain a disclosure of the interview subjects' world" (Kvale 2006: 482). Whether this is legitimate or manipulative is debatable. One may argue that elites, given their dominant social position or the—sometimes—contestable nature of their agendas or behavior, may well be the object of social scientific critique, and that such critique can be formulated only once elite discourses and practices are researched. But even

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elites may be harmed—personally or in their career—by an interpretation of their thoughts or doings they fundamentally disagree with (Dauvin and Siméant 2001). This power asymmetry appears clearly when one considers what happens "after" the interview. The researcher indeed controls the interpretation of the interview text. Even when researchers adhere to an ideal of mutuality and coauthorship, the researcher organizes the process of knowledge cocreation. There is an ambiguity in the interview relationship that has both personal and instrumental elements.

This brief discussion aims to encourage researchers to deeply reflect on the relationship between themselves, as researchers, and their interviewees. This relationship is, first, at the core of epistemological discussions on interview knowledge and its "validity." Second, it is also at the core of a more ethical reflection on power asymmetries during the interview itself, as well as in the process of interpretation of interview text.

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PART 3

Documenting

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Introduction

Documenting

Fanny Badache, Leah R. Kimber, and Lucile Maertens

International organizations (IOs) present themselves to the world through a large variety of productions and outputs. Reports and official websites are probably among the best-known objects through which IOs contribute to international politics. Yet IOs are also active producers of images, discourses, statistics, archives, and other artifacts. The contributions gathered in this section, entitled *Documenting*, are dedicated to methods applied to analyze IOs' everyday productions.

Disciplinary traditions and interests have often led scholars to specialize in the study of one specific type of production, developing tailored methodological devices to research them. For instance, traditionally legal documents are studied by scholars of international law (see chapter 7—*Legal Research*), archives by historians (see chapter 8—*Archives*), maps by geographers (see box m—*Analyzing Maps*). The contributions build on these disciplinary developments to present well-established and proven methods while borrowing methodological tools from other disciplines. They show that different scholarships bring fruitful and complementary insights to produce robust knowledge on IO documents.

Indeed, the contributions propose methodological tools adapted to the nature of the productions but also adjusted to the context of IOs. While researching some products may need less methodological adaptation than others, contributors highlight what scholars should pay attention to when they study how IOs produce statistics (see chapter 12—*Statistics and Quantification*), when they delimit what an IO discourse is (see chapter

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11—*Discourse Analysis*), or when they work with IO archives (see chapter 8—*Archives*). The contributions also attest to the increasingly diverse set of productions social scientists must make sense of. On the one hand, some objects have long been produced by IOs but have received less scientific scrutiny than others. For instance, while IOs have documented their activities through visual objects, their creations, pictures, and videos have been less studied than treaties and resolutions (see box l—*Visual Archives*, and chapter 9—*Visual Methods*). The same goes with budgets, which have received less attention than other written documents (see chapter 13—*Budget Analysis*). On the other hand, the contributions also address newly developed artifacts, especially in the field of digital communication: websites, tweets, data visualization, and so on. (see box p—*Semiology of Websites*, box q—*Analyzing Tweets*, and box s—*Analyzing Charts, Infographics, and Dataviz*).

Documents and other objects offer a rich material to investigate IOs. The contributions present specific ways of studying IOs through their productions while raising questions of access and data management. Taken together, they show how the different methods help answer three main types of questions. First, the methods introduced in this section tackle questions around IO identity, i.e., how IOs act out in their production, and IOs' roles in world politics, i.e., what IOs produce and to what end. While the analysis of IO websites or annual reports (see chapter 10—*Document Analysis: A Praxiographic Approach* and box p—*Semiology of Websites*) provide relevant data on how IOs present themselves, the study of statistics and maps shows how IOs contribute to governing the world by numbers (see chapter 12—*Statistics and Quantification*, box m—*Analyzing Maps*, and box s—*Analyzing Charts, Infographics, and Dataviz*). Second, exploring the elaboration, creation, and dissemination of IO productions is highly valuable to understand the inner workings of these institutions. Indeed, looking at production processes enables the researcher to address questions around power relationships while rendering visible the dynamics of decision-making, categorization, selection, and framing. These methods help understand the complex functioning of IOs: by studying how a report is written (see chapter 10—*Document Analysis: A Praxiographic Approach* and chapter 11—*Discourse Analysis*), an archive is sorted out (see chapter 8—*Archives*), a logo is designed (see box n—*Branding Analysis*), a colored badge is attributed (see box o—*Artifact Analysis*), or a cover picture is selected (see chapter 9—*Visual Methods*), scholars may capture the entanglements of hierarchical dynamics, organizational cultures, professional habits, and individual decisions. Third, the contributions propose concrete methodological tools to analyze the content of IO productions and their broader effects. Schol-

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ars can learn different techniques to interpret rich empirical material and study the social life of IO outputs, be it a specific concept elaborated in an IO report (see box r—*Studying Ideas*), a graph publicized on social medias (see box s—*Analyzing Charts, Infographics, and Dataviz*), or an artifact used in international negotiations (see box o—*Artifact Analysis*). The methods introduced in this part allow us to understand their explicit and implicit meaning(s)—what IOs say about the world through these productions and suggest ways to analyze their effects on global governance, like how IOs support and sustain specific worldviews that impact the way global problems are governed (Interlude III—*What IOs Talk about When They Talk about Themselves, and How They Do It*).

Some methods are more specific than others. Yet they often can be used to study a wide array of empirical material, like discourse analysis ready to investigate legal documents, policy reports, and advocacy pictures (see chapter 11—*Discourse Analysis*). Readers should therefore engage with different chapters and boxes to build their own methodological toolkit. For some productions, researchers may have to acquire specific technical competences, as in the study of IO maps. The contributions in this book provide concrete tools and advice to begin this journey. Overall, the increasing diversity of digital productions, only briefly addressed in this volume, builds a strong case for methodological dialogue, especially between qualitative and quantitative methods.

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CHAPTER 7

Legal Research

Ian Hurd

The structure and authority of international organizations (IOs) are expressed largely in legal language, and IO scholars should be comfortable with legal research methods. It is important to understand the basics of legal theory and treaty law as well as the dynamics of legal contestation. Insight on these topics is accessible via sociology, political science, history, and other fields in addition to legal studies; one need not be a legal scholar. Research on international institutions is enriched by seeing the legal system upon which global governance is based and the ways in which that system laces with international politics.

What?

IO scholars need to pay attention to legal issues because the organizations are constructed from legal resources, and their power, limits, and authority are defined by legal terms. The charters that establish IOs are legal documents, the clauses that define their competence and obligations are read by lawyers, and the political disputes that ensue are fights over the *who* is allowed to do *what* under the rules.

Law and legal argumentation are the common framework by which IOs intersect with government policies and their competing priorities. IO scholars should understand the law of treaties, models of legal change, and competing theories of interpretation that offer different views of the relation between texts and practices and between law and politics.

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Most international institutions are anchored by interstate treaties that set out their purpose, structure, and powers. The Charter of the United Nations, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and the various treaties that make up the European Union are examples of treaties that establish what used to be called public international unions and are now the international organizations at the heart of the system of global governance. These treaties are governed by international legal rules on treaties that define how they are made, interpreted, and contested.

Legal research begins with reading the relevant legal texts. It then divides into distinct traditions. The first emphasizes the choices that actors make to comply with or to violate the rules. The second highlights the capacity of legal rules to constitute the social context, or the resources available to actors through the legal system. The first is roughly "positivist" in the social sciences sense and is suited to research questions that ask about patterns of compliance and violation. The second is "interpretivist" in the sense that it aims to understand how actors make sense of their choices and circumstances, with special emphasis on the productive power of legal forms in global governance.

From human rights to financial flows to environmental collapse, government decisions are influenced by the rules, decisions, and powers of IOs: a government that wishes to subsidize a steel factory must consider how this fits with the rules of the World Trade Organization; Iceland's decision to allow whale hunting is causing problems in its application to join the European Union; the International Court of Justice has some say over the legal implications of Israel's wall inside the Palestinian territories; the International Criminal Court may have jurisdiction over US soldiers in Afghanistan despite the fact that the United States is not a legal party to the Rome Statute.

Without attention to the international legal system that undergirds international institutions, one misses the fact that these political disputes are largely defined by legal terms, resources, and institutions.

Why?

International organizations rest on a foundation of law: they are established by legal devices—typically treaties—that establish a formal body with corporate personhood and with powers that are defined by international law; the authority of international institutions is derived from international law, and so are their capacities, limits, and possibilities. Thinking about IOs requires paying attention to power, law, politics, and more all at once. If, as Martin says (2013), the effects of international law go far beyond the question of

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whether a government complies with it, then research on how law relates to global affairs needs a broad lens on the productive power of law—that is, its capacity to generate new actors, new ways of engaging in politics, and new distributions of power. It also needs practical as well as theoretical analyses. To see the big picture of global affairs, we must first see the details.

Carpenter provides an ideal example of the benefits of detailed legal analysis to illuminate the broad effects of international organizations. In her analysis of humanitarian rescue operations in the Bosnian wars (2000), she shows how the legal rules of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) were exploited by belligerents with the effect that UNHCR humanitarian operations unwittingly served the Serb militias' goal of ethnic cleansing. The UNHCR rules called for rescuing women and children from besieged Bosnian towns and leaving the men behind. This made it easier for the militias to empty the town and massacre the men. Carpenter lays out the legal framework in which the UNCHR operated in order to make sense of these tragic dynamics.

Both the failures and the successes of IOs are shaped by the rules and competencies set out in law and from the interaction between the rules and the wider world of states and others who employ international legal arguments (including activists, individuals, and firms). It is as important to understand why these organizations sometimes fail to take collective action as it is to understand when they act. The international response to the Libyan uprising in 2011, for instance, was very different than to the Syrian uprising a year later, and the reason for this has much to do with the internal rules of the UN Security Council: the permanent members of the Council were much more divided over what to do about Syria than they were about Libya, and this put the Council in a very different state in relation to the two crises. Legal terms define the possibilities for politics, at the same time as political pressures shape the legal terms.

The leading edge of scholarship on international law and IOs employs research methods that reveal the politicization of legal resources and the legalization of political struggles. Janina Dill's study of the legal rules of war (2014) and Rebecca Saunders' book on torture (2018) are excellent models of research in settings that are characterized by a recursive relationship between the political power of law and a legal framing of politics.

How?

The choice of research method should be guided by the research question one is asking. On international law and international institutions,

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four common question-types are "what is the law on this issue?," "are governments following the law?," "how did the law come to be?," and "what follows from the way law and politics are constituted?" I address each briefly in turn.

Scholars sometimes want to know *what the law is* on a particular subject—for instance, one might ask "under what circumstances can a UN peacekeeper use deadly force?" or "can the International Criminal Court investigate a crime by US soldiers in Afghanistan?" Answering these questions requires collecting the relevant legal texts (the UN Charter, Security Council resolutions, Status of Force agreements, for the first, and the ICC Statute and related material for the second) and comparing their provisions with the situation at hand. These questions lend themselves to a kind of textualism—in the sense of starting with what's written in the charter, treaty, court decision, or rule—but it can't end there. With texts, two kinds of interpretation are inevitable, and they mean that competing accounts of the law are inescapable: interpretation of the legal texts and of the empirical situation to determine how it relates to the legal frame. These are familiar as the main practice of courts: applying legal understandings to real-world circumstances. It is inevitable that disagreements will arise often over which documents are relevant and how they relate to each other and to the situation. For instance, US law forbids the ICC from investigating crimes committed by Americans while the ICC statute allows it if the crime was committed on the territory of an ICC member state. Scholars must be attentive to the possibility that the two may be impossible to reconcile. Questions about what the law is or says may end up with indeterminate answers, and yet the legal issue remains important.

A related question is *whether governments are complying with or violating the law*. For instance, Hafner-Burton aims to document whether human rights compliance is improving over time or not (2008); Hathaway considers whether the United States violated international law when it killed Iranian general Qassem Soleimani in Iraq (2020). Making use of positivist social science methods, these studies begin by asking what the law permits or prohibits and then offer judgments about whether the state behavior in question falls within these terms. It is a popular approach among positivists in social sciences who seek correlations between features of the rules or the actors and the level of compliance (Koremenos 2016; von Stein 2013), but its outputs are only as good as the judgments it makes about what counts as compliance.

"Compliance" is a tricky category given the high measures of ambiguity and contestation about what the rules are and how to interpret state behavior. In the face of fighting over whether behavior is law-abiding or not,

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the positivist approach loses its footing. Brooks finds this fatal to efforts to determine whether American drone strikes are lawful or not. The wide range of legal instruments that are relevant to that determination leads to a great deal of ambiguity and contradiction in the answer. The legal sources include treaties, government statements and practices, and scholarly interpretations, which sometimes overlap each other and sometimes leave gaps that need to be filled by legal inferences from other issues. This complexity informs her conclusion that the drone program is profoundly destabilizing for the international rule of law (2014).

Alternately, one might ask about *how and why the law came to be what it is*. These historical questions are answered with reference to diplomatic history, often by reference to the *travaux préparatoires*—that is, the draft documents, negotiating history, and other supporting material that were produced in the course of the negotiating history of the treaty. Archival and historical research techniques are relevant here, but attention should also be paid to how the founding treaty has been changed over time through practice and reinterpretation. The legal charters of international organizations are like constitutional documents and their contemporary meaning may travel some distance from the original text. The UN Charter, for instance, says that resolutions of the Security Council pass only if they have affirmative votes from all five permanent members. However, in practice it has operated as if it said they pass as long as no permanent members vote against. This subtle change means that abstentions do not count as vetoes, motivated presumably by the interest of the permanent members in having a way to signal mild displeasure with a resolution while still allowing it to pass. This important innovation in the legal meaning of the Charter would be missed if one ignored practice and looked only at the formal text.

Finally, one might ask *what the legal system produces*. This version of legal research addresses key issues of international law and politics, including why law matters, what it does, and most broadly "why should we care about international law?" (Hakimi 2020). It is the interpretivist tradition in international legal studies. Legalization empowers some and disempowers others; it produces new terrain for contestation; it changes the terms of political disputes and shifts the location and means of accountability (Shklar 1986). Peevers takes this approach in her study of international interventions and says it allows the scholar to see what law makes possible in addition to the standard question of what it forbids (2014). Recognizing that the legal system as productive and empowering for some in addition to being regulative and constraining (Hussin 2014) is the key to opening a broad and grounded empirical

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research program on the implications of how law and politics are constituted and defined, sometimes as one and sometimes in distinction to each other.

What Challenges?

The tools of legal research described above are available to scholars from all disciplines, but there can be some danger in talking across disciplinary boundaries because the normative assumptions of legal scholarship often differ from those of social sciences. Scholars should be alert to the risk of misunderstandings when these different normative lenses are not acknowledged. Specifically, IO research needs to guard against the assumption that international law and organizations are naturally good and progressive in world politics. This premise is common in legal scholarship despite its obvious empirical and political problems. And while it can impede empirical scholarship, luckily it is easy to avoid.

It is common for scholars to make impassioned pleas that international law and institutions should be more empowered and more respected. Hathaway is confident that "international law is frequently the simplest, most effective and least expensive solution to problems big and small" (2007: 3). Slaughter believes that international law indicates the correct policies for governments, on the assumption that law represents "multilaterally by agreed-upon rules of the game" with benefits for all (2013: 616). O'Connell goes further: she chides scholars who find fault with international law because "given the nature of the problems we face in the world, (. . .) any effort to weaken international law only serves to undermine the prospects for achieving an orderly world and progress toward fulfillment of humanity's shared goals, including prosperity" (2008: 14). These scholars embody the view that international law and institutions are enchanted spaces where political disagreements disappear and are replaced by good-for-everyone outcomes.

This enchanted view of international law and institutions derives from two strands of liberal theory in international relations that sees international institutions as manifestations of interstate cooperation and as inherently beneficial, naturally apolitical, and worthy of expanding.

Legal scholarship on IOs should take a more empirical and less ideological approach, attentive to the costs as well as the benefits of law. Since people have different interests and desires it is inevitable that international legal institutions will favor some interests rather than others. It is inconceivable

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that international law could make all the people happy all the time. Scholars should look for the moments when trade-offs among competing interests are occurring. Indeed, the political controversies around global governance are evidence that people and states are deeply invested in how institutions redistribute goods and harms. Scholars can avoid a priori normative commitment to the desirability of international law and institutions and instead begin with a neutral position that looks first at the empirical evidence and only later draws political or normative conclusions.

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CHAPTER 8

Archives

Ellen J. Ravndal

International organizations (IOs) have left behind an abundance of documents and other archival material. Combined with state and personal collections, these offer a rich basis for IO studies. Researchers can use archives to answer questions of institutional history—the internal developments of IOs or IOs' role as international actors—and to examine broader processes of international history—seeing IOs as an arena for and mirror of global developments.

What?

Archives are institutional repositories of documents. Archives can be large, professional institutions, or smaller and more ad hoc. They can be operated by national or regional governments, IOs, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or other private associations, or hosted by libraries or museums. When we talk about "the archive" we most often refer to a physical location where documents are stored and where researchers can consult material in reading rooms. However, new technology now means that some documents can be accessed online, either through archives' own websites or in digital collections or databases. This chapter primarily discusses traditional, physical archives, where the majority of documents still reside, but similar considerations apply to research using digital archival collections. Archives are important because they contain "*eyewitness accounts*," or "primary sources," and *unpublished* information that cannot be found elsewhere.

Archival research is an old method. Scholars first developed tools and

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procedures for working with archival collections during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Arnold 2000: 45). Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886) is commonly presented as the father of modern history because of his emphasis on using primary sources. Ranke argued that historians should produce "scientific" and "objective" history based on "evidence." However, archival research is not quite as straightforward as letting the documents speak for themselves. Sources, including archival documents, can only be understood through the researcher's interpretation. They are a "residue" left behind by past human activity (Bloch 1992 [1954]: 45) and represent "structures that survive into the present" (Gaddis 2002: 35). Therefore researchers cannot simply enter the archive to find a perfect picture of past events and processes. (For more on analysis of documents, see chapter 10—*Document Analysis: A Praxiographic Approach*.)

IO research can include sources from many different archives. IOs themselves often have rich archival collections that can shed light on the IO's internal institutional developments (e.g., Gram-Skjoldager and Ikonomou 2019) or provide a picture of broader societal developments (e.g., Ravndal 2020). Various national archives hold material sent home from state delegations to IOs. Finally, private individuals who worked for IOs, or NGOs and civil society groups, may have left collections in university libraries, national archives, or the archives of political parties, or similar. Tracking down such private collections can be challenging but rewarding.

A growing IO literature uses archival research. Two studies taking the League of Nations as their starting point represent excellent examples of how to conduct archival research on IOs: Patricia Clavin (2013) examined how the League expanded its work on economic and financial policy and how this laid the foundations for the post-World War II Bretton Woods system, while Susan Pedersen (2015) analyzed how the League's mandates system sought to protect the interests of imperialism while inadvertently opening up space for anticolonialist actors and arguments.

Why?

Archival IO research brings many benefits that stem from the very definition of what an archive is: a repository of unpublished "eyewitness accounts" produced by the day-to-day operations of the organization. This can include many types of documentation, such as incoming and outgoing telegrams and letters commenting on the events of the day, various memoranda with contemporary analysis of events or proposals for new policies, drafts and

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redrafts of speeches that can provide insight into the balancing between different priorities, or verbatim records of meetings and marginal notes and comments that can show internal disagreements or emphasize what different individuals considered important. Contrary to the polished and carefully crafted words of published press statements and reports, these documents offer a glimpse into the "behind-the-scenes" operations of the organization.

The benefits of consulting these materials are obvious. First, archival sources provide the possibility of constructing a narrative of events as seen by IO staff and offer a chance to grasp the spur of the moment, instinctive, and "true" reactions and thoughts of the actors working in these organizations. Second, working with material from different archives allow researchers to see an event from multiple vantage points. Indeed, historians turned to IO archives in the past two decades precisely to counteract the national bias of traditional diplomatic history (Amrith and Sluga 2008; Kott 2011). The most fruitful archival research projects will be those that combine material from IO archives, national archives, and private collections, because this allows for multiple perspectives on the same phenomenon. A third benefit is that archives contain unpublished information, allowing the researcher to bring new insights into the academic debate. Finally, archival material can be analyzed with different research methods that offer grounds for methodological innovation and interdisciplinary dialogue.

How?

As Marc Trachtenberg notes, although many believe archival research is "daunting," there is really "nothing mysterious about working in archives. No arcane set of skills is needed" (Trachtenberg 2006: 165–66). It is largely a research method based on common sense that most scholars learn through practice and by asking advice from experienced researchers. This section sums up the lessons I have learned from visits to multiple archives in the course of my research on IOs (e.g., Ravndal 2020; 2023).

For clarity, it can be useful to separate the research process into three stages: before, during, and after the visit to the (physical) archive. Similar questions arise when working with digital collections.

The first stage involves identifying archival collections of interest and how to access them. A common way to find relevant collections is through the citations in publications on the topic. Additionally, historians place great value on locating novel or hitherto underutilized sources. For IO research, the logical starting point is to check whether the organization's own archive

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is open to researchers. Most large IOs such as the UN, the International Labour Organization (ILO), or the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) have archives, usually located at their headquarters. I have often found that a visit to the UN archive in New York or the League of Nations archive at the UN Library in Geneva is useful even if these organizations are not the main object of study. Since their foundation, the UN and the League functioned as hubs for international cooperation, and we can therefore find traces of other IOs and broader international developments in their archival collections. Likewise, many researchers routinely consult the national archives of the United Kingdom and/or the United States because their extensive diplomatic network collected information about events all over the world, and their archives are relatively easy to access and navigate.

Once interesting archival collections have been identified, accessing them usually involves travelling to the location of the archive and spending at least two to three days there. Such visits must be carefully planned. Archives' websites give information about opening hours, access applications, and whether it is necessary to book a seat in their reading room. Additionally, it is a good idea to consult finding aids, and seek advice from the archivists and/or scholars who have visited before, to identify (some of) the specific documents you would like to view. Many archives allow for ordering documents in advance to facilitate more time-efficient visits.

To locate relevant information in the archives, it is necessary to understand how documents have been created and organized. Archives often have online catalogues that allow keyword searches, but their file descriptions are of varied quality. Relying on an online search risks missing out on relevant files if the archivist who catalogued them failed to include "your" keyword. Instead try to understand how the organization produced and catalogued its documents. Organizations may use a central registry system, thematic codes, a chronological system, or a system centered on different departments or individuals. I have found relevant information, for example, by going though folders of all incoming and outgoing telegrams for an office during a given time period. None of these telegrams would have come up in a keyword search.

The second stage of archival research is the actual visit to the archive, for which my main advice is: bring a camera and take good notes. Most archives today let visitors make digital copies of documents with a camera or phone. But not all, so do read the instructions on the website carefully beforehand. Because international travel is expensive, researchers may only be able to spend a few days at the archive, but by photographing documents even a short visit could yield thousands of copies that can later be analyzed at a

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slower pace. Keep in mind that each day in the archive will likely correspond to a week or more sorting through and analyzing the copied documents.

It is very important to take good, informative, and organized notes during archival visits, so that the researcher later knows which file a document belongs to and how to locate information in the photos. A note or photo without its document reference is useless as it cannot be included in the analysis. Software like RefWorks, OneNote, or NVivo can be useful. My own system is quite low-tech. I create a word document titled with the reference to a folder or box or other small archival unit (e.g., "FO 371 59719") and sort these into computer folders that replicate the structure of the archive. In each word document I take (brief) notes about what I found interesting about this unit and which parts I have photographed. When taking photos, I start each sequence by photographing the archive box, the front of the folder, and/or the call slip—some visually striking element that allows me to quickly identify the start of a new unit in my photo stream, and which will later provide information about the document reference for the following photos.

Finally, the third stage of archival research involves sorting through and analyzing the documents and integrating the information in your writing. Archival collections have different copyright policies. To publish (excerpts from) a document, or even just include a quote from it, it may be necessary to get permission from the copyright holders. Consult the copyright information on the archive website or ask an archivist.

There are different ways to cite information from archives in publications. Sometimes the archive gives a suggestion, or a journal may prefer one style over another. The most important consideration is that it should be possible for others to locate the exact document. Therefore each reference must include three elements: 1) something to identify the individual document (e.g., "Letter from Smith to Johnson, 12 October 1956" or "Minutes of meeting, 3 January 1948"), 2) the archive reference for the relevant folder or box (e.g., "S-0194-0001-02"), and 3) the name and location of the archive.

What Challenges?

Working with archives presents both practical and methodological challenges. Visits to archives can be both expensive and time consuming. Some scholars may face additional challenges with visa applications, not to mention the obstacles to international travel demonstrated by the COVID-19

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pandemic. This means that traditional archival research may not be viable for everyone or at all times.

Some archives are taking steps to remedy these problems by digitizing their collections. The UN Library in Geneva, for example, now offers online access to the entire League of Nations archival collection.[1] The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is also making parts of the ITU's documentation available online. Several other archives have digitized parts of their collections, and these are mostly free to download through their online search catalogues. For a useful overview of relevant online archives for IO research, see the website of the United Nations History Project.[2]

Methodological challenges also arise due to how archival collections have been produced, preserved, and organized. Not all sources survive into the present, and importantly, "sources of the past do not survive in neat patterns of their own accord" (Arnold 2000: 60). Therefore archival collections will only ever give a partial picture of the past, and it will be a picture that is "biased" in significant ways.

Bias in a collection can arise from different sources. Sometimes what makes it into an archival collection can be accidental. Fires and floods have been and remain a hazard for archival collections. But documents are at risk of more than natural disasters, wars, and revolutions. As researchers we rely on the work of archivists in organizing, managing, and preserving the collection. Archives have been produced for a purpose, and this purpose is *not* primarily to serve academic researchers. Past archivists have made choices about what to keep and what to destroy, and these processes can leave systematic biases in the collection. The researcher should therefore pay attention not only to what they find in the archives but also to what is not there. "Operation Legacy" represents a large-scale example whereby the British government during decolonization destroyed or withheld numerous documents from its colonial administration (Sato 2017). On a smaller scale, the archival collection of Trygve Lie, the first UN secretary-general, contains folders and documents that he organized when writing his memoirs in the 1950s. Can we be sure he did not seek to present himself in a good light by leaving out certain files? To deal with biased sources the researcher must first identify how the source is biased, and second seek to compensate by comparing, or triangulating, information from different sources.

Whether intentional or accidental, the gaps and silences in archival collections are significant, and the researcher must be aware of them. Criti-

1. https://archives.ungeneva.org/lontad (accessed February 9, 2023).
2. https://www.histecon.magd.cam.ac.uk/unhist/index.html (accessed June 7, 2022).

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cal, feminist, and postcolonial scholars are particularly attentive to these silences and have developed methodologies for dealing with them (see box x—*Postcolonial Insights* and chapter 28—*Feminist Approaches*). Lisa Lowe (2015: 5) discusses the need to "read *across* the separate repositories organized by office, task, and function, and by period and area" when working with the archives of the colonial state. In IO research, scholars can include archival collections in the Global South as an additional perspective to avoid replicating the worldview found in the American and British collections many of us continue to work with. Recently published work shows the value of including archival visits to countries such as Ghana, India, and Trinidad (O'Malley 2018; Getachew 2019).

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BOX L

Visual Archives

Valérie Gorin

Since the 1860s–1870s, drawings, paintings, posters, daguerreotypes, postcards, stamps, pictures, films but also leaflets and periodicals are preserved by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)[1] or the International Federation of the Red Crescent (IFRC),[2] and also by the United Nations where each agency has its own visual archives (such as the United Nations Refugee Agency or the World Health Organization). Exploration of visual archives can enrich or fill gaps, as well as open new lines of enquiry over the imperialist and colonialist ideologies of the late nineteenth century, or the settings of multilateral diplomacy in the interwar period of North-South relations after 1945. For example, a historical investigation over the poster archives of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum—the largest humanitarian collection in the world—has questioned the visual politics and the reappropriation of humanitarian principles throughout the Red Cross movement since the First World War (Gorin 2019).

Most of the time, visual artifacts are preserved in separate archival units, collections, or buildings, even in the same organization, depending on the visual or textual nature of the source.[3] The constellation of archival sites thus represents multiple challenges for the researcher. It is greatly advised to contact the archivist in charge of the visual archives in the organization (see chapter 8—*Archives*). Some archives are digitized online for free, but they

1. The ICRC audiovisual archives. https://avarchives.icrc.org/ (accessed October 2, 2020).

2. The IFRC historic film collection is on Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCd2bE77hqagP0uP2JxfSTdA (accessed October 2, 2020).

3. For example, see the distinction made in the WHO archives: https://www.who.int/archives/fonds_collections/partners/en/ (accessed October 2, 2020).

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do not include all visual artifacts (e.g., memorabilia). An on-site visit to the archives is necessary for researchers interested in two aspects: first, a focus on the materiality of visual objects, such as the technique or the constraints related to viewing devices, will allow researchers to understand the immersive experience of spectators from previous decades; second, the consultation of written material accompanying images is mandatory (e.g., reports, personal correspondence, field notes) to have contextual information about the production/dissemination process (see chapter 9—*Visual Methods*). Visual archives preserved in the same location offer homogeneous corpuses that give meaningful inputs about the use and reuse of an image, sometimes for multiple purposes and through different visual formats. It is therefore useful to explore the political and cultural specificities of images and their variations through space and time. However, it is not always possible to trace the history of their creation. Many images before 1945 are preserved without any captions, nor location, date, or name of the image-maker. Finally, accessibility is also an issue: images of the early twentieth century are accessible because they fall into public domain. However, there might be a limitation period of approximately twenty to forty years on contemporary images for confidentiality reasons.

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CHAPTER 9

Visual Methods

Valérie Gorin

When you want to observe the organizational structure of IOs, as well as understand their history and culture, visual methods offer highly valuable approaches. Producing images about or analyzing images of IOs allow researchers examination of their representations of the social world, their visual conventions, and their power dynamics. Here we introduce several case studies using visual data as sources of information, and how to proceed with image-based research.

What?

Rooted in social sciences, visual methods sit at the intersection of two different paradigms: "[they] are research practices that explicitly use images in various ways including drawing, photography, video, film, and Internet pages. The images are either regarded as a *source* of data in themselves, or as a way of *producing* data through their use, or a combination of the two" (Warren 2009: 566). Researchers who work on images as sources of data act as "image collectors": they analyze the significance and meaning of preexisting images, whether produced by an institution or by previous studies. Their methods include the use of visual archives and databases, visual artifacts, websites, institutional documents, or the study of the architecture of buildings and places. On the contrary, researchers who produce visual data are "image generators": they relate to images explicitly generated for their study, whether by the researchers or in collaboration with research participants. Rather than using words, these methods include direct observation

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(of behaviors, settings, rituals, etc.) but also visual recording of what is going on (drawings, paintings, photography, film, cartography, etc.).

Interestingly, most authors agree that visual methods are often ignored in organizational research, despite a growing interest since the early 2000s (Ray and Smith 2012). To date, only one handbook promotes the usefulness of visual methodologies in organizations (Bell, Warren, and Schroeder 2013); however, visual theory and culture has been a flourishing field of study, especially in sociology and anthropology. For example, visual methods allowed researchers to explore the creation and dissemination of visual clichés among IOs—as suggested by the previous work of the author about humanitarian imagery (Gorin 2012). In addition, participatory visual methods have increased recently, explicitly involving "research respondents in the co-creation of qualitative data" (Vince and Warren 2012: 275). They use either photo-interviews, also called photo-elicitation (production of pictures by the researcher and interviews with participants to elicit discussions about what they see) or photo-voice (participants make pictures themselves, often to reveal their preoccupations or agendas).

Why?

We live in an image-saturated world, where image production, management, circulation, and consumption have pervaded every organization in the private and public sector. Therefore visual methods enable more in-depth overviews of the different dimensions of organizational settings, including the symbolic, cultural, or emotional. They help to question the way IOs perceive themselves and build their identity and reputation, both in their visual branding or artifacts (logos, merchandising, uniforms, etc.) and their communication strategies (such as accountability, field evidence, fundraising, awareness or advocacy campaigns, and forensic data). Using visuality allows better observation of the organizational structure but also intra- and interorganizational interactions, emphasizing the power dynamics among them, which sometimes remain invisible even to those who work in these organizations.

Overall, images are considered reliable because of their so-called unbiased transparency. However, as in any qualitative approach, images must be considered subjective expressions of points of view that refer to cultural practices and cognitive resources that determine the way we see the world around us (Berger 1972). Visual methods allow the exploration of representations of power, gender, race, or ideology at work among IOs. For example, there is

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a growing scholarship on visual histories of IOs, especially those active in the humanitarian sector. Research has shown how UNHCR images shaped national perceptions of and international policies about refugees, or how WHO visual campaigns contributed to promote health standards (Gatrell 2011; Rodogno and David 2015). In our own research, we focused on the circulation of colonialist imagery in humanitarian organizations active in Africa since the nineteenth century, despite their claim for dignity and universalism (de Laat and Gorin 2016). To reduce the variety of visual materials available, we focused on photographic archives—pictures being one of the first mass media introduced by the use of mechanical reproduction.

How?

Visual Corpus

The constitution and size of the corpus matter. First, determine the purpose of your research and your selected approach in visual culture. If you are interested in an iconic image (like a logo) or a series of posters for a given campaign, then it will be important to focus on the description and detailed analysis of each image. On the contrary, if you aim to identify visual conventions and the emergence of new representations over space and time, then it is better to select a large visual corpus, so you can compare similarities and differences between images. Dealing with a visual macro-corpus can be impractical, so it can be useful to rely on content analysis softwares such as *Atlas.ti* that allows you to process through description and classification devices. One recommendation would be to start with a smaller corpus on a short period (e.g., a decade), while mixing sources among IOs to identify if there are any recurrent or new visual conventions.

Second, think about your capacity to apply visual skills. Working with one or several visual methods implies knowledge about visual techniques (use of the medium), visual theories (semiotics, iconology, etc.), and visual styles (such as medical or travel photography). Gillian Rose's handbook will help you become familiar with visual methodologies, as well as provide a list of questions to interpret images (Rose 2016; Cohen and Ramel 2018). Whether you are an image collector or an image generator, you need to follow several steps. Beginners in visual methodologies may be interested in following Luc Pauwels's step-by-step integrated framework for visual social research (2011).

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Images as Data

If you plan to analyze images, the first step aims at identifying institutional archives, either physical or digital, by establishing a list of major IOs related to your topic (see also box l—*Visual Archives*). To find out visual databases, you have three options: whether the organization has a library or documentation center, archive units, or a media center. Many visual databases are either unrecognized or underused by researchers interested in international relations—such as the UNHCR[1] or the ICRC.[2] Many of them are open to the public, but if not you should seek whether there is an exception for scholars. In many cases, a visit to the physical archives or library in the headquarters could be useful. Although using online research engines or databases is helpful, sometimes they do not include everything. Therefore it is also rewarding to contact librarians working in these organizations,[3] so they can help you identify specific collections and get familiar with the databases. The secondary literature can also be useful (especially in history, ethnography, political sciences, or international relations) to help locate visual materials previously used or mentioned by researchers. Make sure you find visual databases with sufficient information about image producers (e.g., personal biographies, mandate framework with the IO),[4] the context of images, their dissemination, and possibly the targeted public.

Images That Produce Data

If you plan to generate images, you have to decide whether you want to produce images yourself or if you need to include research participants within the organization. Many layers of organizational settings can be directly observed and visually recorded: employees, buildings, meetings, interactions, processes. Try to remain unobtrusive; this can happen with photographic devices or

1. The UNHCR visual media center can be found at: https://media.unhcr.org/C.aspx?VP3=CMS3&VF=Home (accessed October 2, 2020).

2. In 2015, the ICRC put all its audiovisual collection online: https://avarchives.icrc.org/ (accessed October 2, 2020).

3. Most of the time, you find a contact email on the archive resources or library webpage of the organization.

4. For example, in 1948 UNICEF partnered for the first time with David "Chim" Seymour from the newly founded Magnum agency, to attract international attention and funds for war orphans by using one of the best names in war photography.

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videotaped recordings, so you might opt for drawings, diagrams, or graphs instead (Meyer 1991). Conversely, you can include participants to make images of places that would otherwise remain inaccessible to the researcher. Thus Samantha Warren asked members of an IT firm to picture their desks to explore the aesthetics of work environments (Warren 2002). This option will include field preparation with the IOs and instructions to participants. This is a very important aspect: you need to have a mutual discussion over the set-up and execution of the study. Some legal and ethical issues have to be agreed upon; for example, you need to know whether subjects will be aware they are being recorded and whether they agree (informed consent). Many IOs have working agreements already established with photographers that might be useful and readjusted by researchers, whether to obtain consent or to pay attention to ethical issues when using or producing images.[5]

Visual Analysis

The second step of your research will consist of analyzing visual products based on what is represented (the content) and how it is represented (the visual style). This implies you should pay attention to the social life of the image: its production, content, circulation, and reception. The circumstantial elements are important to understand why an image was made, what the communication objectives of its mediation were, and when and where it was disseminated and how often. Never separate the image from the text. In her analysis of the UNHCR and other refugee libraries' pictures, Caroline Lenette thus offers a step-by-step iconographic approach to describing, analyzing, and interpreting the structure, contexts, and producers of refugee photography throughout the 1980s–2010s (2016). An image is always the result of a choice; it can have several meanings depending on the political, social, economic, or cultural contexts in which it is created and seen. In our study of the iconology in Africa, we compared large corpuses of pictures with former studies on iconographic conventions in the humanitarian sector, to explore their symbolic dimension (exoticism, racial gaze, Western governance) throughout the twentieth century. The persistence of clichés through space and time and through different visual products (posters, postcards, stamps, films) can help categorize representations between typical (recurrent, generic) and particular (unusual, exceptional), for example.

5. See for example the photograph consent form from UNAIDS: https://www.unodc.org/pdf/india/news_and_events/photographer_guidelines.pdf (accessed October 2, 2020).

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If visual data were generated to include the "voices" of the stakeholders, the researcher has to question the encoding-decoding process. This means to plan qualitative interviews with the research participants, so they can explain their views, their choices, what they take for granted. It allows the researcher to avoid assumptions, bias, or question elements that might not be obvious or relevant to him/her.[6]

What Challenges?

Using visual methods in IOs involves two main challenges: the political context of such organizations and any ethical issues. IOs are institutions where political stakes, behind-the-scenes meetings, and multilateral diplomacy play a crucial role. Photographers working in these organizations usually have to follow strict media accreditation and image management. First, the researcher who wishes to use direct observation or visual recordings should expect some resistance to setting up the methodological framework, for they would not be allowed to access all places freely, especially those involving sensitive political issues or private meetings. Second, it might be difficult to identify appropriate stakeholders in IOs (either the staff, the decision-makers, or any state representative) and have access to them or engage them in the study. This is even more obvious when using participatory visual methods in the context of IOs working with affected populations, such as the UN agencies. Be flexible and realize that sometimes it is better not to take the picture.

Ethical issues, on their side, relate to anonymity (e.g., blurring faces), intrusiveness (sensitive cases or places, disturbance of the interaction), and confidentiality (respect of privacy, protection of vulnerable people). In the case of visual participatory methods, specific ethical principles related to the display of suffering, including dignity and protection of the subject, must be considered before any visual experiment proceeds, as the research should avoid the perpetuation of visual clichés. The researcher working on images as sources of data should also discuss ethical distancing from stereotypes. But in this case the challenges relate to the copyright and the control and use of public and private images. Many IOs mandate external, public, or private image producers (e.g., filmmakers, photographers, and publicity agencies) to produce visual artifacts. Therefore you might struggle to obtain the rights

6. See a brief given to research participants by Vince and Warren (Vince and Warren 2012: 295).

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to use/reproduce them in a published work. Questions over ethical issues, authorship, and ownership of images should be anticipated, discussed, and negotiated previously in an agreement with the IO (Kunter and Bell 2006: 186–90).

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BOX M

Analyzing Maps

Benoît Martin

We consider a "map" to be any picture showing information on the representation of a geographical space. Whether they deal with networks or territories, maps have long been a device of international relations used to move around, census lands, delimit sovereignties, divide regions, plan attacks, glorify empires, iconize nation, and so forth.

IOs as Cartographers

Despite the diversity of actors who produce maps, IOs remain essential producers at the international level. Their maps fulfill two main functions:

Field operation support when accuracy is required (location, timeliness, data attributes). Maps can be complex, mixing geographical information systems, surveying, modeling, remote sensing, big data, and so on. UNDPO, UNHCR, UNEP, or IOM produce such maps.

Analytical support for argumentation (synthesis of global trend, illustration of case study). Those "thematic" maps, as well as tables or dataviz, often enrich analytical publications (reports, notes, manuals).

Both uses present technical insights to convey indisputable evidence. Such aura constitutes an obstacle to analyze maps that must be overcome.

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Maps as Discourses

Cartographic language is a specific type of discourse with its own set of codes and methods (Bertin 1967). These best practices, which some specialists like to consider rules, do not prevent subjectivity. *Drawing a map consists of a succession of choices, which are not automatic or neutral*. For example, authors select a base map, with its own distortions, centering, and boundaries, or pick colors, with visual weights, cultural references, and even emotional significances. Maps are not disembodied objects but closely depend on their production context and target (Harley 1989; Wood 1992) with rhetorical dimensions and sometimes an instrumental purpose.

In the UN context, the Geospatial Information Section, responsible for clearance process of any UN map, sets standards (graphic and toponymical) about accepted international borders. UN maps thus reflect power dynamics and issues among its members through footnotes on territorial disputes, dotted lines for undetermined boundaries, or even continuous lines inside sovereign states.[1] Otherwise, the notorious reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change skillfully maps a borderless Earth in order to alert the public about the global dimension of the planet's warming, while at the same time gridding the world according to countries when states have to take actions. Maps mostly serve as medium for adopted models on future possible climate scenarios.

Apply a Critical Look on IO Maps

Maps are a specific kind of dataviz and present the same difficulties in their analysis. It must consider the shape, the content, and the two combined (see box s—*Analyzing charts, Infographics and Dataviz*). The triple questioning—what does the picture show? who produced it/for what purpose? how was it built?—is fundamental for analyzing maps.

Considering that a "good map" reflects intentions of the author/sponsor, such pictures lead to three main effects for international relations:

1. For example, the Indian State of Arunachal Pradesh is isolated from the rest of the country by a continuous line, the same as for international borders, because of Chinese claims of this area.

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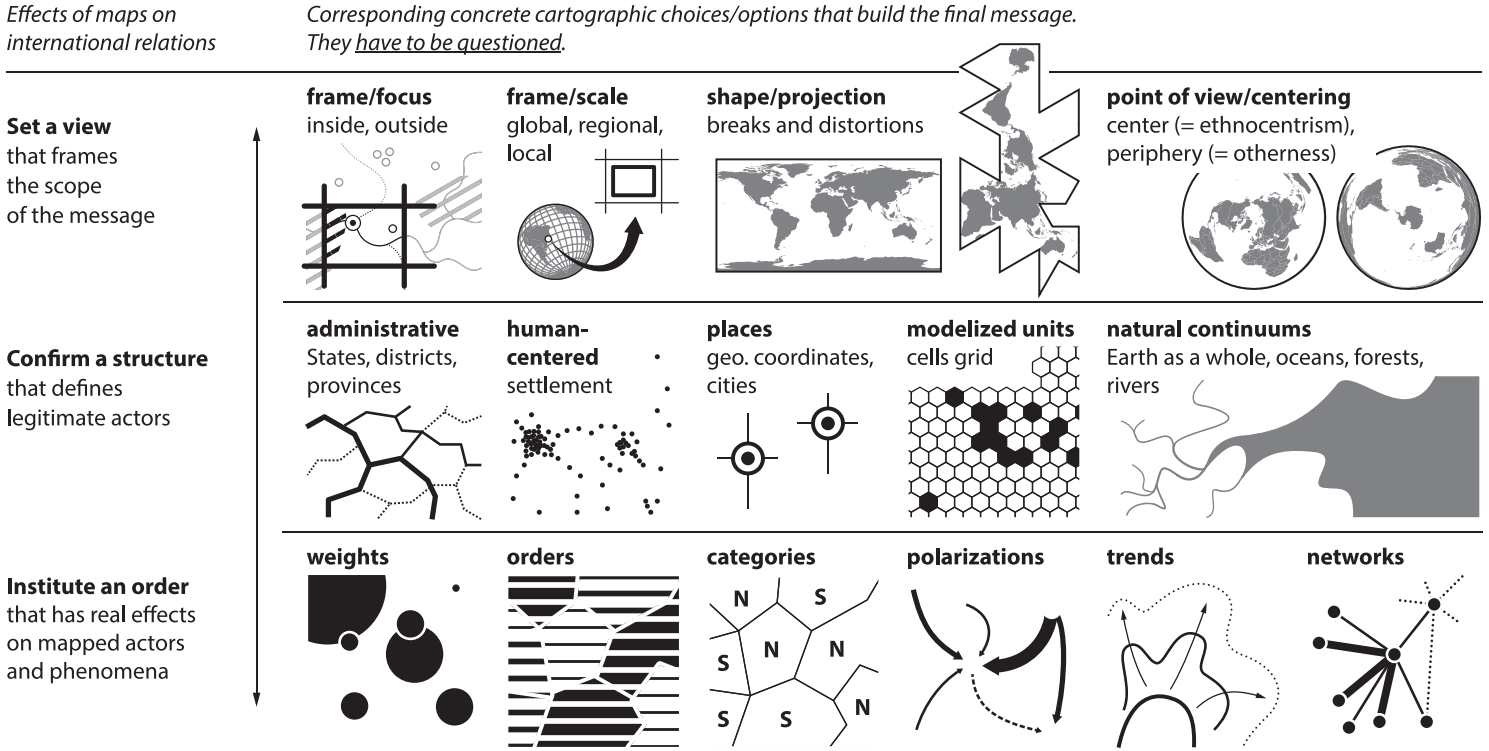

Synthesis from Benoît Martin, Atelier de cartographie de Sciences Po, 2020.

Figure 4. Map analysis

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BOX N

Branding Analysis

Stefan Tschauko

Branding and brand management, typically associated with marketing in the for-profit sector, is increasingly being adopted by international organizations (IOs). IOs are now creating, managing, and implementing holistic branding strategies. These encompass visual identities, carefully selected names for specific campaigns, and engagement with stakeholders through curated brand touch points, such as social media channels.

Branding has been studied in many contexts, including corporations and nonprofit organizations (Kapferer 2012; Laidler-Kylander and Stenzel 2014). Research on IO branding, however, is scant despite the potential benefits that can be derived from IO communication practices and strategies.

Three types of questions can guide research on branding in IOs: 1) What is branding in IOs? 2) What factors influence branding? and 3) How does branding relate to the performance of IOs? Researching branding in IOs can involve the use of a variety of sources, for example: interviews with various stakeholders, such as United Nations (UN) staff and branding companies, or the analysis of branding-related documents of UN organizations, such as brand manuals (e.g., https://brand.ilo.org).

To understand what constitutes branding in IOs, interviewees are asked: what is branding in your organization or how is your work related to branding? These questions elicit information on branding units, such as a specific entity or a campaign, as well as the related branding elements (e.g., logos or names) used as part of these units (for an overview of branding elements, see Wheeler 2018). For example, the secretariat to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (unit) was given the name "UN Climate Change"

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Figure 5. Examples of branding manifestations from the United Nations system

with a corresponding logo (both branding elements). These units and elements are what I call *branding manifestations* (see fig. 5 for examples).

The second question explores the factors that shape branding. Questions on why an organization chooses its name or its logo help explain how an IO's characteristics and context influence branding manifestations. One such factor may be funding. Some agencies in the UN system, such as UNICEF, are considered to receive more funding from private donors due to their perceived status as entities not closely associated with the UN.[1] In keeping with this argument, maintaining its current name would be more beneficial for UNICEF, rather than entertaining a name change to "UN Children."

Finally, the third question identifies the relationship between branding and IO performance. For example, effective branding may lead to a better understanding by stakeholders of the UN's work (Tschauko 2017), greater trust, and recognition of an organization's standing, all of which may enhance performance.

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BOX O

Artifact Analysis

Julian Eckl

International organizations could not exist without the artifacts through which they manifest and that range from buildings via official records and badges to accounting software. Artifacts are ubiquitous but, with the exemption of artifacts that feature an inscribed text (i.e., documents), they tend to be overlooked. Artifact analysis rectifies this neglect. The analysis (Lueger and Froschauer 2018) is guided by questions such as the following: How can the artifact be described? What can be done with it? What effects does it have on people?

An artifact that struck me in my research on global health governance are "traffic lights" (see fig. 6). They are omnipresent at the assembly of the World Health Organization (WHO) but can also be found at other decision-making bodies. Attending the assembly, I was intrigued by the fact that the traffic lights were in continuous use in this setting but rarely spoken about. When I started to document the functioning of the traffic lights and to time the individual phases, I was met with disbelief. The participants took the traffic lights for granted while analyzing such an artifact helps to unearth some of the implicit assumptions concerning the social relations that they enable and reinforce.

In particular, the traffic lights can be interpreted as constituting a calm and indiscriminate way of governing the governors and as a material manifestation of the considerable time pressure under which governance bodies work. To begin with, traffic lights sequence speakers' interventions into three phases: the first and longest phase could be called "you can talk" (green); the second and transitory phase could be called "you have to wrap up" (yellow); the third and unwanted phase could be called "you should have stopped" (red). Moreover, traffic lights display these phases to everyone in the room,

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Figure 6. Traffic light as used in meetings at the World Health Organization
Source: Julian Eckl

which puts speakers under pressure, assures the audience that the time limit is taken seriously, sends the message that country delegates are treated equally, and provides the meeting's chair with shared visual evidence on whether speakers may be plausibly requested to conclude (or forced to stop). Unlike a sound signal, traffic lights can be used to indicate the (approaching) end of the speaking time without immediately disturbing the speaker. Finally, traffic lights are a constant reminder that time is of the essence and that timing is privileged over other ends such as elaborate deliberation.

A closer engagement with artifacts, however, does not only provide an important perspective on present practices. It also alerts to their historical emergence. In the case of the traffic lights, their omnipresence is a tangible consequence of decades-long reform efforts aimed at making WHO governance "more efficient" (Eckl 2017). Regarding general discussions in the plenary, no time limit had been set initially but speaking time was reduced incrementally to five minutes that were long common in the years before the COVID-19 pandemic; this amounts to a speech that is only as long as the text in this box since delegates are meant to read slowly to allow for simultaneous translation. When the first in-person assembly since the outbreak of COVID-19 took place in 2022, time pressure was increased even further and plenary statements were restricted to three minutes as had been common for statements in committee meetings for quite some time.

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CHAPTER 10

Document Analysis

A Praxiographic Approach

Christian Bueger

International organizations (IOs) are preoccupied with the writing of documents and the handling of paper. Whether these are internal notes, non-papers preparing meetings, meeting records, or more official public-facing documents, such as communiques, statements, and resolutions, documents are the main material and artifacts of IOs. Analyzing documents as the key artifact of global governance has the potential to provide important insights into how organizations and processes work, why and how they have effect, and how power and authority are distributed. Praxiographic analyses study the practices around documents, that is, their practical production and writing, but also how documents become embedded in wider practices and use.

What?[1]

The increasing scholarly attention for the inner workings and practices of international organizations has left a surprising gap. Few seem to focus on what is arguably the main activity of IOs: the production and circulation of documents. IO documents are conventionally analyzed with either methods of text or discourse analysis.

1. For comments and suggestions on this chapter I am grateful to the editors, the participants at the Geneva Workshop that led to this volume, and participants at events at Cardiff University and the National University of Singapore where the core ideas were presented. I thank Humphrey Asamoah for editorial assistance.

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Text analyses tend to treat documents as "mirrors" of either actions or beliefs. The focus is on the factual content of the document and analyses concentrate on what is "in it." We read the opinions and claims in documents as being representative of what the organization thinks and does. Meeting minutes are taken as documentation of how the meeting actually occurred. Policy documents or declarations are understood as what is being implemented on the ground. The problem with such an understanding is that the document might not reflect actual practices—what is being done—or it might be a misleading or inaccurate record.

In discourse analyses texts are interpreted as articulations and representations of larger structures of meaning. The focus turns to the language and expressions used in the document in order to understand assumptions, worldviews, and interpretive frames that structure the thoughts and actions of the document's authors. Various forms of hermeneutics, interpretative content analysis, or discourse analysis (see chapter 11—*Discourse Analysis*) draw on such an understanding. We then analyze concepts, metaphors, narratives, relations between words and sentences, or particular assumptions in order to interpret them in terms of culture, discourse, or other larger containers of meaning that structure the organization.

Both of these modes of analysis produce important insights for understanding IOs. Yet they need to be complemented for a number of reasons: in stripping the document from the practices surrounding it, they miss out on insights on how documents actually are produced and used. They tell us too little about what was required to produce the text and the politics and power relations that were part of that process. Moreover, they remain too vague or abstract when it comes to claims of why and how the documents matter—what effects they have and what difference they make.

The methodological perspective that restores these dimensions is that of praxiography. Praxiography is the methodology that draws on insights from practice theorizing (Bueger 2014). Practice theorizing posits that practices—organized patterns of doing and sayings—should be the main unit of analysis (Bueger and Gadinger 2018; see chapter 27—*Practice Analysis*). Praxiography hence aims at understanding practices and the elements that compose them (such as implicit practical knowledge, explicit norms and rules, sayings, bodily movements, artifacts). Documents are understood as one element within such practices. Our focus turns to the practical activities of making documents, and how they become an element in other practices, are interpreted and read. From such a perspective, we can analyze how documents are produced and when and why they become powerful devices in global governing.

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Why?

Documenting is so central to the majority of global governance processes that it can be understood as an "anchoring practice." According to Neumann and Sending (2010), anchoring practices structure other activities and practices. Meetings for instance are prepared and structured through documents and allow actors to "go on record" and ensure that they agree on statements and interpretations.

Studying the production process reveals insights into the inner working of a formal or informal IO and what kind of relations it is part of. This leads to a better understanding of organizational identity, culture, and norms, as well as the practical knowledge that informs organizational practice (Riles 2006; Freeman and Maybin 2011; Cooren 2004). In so far as documenting is an essential practice of many contemporary organizations, we learn how organizations come into being and sustain their existence (Neumann 2007). Studying the authorship of documents and negotiation processes, moreover, allows researchers to understand the underlying distributions of power, authority, and expertise within an organization and its environment (Cooren 2004).

The praxiographic study of documents also provides important answers to a second question, namely how do documents have an effect? Discourse analytical approaches posit that the answer lies in the claim that texts are articulations of broader structures of meanings; it is these structures that produce the effect. Praxiography develops a different argument. Documents become powerful devices through being used in practice. They exert an effect in being circulated, read, cited, and referred to, publicly interpreted or used in other ways. To study the effects of texts is hence to investigate the practices in which texts are used. Through such analyses we gain an understanding of the authority and position of the organization that authored the document in larger textures of practices. Analyses will be able to demonstrate how organizations achieve structural and orchestration effects, but also how the document becomes used as a tool of coordination due to it being circulated as a material object.

How?

Praxiographic document analysis implies a detailed reconstruction of practices of producing and using text (see chapter 25—*Process Tracing*). In the majority of cases, this implies identifying a particular kind of document

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that occupies an important role in an organization. For instance, in the case of the UN Security Council, such documents might be its resolutions. Yet there are also more mundane or secretive documents, such as sanction lists (Sullivan 2020). Other studies have focused on, among others, ministerial speeches (Neumann 2007), UN Conference declarations (Riles 2006), bureaucratic forms (Walters 2002; Hull 2012), or policy documents (Freeman and Maybin 2011).

In my own research on the global governance of piracy, I have studied how international actors succeeded in curbing the problem of Somali piracy within a short time span of five years. Addressing this question through a multiyear praxiographic project led me to two kinds of documents that acted as powerful coordination devices: 1) a best practice document that was key to regulate the practical relations between the maritime transport industry and military actors (Bueger 2018), and 2) the communiques of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS), which was the main informal global governance body dealing with piracy. These documents were crucial for assembling and coordinating the broad array of more than eighty international actors under a common strategy.

My study of the two kinds of documents was based on a long-term multiyear endeavor that implied deep immersion in the CGPCS. I participated in all the CGPCS's various meeting formats for more than five years. This gave me the opportunity to not only observe the meetings and negotiations but also participate in the drafting of the communique. Eventually, I also became the pen holder for one communique in 2017 when I worked as one of the assistants of the CGPCS chairman. This immersion provided me with both access to people and immediate experiences. While such deep immersion may be ideal, a study of the making of documents, however, essentially boils down to asking the right questions. The most important is perhaps the task of dissecting the controversies that had to be resolved in order for the document to be concluded.

Document making is often a much more controversial process than what can be seen by looking at the text. The drafting process in essence is a process of resolving controversies around issues, such as: what characterizes the problem that needs to be addressed? What is part of the problem and what not? Who should be mentioned in the document? Which actors should be given a particular role? Whose activities should be highlighted and who's not? Which actions should be welcomed, criticized, or condemned? What should be concluded in terms of what different actors ought to do? My reconstruction of the making and revisions of the best practice document revealed key divergences over who has the authority to decide when and

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where a high risk for piracy exists and the special measures outlined in the document should be followed. This entailed different claims to expertise and authority between the transport industry, insurance industry, naval missions, and regional states that had to be aligned. The negotiation of the CGPCS communiques entailed debates such as on the urgency of the piracy problem, how much of the solution was to be found within the state of Somalia, in a regional response, or in activities at sea. Participants compete over being mentioned in positive terms and being recognized as having provided significant input in the drafting process. Diplomatic skills, language skills, knowledge of the history and law of counterpiracy, regional political knowledge, and technical knowledge of what is feasible all become important resources in that process.

The success and working of counterpiracy, and especially the role of the informal global governance forum, the CGPCS, cannot be understood properly without reconstructing the role of these documents. Indeed, how much the communique structures the work of the CGPCS was, to my surprise, obvious when I attended my very first plenary meeting. Much of what happened at that meeting and all the others was in one way or another already scripted by a draft of the document written before the meeting even started. Much of the time at the meeting was given to completing this draft. In following the process, I learned about the complicated techniques ("skeleton drafts," "bilaterals," or "reading procedures") that the group employed to align actors and to agree on the document. With some variation, many processes of multilateral diplomacy within international organizations or in the various informal governance formats, such as groups and conferences, operate in a similar manner. The document is the key to understand how these operate.

What Challenges?

Treating the document as a governing device and as an object of analysis in its own right provides important new lenses on IOs. This implies researchers should take the document as an element of practice and study practices of writing, negotiating, circulating, reading, or interpreting. Like other methods, the praxiographic study of documents faces some challenges (further discussed in Bueger 2021).

Studying documents in such a way requires a well-negotiated proximity to the practices (and those involved in the production of the documents). To appropriately understand such practices, one has to leave the desk (physi-

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cally or virtually) and go to the sites where the document is made and used. This implies that researchers should first follow the document and identify those sites. This might be intricate as writing can be distributed. In the case of the CGPCS, the most important site was the plenary meetings. Yet early drafts of the communique had been discussed already elsewhere. Thus the potential number of sites is infinite; however, some will matter more than others. Yet this is an advantage. Getting invited to these sites might imply a lengthy negotiation process. If there is a difficulty, one can start with a more marginal site and then increasingly get closer to those more central to the process.

The same principle can also be applied to interviewing those who are partaking in the production, circulation, and use of a document. Identifying these people, getting their attention, and getting a slot on their busy schedules takes effort (see chapter 5—*Semistructured Interviews*). These efforts are not that different from any other interviewing process; what can be challenging is to select interviewees according to their role in document production, circulation, or use. In addition, any interviewee will only have partial knowledge of the practices of documents. Hence one needs to piece the puzzle together. The worlds of international relations are a constant stream of documents; the practices that matter are globally and spatially distributed. One therefore has to carefully select which documents to focus on. Asking which documents are powerful devices and make stuff happen is an important starting point.

To Go Further

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BOX P

Semiology of Websites

Camille Rondot

Analyzing international organizations (IOs) and their digital productions face a number of challenges. This box presents a series of methodological tools inspired by semiology and discourse analysis applied to digital productions.

Semiotic approach—methods inspired by the semiological work of Roland Barthes (1957)—allows researchers to analyze symbolic dimension of IOs and develop a deeper understanding of their digital communication. This is about questioning denotation (literal meaning) and connotation (associated meaning) of each sign of digital production. With such an approach scholars may grasp four dimensions in IOs' digital media representation: first, by questioning the role of technical devices in IO communication (computer, smartphone, etc.); second, by identifying the different components displayed on the screen ("screen writings") (Souchier and Jeanneret 1999); third, by being aware of the constraining role of software or applications (with PowerPoint you cannot do what you want, with Twitter you have to be concise, etc.); and fourth, by developing a reflective and critical approach. Hence "digital" does not mean "revolution"; rather it means "transformation" (unlike Pressbooks, the content does not disappear when the computer crashes) and continuation, with the visual and literate culture. A methodological approach thus makes it possible, through the exploration of icons, symbols, and clues, to analyze the meaning and the effects of meaning of what is displayed on the screen. It invites researchers to explore a set of questions and to engage in an interpretational effort.

The website, as an informational and communicational unit defined by a URL (for instance, https://www.unesco.org/fr), becomes a particularly rel-

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evant place to understand how the organization conveys meaning and shows its missions. Concretely, I suggest compiling a detailed inventory of every digital device and their structure. For instance, in my research on UNESCO's website (Rondot 2015), I proceeded in three different stages. First, I created an arborescence (tree structure of the website) with the names of pages and URLs. This allowed me to model a representation of the organization with hierarchical links among a set of contents. Second, I took screenshots of each page and wrote the title, URL, and date. Third, I collected hyperlinks. This allowed me to highlight the importance of the hypertextual dimension on the website: between legitimation effects (a link to a state, another IO can show a connection between actors) and Search Engine Optimization logic (many internal links are important for SEO).

Last but not least, to fully understand the specificities of IO's digital communication, it is necessary to take into account nondigital devices. It has to be considered as part of a wider communication strategy. It could also be useful to set out the historical background of the website by using the "wayback" machine (https://archive.org/web/). It helps highlighting communication transformations and the role of design.

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BOX Q

Analyzing Tweets

Matthias Hofferberth

International organizations (IOs) have "gone digital" in the last ten years (Ecker-Ehrhardt 2020). As it stands, whether on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, or other outlets, all IOs today have some form of social media presence (Twiplomacy 2018). Through this latest form of engagement, IOs have a new tool at their disposal to directly relate to their stakeholders to signal responsiveness, influence public deliberation, and overall increase their perceived legitimacy. Research on social media in International Relations (IR) in general, and on IOs and their digital diplomacy in particular, however, is still at an early stage (Bjola and Zaiotti 2020). Using Twitter and analyzing tweets can be an important way forward to explore and account for digital diplomacy, simply because this medium is politically salient due to its users and topical foci. Furthermore, some of its characteristics prove to be advantageous for research. With its brevity, conciseness, and immediacy, Twitter can be considered "amplified" social media and therefore an important tool for studying organizational identity and collective agency (Murthy 2012). Equally important, from a methodological perspective, is the easy access that Twitter offers through its application programming interface (API). This allows researchers to download, archive, and code tweets in real time. Various tools to do this are integrated into statistical computing software (e.g., R) or available online (e.g., Twitter Archiver). In addition, there are commercial providers, such as Vicinitas Analytics, which provide complete data sets. These tools, with a little bit of skill and knowledge, can be tailored toward the individual project to provide meaningful data. In my own research, I have collected UN tweets from various Twitter accounts and applied a qualitative content analysis focused on content, purpose, audi-

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ence, and organizational self-assessment (Hofferberth 2020). A major challenge was to determine which accounts constitute the UN Twittersphere. Distinguishing institutional (@UN) from individual (@antonioguterres) as well as tweeting on behalf of the organization (i.e., official handles) from those toward the organization (i.e., state missions and NGOs) proved to be helpful. This allowed the project to organize different accounts and compare their respective focus and impact. Reconstructing IO tweets in their respective Twittersphere can thus be utilized to determine organizational self-understandings, emphasis put on different issues, and overall engagement and projected authority as a global governor. In other words, tweets provide an important source to understand IOs and the narrative with which they "go public." If anything, as IOs continue to expand their social media presence and produce more material to analyze, scholars interested in IOs have new digital ground to cover.

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CHAPTER 11

Discourse Analysis

Audrey Alejandro, Marion Laurence, and Lucile Maertens

International organizations (IOs) are the setting for the production and dissemination of overlapping discourses. They annually publish thousands of documents in which one word can be debated over years of negotiations. Discourse analysis assists scholars to grasp both internal processes of discourse production within organizations and the impact of IOs' discourses in the making of global politics.

What?

Since the "linguistic turn" in the 1960s, the social sciences and humanities have increasingly made discourse an object of social enquiry, challenging the idea of language as a neutral medium of communication. The concept of discourse—broadly defined as language in context—highlights processual and interactional dimensions of meaning-making, foregrounding the coproduction of discourses and sociopolitical configurations. Scholars have developed a rich theoretical and methodological tradition, often referred to under the umbrella term "discourse analysis" (DA). More than other textual methods focusing on manifest dimensions of language (like content analysis, see chapter 17—*Computerized Text Analysis*), DA examines the implicit dimensions of language and how they interact with invisible aspects of world politics. DA focuses on contextual and productive effects of words and speech: scholars can study processes that are otherwise hard to assess empirically like norm creation. It enables researchers to study naturally occurring discourses, such as in legal documents and policy reports, as well as discourses generated through elicitation techniques such as interviews and surveys.

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A variety of methodological options are available for IO researchers interested in using DA. Rather than a strict rule book, DA encompasses both a theoretical-ontological approach—the idea that discourse plays a role in society and world politics—and a flexible set of methods to empirically investigate this idea. DA allows researchers to approach discourses either as a *source*, to identify what they reflect (e.g., norms, ideologies), or as a *practice*, to investigate what they produce (e.g., discriminations, identities).

DA proposes two main approaches. The first, following Michel Foucault, takes *a* discourse (or several) as the main unit of analysis, such as the emergence of a new discourse defining madness as an illness legitimizing the institutionalization of psychiatry (1965). The second approach, well-established since the 1980s, focuses on the linguistic dimensions of discourse to investigate how different wordings can reflect and produce different sociopolitical orders. For instance, Critical Discourse Analysis investigates how the use of linguistic devices, like the passive voice, produce power relations and prejudice.

Why?

In IO studies and IR more broadly, many scholars engage with discourse without explicitly claiming to do DA. This highlights the potentially broad appeal of DA, but also trepidation about using a method that seems to require mastery of complex ontological and epistemological debates. We identify four overlapping types of puzzles that DA can help uncover.

First, DA provides tools to analyze *agenda-setting and framing processes* by unpacking the ways IOs represent global problems. IOs are discursive sites where meanings are negotiated in interaction, and interfaces through which representations circulate across the world. For instance, exploring the "social life of text" in climate negotiations, Aykut analyzes the mechanisms through which outcome documents exclude different issues and framings, which then translate into governance features (2017). Moretti and Pestre stress the role of derived abstract nouns in World Bank reports, which turn actions and processes into "abstract objects" (2015: 90).

Second, DA is useful to investigate *global norm setting* and the establishment of governance regimes. Epstein, for instance, uses DA to show the normalization of a global antiwhaling discourse: she denaturalizes what is assumed to be the "right" discourse (i.e., antiwhaling) by tracing its historical development and the symbols embedded within it (2008). Likewise, Zanotti (2008) conducts a genealogy of UN texts on peacekeeping in Haiti

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and shows how dimensions of UN discourses inherited from the Enlightenment led to unintended consequences in regard to peacebuilding practices and democratization aspirations. Krook and True use a discursive understanding of norm change to explain outcomes in gender-balanced decision-making and gender mainstreaming in the UN campaign to promote gender equality (2010: 105–6).

Third, DA helps assess how actors use *IOs as discursive arenas* and the ways *IOs engage in self-legitimation*. Donahue and Prosser analyze discourses occurring in the UN as "diplomatic speech-making" (1997: 1). Shepherd maps the construction of "civil society" in UN peacebuilding discourse, showing how that discourse (re)produces the UN itself as the "legitimate knower of peacebuilding practice" while casting local communities as "known objects" (2015: 887). Likewise, von Billerbeck shows that peacekeeping officials in the UN Secretariat maintain a cohesive and legitimate organizational identity by relying on discourses that "simplify" and "exceptionalise" their work (2020: 1).

Finally, DA critically examines *prevailing power dynamics*, showing how discourse can "perpetuate, institutionalize, and legitimate asymmetries of power" (Holzscheiter 2014: 150). IOs normalize and legitimize competing discourses, which represent and benefit different types of actors. For example, Rist challenges the supposedly neutral nature of IO "reports" by showing that their prescriptive character is reflected in the use of the imperative mode, the verb "must," and passive forms (2002: 39). Pratt uses DA to critically examine UN Security Council Resolution 1325. She argues that the resolution reproduces structures of power that embody "gendered, racialized, and sexualized hierarchies," which in turn underpin hegemonic discourses and security practices of the post 9/11 era (2013: 780).

How?

Many researchers will select a specific DA method by emulating the work of scholars who explore similar research questions or by matching their approach to an existing theoretical framework (e.g., poststructuralist DA for poststructuralism, or genealogy for power-knowledge). For instance, researchers may draw inspiration from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which provides an established approach for analyzing discourse through three elements (Fairclough 2003): the genre or the form that structures discourse, like a news report, political speech, resolution, and so forth; the style, which considers the "manner of doing things" linguistically (Balker 2011:

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141); and the ideational content of the discourse. Traditionally, this is done using a qualitative approach, although recently some scholars have sought to combine CDA with quantitative methods. Felli (2016), for example, analyzes the World Bank's discourse on resilience by documenting an increase in occurrences of the lemma "resilien-" in the annual World Development reports, which he then codes according to Fairclough's three elements.

However, in many cases, there is no ready-made DA method matching the specific needs of one's research. This is common when a scholar's research question flows inductively from specific texts (e.g., IMF working papers) or from a puzzling discursive event such as a UN General Assembly debate that unfolds in a surprising way. In such cases, we encourage researchers to create a *bespoke method* for themselves by making innovative use of the DA tools already available in a four-step process. We refer to this sort of "do-it-yourself DA" as "Bespoke Discourse Analysis."

Step 1: Corpus Construction and Data Collection

A. Constructing the corpus: a corpus is a large and structured set of documents constructed for a specific purpose. Defining it is paramount and requires trade-offs between breadth (size of the corpus) and depth (number of discursive mechanisms examined and richness of contextualization). These sampling trade-offs may depend on issues around access and availability. Some texts, like UN Security Council resolutions, are easily accessible online and translated into six languages. Others, like disciplinary proceedings or the results of an internal UN investigation, are much harder to access. Researchers need to carefully consider the institutional logics and power dynamics in which discourses are embedded; the important thing is to be transparent about challenges and justify one's choices.

B. Selecting the data sources: the type of data being collected should match the research question, which can be revised and adapted during the project. Conclusions must then only be inferred based on the available material. Multi-method designs are often required to address discursive questions that textual analysis alone cannot answer. For example, researchers cannot assess the impact of policy discourse from the African Union nor claim to capture authors' intentions based *only* on the textual analysis of policy

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documents. Researchers may collect such additional data themselves or draw from the existing literature.

Step 2: Mapping the Context and Preliminary Analysis

A. Mapping the context: DA can be understood as the interpretation of texts and speech *in the context* in which they are produced and received. It is therefore important to understand and mobilize elements of the context to produce a rigorous interpretation. Different dimensions of the context need to take into account (i) the situation of utterance (who speaks to whom? When? Where? About what?); (ii) the sociohistorical context (institutional, sociopolitical, positional, relational context of the documents or the participants, etc.); (iii) the textual context (genre, paratext, intertext); and (iv) if relevant, the sensorial context (images, moving images, and sound).

B. Doing preliminary analysis: researchers should ensure that they understand what the text (or document) explicitly aims to communicate before starting to explore its implicit dimensions. For example, what event, experience, or policy is the speaker referring to? What is the main argument the speaker is trying to convey, and so on?

Step 3: Identifying Relevant DA Tools

Analytical tools for DA include, for example, lexical fields, metaphors, or subject positionings. There are two main ways to identify which DA tools are relevant for one's project:

A. Doing a literature review jointly searching for both topics related to the project and DA (e.g., "racism" AND "discourse analysis") to see how other scholars have tackled related projects and which tools they have used to conduct their analysis.

B. Combining "immersion" phases of reading and rereading the corpus (Gill 1997: 144), with consultation of "toolkit-style" handbooks that present available tools (Gee 2011; Balker and Ellece

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2011), to define the linguistic processes that one may intuitively grasp through reading.

Step 4: Iterative Interpretation and Writing Up Results

A. Interpreting: researchers use selected DA tools and the contextual elements to delve into the iterative and systematic interpretation of the corpus. For instance, while the use of the passive voice obscures agency, the effects of passivization differ depending on the context: vulnerable populations can be denied agency versus responsibility for harm can be diffused to promote reconciliation.

B. Writing up results: this requires simultaneous mobilization of excerpts from the text, the tools used to analyze them, and the context to support each argument.

Table 5. Discourse Analysis Checklist

1.	Do you have a research question compatible with the use of discourse analysis?
2.	Do you justify why discourse analysis is the most adapted method of analysis for your research project?
3.	Have you clearly identified and defined the method(s) of discourse analysis and discourse analysis tools you are using?
4.	Do you justify how the chosen method of discourse analysis and discourse analysis tools are aligned with your research question and conceptual framework?
5.	Is the chosen method of discourse analysis aligned with the type of material and data you aim to analyze?
6.	Do you justify criteria of inclusion and exclusion and sampling strategies of your corpus?
7.	Is the corpus aligned with your case, literature review, research question, and method?
8.	Do you provide elements of contextualization about your corpus (e.g., the context of production and reception of documents) so that the reader can understand the value and role of the chosen sources in their context?
9.	Is each argument you put forward in your analysis both supported by elements of discourse you identify in your data and elements you draw from the context and literature?
10.	Do you explicitly reflect on how your position/trajectory/socialization might have influenced your analysis and present the actions you took to address these reflexive insights?

Note: Table 5 has been adapted from this webpage: https://www.audreyalejandro.com/blog---the-methodological-artist/checklist-questionnaire-when-revising-a-research-assignmentproject

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DA provides a flexible set of tools to investigate the role that discourse plays in society. Adjustments may be required but following these four steps should provide researchers with a roadmap for adapting DA to their specific needs. The Discourse Analysis Checklist provides a series of generic questions to guide the use of DA in a research project.

What Challenges?

Some of the challenges that come with applying DA to the study of IOs result from the method itself. Others are related to the complexities of discourse production within IOs.

First, DA requires strong theoretical, epistemological, and ontological coherence. Many theories of discourse challenge concepts of agency and intentionality, meaning that scholars must ensure that their theoretical framework aligns with their ontological and empirical claims. Implicit elements and effects of discourse may be lost on those who produce and receive them. For instance, World Bank officials may not intend to depoliticize poverty when setting up quantitative indexes and standards that reduce it to a technical issue (Louis and Maertens 2021). Claims about agency and intentionality should demonstrate awareness of these dynamics. Second, researchers are social agents who produce—and are socialized into—particular discourses: reflexivity helps account for the sociological characteristics and trajectory that lead to interpretation (see box y—*Reflexivity in Practice*). This means considering the extent to which one's own knowledge, experiences, and assumptions are shared by the social agents that one studies. Implicit references and connotations are not universal (e.g., what "security" means), and specific discursive elements do not make sense in all social contexts (e.g., the meaning and value of metaphors are localized).

IOs are complex settings for discourse production and circulation: clear theoretical and methodological justifications are useful when defining the scope of "IO discourses." For example, the rationale for studying official MERCOSUR reports and web pages can be minimal, but the extent to which discourses produced by MERCOSUR employees represent "MERCOSUR discourse" needs to be demonstrated on a case-by-case basis. Similarly, identifying the authors of an "IO discourse" is challenging because of corporate and collective authorship and runs the risk of reifying the organization and concealing internal dynamics. Common characteristics in IO discourse also need to be problematized—like the taken-for-granted labelling of "local" versus "international" discourses. One helpful strategy is to learn

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as much as possible about *how* different texts and documents are produced within a given IO and adjust empirical and theoretical claims accordingly. All case studies require contextualization to guard against one-size-fits-all interpretations of IO discourse as institutionalized discourses might have different meanings and effects.

To Go Further

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BOX R

Studying Ideas

Olivier Nay

Most international organizations (IOs) are engaged in normative activities. They produce, promote, and share core ideas that frame multilateral agendas and legitimize international interventions. These ideas are mental constructs drawn on scientific knowledge, technical expertise, and ideological preferences. Most prominent ones are condensed into generic concepts—such as "sustainable development," "human security," or "fragile states"—that are often used by experts and decision-makers as mental shortcuts to think about social problems. They become international norms when they are officially converted into prescriptive standards for policy development.

The Social Life of Ideas

The study of ideas in IOs refers to the analysis of the characteristics and attributes of core policy categories that get traction and circulate in the system of multilateral organizations. Such a definition implies that ideas are not disconnected from practical activities and political intentions. Rather they emerge, spread, and gain importance in public discourse as "social productions" that are modeled by the different actors operating in and around IOs (see chapter 11—*Discourse Analysis*).

The study of ideas can explore two intertwined fields of observation: first, IO secretariats, which are subject to permanent "knowledge battles" involving their bureaucratic units, member states, and expert groups; second, the IO ecosystem in which many actors operate as knowledge entrepreneurs (policy communities, expert networks, universities, and think tanks, among others).

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Ideas are far from remaining stable in time and space. Once coined, they travel as they are subjected to multiple appropriations that redefine their scope and meaning. Ideas have thus a *social life*, just like objects (Appadurai 1986). They may even have several lives, as they are exposed to various strategic uses and cultural acclimatization depending on which actors appropriate them.

Following the Idea

The approach "follow the idea" is a heuristic method to explore the life of ideas among international institutions. Inspired by the "follow-the-thing" perspective initiated by Appadurai's ethnography (Harvey 1990), it consists of following the circulation of a particular idea and its multiple uses. In the context of IOs and their linked ecologies, it entails investigating the chronological, spatial, and social trajectories of the idea: emergence and circulation in professional or policy networks tied to international bureaucracies; adoption by IO staff, units, and executive bodies; dissemination throughout the IO ecosystem; normative adaptations, appropriations, and diversions from stakeholders, partners, and competing entities; decline and demise of the idea; and potentially the transition toward a new prevailing idea (Nay 2020).

The methodologies used to track the development of ideas may concentrate on textual materials available in organizations' archives (e.g., public records, statements, reports, resolutions, technical documents), as well as communication materials (e.g., memos, letters, blogs, web content, audio, and visual records). Quantitative methods (e.g., content analysis, computational methods) offer multiple grounds to study circulating ideas, including their prevalence in various lexical fields attached to organizations, and their discursive change over time.

Nevertheless, only qualitative methods (e.g., interviews, questionnaires, observations) allow for ethnographic explorations of the social contexts within which ideas are produced and fostered. They offer major insights into actors' strategic use, power games, and knowledge battles within international secretariats, as well as the influence of knowledge networks in their direct environment. Situated approaches reveal that ideas are social constructs that are constantly being locally reinvented in the daily life of each IO.

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CHAPTER 12

Statistics and Quantification

Roser Cussó and Laure Piguet

Quantified information is one among the many daily productions of IOs. From trade statistics to unemployment rates, these institutions make available to a "world community of users" data on almost every aspect of the social and physical world. How can a researcher approach these statistics? What are the particularities of studying data produced by IOs as compared to the study of other IO productions, or of national statistics? What does this research tell us about the functioning of IOs and, more broadly, about statistical expertise as an instrument of power and influence? The sociology of quantification offers useful methodological guidelines for the researcher who aims at opening the "black box" of the statistical production of IOs.

What?

The sociology of quantification (Desrosières 1998; 2008) was developed beginning in the 1970s, largely in response to the work of Pierre Bourdieu. For Bourdieu, analysis of statistical categories was essential because "measurement and tools of measurement [. . .] are simply theories in action, which result from processes, both conscious and unconscious, of constructing facts and the relations among facts" (Bourdieu et al. 2005 [1968]: 59).

Quantification refers to a *process* that translates social or natural phenomena into statistics or other numerical information. For instance, a country's wealth might be expressed in terms of its gross domestic product derived from national accounts. Quantified data thus both constructs and brings to light the "poor countries." Quantification also involves scientific perceptions

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and policy (e.g., correlating low income and poverty, and thus eventually promoting economic growth). When defining quantification, it is pertinent to distinguish statistics (figures) from statistical science; the former are analyzed by the latter (descriptive, inferential statistics, etc.), as well as by algorithms and other mathematical models, which have been proliferating more recently in computer science.

The quantification-based approach merges political, social, and technical processes and practices. It thus calls for interdisciplinary analysis (statistics, social sciences, historiography, and knowledge of what is measured, i.e., diseases, employment, etc.) as well as for specific theoretical bases adapted to it. For Desrosières, quantification involves both the working out of "conventions" on the statistical categories, methods, and procedures for data collection (socially agreed commensurability) and the proper and more visible "measurement" (figures) of the quantified "fact." Intrinsically linked to the rationalization of power and knowledge (Foucault 1991) and to the strengthening of modern states (Desrosières 1998 [1993]), quantification "[. . .] creates a new way of thinking, of representing, of expressing the world and acting on it" (Desrosières 2008: 11). The sociology of quantification thus invites us to reflect upon the "co-construction of scientific statistics and power regimes" (Speich Chassé 2016: 220). As regards the *methods* to study quantification, they may be of various kinds (archives, observation, profiles/interviews of actors, data, and discourse analysis, etc.) and may need to be combined by researchers in order to grasp complex and manifold processes.

Research on quantification has mostly focused on state statistics. Both the study of IO data as a quantification issue and the subsequent proposition of adapted approaches are recent (Cussó 2012; 2019; Speich Chassé 2016; Martin 2023; Piguet 2018; Bemmann 2019). Such approaches are to take into account the founding differences between state and IO quantification. States are generally ruled by political alternation and social conflict; IOs lean on universal goals and consensus, thus enjoying relative autonomy. In this context, while quantification processes may be more democratically supervised in states than in IOs, international data is more readily seen as politically "disinterested." This makes IO quantification emerge as a political innovation, along with cross-country comparisons and the important role taken by technical activities and cooperation.

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Why?

Analysis of international quantification contributes to better understanding of the origin, functioning, influence, and evolution of IOs. First, as regards their origin, the missions of the League of Nations, for instance, were immediately accompanied by international statistical programs, and technical activity more broadly, which not only contributed to but characterized the League's emerging power.

Second, quantification studies help to clarify the functioning of IOs, since their statistical programs imply the intertwined activity and decision-making of different actors in different spheres: intergovernmental (assemblies), transnational (expert commissions, NGOs, unions), and international (secretariats). The "mise en discipline" (in Foucault's sense) of these actors is to be specifically analyzed through technical cooperation activities.

Third, focused on actors and processes, analysis of quantification helps to precise the way IOs wield influence and why the latter is often limited and/or has to be nuanced. Indeed, statistics both reinforce IO goals and make them depend on intergovernmental cooperation and involvement; for instance, global quantified benchmarks on public debt may lead a government to constrain its expenditures, as being under international scrutiny and "shaming." Such benchmarks both construct "global problems" and influence national policies. Yet it is only active state participation in the relevant IO statistical programs that ultimately allows for, and subsequently legitimates, IO benchmarks and peer scrutiny.

Fourth, the study of IO statistical systems contributes to illuminate IOs history. For Desrosières (2000), national statistical systems are closely related to state "historical configurations" such as mercantilism, liberalism, the welfare state, or neoliberalism. For instance, the early welfare states connected comprehensive statistical assessments of poverty and large supply-oriented policies on working conditions. A neoliberal state, by contrast, tends to link microdata analysis to demand-oriented policies encouraging individual incentives and financial efficiency. The evolution of IO statistical systems also reveals different IO "historical configurations." As analyzed by Cussó and D'Amico (2005), UNESCO reformed their statistical analysis in order to facilitate correlation and country rankings, all more adapted to 1990s neoliberal policies. More recently, the development of big data spur flexible and "case-by-case" policies (see for instance UN Global Pulse 2018). Indeed, such data favor ad hoc technical decisions and increased outputs, as often based on multiple and disparate sources.

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How?

As expressed by Fabrice Bardet (2018), a quantification-based approach should consider three intertwined questions: *who* produces the quantified data? *How* is it produced? And *why* is it produced? Their main objective is to reconstruct both the characteristics of the quantification being analyzed and its underlying power rationale (paradigm and policy).

As regards the *who* question, the actors and institutions relating to IO data are diverse: the IO personnel, the representatives of member states, the experts, the members of the specialized commissions, and any other actor who participates in (or influences) the statistical process as, for instance, the workers unions within the ILO. Data providers and users also need to be considered, especially the national statistical services. Are then to be studied actor professions, experiences, and affiliations as well as actor roles and power within the statistical production, from data provision to data publication and use.

The *how* dimension mainly entails analyzing stages and processes of data standardization. To ensure cross-country comparability, national statistics are to be previously classified following agreed-upon international methods and definitions ("conventions"); this is followed by further harmonization by IOs (international data analysis and treatment). Indeed, in view of the sheer range of national definitions and methods, IOs are first to establish common references. As regards labor issues, for instance, in one country unemployment may concern people having lost their job, in another people actively seeking employment, and in a third people registered by a placement office. Unsurprisingly the implementation of common methodologies is to imply a huge stake for governments and calls for serious cross-country cooperation. That is why the IO *how* dimension also involves the examination of the manifold actor interactions, negotiation, and micro-choices that make a qualitative and/or national phenomenon emerge as an internationally quantified topic.

Finally, the *why* dimension refers more specifically to the purposes and uses of IO statistics. One of the explicit objectives of the UN Population Division, for instance, is to produce "constantly updated demographic estimates and projections for all countries, including data essential for the monitoring of the progress in achieving the MDGs and now the SDGs, developing and disseminating new methodologies [. . .]" (UN DESA). Yet a research on quantification is not only to point out that population statistics may legitimate UN global discourse on population issues and problems but also to unveil IO implicit demographic norms.

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There are different ways to implement a quantification-based approach. One possibility is to follow the steps of IO statistical programs, from approval of their official objectives to final outputs and uses (Cussó and D'Amico 2005). Such a comprehensive analysis calls for a long run research project (PhD projects or monographs). Another possibility is to focus on selected research questions or issues: on international measurement of labor accidents (Piguet 2018), for example, or on a specific labor indicator (Berten 2019).

Practically speaking, the following research activities can be identified:

a) Making an exploratory analysis of the targeted IO statistical outputs (online reports with their statistical appendix, technical notes, available data, metadata, etc.). They would give an idea of the implicit quantification choices made by the IO being studied.

b) Identifying the objectives of the statistical activities through analysis of the missions of, and decisions made by, intergovernmental assemblies and commissions and international bureaucracies, in the form of founding charts and statements, but also through agendas, correspondence, and interviews (see above).

c) Analyzing the formulation of statistical agreements ("conventions") that level out the diversity among national definitions of the phenomena measured, and thereby ensure comparability (observation/interview, minutes of meetings, technical papers, guidelines, etc.).

d) Reconstructing technical cooperation (participation of member states in technical meetings, training missions organized by the IOs, nomenclatures, and manuals). Analyzing national statistical services can help here to ascertain the extent to which countries have reformed (adapted) their statistical productions to international requirements.

e) Describing the instruments, procedures, and practices of data collection (questionnaires, manuals, response rate), data treatment (databases, metadata, methods of checking data "quality"), and data production, publication, and presentation (use of inferential statistics, estimates, figures, tables . . .); as well as the weight in the statistical decisions of managers, subject experts, statisticians, and computer programmers.

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f) Investigating the biographies, profiles, networks, discourses, interests, and positions of the actors—NGOs and government members, IO officials, experts, trade unionists, and so on—participating in the quantification process (personal files, correspondence, interviews).

g) Considering other data producers and users in order to understand whether an IO quantification is "influential" and/or "influenced."

h) Linking the studied IO statistical "systems" to specific "political configurations" by analyzing the consistency between IO policies and norms and IO data analysis, presentation, and use.

What Challenges?

Quantification studies involve several challenges. First, the researcher's understanding of data production and analysis are essential for identifying the technical issues and choices at stake. Knowledge of the functioning of institutions and the subject in question (health, labor, etc.) is also useful. This is all the more important in the case of international quantification studies, since they also require an understanding of multiple different national contexts. Researchers therefore need to adopt a genuinely interdisciplinary approach.

Second, and from a more theoretical perspective, quantification studies often show a tendency toward functionalism. Indeed, statistics are frequently viewed as being produced for essentially political purposes—for instance, to maintain some kind of political advantage (e.g., North over South) or to push a particular perception of a question (e.g., climate change, the efficiency of private education). However the *why* dimension cannot be reduced to a single (or simple) political purpose(s) for the data produced; in most cases, statistics are coconstructed and allow for different—sometimes contradictory—uses, political or not.

Third, quantification studies may sometimes draw on a rigid relativism. If statistics are viewed merely as socially constructed artifacts, their capacity to produce knowledge can be missed. Indeed, the act of measuring phenomena can also be legitimately considered a form of raising relevant questions: for instance, if the quantification of climate change may certainly support specific political interests, it can also describe "tangible" environmental and human experiences.

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Finally, quantification studies may also tend to stereotype the "statistical systems," when they are often hybrid and/or challenged by unforeseen uses. As regards hybridity, while the "neoliberal" World Bank uses micro-data to measure local loan efficacy, it still relies on macro-statistics for assessing national debts. Similarly, concerning unexpected data uses, the European Union certainly prioritized benchmarks on employment rates, reducing unemployment visibility, but this choice also resulted in an increased focus on precarious wage earners.

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BOX S

Analyzing Charts, Infographics, and Dataviz

Benoît Martin

"Charts," "infographics," and "dataviz" are several words that express a single medium, namely pictures that show data. Influenced both by fluctuating trends and technological improvements, dataviz gathers heterogeneous figures, from austere statistical graphs to colored figurative infographics. This is nothing new, however, since some of these efficient pictures were drawn from centuries ago (Tufte 1981).

Omnipresence of Dataviz in IO Expertise

"Pictures made out of data" are omnipresent in the products of IO expertise (reports, studies, manuals) and thus in its resulting communication (news, tweets, slides). Concretely, IOs usually produce dataviz in order to a) expose conceptual thinking (a diagram explaining Human Development Index composition); b) illustrate empirical cases (a curve showing poverty rate reduction); or c) evaluate global situations (a dashboard following Sustainable Development Goals indicators). Whatever the function, dataviz strengthens the scientific character of analyses by combining the evidence of statistics with the power of pictures. In a thick global report, charts often provide the first visual landmarks the reader's eye is drawn to and thus remembers. Likewise figurative infographics in tweets (proportional woman pictograms to talk about femicide) have a greater impact than written ones.

IOs are far from being monolithic actors. Their dataviz production often involves various specialists (experts, statisticians, illustrators, designers, etc.), international staff and/or member states representatives who work together,

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more or less independently, while IOs sometimes outsource dataviz production. The resulting dataviz picture depends on the context of production. Pictures can reveal clues of the authors' backgrounds (and biases) especially when paying attention to the balance between abstraction and figuration, functionality and aesthetic, multi- and unidimensionality, or even familiarity and originality (Cairo 2012). Dataviz products then circulate and are (re)appropriated with potentially contrasting interpretation, which scholars should pay attention to.

Layers of Subjectivity

The production process of dataviz implies choices that frame the final discourse:

1. Obvious but often overlooked, by deciding to transform information into dataviz, the authors choose to highlight a specific issue.

2. This issue holds several dimensions (equivalent to columns in the dataset). The example of migrations is telling. We could either choose raw numbers of migrants (flows, balances) or indirect calculated ratios (share of total, trend over time) or qualitative aspects (status, gender, nationality).

3. Each type of dataviz conveys a specific argument. In its FT Visual Vocabulary table, the *Financial Times*' visual and data journalism team distinguishes core functions through ad hoc designs: deviation, correlation, ranking, distribution, change over time, magnitude, part-to-whole, spatial, and flow. Picking one is not automatic nor exclusive. Thus a dataset can fulfill various functions and dataviz can bring complexity rather than simplicity or clarity.

4. Ultimate detail parameters, whether related to statistical content (scale, period, axis) or aesthetic shape (size, colors, layout) influence the final interpretation. The plethora of popular scientific books investigating "how to lie with charts" attests to the malleability of these choices and their—not always—desired outcomes.

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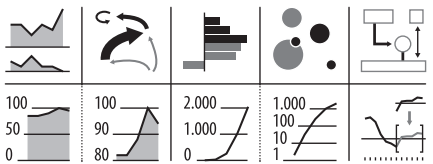
The three levels of analysis to combine*	*Question to answer*	*Paradigm of analysis*	*Items to focus on*	*Concrete examples or sources to explore*
Realist's analysis Dataviz reflects (a) reality	what shows this dataviz?	efficiency and precision of **message**	• graphical elements • units, scales, period, • global design of dataviz.	
Constructivist's criticism Dataviz as discourse	who produced this dataviz? for what purpose?	interests and power of **author** (or sponsor)	• sources of data, • highlighted dimension, • additional research to link message and author.	• status, agendas, votes, funding of actors, • alternative sources (NGOs, academic), • reaction to/ reception of message.
Conventionalist's exploration Dataviz as both scientific evidence and political discourse	how was built this dataviz?	interactions: message, author, **methods,** context.	• full methodology • additional research to open "black boxes" (= choices of 1. data used and 2. dataviz itself).	• annexes, footnotes and boxes, • guidelines, manuals, • resolutions, conventions, actions plans, • historical/political/theoretical context, • interviews and field observation.

**refering to the three classical ways to consider statistics in sociology of quantifications.*

Synthesis from Benoît Martin, Atelier de cartographie de Sciences Po, 2020.

Figure 7. How to analyze IO dataviz

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CHAPTER 13

Budget Analysis

Svanhildur Thorvaldsdottir and Ronny Patz

Many questions can be asked when studying the budgets of international organizations (IOs): which IO has the biggest budget? Which IO has the fastest growing budget? Where do IOs spend money, and what policy domains are underfunded? Does the United States dominate the IOs it contributes to? How much influence do nonstate donors such as the Gates Foundation have on IOs? Or, who decides where IOs spend their money? Answering these questions brings a number of challenges, for example, how to measure the size of budgets, revenues, and expenditures while achieving validity, reliability, and completeness.

What?

Measuring and analyzing an IO budget can mean many things. At the national level, a budget usually refers to legislation adopted to fix annual or multiannual spending, based on income generated from taxes, debts, and other revenue sources of the state. For IOs such as the European Union (Becker et al. 2018), United Nations system agencies (Patz and Goetz 2019; Thorvaldsdottir 2017), or regional IOs in the Global South (Engel and Mattheis 2019), however, a budget can have many different meanings. For example, the annual EU budget and procedures compare well to a national budget, while the IOM budget is largely based on expected income for individual projects instead of centrally adopted spending priorities.

Depending on the IO, the regular budget represents broader or narrower spending categories. Sometimes member states give more autonomy to the

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IO bureaucracy to allocate regular funds according to political priorities, but sometimes they fix spending down to individual staff positions. And not all budget elements are *regular*, as many IOs depend on additional voluntary funding—mostly earmarked by government donors for specific purposes—that may not appear in the regular budget. Some IOs formulate aspirational or "integrated budgets" through which they signal spending needs, and then launch fundraising appeals to fill their budgets with voluntary contributions from governments, foundations, corporations, individuals, and other donors (examples: UNHCR, WHO). In sum, budget figures can mean different things for each IO: in some, they represent actual spending; in others, they represent fundraising goals; in still others, they are a combination of both.

Measuring budget figures also requires careful consideration of the difference between *budgets*, *revenues*, and *expenditures*. A budget is the political or administrative decision about *political priorities* often represented in budget lines linked to certain policy targets. Revenue represents actual *income* an IO generates, through member state contributions in most IOs, through intellectual property services in WIPO, or through its own resources in the EU. Expenditures represent IO *activities*, those planned but also those not planned. Revenues and expenditures may also be mere *contractual obligations*, like budget commitments (expenditures that may be incurred) or pledges (revenues promised) or actual *disbursements*, such as bills paid or donations actually received. This distinction is important: UNESCO adopted an official budget that included the United States' financial obligations for several years after the country halted its contributions in 2011, but it also adopted a separate implementing plan reflecting the reality of major cuts required.

As in the case of UNESCO, *state contributions* are usually IOs' main sources of revenue. However, some IOs, like the EU, may have their own resources (see Becker et al. 2018), and others, like UNICEF, rely heavily on individual and private donations. Similarly, philanthropic and corporate contributions to IOs have existed at least since the League of Nations but are becoming more important recently (Seitz and Martens 2017). Including these alternative revenue sources is crucial for research designs that focus on the limitations to state influence or on bureaucratic autonomy in IOs.

Why?

Understanding IO financing matters because IOs provide crucial global public goods and depend on resources to do so. They are also significant distributors of multilateral and sometimes even bilateral aid ("multi-bi aid"),

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in some cases comparable to medium-size states, making them central players in (sustainable) development and humanitarian aid. Furthermore, IOs are not mere tools of member states. Where IOs have access to sufficient and flexible resources, they can gain certain levels of autonomy, giving them independent influence and power (Ege and Bauer 2017). Thus understanding their financing can further our collective understanding of their overall role in global governance.

Additionally, analysis of IO budget figures can help trace the influence—formal or informal—of various actors external to the IO itself. For example, through tracing influence of government donors (Thorvaldsdottir 2017), looking at the scope of private contributions (Seitz and Martens 2017), or examining broader questions of "trojan multilateralism" (Sridhar and Woods 2013), budget data can make observable some of the mechanisms through which these actors wield influence. Given how much of the politics of IOs happens informally or behind closed doors, sometimes financial data are the only documentary evidence for a systematic analysis of influence.

IO budgets, revenue, and expenditures are also among the most measurable dimensions of IO activities. They provide an overview of the size and growth of IOs, as well as their geographical or policy foci. Carefully constructed, budgetary data also permit comparison across IOs and can provide reliable dependent or independent variables, especially in quantitative research (see, e.g., Thorvaldsdottir, Patz, and Goetz 2022; Lall 2020; Eichenauer and Reinsberg 2017; Humphrey and Michaelowa 2019 for recent work using a variety of financial variables).

How?

Various ways exist for measuring IO budgets, revenue, and expenditures. For more recent periods, myriad datasets exist with varying levels of detail, accuracy, and coverage. Common, but not necessarily reliable and valid, sources are the Yearbook of International Organizations[1] (includes annual budget figures but without clear-cut budget definitions or expenditure data); the OECD-DAC databases[2] (not always comprehensive and limited time coverage); the financial statistics provided by UNSCEB for the UN system[3] (with consistency issues going back in time); and individual IOs' websites with

1. https://uia.org/yearbook
2. https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=MULTISYSTEM
3. https://www.unsceb.org/content/un-system-financial-statistics

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downloadable budget sheets (not necessarily consistent over time). Recently, the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) has started providing additional data, especially at the project level[4] but also by agency.[5]

Often the level of detail in these datasets is insufficient or definitional terms (i.e., what exactly is included in the numbers provided) are unclear, rendering primary research of official documents necessary. The most reliable and detailed documents for this purpose are audited financial statements. Most IOs produce these, and they can usually be accessed directly from IOs or from relevant national ministries. Annual reports can also be useful but not all include detailed financial data. However, they often provide more contextual information than audited financial statements, which can help improve validity. When working with preexisting databases, it is good practice to check them against official documents to validate both accuracy and measurement, and to ensure that the data appropriately reflect the research question posed.

Understanding what is included in IO budget documents and datasets at different points in time is key for validity of time series, panel, and cross-sectional analyses. For example, studying EU finances may require different budget data for different questions: data on *commitment appropriations* in the EU budget can answer questions about general political priorities, while *payment appropriations* determine how much member states have to pay into the budget and thus why net contributors care about these in particular. Measuring EU budget *outturn*, namely actual expenditures, is more interesting for research on budget implementation or on the influence of the European Commission and of national bureaucracies on which beneficiaries ultimately receive EU funds.

These examples from the EU are mirrored in other IOs. They show that financial and budget data collection requires fairly detailed expertise on the finances of an organization. Researchers must invest considerable time to ensure that consistent—and thus comparable—budget, revenue, and expenditure data are collected. Among these challenges is appropriately defining boundaries of inclusion. Many IOs have extensive "budgetary galaxies" (Crowe 2017), including segmented side-budgets (Patz and Goetz 2019), trust funds (Reinsberg et al. 2015), and various earmarked voluntary contributions both inside and outside core budgets (Graham 2017). Inconsistent decisions on which of these to include lead to distortions in cross-sectional and longitudinal studies. Different types of budget data may also be rela-

4. http://d-portal.org/ctrack.html#view=search
5. https://www.iatiregistry.org/publisher

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beled or modified as international accounting standards change (Bergmann and Fuchs 2017).

Next, researchers should be aware that budget figures are usually reported in *nominal* terms, not *real*. A nominal budget increase between years can actually translate into a real budget cut once inflation is taken into account. A lot of political debates in IO governing bodies revolve around whether budget growth should be real or nominal. A similar phenomenon exists on the income side: nominal increases (or decreases) in a donor's contributions in the currency of an IO (Euro, US dollar, Swiss franc, etc.) can be due to exchange rate fluctuations rather than real shifts in donor preferences. Ignoring inflation or exchange rates may lead to misinterpretation of the causes for shifts in IO income or expenditures.

Finally, researchers need to consider the level of detail in the budget data they want to study since this can materially shape findings: macro-level spending categories in an IO budget may shift in name but remain very stable over time. This perceived stability may mask punctuated or even erratic responses to outside influence or actual needs. For example, WHO may have the same overall expenditures in the Democratic Republic of Congo in two consecutive years, but in the first year the allocation comes from the core budget and is spent on health-system support while, in the second year it is based on earmarked contributions from a special fund to tackle Ebola. Thus while country-level financial data may suggest stability, policy-level data can reveal significant shifts in focus of the IO.

What Challenges?

The various definitions of what a budget is in different IOs is the starting point for much confusion. Many researchers do not clarify which aspect of IO budgets—revenues, expenditures, projects, and so on—they study, which can obscure what the data actually measures and the extent to which different studies are comparable.

The central challenge, however, regards the availability, quality, and comparability of budget data.[6] Constructing a dataset with reliable financial data going past the last decade or so can be fraught with difficulties. While websites of IOs have improved in recent years, with some even making downloadable financial datasets available, finding official figures can be hard unless there exists a dedicated and up-to-date IO budget website.

6. For the UN system see Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and UN MPTF Office (2018, chapter 3).

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One difficulty is simply locating final and authoritative figures. For the UN core budget, the official final figures are decided in a GA resolution. However, complete budget and staff figures as well as political priorities are only found in the draft budget documents. Nowhere are both consolidated into a single public document. In the case of UNHCR, detailed donor contributions are published in audited financial statements while detailed expenditures at headquarters or field level are inconsistently reported over time. Some official expenditure databases include only certain expenditure types, such as project spending, but not all other institutional spending. Contributions from the same donors but to different funds of an IO may be reported in multiple locations; private donations may come from "private" foundations closely linked to governments but are not reported as state support; and other nonstate revenue may only be recorded in aggregate formats, limiting more fine-grained analyses.

Finding historical data online may often be impossible. Experience with the UN system furthermore shows that archives may not collect budgetary or financial documents in a consistent manner, so field research may not yield complete documentation either. Older financial documents may sometimes be unreadable or require extensive manual labor to transform into machine-readable data. Sometimes legible financial documents are only available in language versions that researchers do not speak.

Last, comparing data across IOs may lead to validity issues due to so-called double delegation (Michaelowa et al. 2019). For example, the EU heavily cofinances regional organizations in the Global South (Engel and Mattheis 2019) and UN organizations (Michaelowa et al. 2019). Some UN funds and agencies provide significant funding for other UN agencies. This double delegation can lead to double counting, which may be problematic when assessing overall multilateral spending, or when comparing revenues of two IOs where one is also a major donor to the latter (e.g., the EU for the AU).

Pragmatic solutions to the challenges of IO budget research will often include developing nuanced understanding of what data are available and adapting research questions accordingly. Being transparent about definitions and data sources is paramount, so that IO research including financial data can slowly accumulate insights, even if researchers study IO budgets with varying questions and at different levels of analysis.

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INTERLUDE III

What IOs Talk About When They Talk about Themselves, and How They Do It

Davide Rodogno

This interlude, the title of which is a *clin d'oeil* to a famous book by Haruki Murakami (2008), reflects on the ways international organizations (IOs) talk about and to themselves and to us (i.e., lay persons, students, scholars). What do they tell us? How and why? What do they communicate and what do they choose not to communicate? How do technologies favor and hamper, free and constrain the ways in which IOs talk? This set of questions is an invitation to think about these strange creatures.

In their contributions, the authors reflect on the methods to study a variety of products, outputs and outlets imagined, set up and used by IOs. Their analyses are of critical importance because they draw our attention to the ways IOs talk to us, *we the people*, we the recipients of their talk and of their actions. From my perspective, namely the perspective of a scholar of international history and politics, the communication of IOs is more than just a simple activity, rather it is an existential one that—among others—proves their vitality both to these organizations internally as well as to the outside world. The act of communicating is for them, as for other institutions or living species, a sign of life. Put differently, for IOs *Communico ergo sum*. In this short interlude I deliberately and alternatively use the verbs *to talk* and *to communicate* referring on the one hand to *speak* in order to give information, such as expressing ideas including feelings, and on the other hand to *communicate* by spoken as well as unspoken words such as images, photographs, artifacts, and data. I include architecture or logos (see box n—*Branding Analysis*) into the concept of communication (Bak McKenna

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2021). *To talk* might also be extended to negotiations (as in peace talks) and refer to informal and formal discussions in so far as they indicate a specific way in which a given organization expresses itself in a specific way to take action.

Different Talks—Origins, Legal Documents, Situated Knowledge

To begin with, it is important to bear in mind that IOs might display several concomitant talks using slightly or significantly different ways of expressing themselves. Therefore the multiplicity of talks on the same issue is something that must be considered when researching these creatures. I refer to a given IO talking about the same issue in various ways as well as different IOs talking about a given issue in very different ways. As an example of the former case, we can think about the International Committee of the Red Cross talking (negotiating) very discretely for access to victims referring to international humanitarian law and—at the same time—firmly, vigorously talking (advocating) with the warring parties in that same conflict on the interest they have in knowing and applying international humanitarian law. As an example of the second case, we can think about the African Union and the United Nations and the ways in which they talked about events in Darfur throughout the 2000s (Mandani 2009). They used (or not) the term genocide and kept proposing different talks. The multiplicity of talks should not be hastily dismissed as evidence of inconsistency, incoherence of duplicitous behavior because it informs the remarkable ability of these organizations to adapt, which we—scholars—should not downplay or, worse, ignore. From a methodological point of view, it is also worth encompassing the analysis of a given organization's perceptions (and misperceptions) of the recipients of their talk and how they imagine their audiences.

When examining the ways in which IOs communicate, scholarly analyses should pay attention to the fact that each communication is the result of several layers of mediation. Each is filtered and often the result of compromises. Mediations are determined by the object of the communication, by its inherent and perceived stakes, and the institutional culture(s). They are mediated by the individuals involved with it and the specific historical context as well as by the format of the talk. Some of these ideas might entail a normative intention, while other ideas might have a prescriptive, descriptive, or informative nature (see box r—*Studying Ideas*). Normative ideas might be translated into international law, the language the international community decides to share (see chapter 7—*Legal Research*).

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Among other things, IOs are social spaces and loci where knowledge is created or at least places where knowledge is shared, used, and communicated (Kott 2017). IOs might have an interest in preserving, guarding, and if possible expanding their role as knowledge-keepers, knowledge-makers, and knowledge-spreaders. Before being communicated externally, this knowledge is discussed internally. Knowledge creation and its circulation are processes of cocreation. These processes are not necessarily or systematically democratic. Cocreation does not presuppose equity or equality; and we know that power relations are omnipresent in influencing and shaping knowledge. For instance, the League of Nations was designed by imperial powers for imperial powers and their own interests and knowledge (Müller 2020). The discrepancy observed within the organization between self-determination talks and the reality of the organization's support for oppressive rule must be acknowledged. The ways in which a student imagines the mandate system through which the League of Nations was, for the first time, formally involved in the ruling of human societies might be a good example of a (dead) IO's talk. A student might assume that the talk as progressive and emancipatory, geared toward the independence of all mandated territories, since this was the official discourse and the rhetoric the League of Nations put forward. On the contrary, they might examine the mandate system as entailing a talk that was progressive and a reality, which remained oppressive. Methodologically, the consequences are significant. One may either posit that the Permanent Mandate Commission of the League of Nations was the expression of a revolutionary entity working for the emancipation of colonized populations while another may claim that colonial—hence oppressive—mandates were supposed to have an emancipatory and civilizational role with mandatory powers using their authority and right to rule on the basis of an allegedly superior civilization. In other words, despite the scientific value of analyzing IO official talks, we should acknowledge that these do not necessarily reflect IO action.

Another methodological concern relates to the importance of situating knowledge and the subsequent talk of IOs. For instance, after 1945 and for several decades, the United Nations development projects were based upon assumptions and knowledge that came from ex-colonial administrators who started new careers as international civil servants. These visions combined with a situated, specific kind of knowledge and were circulated and communicated within the organizations. These development programs were thus enforced by the United Nations and—some—of its agencies based on a certain kind of knowledge with certain ideological visions. The technical nature, the alleged benevolent nature of the action, the seemingly apoliti-

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cal talk (Louis and Maertens 2021) concealed a different reality, one that perpetuated colonial policies in a postcolonial world. The methodological take away point is identical: no matter how theoretical the study of IOs is, a precise and granular knowledge of the context, of the history and politics is indispensable when we examine how and why IOs talk to us.

IOs are loci, physical, and virtual; but they are much more than merely places. They are agents in that they have agency. What complicates research is understanding the specific contribution, the inputs that IOs give in a given context, before they talk, when they talk, and after the talk has happened. For instance, Heymann (2020) showed that perceptions of climate challenges have changed significantly: regional climate issues and problems of arid regions have received less attention than global climate changes. Persistent misconceptions and a lack of understanding of arid zones are rooted in misguided colonial ideologies and expertise, propagated by United Nations initiatives such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Arid Zone Programme. This is a typical and certainly not exceptional example of the—biased—input an IO can give on a specific issue on which it claims to have the authority and the legitimacy to talk and to produce knowledge from.

We know that the official talk of IOs goes public after several filters and multiple compromises among stakeholders—whomever they might be—have taken place. This in turn explains the jargon of some IOs. An official written or oral communication or the utilization of a single photograph might follow lengthy and thorough reflections and negotiations. This may also explain the overabundance of statistical data (and data in general) in IOs' official communications. Data represents an attempt of objectivity through the allegedly impartial and universal language of science and numbers (see chapter 12—*Statistics and Quantification*). Data and figures have also a symbolic potential, are given an untold symbolic and in some cases religious dimension that help IOs depoliticize and neutralize some issues or on the contrary politically overcharge IO communications (see chapter 11—*Discourse Analysis*, box m—*Analyzing Maps*, box n—*Branding Analysis*, box s—*Analyzing Charts, Infographics, and Dataviz*). For instance, data takes the center stage of annual reports. The introduction of these documents often starts with an avalanche of data that overwhelms readers. They are there to legitimate and prove the authority of the talk. At the same time—and this has been the case for more than one hundred years—IO reports contain images, photographs, and videos (or animations for Internet outputs) injecting emotions and a further—different and complementary—register, which often ambitions to humanize the talk (see chapter 9—*Visual*

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Methods, chapter 10—*Document Analysis: A Praxiographic Approach*, and chapter 11—*Discourse Analysis*, box l—*Visual Archives*, box o—*Artifact Analysis*, box p—*Semiology of Websites*, and box q—*Analyzing Tweets*). If for some organizations the use of images was (and to some extent still is) a simple afterthought or a decoration, other organizations have reflected on the role of images as a powerful way to communicate or convey their political and/or ideological stances. Images serve specific and multiple purposes and are part of sophisticated strategies, an integral part of the ways in which IOs express themselves.

Taking Context into Account When Researching Documents

Practices of production and circulation of knowledge and its communication are specific to each IO but they are always determined by historical, political, and cultural contexts. For instance, the influence of Protestant Christian charity notions and Calvinist heritage shaped the way the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was designed, operated, and talked (or not), and even the way it stored its archives. Like many other organizations, the ICRC has a hard time admitting its mistakes and its archives are full of meaningful silences that scholars must interrogate and investigate. IOs' silences, especially for institutions for whom communication is an existential need, deserve more scholarly attention. Moreover, the ways in which IOs were founded seventy or one hundred years ago are interesting insofar as there are plenty of analyses scholars can offer as to their enthusiasm or reluctance to embrace new media over time from photography to radio, from cinema to television and the Internet. For instance, an archeology of a given IO website since its inception might invite original reflections on the changes that IO underwent over the last thirty years (see box o—*Artifact Analysis*).

Scholars contributing to this part of the handbook draw our attention to three issues when it comes to the need of careful contextualization. First, whether we are researchers or informed readers we should not assume that international law and international organizations are inherently good. As Hurd puts it, this premise is pervasive in global governance scholarship despite its obvious empirical and political pathologies. It impedes empirical research, but luckily it is easy to avoid. An effective way to do so is to investigate the mediated, filtered nature of IO communication. Second, the connection between communication and a given IO's agency and intentionality should be kept in mind by scholars at all times. Hence identifying the individual (or unit, department) that communicates is important and chal-

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lenging because of the collective authorship as well as exogenous and endogenous factors, including self-censorship. I warmly invite researchers to adopt a multimethod research design that might help understanding how the talk is imagined before being talked. Distances and discrepancies between the imagined talk at its inception and its actual delivery are as relevant as the measurement of the impact of the talk. Third, our (i.e., scholars) own positionality should be openly and fully disclosed from the outset.

I would like to conclude this appeal for further attention to the history and politics of IOs drawing the attention to artifacts (see box o—*Artifact Analysis*) and architecture as insightful ways to study how IOs talk. Research conducted solely online might miss the material dimensions inherent to any individual IO. Last but not least, even when archives exist and are available, and even when the scholar can afford traveling to these archives it is worth insisting on the importance of cross-referencing them. None of these archives can be enough to understand what, how, and why IOs operate. They must be combined with other primary and secondary sources (see part 5—*Combining*).

Scholars have already noted the neglect of the cultural dimension of IO public communication (Ecker-Ehrhardt 2018). I would add the historical dimension to the cultural one as an area where further research is needed. When it comes to IO communication, a final conclusive invitation I have is to study more carefully and thoroughly the distance that exists between how IOs have imagined and currently imagine their audiences and how the recipients receive, interpret, and critique that information. New research on IOs' Instagram and Twitter accounts (see box p—*Semiology of Websites*) and the specific talk of these organizations on these and other platforms might reveal interesting aspects of the abilities and skills these organizations have to adapt to new technologies and to reach out to us, *the people* (Corneliu and Zaiotti 2021).

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PART 4

Measuring

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Introduction

Measuring

Fanny Badache, Leah R. Kimber, and Lucile Maertens

While the previous part, *Documenting*, presented and discussed methods to research and understand what international organizations (IOs) produce, such as archives, documents, discourses, statistics, and visual artifacts, this section turns to the use of numbers and quantitative data in the research on IOs. We present how researchers can rely on multiple methods to measure different dimensions of multilateralism.

In social sciences, scholars have to a large extent relied on numbers to describe and understand social phenomena. IO studies are no exception (see interlude IV—*Challenging IOs through Numbers*). Historically, quantitative data have been used to understand states' behavior within IOs, and in particular voting behavior (see chapter 14—*Voting Analysis*). Scholars have also developed quantitative tools to count the number and type of IOs. Thanks to these research efforts, IO scholars can now use a variety of databases on IOs that provide characteristics such as membership and institutional design. More recently, scholars have started using quantitative information to study other sets of actors aside from states, such as IO staff and leadership (see box t—*Navigating Human Resource Statistics* and box u—*Building Databases on Individuals*) and civil society organizations. In addition, quantitative methods are increasingly used to research IO documents such as recorded speeches and reports (see chapter 17—*Computerized Text Analysis*).

Quantitative methods allow scholars to achieve various research objectives. First and foremost, with numbers, scholars can provide a systematic description of phenomena over time and across many units. Numbers

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enable researchers to highlight trends and carry out comparisons (see chapter 15—*Statistical Analyses with IO Data*, and chapter 16—*Large-N Data and Quantitative Analyses*). Second, large-N methods can deepen our understanding of causal relations by looking at relationships between variables across many cases. Although causal inference can be achieved based on both qualitative and quantitative approaches, statistical methods examine the relation between two variables (or more) in a covariational perspective. Third, numbers enable researchers to seize interactions between and among actors in a systematic way (see chapter 17—*Computerized Text Analysis*, chapter 18—*Multiple Correspondence Analysis*, and chapter 19—*Social Network Analysis*). The contributions present methods able to objectify the relationships and links between different entities in a way that can be insightful to answer research questions on power dynamics and cooperation between IO actors, for instance.

In this part entitled *Measuring*, the reader will find two types of contributions. The first one presents why and how researchers use quantitative data—either produced by researchers themselves or using data emanating from IOs (see chapter 14—*Voting Analysis*, chapter 15—*Statistical Analyses with IO Data*, and box t—*Navigating Human Resource Statistics*). Contributions shed light on the potential but also the challenges related to the use of IO statistics, for instance, in terms of access, comparability, and validity. The second type of contributions focuses on quantitative methods of data analysis (see chapter 16—*Large-N Data and Quantitative Analyses*, chapter 17—*Computerized Text Analysis*, chapter 18—*Multiple Correspondence Analysis*, and chapter 19—*Social Network Analysis*). In addition to strict statistical analyses, scholars also mobilize quantitative methods to examine and present data that may have been collected thanks to other methods such as interviews or document analysis to name a few. This acknowledgment comes as a kind reminder that quantitative and qualitative methods should not be put face to face, in an antagonistic perspective, but rather integrated to best answer our research questions (interlude IV—*Challenging IOs through Numbers*).

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CHAPTER 14

Voting Analysis

Erik Voeten

International organizations (IOs) often resolve contentious issues by voting. This chapter first discusses the methodological challenges involved in translating observed votes into measures of theoretically relevant concepts. It then examines how institutional and strategic context shapes how we analyze votes.

What?

International organizations sometimes resolve contentious issues by voting. To the extent that these votes are public, they provide useful data for scholars about state positions on controversial issues. For example, scholars have analyzed United Nations General Assembly voting to examine how a state positioned itself in the Cold War East-West ideological conflict or, more recently, a state's acceptance of the US-led international order (Voeten 2000). Scholars have analyzed the European Parliament to understand national and partisan contestation over left-right socioeconomic conflict and European integration (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2006). In the European Court of Human Rights, scholars have analyzed judicial voting behavior to examine which judges favor a more activist or more restrained court (Voeten 2007). Such analyses are only possible in international organizations where voting is both public and relatively common. For example, Court of Justice of the European Union minority are not public. The United Nations Security Council has very few contentious votes. Thus voting analysis applies only to a select group of international organizations.

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Why?

Analysts study voting in IOs for two distinct purposes. First, some scholars are interested in better understanding organizational decision-making. A vote, in this context, is of interest because it carries policy, legal, or political consequences. So scholars may ask whether foreign aid or other economic considerations shape UN Security Council (UNSC) decisions (Vreeland and Dreher 2014). Or how public opinion shapes government vote choices in the Council of the European Union (Hagemann, Hobolt, and Wratil 2017).

Second, scholars use votes to construct measures for the ideologies of states, judges, or other actors. UN General Assembly (UNGA) votes are a popular data source not because scholars believe that its nonbinding resolutions are important but because UNGA votes reveal policy positions of many states over a wide range of global issues at regular intervals over a long period. Measures of UN voting correlate with numerous consequential outcomes that have little to do with the UNGA, including the likelihood of interstate militarized disputes (Gartzke 1998), the distribution of foreign aid (Alesina and Dollar 2000), and the lending behavior of the World Bank and IMF (Thacker 1999). Others use these measures as dependent variables, for example studying whether domestic leadership changes result in foreign policy changes (Mattes, Leeds, and Carroll 2015) or whether trade with China affects foreign policy interests (Flores-Macías and Kreps 2013).

How?

Empirical spatial models simultaneously estimate ideal points and roll-call parameters from observed vote choices. There is a vast literature explaining these models, even though most of it focuses on legislatures and courts rather than IOs.[1] There are also numerous options to estimate these models. This ranges from traditional ready-made models that can be estimated in R or Stata, such as W-NOMINATE (Poole et al. 2008), to customizable Bayesian frameworks (Grant et al. 2017).

Analysts need to make several methodological choices. First, abstentions have different meanings dependent on context. In the UN General Assembly, abstentions are extremely common and have long been understood as a less strong signal of disapproval than a no vote (Lijphart 1963). This requires an ordinal model, which is not common in the broader literature, although adjustments are reasonably straightforward (Voeten 2004).

1. A good introduction is: (Poole 2005).

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Second, analysts must decide how to model dynamics. One particularly troubling issue is that changes in voting agreement may reflect changes in the agenda as well as changes in foreign policy preferences. For instance, a year with many votes on the Israeli occupation of Palestine will affect voting agreement scores even if no state changes its preferences. A dynamic model separates shifts in the UN's agenda from shifts in ideological positions by holding constant the roll-call parameters of identical resolutions (Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten 2017). For example, in 2016 US president Barack Obama decided to abstain rather than vote against a long-standing UN resolution on the US embargo on Cuba. In 2017, newly elected president Donald Trump reversed the UN vote. Because we know that the resolutions are identical, we can fix the roll-call parameters across these years, which helps us identify preference change. These dynamic estimates correlate well with known changes in foreign policy ideology, such as changes in domestic levels of democracy and capitalism, as well as domestic left-right switches in government (Voeten 2021).

Third, analysts have to decide on dimensionality. In the context of the UN General Assembly, Michael Bailey and I examined whether there is a stable, important, and interpretable second dimension (Bailey and Voeten 2018). We found that from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s, North–South conflict constitutes a stable second dimension. In the periods before and after, the second dimension neither is stable nor easily interpretable, though it is sometimes important. In most applications, one-dimensional estimates have conceptual advantages with minimal losses in explanatory value. Yet analysts who care about particular issues may well consider estimating ideal point models on subsamples of the data.[2] For example, voting behavior on nuclear issues often poorly fits the first dimension.

Finally, IR scholars are often interested in how often two states vote together? Sometimes they use ideal point distances to estimate the degree to which states have "shared foreign policy interests." This interpretation can be problematic. Votes are not relational. States vote on resolutions on human rights, the Middle East, nuclear weapons, etcetera. The patterns underlying vote choices reflect ideological positions not shared interests with any specific country.

To illustrate this, consider the triad Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the United States. Saudi Arabia and Iran often vote together even though they are adversaries. The United States and Saudi Arabia rarely vote together even though they are strategic partners. This makes sense in terms of ideologies

2. For code and examples, see: https://github.com/evoeten/United-Nations-General-Assembly-Votes-and-Ideal-Points

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over global issues. Saudi Arabia and the United States have common strategic interests. But they have profoundly different views on global issues, such as human rights. By contrast, Iran and Saudi Arabia share similar views on those issues even as they are regional rivals. Thus ideal point differences are estimates of how different two countries' preferred resolution of global issues is, which may differ from the more generic "shared interest" interpretation often found in the literature.

What Challenges?

Votes do not always reflect sincere preferences. Voting occurs in an institutional and social setting that shapes incentives for strategic behavior. For example, whether decisions are made by simple majority, super majority, unanimity, or majority rule with veto players shapes how actors translate their preferences into a vote (Maggi and Morelli 2006). Moreover, most institutions have strategic agenda-setting processes that determine what is and is not brought to a vote.

Strategic voting raises a number of methodological issues. For example, several scholars have pointed out that not all votes are recorded by a roll call. The selection process is unlikely to be random (Carrubba et al. 2006; Hug 2010). This is probably not a major issue in the UNGA but it is in the European Parliament and even more so in the UNSC. Many issues are never voted on in the UNSC because states know that they would be vetoed. The right to veto is a quintessential example of voting power that could be effective even if it is rarely exercised.

The most analyzed type of strategic voting is vote buying: the idea that a state can use its economic or military power to influence voting. A well-known methodological issue in such studies is endogeneity. For example, how do we know that a state who receives a lot of US aid votes more with the United States because of the aid or that the United States tends to give aid to countries that already had similar foreign policy preferences? There are some clever solutions to this issue. For example, nonpermanent UNSC members appear to get more favorable IMF loans and more US aid for the duration that they hold this seat (Kuziemko and Werker 2006; Vreeland and Dreher 2014). The presumed reason is that these countries will support the United States should important security issues arise in the Council. Since exit from UNSC membership is exogenous (the term is nonrenewable), this can plausibly be seen as a causal effect. Since endogeneity issues are not

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specific to voting analysis, I will not further discuss this issue, other than to note that there may be some rare settings where close votes allow scholars to use regression discontinuity designs (Voeten 2013). Finally, qualitative or anthropological research may help in tracing how influence is exercised in the Council (Farrall et al. 2020; Schia 2013).

There is a second methodological issue: strategic misspecification bias. Carter and Stone argue that the credibility of US threats to punish states with aid reductions following unfavorable UN votes depends on a state's regime type (Carter and Stone 2015). They estimate an explicit strategic model to isolate the degree to which aid influences votes but also to examine the degree to which poor democracies share policy preferences with the United States. The methodological issue is that omitting this strategic dynamic may lead us to overestimate shared preferences among democracies.

A related strategic issue is bloc voting. For example, the EU coordinates the positions of its members on most UNGA votes, making it very difficult to disentangle within EU differences in state preferences. The Non-Aligned Movement and Group of 77 have long done this for developing countries and former colonies, with mixed success. The underlying idea is that these states amass bargaining power by voting as a group, which may incentivize states to vote differently than they otherwise would. The methodological issue is not unlike that of separating party discipline from ideological voting in legislatures: We don't always know whether Congress people vote with their party because they converge ideologically or because the party has resources and incentive schemes to keep them in line. IO scholars still have a lot to learn from methodological advances in that literature.

To Go Further

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CHAPTER 15

Statistical Analyses with IO Data

Fabien Cottier and Heidrun Bohnet

Over the last two decades, international organizations (IOs) have become major data providers. This data is instrumental in supporting scientific research and shaping public policies. In this chapter, we discuss how statistical analyses of IO data can help answer important research questions, such as "what determines refugee flows?" We illustrate our argument by using data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).[1]

What?

By IO data, we refer to data that either has been collected directly by international organizations or has been assembled by IOs from a variety of sources (e.g., national statistical offices, specialized agencies) and made available to a broader audience. The World Trade Organization (WTO), for instance, collects much needed data on international trade flows, while the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) provides information on the use and access to telecommunications across the world. Furthermore, the United Nations Population Division produces global demographic projections. Reliefweb, a platform setup by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), collects reports from various agencies on natural disasters. This type of data sharing portal like the one run by OCHA or by other actors such as UNHCR have increased communication

1. The data used is available on UNHCR data platforms: http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview

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levels and accelerated emergency response (see fig. 8). More broadly, IO data, together with statistics, have proved critical for researchers across a wide range of disciplines, from economics to political science to agronomy. For instance, it has enabled them to study the causes and consequences of displacement (e.g., war, human right violations) (Davenport, Moore, and Poe 2003; Neumayer 2005; Salehyan and Gleditsch 2006).

Why?

Since national bureaucracies rarely collect data beyond their territory, IOs have become important actors in collecting and assembling data. Moreover, by setting common standards across the globe, IOs play a crucial role in ensuring that these can be meaningfully compared across contexts. Social sciences have, thus, tremendously benefited from IOs efforts in these domains. To analyze these data, however, we need the tools of statistics.

Statistics, or the quantitative analysis of data, generally, allow researchers to build on IO data and help them answer the questions motivating their research. As a tool of social inquiry, the goal of statistics is *inference*. In general, inference can be either descriptive or causal (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994). *Descriptive inference* provides estimates of the mean, mode or median for a phenomenon of interest. Examples of descriptive statistics are, for instance, the median age of Syrians seeking refugee protection in the European Union or the average monthly trade flow between the United States and China. *Causal inference* provides estimates of the relationship between two variables, such as the intensity of human rights violations and the number of refugees (Neumayer 2005; Moore and Shellman 2006), or the extent to which displacement contributes to the spread of violence (Salehyan and Gleditsch 2006; Bohnet, Cottier, and Hug 2018; Bohnet and Rüegger 2019). Causal inference makes it thus possible to determine whether a hypothesized relationship between two variables exists.

Statistics contribute to *inference* in two primary ways: by producing *summaries of quantities of interest* and estimating *uncertainty*. First, by *quantity of interest*, we refer to the parameter(s) governing the distribution of some data, such as the median income of refugee households in Lebanon. These quantities of interest can either be descriptive (e.g., mean, median, standard deviation) or associative (e.g., a regression coefficient). We label our best statistical estimates of these quantities *summaries*. Yet the problem we, as researchers, face is that these parameters are typically unknown and must be estimated from the data. As a result, these are by nature imprecise.

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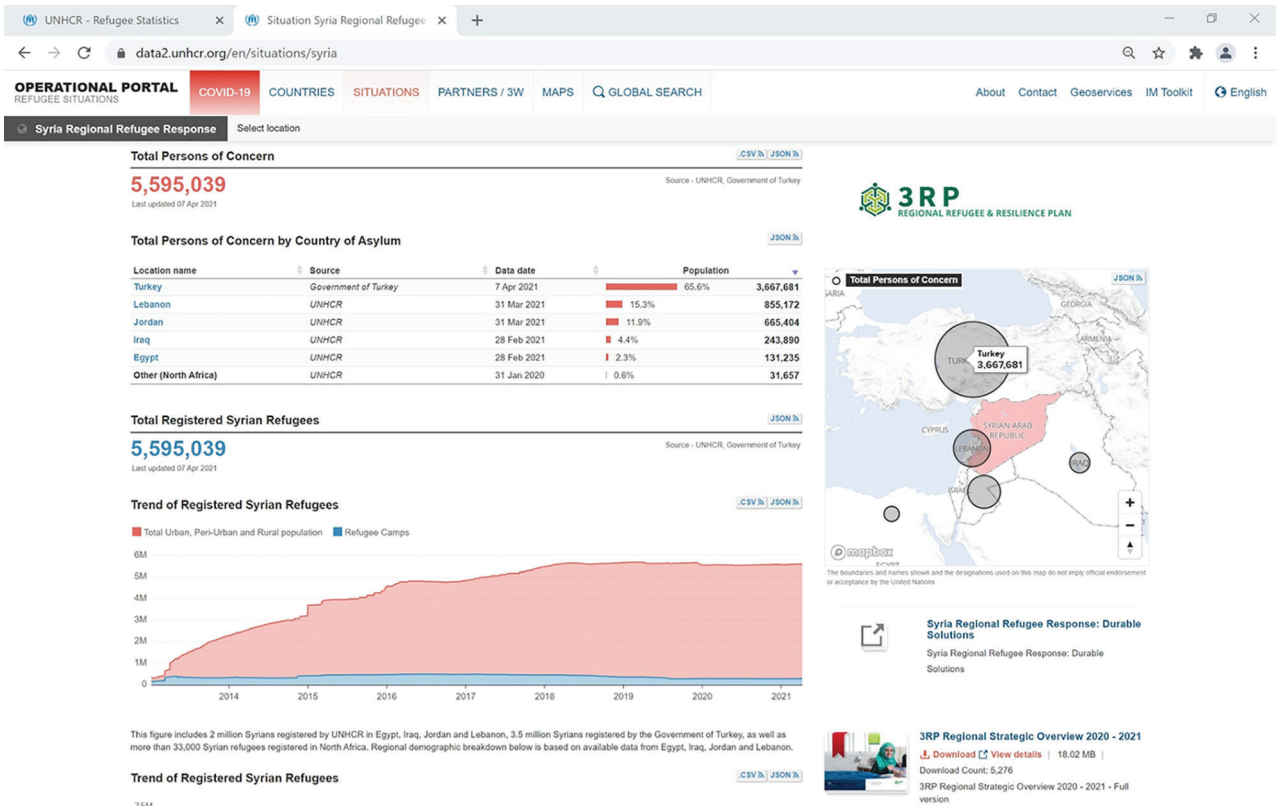

Figure 8. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees operational portal

Estimates of our confidence in these summaries, such as the standard error of the mean, provide a measure of *uncertainty*. They inform on the range of plausible values of the summaries. The precision of these summaries depends on the number of observations. Typically, a few hundred observations will yield an estimate of, for instance, the share of people supporting policies in favor of refugees, precise to a few percentage points.

In addition, statistics is a particularly useful tool for causal inference as it can account for the possibility that a specific variable does not result from a single cause, but that it is the joint outcome of a number of distinct processes, which could be correlated with each other. In this regard, *linear regression* is an important technique for researchers to examine the effect of human rights abuses on the number of refugees, while controlling for other factors known to correlate with refugee flows, such as poverty (Neumayer 2005). The correlations between these two variables could thus *confound* the estimated effect of human right violation on refugee flight.

How?

As a first step, we encourage researchers to review the documentation to understand the definitions employed by IOs, the format of the data and possible limitations. For a concrete example, UNHCR provides information on refugee stocks in a *dyadic* format (pairs of countries of origin—asylum). This has two implications. First, for applications (as our own) in which researchers study the determinants of refugee flows, it is useful to aggregate the data by country of origin, resulting thus in a *monadic* format. Second, while the data measures refugee stocks in a given period, we are interested in refugee flows. Hence we generate a variable measuring the number of *new refugees* by subtracting the number of refugees in the previous year from the total for the next year. Negative refugee counts are censored at zero.[2,3]

In a second step, researchers should examine their data with the help of summary statistics (e.g., mean, median, standard deviation). In doing so, it is good practice to question whether the information reported agrees with one's own *prior* knowledge. Discrepancies could alert the researcher to problems with the data, yet they could just as well indicate that existing

2. Formally, N new refugees = N refugees — N refugees in the previous year if ≥ 0, otherwise 0.

3. High rates of unreported country of origin for UNHCR refugee data is also a major concern. For a discussion and approaches to overcome this problem, see Marbach 2018.

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knowledge may be incomplete. In general, we encourage researchers not to limit themselves to considering only summary statistics, as significant patterns in the data may be hidden. Hence it may be useful to explore how the data varies temporally and spatially.

In a third step, we use the available data from UNHCR to determine to what extent authoritarian regimes, human rights violations, and armed conflicts cause displacement using *linear regression*. As the name indicates, we assume a (*log*) linear relationship between these variables and displacement. Data for these variables comes from the *vdem dataset* (Coppedge et al. 2019),[4] the *Political Terror Scale* (Gibney et al. 2019),[5] and the *UCDP Armed Conflict Dataset* (v 19.1) (Gleditsch et al. 2002; Pettersson, Högbladh, and Öberg 2019). In addition to low and high intensity, we distinguish between interstate and internal conflicts.[6] Finally, we control for GDP per capita and population (World Bank 2019) and add country and year fixed effects.[7]

Table 6 presents the results of the regression. The first estimate for each variable is the coefficient, which can be interpreted as our "best guess" for the direction and magnitude of the relation between a predictor and the dependent variable. The number in parentheses below is the standard error, which is an estimate of uncertainty. The larger the standard error relative to the coefficient, the more uncertain the association. Asterisks indicate whether the *T* value (the ratio between the coefficient and the standard error) has crossed a *p-value* threshold.[8]

Table 6 is an analysis of the determinants of refugee flows over the period 1990–2018. The results indicate that armed conflicts are a primary cause of refugee flows. Both civil and international wars are associated with a substantial increase in the number of refugees, the more so for high intensity conflicts. Similarly, human rights violations have a large effect on flight. A decrease of one point on the political terror scale (i.e., more severe violations) more than doubles the number of refugees. While the coefficients for democratic regimes are suggestive of a negative association between democracy

4. The index (*polyarchy*) measures electoral democracy on a scale from 0 (authoritarian) to 1 (full democracy). We add a squared term to model a possibly nonlinear relation.

5. Formally, it measures human rights violations by agents of the state on a five-point scale.

6. High-intensity conflicts cause at least a one thousand battle deaths in any given year. Conversely, low-intensity conflicts are periods during which violence causes between twenty-five and one thousand battle deaths.

7. The fixed-effects control for unobservable factors, which may have affected displacement patterns and are correlated with the independent variables.

8. While useful in helping to read statistical tables, we would advise researchers to cautiously approach *p-values*. Their use has been the target of criticisms by statisticians (American Statistical Association 2016).

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Table 6. Statistical Analyses Using UNHCR Data

Polyarchy	-4.315
	(3.363)
*Polyarchy*2	3.200
	(3.519)
Human rights violations	-0.804***
	(0.125)
International war (low)	0.869**
	(0.342)
International war (high)	6.496***
	(1.574)
Civil war (low)	0.652**
	(0.251)
Civil war (high)	2.420***
	(0.490)
GDPpc log	-1.660***
	(0.327)
Pop log	2.115***
	(0.658)
Country, Year FE	Yes
Observations	4,259
Adjusted R2	0.309

Note: *p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01
Std errors clustered by countries in parentheses.

and refugees, this association is not statistically significant, thus precluding any conclusion. Finally, the results indicate that economic development is negatively associated with refugee flows, while the demographically larger countries, generally, generate more refugees.

What Challenges?

Conducting research using IO data raises specific challenges. We discuss three aspects: definitions, measurement, and the unit of analysis. Researchers should be alert to these concerns and carefully assess the validity and reliability of their data.[9] While we illustrate our discussion with UNHCR data on refugee flows, readers should be mindful that concerns pertaining to

9. Statistics hinge crucially on key assumptions. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss these. Interested readers should consult introductory level statistical literature, such as Agresti (2017).

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data produced by IOs are frequently idiosyncratic to one's own specific line of inquiry. Readers are therefore invited to carefully appraise IO data in their own field of investigation.

First, the definitions employed may make comparisons difficult. In our illustration, different IOs (e.g., UNHCR, African Union) employ slightly different definitions of "refugee." The fluidity of refugee, internally displaced person (IDP), or returnee categories is another difficulty. For example, people from South Sudan often move back and forth between Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Uganda. Within the same year, one person can successively belong to each of these three categories. Another challenge is that UNHCR data only reflects the situation at the end of the year. Therefore if refugees flee a country and return within the same year, these movements won't be recorded.

A second challenge regarding data provided by IOs concerns measurement bias. For example, researchers should be aware of risks of politicization of the data. In fact, this challenge is magnified as IOs depend largely on data collected by national bureaucracies, in particular for demographic, health, as well as economic indicators. With regards to refugee specifically, both hosting and sending states, for instance, have incentives to downplay, or conversely exaggerate, the number of refugees originating from a particular country, because refugees are "a [potent] symbol of state failure" (Crisp 1999: 8). Conversely, refugees originating from allied countries may be labelled "economic migrants." Refugee counts might also be inflated in order to attract more international aid. For instance, Uganda refugee numbers were revealed to have been exaggerated by 300,000 (Okiror 2018). In addition, some people do not register as refugees in the hope of evading detection. Hence displacement figures may not necessarily reflect the true picture.

Finally, researchers should be aware of the appropriate unit of analysis when analyzing data from IOs. For example, Salehyan and Gleditsch (2006) found out that the more refugees a country received, the more likely it was to experience civil war. Yet in a new study, Zhou and Shaver (2021) have challenged this conclusion using data on refugee settlement locations. At the same time, subnational data on refugees, such as data on settlements, is often harder to obtain and come with important limitations, such as approximate location and missing refugee figures (see Bohnet 2015).

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BOX T

Navigating Human Resource Statistics

Fanny Badache

Researchers are increasingly interested in examining the composition of United Nations (UN) personnel regarding sociodemographic characteristics. In particular, existing studies focused on the composition of the staff in terms of nationalities (Parizek 2017; Novosad and Wercker 2019; Badache 2020; Oksamytna, Bove, and Lundgren 2021) and gender (Haack 2014). However, human resource data such as nationality, gender, and age of the personnel of UN organizations are not easily accessible and, when they are, can be partial. Available data can be used for certain purposes but also have some caveats.

Two sets of human resource data concerning UN organizations are publicly available. First, the UN Secretariat is the only UN organization that overtly publishes data on the composition of its personnel. These reports have been published on a yearly basis by the secretary-general since 1948. Initially limited to staff in posts subject to geographical distribution, their breadth has increased over time. Since 2007, these reports provide data on the nationality, age, contract type, and gender for all its staff irrespective of the categories of service and funding sources. The main advantage of these reports is to present raw information by countries. The comprehensive statistical tables at the end of these reports provide, for each member country, the number of staff by categories of service, appointment types, and gender.

The second available source includes the statistics gathered by the Chief Executives Board for Coordination.[1] They provide human resource data for all UN organizations on age, staff location, nationality, gender, length of

1. https://www.unsystem.org/content/un-system-human-resources-statistics

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service, grade, and category of service. These statistics are graphically presented on the website and can be downloaded. This database is very useful to make comparisons between UN organizations. However, since they are presented by organizations and by characteristics, they cannot be used for cross-sectional analyses such as studies that address the composition in terms of age and gender. Another limitation of this set of HR data is that they are limited to staff with fixed-term contracts of one year of more.

In addition to the above-mentioned limitations, it must be noted that the available data on UN personnel is limited to a small number of sociodemographic attributes (i.e., age, gender, nationality). In order to collect more human resource data such as education, professional background, and social origins, researchers should use other data collection tools such as conducting biographic interviews (see chapter 6—*Biographic Interviews*) and create their own database (see box u—*Building Databases on Individuals*).

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CHAPTER 16

Large-N Data and Quantitative Analyses

Charles B. Roger

Prior to the 1990s, large-N data and quantitative studies of international organizations (IOs) were relatively rare. Case studies were the dominant mode of analysis. Since then, however, there has been a significant shift. Large-N data and quantitative methods are now well-established. Scholars have also increasingly combined quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide more compelling answers to empirical questions than either could in isolation. This has had profound effects. Quantitative and mixed-methods analyses have significantly advanced our understanding of IOs and generated new puzzles to explore. These approaches are, therefore, important for scholars to understand and appreciate and should be an essential part of the toolkit for understanding IOs. However, quantitative methods have also presented unique challenges when applied to IOs, which researchers should be aware of. My aim in this chapter is to provide some insights into the kinds of things that should be kept in mind.

What?

"Large-N data," here, refers to datasets that quantify IOs, specific features of IOs, or IO activities. These come in several forms. Time-series datasets contain observations about a single unit across time—for instance, how membership in a single IO has changed. Cross-sectional datasets contain observations across many units, often at a single point in time—i.e., variation in membership across all "currently active" IOs. Panel data combine information of both types—i.e., how membership across IOs has changed over time. In practice,

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a range of datasets exist providing different information about IOs, and these can be found either in standalone files online or in the replication files for particular papers. A few of these are discussed later. A scholar may also, of course, collect original data through observations or experiments.

However structured or attained, large-N datasets are widely used for important *descriptive* purposes. Liesbet Hooghe et al. (2019) have, for instance, collected data on the authority of IOs, showing how this has varied throughout the postwar period. But such datasets are also frequently used to make *causal* inferences by employing them in "quantitative analyses." In the case of Hooghe et al., they use their data to *explain* the growth of IO authority. Different statistical models will typically be used to do this, which depend on the kind of dataset one is working with. Specific models have been developed to handle time-series data or panel data, variables that are continuous or limited in different ways, and so forth. Scholars often develop expertise in working with particular models and make use of different software packages to execute them. They also frequently employ tests to verify whether statistical assumptions hold and will undertake sensitivity analyses to determine whether findings change when variables are measured differently or when employing different modeling strategies.

Why?

Quantitative methods offer two distinct benefits. First, they can help us understand complex patterns and processes that would otherwise be impossible to observe. Compared to case studies, quantitative data can be used to summarize large-scale phenomena, like membership patterns, voting within IOs, or types of IO behavior. This kind of information moves beyond single observations and allows scholars to identify "aggregate" patterns, which we might suspect are true but would not be able to say so confidently otherwise. Work by Tallberg (2013) on "transnational access" to IOs—participation by nonstate actors in IO decision-making—provides a wonderful example. Earlier researchers observed that access had increased in several prominent institutions but it was unclear whether this pattern was new or widespread (O'Brien et al. 2000). By collecting data across a large sample of IOs, Tallberg et al. could answer this question effectively, showing that it had increased, on average, since the 1950s. Without this, it would have been impossible say for sure.

The second advantage is that quantitative methods can deepen our understanding of the relationships between variables. Many of the processes

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scholars analyze are complex. In a single case, or even several, a change in a variable may not lead to a change in another due to a range of idiosyncratic or confounding factors. Equally, even when an association is observed, this need not mean they are causally linked. It may simply be coincidence. To evaluate arguments convincingly, therefore, we often need to determine whether associations are systematic or due to random chance. This is where statistical methods and large-N data come in especially handy. By looking across many cases and leveraging the logic of probability, we can use statistical models to separate the "signal" from the "noise" and reach more convincing conclusions about underlying relationships. Work by Tallberg again offers a compelling illustration. Earlier studies suspected that protest frequently led IOs to "open up." However, their analysis revealed that this effect was not so pronounced. They found, instead, that other factors, like functional demand and the democratic values of member states, were more powerful causal drivers. It would have been challenging to reach this conclusion without reliance on quantitative methods.

How?

The basic starting point for any quantitative analysis of IOs is the selection of a large-N dataset. This initial choice, and many decisions that follow, will largely be determined by theory. Depending on the question one asks about IOs, different datasets will be relevant. In my recent research, for instance, I have been interested in the legal nature of IOs and to study this I used a dataset that measures levels of legal formality (Roger 2020). This is the "dependent variable" in my analysis. However, in practice, a large number of options are available, and data on IOs can be used as either dependent or independent variables (Gartzke and Schneider 2013). One of the earliest and most frequently used IO datasets was developed as part of the Correlates of War (COW) project initiated by J. David Singer (Wallace and Singer 1970; Pevehouse, Nordstrom, and Warnke 2004). The most recent version of this dataset measures membership in formal bodies and has served as a fundamental resource for IO scholars. Today, however, we also have fairly comprehensive data on features of IOs—their independence, policy scope, voting rules, and so on—and many of their activities too (Haftel and Thompson 2006; Hooghe, Lenz, and Marks 2019).

Once one has selected data that measure the key variable of interest, the task is then to combine this with data on other covariates—democracy, economic openness, national capabilities, and so on. The data that are rel-

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evant will again be determined by theory. In my case, I needed data that theory suggested might shape the legal design of IOs. To test "power-based" explanations, for instance, it seemed reasonable to measure power using pre-existing data on GDP across relevant states. A similar process was used to choose other variables and controls, and in most cases the existing literature provided a helpful guide to what would be appropriate. Once data are assembled, the next task is to undertake an analysis. The specific type of analysis that will be appropriate will largely depend, as mentioned, on considerations related to the outcome of interest. In my study of informality, the data were cross-sectional in nature and the key variable was binary. This meant that certain types of limited dependent variable regression models would be needed (for a discussion, see Long 1997). Others may use entirely different approaches. But in each instance, the end goal will be the same: the analysis should help to discern which relationships may be due to more than chance and how substantively important these are for the final outcome we care about.

Things are not finished there, however. Typically, as noted above, a scholar will try to test the robustness of the findings by using different models, adding and dropping variables, measuring key ideas in different ways, and so on. The idea behind all these moves is to check whether results are sensitive to minor changes. Ultimately, if they fail these tests, our confidence in a finding will be correspondingly reduced; but if not, we may remain confident that the relationships we have uncovered are systematic in nature.

What Challenges?

When performed well, quantitative analyses can be a powerful tool. But they can have disadvantages. Many of these are general in nature. Quantitative methods are often less useful, for instance, for understanding the precise nature of the mechanisms linking variables. We may uncover associations suggesting that some link exists, but there may be several plausible accounts of the mechanism at work. When this is so, statistical approaches reach their limits. It will often be valuable to combine quantitative methods with qualitative ones. By leveraging the unique inferential capabilities of both, it is possible to compensate for the weaknesses inherent in each. A growing literature explains how this can be done, and such mixed-method studies are now widely used in the study of IOs.

In addition to such drawbacks, however, there are others more specific to studying IOs. The first is that IO data can sometimes be uneven and difficult

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to work with. Much depends on the question one asks, but for research that focuses on the "IO" as the unit of analysis, or on particular processes within IOs, it can be difficult to attain the data needed. A key issue arises from the fact that most datasets include samples of IOs or, when more complete, may be structured for cross-country or country-year analysis, i.e., where the unit of analysis in such studies is a state-level "event" in a given year. State-IO membership data, such as that contained in the COW dataset, is structured in this way and can be integrated fairly easily with other types. But if one is interested in understanding what determines the design of IOs, it will often be necessary to match different datasets and (sometimes) transform existing data to ensure it is structured appropriately. Because many include different samples of organizations and do not always match up perfectly, this can be challenging. The need to transform data can also mean that research on IOs—of this type—can still be quite costly and time-intensive.

Second, even when available, it is important to approach datasets with some caution. There are, for instance, known problems in the COW dataset: duplicates, incorrect dates, missing IOs, and so on. A more fundamental issue arises when the concept underlying the data is problematic, or doesn't align with that presumed by a theory. One example of this comes from data on voting rules. Blake and Payton (2015) offer comprehensive data on voting arrangements in IOs. But others have questioned how they define these, especially the practice of "consensus" voting. They code consensus as being synonymous with "unanimity," yet Erica Gould (2017) has argued that this is often not the correct interpretation, and that when we take this into account the causal picture looks different. In my work with Sam Rowan, I have shown that much research focuses on a narrow range of "formal organizations" (Roger and Rowan 2022). But there are, in fact, a number of "informal" bodies left out of such analyses. If these are not included, this can sometimes affect findings. So it is important to be conscious of these issues when using data "off the shelf" and to seek a close alignment between measures and key concepts.

To do this, it is sometimes necessary to collect your own data. Generating your own data can ensure a good match between the data and ideas a researcher is working with. It can also reveal new puzzles. In practice, the *Yearbook of International Organizations* has proved to be an invaluable resource for doing this, since it contains descriptions of numerous institutions (Union of International Associations 2009). It has correspondingly served as the starting point for many datasets, COW included. Other resources include the websites, legal documents, and publications of IOs. These can often be useful but may not be available for historical institutions,

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and can be somewhat uneven in terms of their content. It is also worth noting that they can sometimes give a misleading picture of what happens. A charter may outline a precise set of decision-making procedures and a website may offer helpful descriptions, but practices may differ. To handle this, surveys and survey experiments have increasingly been used to collect data (Hooghe 2005; Hardt 2018). These approaches, described elsewhere in this volume, can help to measure otherwise hidden aspects of IO design or behavior and the datasets generated can contribute powerfully to our understanding of IOs.

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CHAPTER 17

Computerized Text Analysis

Mor Mitrani and Inbar Noy

This chapter presents the potential uses of computerized textual analysis methods in studying international organizations (IOs). It shows how these methods are useful for studying both the organizations themselves and the interactions among their members. These innovative methods allow researchers to analyze extensive data, identify latent discursive aspects of texts, and extract a tone or a position regarding a certain issue.

What?

Text analysis is a term for a large array of methods that use textual data to scrutinize social reality. In political studies, the premise that language, text, and communication are pivotal elements in political processes yielded over the past decade political research that treats text as data and applies human and computerized methods for its analysis. Technological advancements that facilitate extensive digitization of political texts and allow systematic mining and processing of large-scale corpora have increased the popularity of computerized methods (Grimmer and Stewart 2013; Lucas et al. 2015; Monroe and Schrodt 2008). Their application is mostly oriented toward identifying latent political processes through the analysis of text and language. Most of these studies have invested extensive effort in developing models that use "text as data" in order to measure, score, and scale the political positions of political actors such as parties, legislators, and interest groups based on automated text analysis (Laver, Benoit, and Garry 2003; Slapin and Proksch 2008).

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These approaches, however, have rarely been exported to the international arena. Studies that applied computerized text analysis in IR usually either utilized a lexical-based approach to coding event data based on newswire reports (King and Lowe 2003) or performed automated coding of NGO reports, mainly in the field of human rights (Fariss et al. 2015). A few studies treated international texts produced in international settings—notably by IOs—as data that can provide insights into the processes of agenda-setting, political attention, and political positions (Alschner and Skougarevskiy 2016; Bagozzi 2015; Gurciullo and Mikhaylov 2017). Some studies have aimed at mapping positions of IO members regarding a specific issue or policy (Bagozzi 2015; Frid-Nielsen 2018) or to examine the influence of interest groups on choices of policy outcomes (Klüver 2009). Other studies have also applied methods of computerized textual analysis for the purposes of analyzing the content of a certain agenda, and the changes of framing of an agenda over time (Park, Murdie, and Davis 2019; Schönfeld et al. 2018).

Why?

The international political sphere is rich in texts, is built out of texts, and to a great extent relies on and is realized by discursive and textual interactions. Public discourse at the international level can serve as a source of data, and existing computerized methods—for big data—can systematically examine both the content of and discourse on the interactions that eventually design our main subject matter—world politics. These interactions often take place in the institutional contexts of international organizations at two levels. First is at the micro level, through the day-to-day natural language of diplomatic and political communication in bilateral or multilateral settings. Second is at the macro level, through texts that institutionalize international relations through legal language, including treaties, charters, agreements, and other reports and policy documents, that shape international norms and practices. IOs are thus great sources of textual data that can be used to study the organizations themselves, their member states, and the political relations that are constructed in these contexts. This is more than a methodological claim. Indeed, IOs produce dense and extensive amounts of text, and therefore it is methodologically useful to apply computerized text analysis when studying them. However, we should not treat text as just a methodological resource for data but rather analytically as a fundamental political tool through which actors present identities and construct (political) relations through the mechanisms of legitimacy and identification.

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Textual analysis allows collecting and processing large corpora at the organizational level, which can generate broad longitudinal data on all IOs and from varying perspectives, with a scope that human coding or analysis is incapable of. Recently, IO scholars have focused on establishing a rule-based perspective on IOs that focuses on connection between legitimacy and deliberation. The main premise here is that IOs and states (in their context) continually negotiate a set of rules and norms that shape their mutual interactions, roles, and relations and establish standards of legitimacy (Hurd 2007; Johnstone 2011). By analyzing the tone of texts, as well as their framing, textual analysis is a valuable tool for understanding the range of activities in which an IO can legitimately engage and identify norms and rules of behavior. Text analysis can also assist in identifying rules regarding the expected behavior of members of a certain IO.

Text analysis can also shed light on both the content of IOs' agendas and of the processes of agenda-setting by illuminating aspects of framing, positioning, and priming. It can provide valuable tools for comparison of similarities and differences in issues and agendas between organizations or among their members. Such analysis can also discern issue-linkage and diffusion between organizations or between an organization's members. Computerized textual analysis also enables researchers to assess the discursive power of political actors within organizations, and how they construct and reframe certain issues, and their ability to shape organizational agendas. Finally, analyzing the content of IOs' documents, as well as speeches of IO officials, may provide an understanding of the norms and legitimization aspects within an organization.

How?

Prior to applying computerized textual analysis, a researcher needs to decide which texts and databases will be analyzed. In the process of text selection, a researcher can either choose to analyze textual databases that already exist or create new databases using tools that enables importing and collecting of data. In most cases, the researcher will be required to validate the texts and prepare them before processing. Preprocessing requires the researcher to first discard words and symbols irrelevant to the analysis—such as punctuation, commonly used words ("stop words"), or numbers. Additionally, the researcher may want to remove words that occur at a low frequency in the texts, as they may be irrelevant to the analysis. Finally, the research may recognize different forms of a certain word by stemming or lemmatiza-

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tion (Grimmer and Stewart 2013). The next section will elaborate on three methods of computerized textual analysis—topic modeling, Wordfish, and sentiment analysis—and their application in IO research.

Topic Modeling

Topic modeling is a collection of unsupervised methods that compile sets of words and attribute each set to a different topic. The algorithms identify the topics by extracting patterns of word recurrence, to the extent that they can be acknowledged as assembling a certain topic (Grimmer 2010). For example, as words that are used as greetings, such as "thank you" and "congratulations," usually occur together, they will be recognized as belonging to a certain topic (Watanabe and Zhou 2020). In social sciences, topic modeling is used mainly through the latent Dirichlet allocation model, which examines the distribution of topics within a certain document by identifying repeated patterns of cooccurrences of words and/or appearances of the words outside the topics to which they were attributed (Blei, Ng, and Jordan 2003; Chang et al. 2009; Watanabe and Zhou 2020). The application of topic modeling in political science has focused on examining the content of political actors' agendas (i.e., Grimmer 2010). In IO research, topic modeling was thus far applied mainly to examine changes in framing of a certain issue over time among different IOs (Park et al. 2019) as well as to assess the impact of positions of members of an IO regarding a certain issue (Bagozzi 2015). As topic modeling can be applied to detect latent agendas of certain actors (Grimmer 2010), its application in IO research can provide a comprehensive understanding of agenda salience within an IO framework.

Wordfish

Wordfish is a model that aims to identify actors' positions on a certain issue based on one-dimensional scaling of word frequencies in texts (Slapin and Proksch 2008). Wordfish scaling is unsupervised and unfixed in advance. Consequently, it requires the researcher to retrospectively assess the results in order to define the scaling dimensions. As Wordfish enables comparative examination of actors' positions, it is mostly applied in political science in comparative studies examining parties' positions on specific topics, or in temporal analyses of changes in actors' positions (Lauderdale and Herzog 2016; Slapin and Proksch 2008). The Wordfish tool can be extremely useful

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in the study of IOs for both inferential and comparative purposes. It can deductively expose the positions of certain organizations—or of organization members—regarding a specific issue (Slapin and Proksch 2008: 711). For example, Frid-Nielsen used Wordfish in order to estimate the positions of members of the European Parliament (MEP) regarding asylum policy (2018). Based on relative word usage of MEP's speeches on this contested issue, Wordfish provides an initial scale of the range of positions and enables the researcher to compare the positions of the MEP examined.

Sentiment Analysis

Sentiment analysis is a supervised dictionary-based automated analysis that aims to detect and analyze different aspects of sentiments in political texts by assessing the tone of the text as negative or positive (Proksch et al. 2019; Young and Soroka 2012). Thus it can assist in understanding attitudes and opinions regarding a certain topic. Based on a chosen dictionary that sets a list of negative and positive words, the automated sentiment analysis measures the frequency of the relevant words in the unit of analysis. In political science, this approach is mostly applied in political communication and is used to assess the way that political issues are represented and framed in the media and by users of social media (Soroka, Young, and Balmas 2015).

Together with other tools, sentiment analysis can provide an understanding of the normative positions of organizations and their members on certain issues and thus can insinuate which agendas are most likely to be promoted and simultaneously which issues are considered delegitimate or wrongful from the organizational perspective. Sentimental dynamics across time and among states or organizations can illuminate processes of politization and identify who shapes them and which tools they use.

What Challenges?

In the attempt to apply computerized text analysis to the study of IOs, three main challenges must be acknowledged. The first challenge is the issue of translation. In an attempt to study a great variety of actors and organizations, we often rely on translated texts that are provided by the organizations themselves. Translation is often insensitive to cultural differences, involves personal decisions, and is also highly prejudiced toward specific institutional and organizational discourses. The second challenge in applying computer-

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ized text analysis is the tendency to overlook the context. Automated analysis of very large amounts of text with no interpretative elements may reduce the reading of the texts to the level of word frequencies and cooccurrences and therefore ignore deeper or complex discursive elements of context, lexicons, and framing. The third and last challenge is the challenge of genuineness and intention, or more precisely, the need to deal with the question: "what if people do not mean what they are saying."

All three challenges raise valid and important questions at the theoretical and methodological levels. They can all be accommodated once the researcher adopts three main principles in their research design. First, text analysis will always be limited to what texts can tell us. In this case, texts are not reflections of thoughts or mirrors of reality. Text is a social tool through which people choose how to present their reality, tell their stories, and interact with fellow agents, and it is thus a valuable tool for exposing how these political processes take place. Text analysis is therefore more effective in answering "how" questions than "why" questions. Second, computerized text analysis is a great tool for distilling findings from a large amount of data, but it can always benefit from complementary human analysis of specific cases. Third, one must learn to work with what there is and be mindful of the limitations. International political discourse does not take place in organized or ordered settings. On the contrary, it is multilingual; it happens (simultaneously) in many institutional and organizational arenas (see chapter 11—*Discourse Analysis*). It has no ground rules or effective authority to govern or discipline it, and in these respects, it fully represents the anarchic nature of the international arena. This is not a good reason to disregard the extensive amount of texts and discursive interactions that construct it, just the opposite. Words are the most accessible and valuable data source for researchers of international politics in general and of IOs in particular. If we learn to acknowledge that this data source is not (and cannot be) sterile or perfect but still allows us to build valid datasets and design reliable research, we can certainly expose a fundamental and hitherto quite under-researched layer of international politics.

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CHAPTER 18

Multiple Correspondence Analysis

Constantin Brissaud

How should we classify international organizations (IOs)? Or central bankers in the global field of power? Though rarely used in international relations, Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) is an inductive mode of classification that is especially useful for this kind of task. It allows the study of actors positioned in a given field—such as the field of international expertise or international organizations—and to verify whether their position in the field produces effects on their positions-taking.

What?

To study a population, it is often useful to determine its principles of cohesion. MCA allows researchers to inductively create subgroups of individuals characterized by common properties (or modalities of variables). It is a statistical method that synthesizes a set of categorical variables in one or more two-dimensional spaces (e.g., paper sheets). It summarizes the information contained in a dataset, by showing how certain modalities of variables are frequently found together within statistical individuals. Symmetrically, the method yields cohesive—in that they share common modalities of variables—subgroups in the statistical population, be it composed of international civil servants, experts, international projects, or even international organizations.

Since MCA yields cohesive subgroups that have statistically significant modalities of variables in common, it allows the researcher to determine whether these common properties determine a common behavior. Finally,

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MCA is a relational method: the position of a statistical individual on the plane is to be understood in comparison to the positions of others. It is therefore the best method to objectify a field in the Bourdieusian sense.

MCA has initially been used in sociology by Pierre Bourdieu and his colleagues to map the "field of power." For researchers who study the field of power, the treatment of prosopographical data (Lebaron 2009; see also chapter 26—*Prosopography*) through MCA can show the link between a given set of modalities of variables (for example educational background, inherited socioeconomic status, and so on) and a certain type of behavior. The method therefore shows the oppositions characterizing a social space through the comparison of groups of individuals (or sets of properties) on the axes. It indeed yields new variables, called factors or axes, that summarize information from a large number of variables.

MCA creates clusters of statistical individuals that share a common set of properties and groups them on a geometric plane. Two planes are then created: the plane of individuals—where one can see clusters of individuals, the clusters being the product of individuals sharing common properties—and the plane of properties. If the properties are close on the plane, it means that individuals retaining one of those properties are very likely to retain the others. Symmetrically, two individuals that are close on the plane will share a lot of common properties. Since properties are held by individuals, the two planes are two representations of the same social space.

Why?

At the organizational level, the modes of financing, the variety of countries involved, the capacity to carry out external actions, or to raise funds are often perceived as structuring differences in the world of international organizations. If studying international spaces at the individual level, properties such as nationality, education, or trajectory differences are routinely understood as having deep impacts on agents' behavior, and on decisions-taking processes (Brissaud and Juven 2020), but few studies have relied on MCA to explore the field of IOs. MCA allows researchers to inductively create groups of actors or groups of IOs to describe the (statistical) population and verify that these groups are coherent, in the sense that they behave the same way.

Vincent Pouliot has used this method to map the pecking order of countries in two international peacekeeping organizations, NATO and the UN (2016). Thanks to MCA classification, he showed the variations of countries' standing echelons and classified country behavior in both IOs. Médéric

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Martin-Mazé (2018) used MCA as well to unravel the complex relations between technical assistance agencies. He positioned the various international organizations dedicated to border monitoring in a transnational space constructed by the projects those organizations conduct. Both Pouliot and Martin-Mazé, therefore, used MCA to show the main principles of differentiation within a complex population of organizations.

However the clusters created through MCA are not only descriptive: since they show unexpected similarities between individuals close to each other on the graph, and oppositions between the most distant of them, they are also very strong incentives to stimulate sociological imagination. My own research specifically aims at understanding how the OECD has become a central IO in the field of international health reforms. Deriving from the sociology of intellectuals (Lamont 1987), one explanation is that to gain legitimacy in a given field, an intellectual (or in this case an organization) must be associated with well-known authorities in the field. MCA on the authors' population of OECD reports on health tends to show that the first reports were signed by well-known economists, while recent OECD reports on health are signed by "data-crunchers" whose volume of academic capital is much less important. It then tells a story on the way OECD gained legitimacy in the international field of health care: by enrolling well-known academics, OECD legitimated its data and its recommendations, therefore being more and more used by governments, other international organizations, and academics, as in a virtuous circle.

Used in multimethod research design, MCA also allows researchers to relate the behavior of observed or interviewed individuals to their position in the space statistically constructed. And finally, as MCA unveils the most structuring properties of the space, it also allows researchers to compare various social spaces in order to determine whether they have the same structuring properties, and therefore build bridges between national and international levels of analysis (Gayon 2020).

How?

To conduct MCA, scholars first need to create a database of the statistical individuals or organizations, with statistical units in rows and properties in columns. Information about properties is then gathered through the Internet (mainly LinkedIn and academic CV) and interviews (when database consists of individuals). Scholars distribute these pieces of information in groups of variables (in columns) that provide a point of view on the population under

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study, built according to existing literature, ethnography, and interviews. The modalities of variables must be qualitative and concern about the same number of individuals each time. The very description of individuals therefore stems from research choices: a statistical individual may be described by a potentially infinite number of variables. The variables finally retained are those the researcher assumes to produce effects on individuals' behaviors. Variables that are taken into account and their modalities should be justified and relevant regarding the population studied. The decision to keep or exclude a variable, or to categorize it in a certain way, is a deeply *scientific question*—as opposed to a technical question—that can totally change the results. On the graph, each group of variables is finally represented with a different type of point.

In my work on the OECD, I crafted a database of the 109 experts who signed the OECD reports on health by coding some of their properties with qualitative variables. Information gathered on each expert is distributed into five groups of variables (in columns) distributed into nineteen active variables counting fifty-four modalities and twenty-four additional variables (not taken into account in the MCA) with a total of seventy-two modalities. For example, since internationalized trajectories or the ability to speak several languages had been outlined as a powerful asset to work in IOs, I decided, in my research, to construct a group of variables on the "cosmopolitan capital" retained by each individual. Each variable included in the analysis is indeed a hypothesis on the structure of the population.

Once the dataset is constructed, MCA can be run thanks to different platforms such as the package FactoMineR (Lê et al. 2008) from the statistical software R.[1] Applied to the database, MCA produces a table that gives, for each modality of variable, its contribution to the production of axes.[2] It also produces another table that gives the positions of modalities of variables and the positions of individuals on the graph. Then it plots a two-dimensional graph that must be improved using other packages such as ggplot2, showing the modalities of variables on a plane. The researcher must then look at the percentages of variance explained by every axis. It is a measure of the proportion of the differences between individuals that is summarized by the axis. Then the researcher chooses the number of axes that must be retained in the analysis (often two or three).[3] The plots should be read

1. Many tutorials exist, but most of them are in French (see for example Perdoncin 2020).

2. Several other metrics are produced such as the cos2—that gives the quality of the representation of a modality on the plane—and the v-test—a measure of association between variables.

3. The number of axes that must be kept in the analysis is both a statistical and a scien-

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as an opposition on the west-east axis (the x axis), and on the north-south axis (the y axis), with each part of the graph describing a subpopulation. It is often useful to exemplify these subpopulations with the description of the trajectory of one of the individuals that are positioned here. The following figure illustrates such results based on my research. Due to space restriction, I have limited the presentation of variables to those represented in the first two axes of the MCA, which gather most of the overall information.

In figure 9, individuals (in grey) and the most contributing properties (in black) have been represented on the same graph. X axis explains 13.8 percent of the total variance of the database, and the second one 8.9 percent. On the western part of the graph, one can see a set of properties that describe the deprivation of academic capital: people on this side of the space have signed the most recent OECD reports on health but have no PhD ("phd_no") and no publication in central academic journals ("central_publi-"). On the opposite part of the graph (eastern part), people have published many articles in very central academic journals ("central_publi++"), are part of many journals' reading committees ("reading_committee+"), and they generally hold a PhD in economics ("phd_eco"). They have signed the first OECD reports on health.

Interpretation of the graph lies on the comparison of the subgroups constructed by MCA. Variables that contribute the most to the construction of the axis oppose the two subpopulations. In this case, the first axis is mainly determined by the volume of academic capital retained by individuals. Thanks to MCA, one can see that individuals who signed the first OECD reports on health (in the eastern part of the graph) retain an important volume of academic capital. This subpopulation is opposed to individuals who signed recent OECD reports on health and hold a much less important volume of academic capital. The method therefore shows that OECD has been legitimized as a central IO of the international field of health policy reforms thanks to enrollment of famous economists in its first reports. The description of the second opposition—north-south axis—refines the analysis. It must be read the same way as the first axis, using the most contributing variables to oppose the two polar subgroups. In this case, one can see that the second axis opposes internationally and nationally grounded trajectories. In other words, it opposes international and national civil servants. To sum up, MCA shows that the population of OECD reports on health signatories

tific question. First axes explain more variance than the last ones. Most of the time, scholars keep in the analysis between two and five axes, the limit being the axis after which variance explained significatively decreases.

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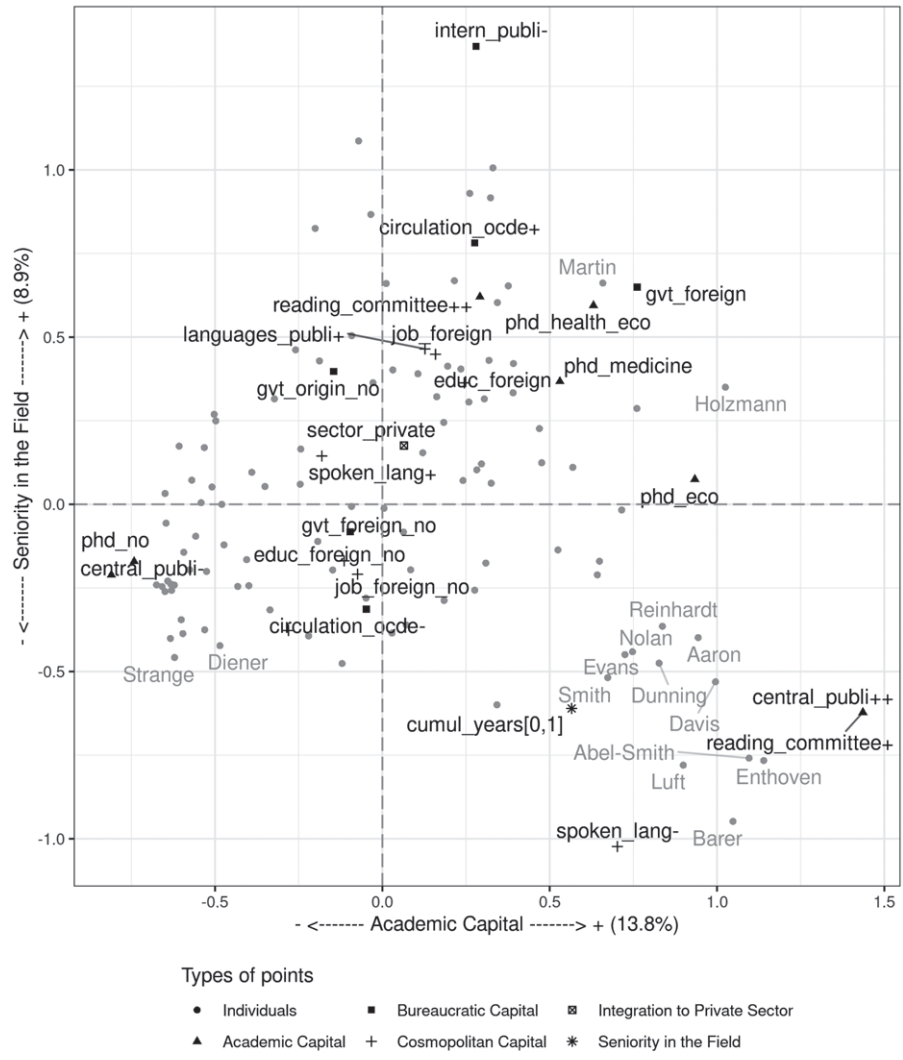

Figure 9. Example of Multiple Correspondence Analysis

is structured first by the volume of academic capital retained by the agents and second by the nationally grounded dimension of their trajectories.

Furthermore, MCA is a powerful tool not only to describe a population but also to raise new research questions—for example here on legitimacy in the international field of health-care expertise, on the role of health economics as a must-have curriculum for experts entering this field, or on the oppo-

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sitions between national and international curricula to enter the field. MCA unveils the most structuring variables in the space and may therefore lead to new research questions, for example here on the history of health economics as a discipline, the universities where it has been developed, its appropriation by political agents, the importance of international trajectories to become an international expert on health care, and so on.

The example reported here shows that MCA is even more useful when used in a multimethod research design (Martin-Mazé 2018). Archival work, interviews, and ethnography are often usefully combined with MCA: they first help researchers in deciding which variables to keep for the analysis, but they also allow researchers to relate the positions of individuals as objectified by MCA to positions they have taken, be they in interviews, observations, or paper-notes that would be stored in the archives. In the case of OECD health experts, observation of meetings where several report signatories were present allowed researchers to relate their interactions to the positions of individuals in the space designed through MCA.

What Challenges?

The main challenge of MCA lies both in the construction of the database and the data collection. Most of the time, for individuals, data is collected on the Internet, or through interviews and archives, but with potential biases that must be taken into account, and missing data. R package FactoMineR presents valuable tools to manage such biases. That said, the main challenge stems from the construction of the categories retained in the database that must be carefully justified.

Once the MCA has been performed, interpretation of each axis may be tricky. It requires a good knowledge of the population, of the variables taken into account in the database, and a careful reading of the plot. Finally, one must note that statistical software to conduct MCAs can be quite difficult to handle. Out of the geometric part of analysis, various metrics are produced by MCA (cos2, v.test, etc.) that require a certain level of statistical knowledge to be explained. The open-source software R has a dedicated package called FactoMineR that comes with many handy tutorials and an active online community.

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To Go Further

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BOX U

Building Databases on Individuals

Kseniya Oksamytna

Data on individual IO officials are important for researchers investigating issues like the political economy of IOs, autonomy and expertise of international bureaucracies, and IO performance and accountability. However, not all IOs provide comprehensive information on all relevant characteristics of their employees. When such data exist, they are often limited in scope (see box t—*Navigating Human Resource Statistics*). Researchers should carefully consider whether building their own database of individual IO officials' characteristics is worth the investment of resources.

Building a database of IO officials' characteristics should begin with an assessment of the existing data or ongoing data collection efforts by other researchers. If the data are indeed unavailable, the next step would typically involve a pilot project to determine the viability of the approach and the scope of the data. Researchers might reassess the project's viability if they discover that information is classified, incomplete, hard to find, or difficult to categorize. If the pilot is successful, comprehensive data collection can begin. Since information on IO officials' characteristics usually requires data collection rather than interpretation, intercoder reliability is not a significant issue, but members of the research team need to be on the same page about what information should be recorded and in what format.

For example, in UN peacekeeping, data on the nationality, gender, and fatalities of military peacekeepers are readily available. There is less information on civilian peacekeeping officials or senior mission leaders, so Bove, Ruggeri, and Ruffa (2020) built a database of the characteristics of civilian and military leaders of UN peacekeeping operations, such as nationality, tenure, and prior experience in a similar post. Their experience dem-

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onstrates the advantages and costs of this approach: building the database of UN peacekeeping leaders entailed reading numerous UN press releases announcing leaders' appointments, official secretary-general's letters, and media reports for recording leaders' names, nationalities, and start and end months of service.

In deciding whether to construct a new database, researchers should weigh potential payoffs against the investment of resources. The main advantage of constructing such databases is that they allow systematic research into questions that could previously be examined only through single or comparative case studies. The creation of a database on peacekeeping leaders, for example, has enabled an analysis of the role of cultural distance between peacekeeping leaders on the one hand and troops or the population on the other hand (Bove, Ruggeri, and Ruffa 2020), factors that affect peacekeeping leaders' appointments (Oksamytna, Bove, and Lundgren 2021), and the UN Secretariat's efforts to hold leaders accountable for underperformance (Lundgren, Oksamytna, and Bove 2022).

In the literature on international financial institutions, there is also a growing attention to IO officials' characteristics that can be coded from project reports or LinkedIn profiles (Clark and Zucker 2022; Heinzel 2022). In summary, databases of IO officials' characteristics can produce valuable insights, but require long-term planning and well-resourced teams.

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CHAPTER 19

Social Network Analysis

Anna-Luise Chané

Social network analysis (SNA) provides researchers with a toolbox to study relations or interactions between entities. Rather than examining the individual attributes of an actor, network analysis deals with the connections that exist between actors. It thereby offers a systematic approach for the analysis of relational patterns that shape the internal dynamics of international organizations (IOs), as well as their engagement with external actors.

What?

As the "science of interactions" (Maoz 2011: 6), SNA is particularly well-suited for the study of IOs, both with regard to their internal structures and their embeddedness in external networks. After early applications in sociology and anthropology, network analysis grew popular in the late 1960s and early 1970s across a broad range of disciplines. In international relations, it only began to appear in the late 1990s (Hafner-Burton et al. 2009), reflecting an increased focus on cooperation and networks. This development has been accelerated in the digital age by the growing availability of online databases and archival sources and the skyrocketing computing power of modern computers, which today allow researchers to store and analyze vast datasets.

SNA is based on the premise that actors are not detached from their social context, nor solely driven by their individual characteristics, autonomous from the influence of other actors. Instead it assumes that actors are embedded in social systems, which link them to other entities, and which can determine, enable, and restrict their behavior (Knoke and Yang 2020).

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SNA seeks to measure and map the structures that emerge from these patterns of relationships, contacts, and interactions. It aims to explain how these structures develop over time, and how they influence the behavior of the network members.

Consequently, researchers increasingly rely on SNA to explore, for example, membership patterns of IOs, the effect of IO membership on the behavior of states, the internal structures of IOs, and interorganizational relations. In the 1960s, Brams already drew on joint IO membership as one of the "flows of transactions" that defined the clusters of states in the international system (1966). Network analysis has since frequently been employed to map network structures in specific policy areas (Mérand, Hofmann, and Irondelle 2011) or IOs (Macon, Mucha, and Porter 2012; Dijkhuizen and Onderco 2019). The entities investigated may be states or groups of states but also individual persons. Several studies have examined the effects of IO membership, namely with regard to climate change (von Stein 2008) or conflict (Hafner-Burton and Montgomery 2006; Dorussen and Ward 2008). Other studies have focused on interorganizational relations, exploring the position of IOs within the broader global network (Kim and Barnett 2000).

Why?

SNA offers researchers a powerful toolbox to systematically analyze relational data and thereby obtain information about IOs that could not be gained by focusing only on the individual attributes of entities. A study of an IO could, for example, take stock of the various properties of its member states, such as their geographic location, wealth, and political ideology. Yet neither of these attributes would capture the complexity of the relations between the member states in the different bodies of the IO and therefore only give a partial view of the actual dynamics that shape the work of the organization. A network approach can complement the analysis by providing information about the characteristics of the network as a whole, the positions of individual member states, and the existence and properties of subgroups.

SNA therefore brings several advantages to the study of IOs. It captures the web of structural relations that are often more important for explaining an actor's actions than their individual attributes (Hafner-Burton and Montgomery 2006). It takes into account both how an actor shapes a network through their behavior and how the network impacts on that behavior in return (structure and agency, Schulze and Ries 2017). And it allows for

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the seamless bridging of several levels of analysis: from the individual entity, to a group of actors, to the whole network (Schulze and Ries 2017; Hafner-Burton et al. 2009).

For example, it can be used for an initial mapping of an IO or a policy field, allowing the researcher to identify the most relevant actors or subgroups, which could in a second step be explored through in-depth case studies (Chané and Sharma 2017). It can yield new insights about the processes that shape the development of international norms, by investigating network structures in multilateral fora (e.g., voting or sponsorship networks). Unpacking the internal structures of an IO (as a network of member states, secretariats, and departments) also helps explore questions about organizational forms, and the challenges and opportunities they offer. SNA can reveal the dynamics that influence the legal interpretation of international norms, by exploring the interactions between courts. Furthermore, it can help capture the influence of IOs in policy networks, for example by assessing their relative position in issue-specific communication networks.

How?

At its most basic, a network consists of two elements: entities (nodes) and their relations with each other (ties). A node can be anything, from an individual person to an informal group, a state, an IO, or even an inanimate object, such as a judgment or a treaty. Similarly, a tie can be established by any form of contact between those entities, for example membership in an IO or ratification of an international treaty, participation in an event, information exchange, diplomatic relations, or armed conflicts. The type of relation on which data will be collected must be defined from the outset because it will determine the type of network that will be analyzed. Each entity will likely be involved in a myriad of different networks. For example, a state's trade network will differ from its diplomatic or its development aid network. It is therefore important to carefully define the rules that determine tie formation between nodes, and to clearly establish the significance of the selected relation for the research question. Joint membership in an IO, for example, is a widely used network variable, yet it is often insufficient to capture relations between member states. Multilateral fora may provide opportunities for engagement between their members, but the degree of actual interaction will depend on the setting. Council meetings in the EU, for instance, foster close exchanges among high-level politicians and will therefore build more influential ties than the meetings of "midlevel bureau-

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crats in the African Groundnut Council" (Hafner-Burton and Montgomery 2009: 579). Focusing on direct interactions, such as the joint tabling of proposals or joint organization of relevant events, may therefore yield more accurate results.

Networks can take different forms. A relational (one-mode) network captures direct relationships between two entities (e.g., trade, diplomatic representation), whereas an affiliation (two-mode) network captures common affiliation with a third entity (e.g., membership in an IO, participation in an event). A distinction must also be made between symmetric and asymmetric networks. A symmetric tie has equal value for both connected nodes (e.g., cosponsorship networks: state A and state B have both sponsored the draft), whereas an asymmetric tie does not (e.g., citation networks: judgment B refers to judgment A but judgment A, preceding judgment B, cannot possibly cite judgment B). Researchers must also decide whether to adopt a whole network or an egocentric network approach. The former examines the relations between all nodes in a defined social setting, the latter focuses on one entity and studies its direct relations with other entities, as well as the relations between them. For example, a study of a specific policy area could include all IOs active in this field or select one of them and investigate its network relations.

Once the research parameters are set, researchers must decide on the data collection method. In the early days of SNA, observational research was widely used. In IO research, this method offers the advantage of an insider's perspective (see chapter 2—*Participant Observation*) and thereby may allow capturing a specific form of relation that would remain invisible through other means. At the same time, the difficulty of gaining access to what are often confidential settings, and the considerable time investment that is required, may pose challenges. In addition, given the size of the social setting under investigation, it may often be impossible to capture all relevant contacts, leading to gaps in the data, which are particularly detrimental in network analysis. Survey research offers a viable alternative, though it also comes with challenges (see chapter 4—*Surveys*) (Scott 2017). In particular, researchers must decide whether they will let their respondents choose possible answers from a predefined list or let them answer freely. The former requires that the researcher has identified all possible entities in a network in advance, in order to ensure the completeness of the data. It can thereby minimize data gaps but may at the same time be cumbersome in cases of large networks with many possible responses. The second approach defines the network based on the responses by the survey participants. This may be useful in order to identify previously unknown

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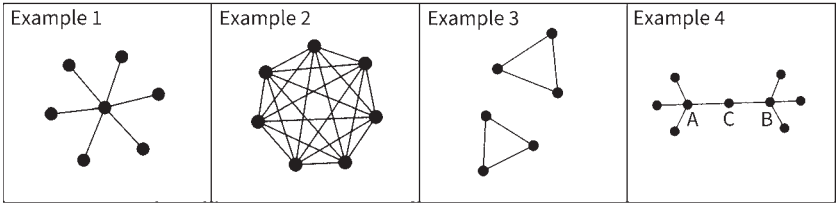

Figure 10. Sample network graphs

entities in the network, but it risks data gaps if responses are incomplete. The most convenient form of data collection will often be documentary research (see chapter 10—*Document Analysis: A Praxiographic Approach*). Today, most IOs make huge quantities of data freely available online, providing researchers with an easily accessible goldmine of information, including meeting and voting records, preparatory documents, activity reports, and treaty and case-law databases.

Depending on the research objectives, the subsequent data analysis can focus on the overall network, on the position of entities within the network, on subgroups, or on a combination thereof. Network level measures include for example density and centralization, the former indicating the overall level of connections between the nodes, the latter the extent to which a network is focused on specific nodes. Figure 10 proposes sample network graphs showing (1) a centralized, sparse network, (2) a decentralized, dense network, and (3) a fragmented network. Actor-level measures determine the centrality of nodes in the network. They include degree centrality (the sum of the ties between the node and all other nodes), closeness centrality (the distance of a node to all other nodes in the network), betweenness centrality (the number of shortest paths that go through a particular node), and eigenvector centrality (which also considers the centrality of the nodes with which a node is connected). Finally, SNA allows the identification of subgroups—clusters of more than three nodes that, for example, are all interconnected by ties of a certain strength (clique) or that are structurally similar (block or structurally equivalent cluster).

The results may give insights about the efficiency and robustness of the network, about the level of coordination in subgroups (Dijkhuizen and Onderco 2019), and about the power of individual nodes. For example, nodes with a high degree centrality (such as nodes A and B in example 4) may wield social power and play an influential role in the network, whereas nodes with a high betweenness centrality may act as brokers, building bridges to less connected parts of the network (such as node C in example 4).

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What Challenges?

Despite the potential of SNA, researchers must also be aware of its limitations and challenges. Some of these are methodological in nature, such as the difficulty of dynamic network modeling, which captures the development of a network over time (Maoz 2011). Most studies offer static snapshots of a network, which yield no information about network growth or dissolution, about the changes in the positions of actors and subgroups. They may therefore overlook crucial developments and ultimately offer a distorted view of the actual dynamics.

Another challenge is multiplexity (Schulze and Ries 2017): networks with multiple types of ties between nodes. Entities are usually members of several networks, and the constraints they face in one network may impact on their behavior in another. A network based on one type of tie offers only a partial view of a more complex reality and may lead to erroneous conclusions. To mitigate these shortcomings, it is often advisable to integrate SNA in a mixed-method research design, complementing it with statistical or qualitative approaches, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the individual attributes of the nodes, as well as the quality of their ties (Chane and Sharma 2017; Schulze and Ries 2017).

In addition, researchers should be mindful of ethical concerns, which are particularly pressing when the entities analyzed are individual persons. SNA does not allow for the anonymity of the entities at the stages of data collection and analysis because the individual nodes and their relations need to be identified. It also does not allow for anonymous grouping of entities but identifies every node and its position in the network individually. Even anonymization of the final results will often not hinder the identification of the entities through reverse engineering.

Finally, it is the highly technical character of SNA that constitutes perhaps the primary practical obstacle to a more widespread application in IO research. For those undaunted by this challenge, SNA offers a powerful toolkit for the analysis of social processes.

To Go Further

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INTERLUDE IV

Challenging IOs through Numbers

Simon Hug

Introduction[1]

My point of departure for this interlude is a simple one: there is nothing unique or distinctive to international organizations (IOs) that would justify specific methods. There might be specific issues in using particular methods when dealing with IOs (many of which appear more generally in international relations (IR) or political science scholarship), but I do not know of any specific method that is uniquely applicable to IO research, certainly not among quantitative methods. The chapters of this part of the edited book underline this quite convincingly as they discuss and illustrate (a subset of) methods widely used in political science and IR.

Let me also be clear what I consider to be a method: a method is a set of procedures that allows us to adjudicate among rival hypotheses (Sprinz and Wolinsky-Nahmias 2004: 4). So a method is not a technique of data collection alone (e.g., participant observations, elite surveys, text or network analysis, etc.) nor is it a theory (see Sprinz and Wolinsky-Nahmias 2004 and Barkin in this volume, Interlude V—*Controversies on Methodological Pluralism*, though this latter text unduly associates methods with epistemological stances).[2] Thus if one considers the use of quantitative methods in the study of IOs, one generally finds almost always related (though often delayed) pat-

1. Helpful comments by Gerald Schneider and the editors of this volume are gratefully acknowledged.

2. It is useful to note that in IR scholarship there is considerable confusion about methods and theoretical approaches (or, god forbid, paradigms; see, e.g., chapter headings in Reus-Smit and Snidal 2008).

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terns as in IR or political science more broadly. Thus specific quantitative tools were introduced (or discarded) in political science or IR more generally, before similar introductions (and eliminations) occurred in research on IOs. While Singer and Alger's (1968: 3) quip that "[I]f it can be measured, it must be trivial" has been made to characterize the critique of quantitative work in IR more broadly, it certainly also characterized scholarship on IOs critical of quantitative methods more specifically.

IOs, IR, and Numbers

If one considers systematic work in IR, a rather schizophrenic picture emerges when it comes to quantitative studies. On the one hand, as Singer and Alger's (1968) volume demonstrates, even in the late 1960s quantitative work still had to fight for being taken seriously in the broader IR scholarship. On the other, on some aspects of scholarship on IOs quantitative studies were almost the only game in town when it comes to systematic work. Thus Alger (1970) notes that in the 1950s and 1960s reputable journals, including *International Organization*, while focusing on IOs, often published few systematic studies. He also notes that a large share of these systematic studies analyzed quantitatively voting in various international assemblies (more on this below).

Thus in some sense the IO literature followed a similar pattern as many other areas of IR scholarship, from mostly qualitative case studies to systematic comparisons and finally studies taking inferential problems seriously. This is reflected in the increasing importance of quantitative work (see Sprinz and Wolinsky-Nahmias 2004: 4). Nevertheless, quantitative scholars in IR more generally and IOs (Hafner-Burton, von Stein, and Gartzke 2008) more specifically still feel the need to defend their approaches.[3]

Examples of the Use of Quantitative Methods

It is useful to discuss why methods used in research on IOs are hardly (if ever) different from methods used elsewhere in IR or political science research by focusing on some examples, which closely follow the chapters

3. Note also, however, that some national, mostly European, literatures have dissociated themselves from international trends.

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brought together in this part on quantitative methods. It bears noting that most of these chapters do not present and discuss "methods" in a strict sense but focus on measurement tools.

Voting

As the review of systematic work on IOs in the 1950s and 1960s by Alger (1970: 444) nicely shows, analyses of voting, mostly in the General Assembly of the UN (UNGA), dominated (see review offered by Voeten in chapter 14—*Voting Analysis*),[4] which led this author also to a critical assessment:

> On the other hand, given limited skills, time, and money it seems reasonable to conclude that too much of what is available has been put into voting studies. After all, roll-call votes cover only about one-fifth of the votes in the United Nations General Assembly, and more than half of the decisions are made without voting at all.

Thus, as Alger (1970) states, most studies on voting in IOs neglect that much business is conducted in these assemblies without votes. Similarly, the process leading up to these votes (and their content) is almost always ignored (see relatedly Conrad and Monroe 2021), which is considerably problematic as numerous studies unreflectively use such voting records to provide measures of state preferences (see discussion in chapter 14—*Voting Analysis*),Thus a large part of the voting literature on IO reads as if very little had happened since Rice (1928) pleaded for quantitative analyses. Similarly, few studies explore tools developed in political science and related disciplines to analyze voting records both to infer positions but also, at the same time, to test specific hypotheses, as done in Hug and Lukács's (2014) study of what explains votes at the UN Human Rights Council.

4. The importance of voting in systematic quantitative studies of IOs is obviously reflective of the very early quantitative work on voting in parliaments initiated by among many others Rice (1928).

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Individuals and MCA

A look back at the early IO literature (see Alger 1970) suggests that a few systematic studies already early on focused on individuals. Thus Keohane (1969) relied on similar sources as those discussed by Oksamytna (box u—*Building Databases on Individuals*) and Badache (box t—*Navigating Human Resource Statistics*). In many traditions of IR research, however, such a focus on individuals appeared meaningless. Nevertheless, some path-breaking work on negotiators by Jacobson et al. (1983) illustrated how the behavioral revolution also was of relevance for IR scholars generally and IO researchers more specifically. As much of this individual-level data is quite plentiful, quantitative methods used in the social sciences experiencing the behavioral revolution were deployed to great effect. While much of this work adhered to an inferential strategy, in some areas (both topically and geographically) more descriptive tools were deployed, as for instance the tool discussed by Brissaud (chapter 18—*Multiple Correspondence Analysis*). For inferential, and thus mostly explanatory purposes, however, such tools are quite inadequate.[5]

Text and Social Network Analysis

Needless to say, the analyses of texts and interactions in a quantitative way has featured prominently in the IO literature. Much of this work, however, as discussed by Mitrani and Noy (chapter 17—*Computerized Text Analysis*) and Chané (chapter 19—*Social Network Analysis*), aimed at generating measures of particular features of IOs and thus offered basically tools for generating information. Obviously in the field of network analyses, to already foreshadow the end of this part, methods have been developed that allow testing hypotheses and theories. Similarly, text analyses of the quantitative type can be integrated in a method to do the same. As the latter is hardly done in the literature on IOs, I will refrain from covering this second development, while returning to the first below.

Thus Graber (1969) had recourse already to such a measurement strategy in order to assess the perceptions in the UN regarding the conflict in the Middle East. Doing so the author relied on practices and tools widely used

5. Thus Brissaud's (chapter 18—*Multiple Correspondence Analysis*) reference to hypotheses will strike many readers as odd, as he is quite explicit about the fact that MCA proceeds inductively.

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in other fields, and thus it cannot surprise that Mitrani and Noy (chapter 17—*Computerized Text Analysis*) in their review basically discuss tools used in text analysis in other fields of research. Also the three main challenges for using these tools in IO research that they identify, namely translation, context, and intention, are hardly specific to IOs (e.g., Proksch and Slapin 2012). Thus while there is interesting work on IO texts using automated text analysis, much of the work focusing on speeches does not yet sufficiently take the context and intentions in international assemblies and parliaments into account.

Similarly, analyses of interactions have also played an important role in work on IOs since the early quantitative studies. Thus Alger (1966) carried out a detailed analysis of interactions among delegates in the 5th committee of the UNGA. Much work on interactions and networks reviewed by Chané (chapter 19—*Social Network Analysis*) is now commonly known as Social Network Analysis (SNA), which corresponds to a set of tools to describe interactions and network characteristics. Thus SNA used in this way is basically a measurement tool that can be used to describe networks. Summaries thereof can be powerfully used in subsequent traditional quantitative analyses. More recently, however, several scholars rely on network analyses in an inferential, explanatory perspective, mostly drawing on Exponential Random Graph models. In this vein, Cranmer, Heinrich, and Desmarais (2014) consider how network effects play out in international economic sanctions, especially how reciprocity influences sanction regimes.

Quantitative Analyses

It is probably fitting to end this interlude with a section on quantitative analyses more broadly. As such analyses are broadly dominant in the IR literature, it is not surprising that they also have their place in IO research. Hence Roger's (chapter 16—*Large-N Data and Quantitative Analyses*) review eloquently shows that research questions addressed in this field find almost always close parallels in other areas of political science research. Thus the problems of quantitative work on IOs this author highlights are not unique to this field but are largely identical to the ones present in quantitative IR and political science more broadly.

These issues are also convincingly illustrated by the application proposed by Cottier and Bohnet (chapter 15—*Statistical Analyses with IO Data*). Data provided by IOs are often collected for very different purposes than those for which researchers want to use them (as in most subfields, see Lustick 1996), which also implies that researchers have to be careful how they are used.

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Conclusion

Systematic studies of IOs have, as Alger (1970) nicely demonstrates, already a considerable history. Methods used (often earlier) in IR and political science research found entrance in the field of IO research and have allowed for numerous novel insights. Thus quantitative work has gained in stature in IO research (as in IR more generally), but as illustrated by the discussion of the examples above, in many areas of IO research quantitative scholars neglect important caveats of not only quantitative but also qualitative research. Consequently, the use of voting records without considering what leads to votes (and how this changes over time), or considering documents from IOs uncritically is considerably problematic. Similarly, in assessing the consequences of IOs it is baffling that work still fails to consider that IO membership is largely endogenous to many outcomes we might be interested in. These shortcomings, while easy to document and illustrate for quantitative research, are affecting, however, both qualitative and quantitative work on IOs.

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PART 5

Combining

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Introduction

Combining

Fanny Badache, Leah R. Kimber, and Lucile Maertens

In order to answer a research question, scholars often rely on two or more methods introduced in the first four parts of this book to generate, collect, and analyze data. This section, entitled *Combining*, discusses the advantages and challenges of explicitly and purposely combining methods in research projects on IOs while providing practical examples.

Historically, scholars have mostly limited their methodological toolkit to the methods associated with their discipline. Methods of observation, for instance, have originally been used by anthropologists and sociologists (see part 1—*Observing*), while archival research was taken on by historians (see part 3—*Documenting*). However, in the last decades, scholars in social sciences and the humanities have increasingly mobilized an array of methods broadening the scope of their methodological approaches. Drawing on methods stemming from different disciplines has allowed scholarship in IO research to witness an increasing—and welcoming—interdisciplinary dialogue.

This section shows how studying IOs by combining methods has multiple advantages for doing empirical research in the ever-changing contexts of multilateralism. On the one hand, the use of multiple methods is relevant to address specific theoretical questions such as unpacking power relationships, going beyond institutional discourse, understanding the complex agency of IO actors, or tracing the origins of a particular idea or program. On the other hand, at a methodological level, researchers have suggested several rationales for combining methods. Being aware of the inherent limi-

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tations of each method, researchers combine methods to overcome these in order to search for more validity (*triangulation*). Using various methods and thus intertwining data may come in handy to *complement* and *expand* the results derived from one method, which in turn allows researchers to *explore* the findings further. The combination of methods may at times also be needed to overcome the challenges researchers face while doing fieldwork, as it reveals the crafted nature of social science research (see chapter 29—*Composing Collages: Working at the Edge of Disciplinary Boundaries*).

This having been said, contributions also point to important challenges in combining methods. For instance, it supposes a high diversity of methodological skills and generally calls for more material resources. Last but not least, studies that combine methods are often longer both in the time dedicated to data generation and analysis as well as in their written format. The latter may collide with scientific journals that restrict the number of words in their publications.

The contributions gathered in this section address the issue of methodological combination in three ways. First, scholars provide examples of the combination of some established methods in social sciences (see chapter 20—*Interviews and Observations*, chapter 21—*Observations, Interviews, and Archives*, and chapter 22—*Computational Text Analysis and Archival Methods*). They explore why and how these specific methods can be combined, what the value added is, and point to their reoccurring challenges. In box v—*Challenging Secrecy*, combining methods helps overcome the hurdles of secrecy in IOs for instance, while box w—*Research with LinkedIn*, shows how digital platforms provide complementary information. The possibility of combining methods is, of course, not limited to these examples. Second, contributors shed light on how combining methods can be done as part of a coherent research design (see chapter 23—*Qualitative Comparative Analysis*, chapter 24—*Structured, Focused Comparison*, and chapter 25—*Process Tracing*), guiding the reader on how to make sense of such combinations. Third, contributors present methodological approaches that in essence necessitate the combination of various methods for their data generation, data collection, and data analysis (see chapter 26—*Prosopography*, chapter 27—*Practice Analysis*, chapter 28—*Feminist Approaches*, chapter 29—*Composing Collages: Working at the Edge of Disciplinary Boundaries*, box x—*Postcolonial Insights*, and box z—*Expeditions as a Research Method*). These contributions focus on a particular research approach and its adaptation to the IO context.

In sum, the final part of this book opens with a reflection on methodology (see box y—*Reflexivity in Practice*), broadening the specific challenges

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on methods per se. Taken together, these contributions shed light on three important dimensions when combining methods: the rationales, timing, and practical implications. While all show that combining methods allows researchers to grasp the heightened complexities of IOs, they also provide rich examples by advocating in favor of methodological pluralism in the study of IOs (Interlude V—*Controversies on Methodological Pluralism*).

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CHAPTER 20

Interviews and Observations

Kari De Pryck

Who has never had, reading a report by an international organization (IO) or interviewing an international actor, the impression of being served the official discourse, a politically correct speech that shies away from sensitive and contentious issues? While this may not be a problem if you are interested in the representations and worldviews projected by IOs, it may become frustrating when you seek to study what they do in practice. Researchers here are interested in daily activities, which are often more complex than what procedures let transpire, loopholes in the procedures (which give bureaucrats room for maneuver), and cases of mismanagement (no one is perfect). Yet you will often be told, especially in times of crisis, that there is nothing more to say than what is already available in the official reports and press releases. In this chapter, I discuss how to combine interviews and participant observation to circumvent (and at the same time study) IOs' strategies to control the information that is being shared in official documents and discourses. Both methods can be used to generate *original* data on the day-to-day life of IOs and to complement other approaches that delve into the documents and reports that they produce.

What?

Interviews and observations are two well-established qualitative methods in the social sciences, which are often used to study IOs (see part 1—*Observing* and part 2—*Interviewing*). Interview research, the craft of collecting data through conversations (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009), may take different

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forms depending on the research design: interviews may be structured (relying on a strict set of questions), semistructured (relying on an open set of questions) (see chapter 5—*Semistructured Interviews*), or unstructured (with no predetermined questions). They also often have different purposes. For instance, ethnographic interviews (see chapter 3—*Ethnographic Interviews*) aim at learning about a given culture from the interviewees' perspective. Biographical interviews (see chapter 6—*Biographic Interviews*) seek to gain access to the life histories and career trajectories of individuals. Finally, praxiographic interviews (Bueger and Gadinger 2018) emphasize collecting clues about the practical knowledge of participants. The data takes the form of interview notes, recordings, and transcripts.

Instead of experiencing IOs through the eyes of an informant, direct and participant observation seeks to obtain an unmediated personal witnessing of them. Such a method (see chapter 1—*Direct Observation* and chapter 2—*Participant Observation*) ranges on a continuum from passive (involving no or marginal intervention from the researcher into the activities under study) to active participation (including engaged participation by the researcher in those activities). The researcher may occupy different roles in an organization, as a member of a government delegation, as an observer, or as a staff at headquarters, regional, or national offices. The data takes the form of fieldnotes and other documents gathered during the immersion period. Depending on the role, the sensitivity of the data may be more or less important—for example, an observer will be less confronted with confidentiality issues than a member of a national delegation or a staff.

Combining interviews with observations may provide rich and detailed insight into the depth of IOs and the individuals who gravitate around them. Both methods are often used in ethnographic research (Spadley 1979) and in mixed-method approaches, which combine both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis (Small 2011). For instance, Lucile Maertens and Raphaëlle Parizet (2017) used participant observation and semidirected interviews (in addition to document analysis) to compare depoliticization practices in the United Nations Environment Programme's Post-Conflict and Disaster Management Branch and the United Nations Development Programme's Country Office in Mexico. Both methods are used to complement each other and gain the widest perspective on those organizations. In my own work on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), I combined ethnographic methods with descriptive statistics (Gros 2017) and used a database of IPCC scientists and diplomats to quantify insights from direct observation and interviews (De Pryck 2022).

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Why?

The most obvious advantages of combining multiple methods is that the findings can be used to *confirm* and/or *complement* each other: the data derived from one method can be used to verify findings derived from the other and/or compensate for its weaknesses. Because different types of data generally produce different types of knowledge, complementary research design is more frequent than a confirmatory one (Small 2011).

Combining interviews and observations is particularly relevant to enlarge our understanding of IOs beyond what is publicly communicated in official documents. For instance, observations allow researchers to experience an IO through their own eyes, adding to the testimonies gathered in the interviews.

In the first stage of my research, direct observations of IPCC plenary sessions (where the member states of the organization meet) were pivotal to develop a familiarity with the inner workings of the organization that I would not have gained if I had only lived it through participants' accounts. Such familiarity also contributed to enhance the relevance and depth of my interviews (because I had gained inside knowledge). On the other hand, interviews are particularly informative, at a second stage, to reflect on the data collected during the observations. Because the experience of the embedded researchers is often bound to the position they occupy (from observer to staff or delegate), the accreditation they receive (complete or limited access), and the length of the immersion (from a few weeks to a few months/years), interviews can be useful to "fill in the blanks" of observations. For instance, in my research on the IPCC, I conducted several formal interviews with informants that I had met during my fieldwork to gather their perspectives on certain outcomes and to help me put my observations into perspective. Finally, interviews are also relevant to confirm information that, for confidentiality reasons, cannot be displayed as excerpts from the field.

Another major advantage of combining interviews and participant observation is that it makes it possible to circumvent (and study) the strategies of *stage management* by IOs. Stage management is a concept introduced by the sociologist of science Stephen Hilgartner to describe the "techniques for controlling what is publicly displayed and what is concealed" by an institution (Hilgartner 2000: 7). While originally introduced to study the production of science advice, stage management strategies are also visible in the practices of formal organizations (Broadhead and Rist 1979). As noted by Hilgartner, "bureaucracies—well known for their elaborate external and internal boundaries—typically segregate audiences and separate information into multiple regions, carefully controlling access to written material" (2001: 19). Drawing on Goffman (1959), Hilgartner distinguishes between

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the front stage (the official views and images communicated to external audiences) and the backstage (the information and practices that are concealed to them). International bureaucracies employ very similar strategies, carefully selecting the kind of information that is publicly displayed, the individual entitled to speak on their behalf, and under which conditions. In this context, interviews and participant observation can be useful to observe the front and back stages of IOs. Interviews were for instance very relevant to reconstruct the crisis that shook the IPCC in 2009, when errors were found in its Fourth Assessment Report—for instance, regarding a rapid retreat of Himalayan glaciers. The organization responded officially only a month later (after a series of blunders by its chair, which included comparing critiques to "voodoo science"). Interviews allowed me to better understand the circumstances that led to such delay in responding to critiques: the IPCC secretariat had been under a lot of pressure following growing media attention on climate change and did not have a proper communication strategy. Besides, members of the Bureau (the governing body of the IPCC) did not agree on who should take responsibility for the errors (De Pryck 2021).

How?

When using interviews and participant observation, a number of elements should be considered at different stages in the research. I briefly mention a few, for they are already addressed in greater details in parts 1 and 2 of this volume.

Since different methodologies lead to different types of research questions and hypotheses, it is important to reflect on the scope of the research early on and be explicit about the rationale for the selected methods. While this is true for all scientific investigation, it is particularly important when combining methods as this requires collecting data in ways that facilitate their combination at a later stage. Will the interviews be conducted before, during, or after participant observation? Will the interviews seek to reflect on findings stemming from the observation or explore issues that were not covered in the observation, or both? The combination of methods in time and space needs to be well thought out.

In the context of increased attention to data protection, researchers are generally requested to provide interviewees with a formal document explaining the objective of the research, the terms of the interview (leaving to the interviewee the possibility to decide if they want the interview to be recorded and if their identity should be anonymized), and the use that will be made of the data. This procedure is also a way to reassure the informants that their

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data will be used appropriately and to convince them of the legitimacy of the research. Information on data protection must in some cases also be provided when carrying out participant observation—for example, how will the identity of participants be protected? Will recording be used? Universities are increasingly requiring researchers to win approval by their ethical review boards to carry out research.

When preparing for interviews, researchers need to identify the participants who will be included in the study and on which ground: employees of a particular department and/or program? Government delegates? Third parties such as civil society groups? In certain cases, the geographical representativeness of the participants needs to be considered to avoid perspectives being underrepresented (e.g., from the Global South). Additional questions include how the potential interviewees will be contacted (by email or on site) and how the project will be introduced to them. Having inside knowledge of the IO's functioning can be an advantage when making a request for an interview because the researcher may be seen as an "insider"—interviewees may feel more at ease and share more stories than with an "outsider." On the other hand, it can be a disadvantage especially when the interviewee seizes the opportunity during the meeting to gain insight from the researcher, who in turn runs the risk of losing the thread of the discussion to the extent of becoming themselves the interviewee.

When planning participant observation, the researcher needs to consider the different positions that can be occupied in an IO, because each role generates different types of knowledge. For instance, it is not the same to observe diplomatic deliberations from the standpoint of a civil society group/observer, of an IO employee, or of a government delegation (see table 3 in chapter 2—*Participant Observation*). In multilateral forums, the accreditation also delimits the spaces to which researchers have access. Observers or third parties for instance can attend the plenary room, where the general debate takes place, but they rarely have access to breakout rooms (where governments negotiate specific issues behind closed doors). Depending on access rights and responsibilities, interviews can be used to gain information on the unfolding of meetings that the researcher could not cover due to limited access.

What Challenges?

Both methods have their limitations, some of which have been already mentioned (the question of recruiting informants, of getting access to IOs,

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and so on). To avoid them, researchers can rely on other sources of data to complement and contrast their findings. IOs produce a large number of documents (procedures, minutes, guidelines, reports, press releases, and so on) and make them available on their website or in their archives. Using this data can be very useful to put observations into perspective and to support sensitive findings collected through participant observation with other documents. In my research on the IPCC, I also made abundant use of the participants' comments that I could find in books and in scientific journals (e.g., *Nature* and *Science*).

While combining interview and participant observation is relevant to explore the backstage of IOs, both methods can be subject to stage management strategies and have their limitation, even combined. Interviews can become performances, during which the interviewee subtly emphasizes certain issues while concealing or remaining vague about others. Interviewees, and in particular scientific or technical experts, may use techniques of *boundary work* (Gieryn 1983) by seeking to present their activities as objective and nonpolitical. Such strategies are also prevalent in IOs (Louis and Maertens 2021). In my research on the IPCC, I soon realized that some of the interviewees were giving me a "guided tour" of the organization and avoided sharing information about the internal dynamics of the assessment process. I realized that this type of discourse reflected a more generalized strategy of the organization that consisted in emphasizing the procedures guiding the assessment, while remaining discreet about the unwritten rules that shape the internal deliberations between scientists and diplomats. While participant observation allows researchers to bypass such strategy, certain arenas will still be difficult to access or remain closed to researchers (see, e.g., Bourrier 2017 on getting access to the World Health Organization).

In a context where practices of IOs are increasingly scrutinized, stage management strategies have become more common (e.g., employees receive media training and are briefed on how to respond to sensitive questions; access to researchers is made more difficult and bureaucratic) to the point of potentially creating blind spots that cannot be filled by any research method. Taking stock of these hurdles leads researchers to recognize that social reality is always more complex than what research methods allow them to see.

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BOX V

Challenging Secrecy

Olivier Schmitt

Accessing data in an international organization (IO) may be challenging because of the secrecy in which policymaking activities are sometimes shrouded. Secrecy is here understood as the institutional process of concealing information about the organization, for operational and security purposes. This concealment happens through work cultures (some organizations are more or less open about their activities) and/or through specific regulations. Challenging secrecy is then about knowing how to uncover secrets, determining which are relevant, and exercising judgment in publishing these secrets. It is a well-known fact that bureaucratic organizations tend to overclassify information, and IOs are no exception to the rule. This is particularly acute in security-oriented IOs such as the North Atlantic Treaty rganization (NATO) or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), but lifting the veil on particular activities is a challenge that researchers working on any IO will encounter.

A second issue to keep in mind is that unveiling secrets is different from getting a "scoop." To answer the vast majority of research questions, understanding social patterns (such as decision-making processes) is far more important than obtaining very specific information such as the precise wording of a classified document. Fortunately for researchers, the former is usually more easily done than the latter. Work practices and social patterns can be *secret* (in the sense that they are not openly exposed outside of the organization), but they are not necessarily *protected* (in the sense that their access is restricted according to a specific set of regulations) the way specific documents usually are.

The third issue to address is the ethical dimension of unveiling secrets.

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Peoples' careers and lives are on the line, and the commitment to research needs to be bounded by the principle of "first, do no harm." The very unlikely situation of uncovering blatantly illegal activities aside, researchers need to assess the data they publish, taking into consideration the impact on people inside the IO under study: it is very possible that the researcher uncovers more than what is necessary to make a compelling argument, and not everything unveiled during the research process needs to be published.

With these three issues in mind, different methods facilitate the unveiling of secrets within IOs. Participant observation is obviously an effective way to circumvent secrecy, since the researcher is embedded within the organization (see chapter 2—*Participant Observation*). Some form of nondisclosure agreement should be agreed upon in advance in order to delineate the boundaries of the final publication. Participant observation can be difficult to establish, and interviews are another way for researchers to access relevant (secret) data (see chapter 5—*Semistructured Interviews* and chapter 6—*Biographic Interviews*). The methodological principles discussed in chapter 3 (*Ethnographic Interviews*) are of course applicable here, but it is worth mentioning that, in my experience, interviewees are more comfortable discussing sensitive aspects of their work when note-taking is preferred to recording. Finally, it is important to protect the data obtained in line with each university's ethical requirements.

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CHAPTER 21

Observations, Interviews, and Archives

Marieke Louis

> "Like ranchers and farmers, historians and social scientists lay claim to the same terrain with different purposes in mind. . . . Fortunately, the conflict between the two professions has never gone beyond rhetorical violence, but it has at times been acute and, in my opinion, counterproductive." (Lebow 2001: 111)

The question of mixing methods like observation, interviews, and archives analysis is closely intertwined with the debates on interdisciplinarity in social sciences and distinctions going far back into the nineteenth century, essentially between anthropology and ethnography, and sociology and history (Arborio et al. 2008; Cohen 2008; Bloch 1992; Buton and Mariot 2009; Müller 2006; Weber 1996). While these disciplinary borders might be comforting, many in the IR field admit that building bridges between disciplines and research traditions is a more fruitful way to study not only international politics in general (Elman and Fendius Elman 2001) but also IOs in both past and present times.

What?

In this chapter, observation goes from rather passive activities like attending, reporting, recording, and taking pictures during international meetings as well as witnessing ordinary interactions during more informal situations, to more active forms of observation pertaining to participant observation (internship, expertise, and so on) (see chapter 1—*Direct Observation*, chapter 2—*Participant Observation*, and Chapter 20—*Interviews and Observa-*

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tions). Interviews mostly encompass the techniques of qualitative semistructured discussions lasting from thirty minutes to two hours or more with a variety of actors (diplomats, national or international civil servants from director to lower-level staff, trade unionists, employers' representatives, NGO members, and so on) (see chapter 3—*Ethnographic Interviews* and chapter 5—*Semistructured Interviews*). Finally archive analysis relates to the examination of two main kinds of sources: the consultation of documents (physical or online) stored by and within the archive department of the organization under study (if existent), but also "self-constituted" archives, meaning documents related to past events that are not necessarily considered worthy of attention by the institution and thus not stored within IOs by professionals (see chapter 8—*Archives*). They can either be collected during fieldwork or shared by private actors during the research process. While only the former might be officially stamped as archives, the latter also deserves our attention as such sources will be examined and used in similar ways as official archives.

Why?

Combining the study of *archives* with *observation* of past and present situations as well as *interacting*—mainly through *interviews*—with contemporary individuals who shape or have shaped the everyday life of IOs is not just a tool for fact-checking and triangulation. It also allows the researcher to achieve more robust results and a deeper understanding of a given problem such as representativeness claims at the ILO (Louis 2016), gender within IO-led international programs (Saiget 2017), food security at the FAO (Cornilleau 2019), heritage protection during UN peacekeeping operations (Leloup 2021), among others. Such combination is particularly relevant, even necessary, when the researcher is confronted with the study of change and continuity, legitimization processes, institutional mechanisms, and routines firmly rooted in the past and the tradition of an organization like tripartite representation in the ILO (Louis 2016) or the influence of neoclassical economics at the FAO (Cornilleau 2019). For each of these topics, the mix of methods performs three distinct though complementary functions: informing, confronting, and remembering.

(1) The **study of change and continuity** over a long period of time is the most obvious reason to combine observation, interviews, and archive analysis. As most of the IOs we study nowadays

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were created at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, we are confronted with a problem of *missing* sources related to both past and present facts. In some cases, archives are not accessible for reasons of confidentiality, disclosure rules, loss during IOs' moves, thereby rendering the resort to interviews and, when possible, oral history even more necessary. For instance, in the case of the International Chamber of Commerce (created in 1919) many archives were either lost or only episodically stored. Sometimes key individuals did not leave any archival record at all. Interviewing them (or their colleagues or relatives if deceased) might therefore be a way to circumvent the dearth of empirical material whether we are interested in past or present events. Reciprocally, when one intends to go back to the roots of a specific issue, interviews and observation are not always adequate sources, as events might go way back beyond what contemporary individuals can actually know or remember. Archives are therefore necessary to reconstruct the genesis of the problem under study. Without considering observation, interviews, and archives as substitutable sources, one can think of combining them as a way to reconstitute the whole picture of the problem under study and to fill out empirical loopholes (see chapter 20—*Interviews and Observations*). Moreover, in order to claim any kind of "turning point" within IOs, we need to be able to document a "before" and an "after" without considering that these categories are self-evident and mere chronological attributes. The more documented these historical periods are, the less exposed to the criticism of restrictive case selection the researcher is.

(2) Combining observation, interviews, and archives is also useful in order to **challenge dominant discourses** produced by IOs, as institutions often prone to consensus and reluctant to publicizing controversies and conflicts, especially when these discourses rely upon convictions and narratives deeply rooted in the past to the extent of being almost naturalized and internalized by institutional actors. Combining methods therefore aims at circumventing silences or establishing critical distance from subjective and sometimes distorted perceptions of reality. The idea is thus to confront discourses with practices in very concrete terms and not just abstract hypotheses. Discourses can be documented either through observation,

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interviews, or archives. In order to challenge legitimization strategies though, the purpose of combination is to confront discourses (through interviews or archived speeches for instance) with actual practices collected by the researcher during their observation or archival investigation. Combining methods can therefore prove useful in order to highlight the dominant discourse within an institution, but also to explore alternative narratives and institutional options that have been either left aside or silenced by specific, often dominant, actors (Louis 2016; Cornilleau 2019). This aspect has been well demonstrated by critical (mostly feminist and postcolonial) studies (Aradau and Huysmans 2013; Decker 2013; see chapter 28—*Feminist Approaches*). In some cases, this combination might even raise the awareness of actors involved within IOs toward their own processes and eventually have a transformative impact on them. Finally, relying upon archives and previous observation of specific situations is also a good way to assert the legitimacy of the researcher (Laurens 2007: 117), especially when facing interviewees who are reluctant to social sciences methods of investigation and try to dismiss some findings as irrelevant or anecdotical. As emphasized by Sgard (2019), combining archival work and interviews on the International Monetary Fund, interviews must necessarily complement archives if one wants to document controversial phenomena such as conflicts of interests or collective deficiencies.

(3) Beyond challenging dominant discourses, the purpose of combining methods is also to **overcome institutional silences and memory loss**: it can refer to inconvenient truths that have been intentionally "buried" but also unintentionally forgotten events or processes (Louis and Maertens 2021). This aspect of institutional (loss of) memory is especially relevant when analyzing IOs that have accumulated a considerable amount of documents, sometimes over more than a century, and encountered a high staff turnover. In the case of memory loss, the lack of archives can be circumvented by an oral testimony or a direct observation. Likewise a deficient individual memory can be compensated by available archives or direct observation of the situation under study (Louis 2016).

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How?

I hereafter describe three cases drawn from my own research on the International Labour Organization (ILO) (Louis 2016), a tripartite international organization established in 1919, in which the combination of methods has proved useful in order to unveil the above-mentioned processes.

(1) **Highlighting change and continuity**: Combining methods was rendered necessary by the specific temporality of my research question. Relying on multiple sources, especially archives and interviews, was necessary to prove the resilient character of my research question over time. I reconstituted the "chronology" of the controversies associated to representativeness. However, as archival records ended in the early 1990s, mainly for disclosure reasons, interviews were necessary to continue the investigation up to the 2010s. To put it more bluntly: interviews started where archives stopped. Based on archive analysis, I tested the resilient or, on the contrary, the conjectural character on debates around representativeness. Thanks to this combination, I was able to assert that the debate on representativeness within the ILO was a century-old debate (**continuity**) but that its politicization and intensity differed according to specific sociohistorical contexts (**change**).

(2) **Challenging dominant discourses**: One dominant view both outside and inside the ILO is that workers' and employers' delegates are adversaries who are constantly fighting to attain a compromise that will eventually be endorsed by the governments. Such view is confirmed when we study the ILO only through archives like records of proceedings or minutes translating the (public) positions of each group. However, observation and interviews allowed me to qualify this view and to shed light on more cooperative relationships between workers' and employers' representatives, but also friendships among a group of people who were sharing a specific institutional and personal experience due to their ILO membership. Archives, especially when they are institutional and official, most of the time remain silent on informal relationships and interpersonal conflicts as well as individual emotions and feelings. Moreover, as I was attending ILO meetings, I observed carefully mundane practices of members such as laughing, hug-

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ging, and small talks that could imply more proximity and familiarity than archives and even interviews would ever reveal. I then used this observation to softly challenge my interviewees when addressing the kind of relationships that they had with delegates from other groups. I avoided mentioning the observation as such—which could have given the rather unpleasant impression that I had been "spying" on them—but rather made a general comment on the atmosphere: "I thought there would be much more tensions given the stake of the negotiations this year." In other words, by concealing, even in an exaggerated way, our own perception of the situation, it can help the interviewees to expand more on their conception of the situation.

(3) **Resisting institutional amnesia**: Part of my doctoral research focused on the negotiations of a sensitive and highly political constitutional amendment that aimed at suppressing permanent seats within the ILO Governing Body. I accumulated a considerable number of archives on it from the 1960s to the 1980s. At that time, this debate was not only considered legitimate, it also absorbed the energy of ILO members and staff. However, the examination of ILO proceedings from the 1990s seemed to indicate an extinction of the debate. When asking ILO members about it during interviews between 2011 and 2013, I realized that most of them did not know about it or only in very vague terms. This was due to both turnover within delegations and the political will of dominant actors to not reactivate the debate. Scrutinizing the reactions of my interviewees when asked about this amendment, I was able to document feelings of embarrassment, ignorance, or indifference. Moreover, the fact that I constantly referred to a robust corpus of archives prevented interviewees from dismissing the question as irrelevant: they felt compelled to justify why they did *not know* about it or did *not want* to act upon it.

What Challenges?

The main challenge in combining methods is to master each one in order for the research to (1) benefit from a genuine pluri-methodological input and (2) be recognized as valuable and relevant by your peers, including from other disciplines. Unfortunately, interdisciplinarity is more often a claim than a reality, especially at a time of increased specialization and sophis-

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tication of methodological knowledge. For political scientists who do not have any background or training in history, going through archives might be a real challenge with entry costs (Garrigou 1989). Scholars, in particular students, should therefore be able to show, by carefully documenting their bibliography, that they are aware of the main epistemological debates existing in each discipline and the methodological challenges associated with each technique and source.

Beyond issues of recognition, it must be acknowledged that mastering one method already takes a lot of time, as proved by this handbook! In practice, not all methods can always be used and treated equally. Often one would feel frustrated for spending more time on one or two aspects of the research (in my case, interviews and archives clearly took most of my time at the detriment of more in-depth observation). However, beyond time, money, and institutional constraints, the most important aspect of combining methods is to make clear that *they were all necessary* to succeed in answering the research question and that it was not just a question of methodological curiosity. I would therefore advise researchers to keep in mind the following question: "What would I have missed had I not combined these three methods?"

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CHAPTER 22

Computational Text Analysis and Archival Methods

Evan Easton-Calabria and William Allen

Researchers studying international organizations often rely on textual materials produced by these organizations and held within archival settings, especially if their questions and periods of interest predate more modern materials and methods such as surveys or interviews (McGarr 2020). These materials, increasingly available in digital formats, potentially provide valuable windows into organizational priorities and practices. While qualitative archival methods—often involving close reading—offer clear advantages of conceptual clarity and familiarity, they potentially incur high costs of time and human error. This chapter outlines how researchers can combine the power of simple computational textual analysis techniques with interpretive archival methods in ways that confer efficiency and empirical validity to studies of international organizations' written outputs.

What?

The method we outline derives inspiration from the fields of computational and corpus linguistics, which seek to identify patterns of language use in sets of text (called "corpora") that are systematically assembled for particular purposes (Taylor and Marchi 2018). Our approach uses these patterns both as guides to potentially relevant portions of an archive and as forms of knowledge in their own right that can be used to address questions that

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researchers ask about international organizations.[1] First, if researchers are already interested in a particular population, concept, or event (e.g., *refugees*, *democracy*), descriptive patterns can be identified of where those terms of interest tend to appear more or less frequently as a proportion of all the text in each document. Then more intensive close reading of those areas containing more mentions can be undertaken. By contrast, if researchers are interested in identifying terms that might characterize one portion of the archive (e.g., which issues appear more often in a certain time period), the frequencies of the words in one subset of documents can be compared to their frequencies in another subset. Having found those terms, researchers can scrutinize them further using qualitative methods.

Why?

History as a field, including the study of international organizations, is still coming to grips with recent leaps in digitization (Anderson 2007). On the one hand, the growing digital availability of sources offers the potential to "democratize" archival research: researchers who previously could not travel to physical archives can now access many documents instantly. On the other hand, the growing volume and variety of materials presents large—sometimes prohibitive—costs of time and energy: closely reading every document is simply not practical (e.g., Quinn et al. 2010). An obvious solution would be to select portions of an archive, dive into reading, and identify which documents (or portions thereof) seem "important" or "different" from what one expects. However, source selection may be unknowingly yet systematically biased, such as in terms of what researchers consider to be interesting or relevant in the first place. Moreover, evaluating materials' typicality is difficult without some view across the whole archive. This view could come from deep and long-standing engagement with an archive and the organization that produced it. Yet when initially exploring an archive, perhaps as part of a new project, researchers may not have this luxury.

To address these challenges, social scientists increasingly turn to computational methods (Grimmer and Stewart 2013). On the one hand, these

1. We make several key assumptions relating to research design. First, we assume that the assembled texts are justified as being (limited) representations of an organization. Second, we assume that the object of interest—such as an issue, actor, or process—has some observable manifestation within the corpora. Third, we assume that observable variation in the texts signals something important for our research question, whether that is a shift in attention or salience. For all of this, researchers must clearly justify their choices and theoretical stances.

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approaches offer unrivalled strengths in efficiency and consistency. Unlike human coders, they can reliably evaluate many texts against many criteria without tiring. Meanwhile, by simplifying texts to their minimal features, they can identify patterns across the whole dataset that might not be readily apparent through sequential periods of reading, such as the positivity or negativity of texts. However, these methods attract concerns about their validity, particularly when used in contexts where interpretation is key: *statistically* significant patterns may not be *substantively* significant, or even accurate at all (Brookes and McEnery 2018). There is growing consensus and evidence that these methods fall short of humans' abilities when used uncritically and in isolation (van Atteveldt, van der Velden, and Boukes 2021).

For some settings, having a consistent and clearly applied measure of features within texts may be sufficient, especially when that measure is validated through coding done by humans who can more effectively adjudicate between clearly defined usages. However, archival researchers examining international organizations may have other kinds of questions in mind. For example, they may be interested in identifying beliefs and practices that are latent within texts (Bevir and Rhodes 2012). Yet landing upon these portions of digitized archives, and making sense of their wider significance, would be difficult without some sense of the whole set of materials. This is where our mixed-methods approach, drawing upon replicable techniques from computational and corpus linguistics, can help.

How?

We use three types of linguistic analysis arranged in different orders depending on the research goal. *Frequency analysis* counts instances of a given word or group of words and then displays these frequencies either in terms of the whole corpus or differentiated by subsets of texts ("subcorpora.") To enable comparison of frequencies arising from differently sized subcorpora, these frequencies are normalized into occurrences per thousand or million words (Taylor and Marchi 2018). *Keyword analysis* identifies terms that are central to a corpus or subcorpus by comparing it to another set of texts called a "reference corpus." Words more unique to the corpus in question are better candidates for exploring what the texts might be about.[2] Finally, *concordance analysis* displays the text around every instance of a word or phrase of inter-

2. Different ways of calculating keyness potentially produce different candidate terms (see Gabrielatos 2018).

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est, whether this interest is determined by frequency, keyness, or another measure. This provides a window onto how a given word or phrase is used in the documents, and a way to gain further qualitative access for either interpretation or disambiguation (for example, between *asylum* as used in either forced migration or mental health settings and *environment* to refer to political contexts rather than ecological terms).

Our working example involves analyzing a corpus of ninety-three annual reports produced by the International Labour Organization (ILO) between 1919 and 2015. These documents, made available online through the ILO's digital archive, comprise more than eighteen million words.[3] Our unit of analysis are individual reports, meaning that each year is represented by one document. While we did not divide the dataset into subcorpora (such as by decade), depending on the research question and types of archive materials, this is an option worth considering.

The first step involves organizing and tagging the texts in preparation for analysis. This is a nonneutral process, involving choices about types of metadata to attach to the text, the most important units of analysis, and even which software or programming environments to use. We used the Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al. 2014), an online platform for lexicographic and linguistic analysis, but these techniques are not software-specific and can be implemented in different computing environments and packages. Regardless of the software or tools used to complete the quantitative analysis, we advise recording all the decisions made (and settings used) during the process, if one is not automatically produced. This not only supports reproducible and transparent research for future scholars but also jogs one's memory upon returning to the project.

From here, there are at least two possible pathways. Imagine our research were focused on refugees, and we were interested in ascertaining how salient refugees have been for the ILO throughout the twentieth century. The ILO is not usually publicly associated with forced migration issues involving refugees. Therefore if we were to rely on close reading of these documents to seek evidence of the ILO's relationship with refugees, we would likely incur high search costs for uncertain results. Therefore we could measure the normalized frequency of the terms *refugee* and *refugees* (throughout this example, italicized words refer to the terms themselves rather than the group or population). In our research, doing so revealed three key periods dur-

3. See https://labordoc.ilo.org/discovery/search?vid=41ILO_INST:41ILO_V2. A small number of reports were not machine-readable or published during this period.

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ing which these terms were particularly visible as a proportion of all words in each annual report: 1921–1928, 1948–1952, and 1982–1984. Two of these periods—the interwar and post-WWII periods—fit with established histories of the ILO (Van Daele 2005). However, we also found evidence of a third moment of heightened refugee salience: in 1984, the ILO and UNHCR signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU). This opens further questions that archival research methods are particularly well-suited to answer, such as interpreting what these shifts in the ILO's attention signified.

Here we could use concordance analysis of the text surrounding instances of *refugee(s)* to focus attention on the portions of the documents explicitly mentioning these terms. This stage of the analysis, supplemented with archival material beyond the corpus, involved more close reading and distinguishes our approach from Mitrani and Noy's chapter on computerized text analysis (chapter 17). This qualitative work suggests that the ILO became involved in refugee affairs when other humanitarian agencies including UNHCR emphasized the importance of refugee self-reliance, and advocated for livelihoods and employment as important ways to achieve it. These kinds of insights, when appropriately situated within theoretical expectations, can help archival researchers address interpretive questions about motivations and strategies.

By contrast, imagine we were interested in identifying which issues were more salient for the ILO in some periods compared to others. Keyword analysis can generate lists of terms that may be good candidates for further qualitative exploration using concordance analysis as above. For example, have some issues typified more recent ILO bulletins compared to older ones? Addressing this question required drawing upon prior historical research that suggested three broad periods of international humanitarian focus on forced migration and livelihoods: 1919–1939, 1944–1979 and 1980–2015 (Easton-Calabria 2015). Then, using 1919–1979 as the reference subcorpus, we compared the normalized frequencies of words appearing in the 1980–2015 bulletins against those appearing in the reference group. Words such as *HIV*, *gender*, and *globalization* were not only more frequent in recent ILO bulletins but also were entirely unique to this period: we did not find any mentions of these terms in the reference corpus. This type of analysis is important in its own right, particularly for addressing questions about how organizations' agendas shift over time. Yet, in combination with concordance techniques, it also allows investigation of how terms appearing in both periods may have subtly different meanings.

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What Challenges?

Even as our mixed-method approach offers ways of effectively identifying, accessing, and interpreting archival observations, there are still several challenges. First, it assumes that researchers can access (or create) digitized documents of sufficiently high quality to be machine-readable. While historical documents are increasingly made available online, poor image quality impedes automated textual processing. Similarly, primary handwritten documents are more difficult to process without human readers. Therefore our approach relies on the availability of typed and digitized corpora. Fortunately, developments in optical character recognition (OCR) are making this process easier and more reliable.

Second, quantitative techniques—even relatively simple ones such as counting words—do not absolve researchers of either avoiding serious qualitative and interpretive work or accounting for their own (and possibly unnoticed) biases in making those interpretations. Moreover, our approach needs to be embedded within strong designs and theoretical expectations as appropriate for researchers' disciplinary norms.[4] Although computational techniques may provide signposts toward key parts of the archive, we advise not to underestimate the amount of time and energy needed to make sense of these patterns and show their wider significance for a given discipline or audience.

Finally, the qualitative components of our approach still require the strengths and sensibilities of archival researchers. Reading "along," "with," and "against" the grains of archives (Stoler 2002) remains vital for both interpreting the quantitative patterns and providing the qualitative nuance necessary to substantiate them.

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4. See Allen and Blinder (2018) for an example of applying similar computational techniques in a political communication setting.

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CHAPTER 23

Qualitative Comparative Analysis

Ryan Federo

The growing interest in the configurational perspective to understand causal complexity has brought the spotlight on qualitative comparative analysis (QCA). However, the prospect of using QCA as a research technique to understand international organizations (IOs) just recently emerged in the literature (e.g., Federo and Saz-Carranza 2018; 2020; Binder 2017). This chapter sheds light on the nature and specificities of QCA in order to encourage IO scholars to adopt the technique for their future research endeavors. For instance, some of the research questions that QCA can answer include understanding how multiple factors can combine to result in IO-related outcomes and how IO characteristics complement or substitute each other in configurations to explain different outcomes.

What?

QCA is a research technique initially developed by Charles Ragin in 1987 for subjects on comparative politics and historical sociology during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Its initial purpose was to empirically examine a limited number of macrolevel phenomena that are relatively large for comparative case study (qualitative) and yet too small for statistical (quantitative) research designs. QCA aims to "integrate the best features of the case-oriented approach with the best features of variable-oriented approach" (Ragin 1987: 84). It is distinct from other research methods, as it draws on a configurational perspective to view social phenomenon as a constellation of interconnected elements that should be analyzed holistically, rather than individually.

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QCA underscores that causality is complex, characterized by three principles: 1) conjunction, referring to the notion that multiple, independent causal attributes jointly produce an outcome; 2) equifinality, suggesting that different combinations of conditions yield the same outcome; and 3) asymmetry, pertaining to the possibility that both presence and absence of attributes would be associated with the outcome. Since the predominant research tools to understand complex phenomena are not designed to capture the three principles of causal complexity, QCA has now become the widely embraced research tool for empirically examining and disentangling causal complexity. In contrast to correlation-based techniques relying on linear relationships and examining net effects of individual factors, QCA explores the multidimensionality and interplay of factors to identify their joint effects. It uses set theory through Boolean algebra to investigate unions of set memberships by analyzing how the presence or absence of different conditions combine within a bundle to consistently influence an outcome of interest.

More than half of academic journal publications that applied QCA are still in political science, followed by sociology, corresponding to Ragin's disciplinary domains. However, a growing number of social science fields such as management and public administration already have embarked toward adopting QCA-based studies. Although a late mover, the international relations (IR) field also has gained ground in applying QCA. For instance, one of the earliest applications of QCA in IR is Drezner's work in the sanctions literature (1999), which has continuously produced QCA-based studies (e.g., Boogaerts 2016). As Bennett and Elman anticipated (2007), QCA is becoming more frequent in IR studies such as the more recent ones by Arts and de Koning's research on community forest management (2017) and Haesebrouck's exploration of patterns regarding contributions to NATO's military campaign in Liberia (2017). Yet despite the evident interest on QCA in the IR field, a small number of studies so far have used the technique to understand IOs (e.g., Binder 2017; Federo and Saz-Carranza 2018; 2020; Heinkelmann-Wild and Jankauskas 2020). Thus I discuss here why QCA can be fruitful for IR scholars to study IOs.

Why?

The main advantage of QCA over other available research techniques rests on its ability to disentangle causal complexity. Such advantage is particularly important for understanding IOs that are nested within a complex system

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comprising multilayered and multifaceted interdependent factors (Chaudoin, Milner, and Pang 2015). Three fundamental reasons support the relevance of QCA for future research on IOs.

First, understanding IOs would benefit from configurational theorizing in QCA. Although not explicitly stated, IR scholars already assume a configurational approach by adopting a design perspective, in which IOs have organizational designs embodying multiple, yet interrelated, factors. However, current theoretical and empirical investigations using a design perspective focus on each explanatory factor's net effect, while taking other factors constant. QCA enhances our understanding of IOs' design by analyzing the cause-effect relationships of factors as a configuration. As such, we can identify whether IO attributes might be complements (i.e., enhancing each other's effect) or substitutes (i.e., replacing each other) within a configurational design, thereby corresponding to the conjunction principle of causal complexity. Moreover, QCA can be used to perform multilevel analysis, which overcomes the challenge in studying IOs' complex environment that involves multiple actors at different levels of analysis.

Second, QCA helps in building better typologies. IOs vary along several design attributes in diverse settings; yet such differences might be related to the same outcomes, suggesting equifinality. Using QCA can systematically group IOs into specific archetypes based on distinguishing conditions, rather than grouping them according to the commonalities among specific variables (i.e., cluster analysis). Although QCA does not allow researchers to identify which condition gives the greatest explanatory power, it could determine which attributes are core (i.e., definitive ingredients with stronger influence) or merely peripheral (i.e., with contributing influence) to the effects of configurations on the outcome of interest. Simultaneously, it could illustrate the possibility that the presence/absence of conditions may still produce the same outcome, coinciding with the asymmetry principle that cannot be captured by the symmetric nature of correlation-based methods (Fiss 2011).

Third, QCA is flexible to analyze a wide spectrum of sample sizes, which is an important consideration for studying IOs. For instance, the IOs comprising the UN system would be too small for statistical analysis and too large for comparative case study. The Correlates of War database shows around 350 active IOs; however, the amount of obtainable information varies among them. Thus whether information is available for a larger sample to conduct statistical analysis or information is only limited to a relatively smaller sample, QCA can be used for either research setting to perform a systematic comparison of the cases.

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How?

Although the process for conducting QCA-based studies is discussed heavily in the literature (see Ragin 2008 and Schneider and Wagemann 2012 for more details), this chapter provides a brief practical overview of the process (see fig. 11), following four steps: (1) model specification, (2) data collection, (3) data analysis, and (4) presentation of results (Parente and Federo 2019).

Model specification. In applying a configurational logic, we need to establish strong theoretical and case knowledge about how different conditions mutually enhance their effects or replace each other when placed within a bundle. For instance, our research on IO boards relied on our knowledge of IO designs, as we identified only the relevant board features for our context. The key aspect is maintaining balance between the number of conditions and cases for the analysis to mitigate limited diversity, which occurs when configurations are not observed from the sample due to exponential increase in logically possible combinations when adding conditions to the model (Marx 2010). For example, we used five conditions to explain the outcome of interest, given the small sample sizes of fifteen and thirteen IOs for the analysis.

Data collection. The next step involves selecting theoretically defined cases to ensure that the sample fits for the research. Similar to case-based research designs, case selection in QCA is purposeful; and in contrast to statistical research designs, random sampling is not advised, since outliers or deviant cases might be relevant to explain the relationship between the conditions and outcome (Greckhamer, Misangyi, and Fiss 2013). For example, even though researchers already have a set of cases, it is important to have a strong understanding of the cases to ensure that they are comparable and therefore QCA would fit as the technique for the analysis.

Data analysis. Before analyzing the data, the conditions and outcome need to be transformed into set memberships, either as crisp or fuzzy sets (Ragin 2008), through calibration by using set-membership thresholds from theoretical/substantive grounds. However, calibration can also be done using thresholds based on the distribution of the dataset, particularly for exceptional instances where no theoretical basis exists in the literature.

Once the data is calibrated, the next step is building a truth table showing the logically possible configurations with their corresponding number of observations. Thereafter, a necessity analysis should be performed to identify whether a specific condition is always producing the outcome of interest. A sufficiency analysis follows by minimizing the truth table to ascertain whether conditions or combinations of conditions constantly produce the

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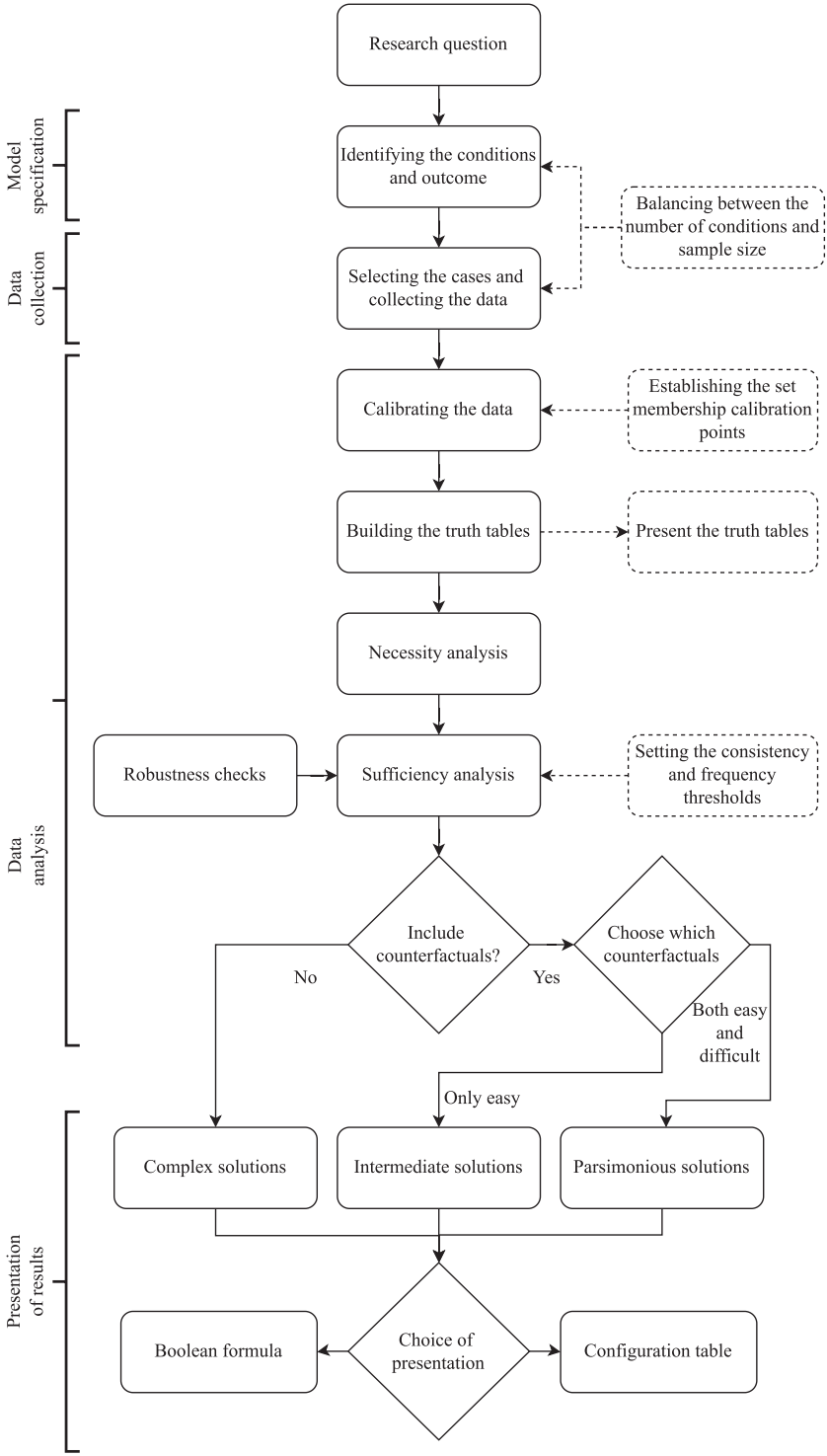

Figure 11. Steps in conducting Qualitative Comparative Analysis

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outcome. Although the analyses can be done manually, it is recommended to minimize the truth table using a software such as fs/QCA, QCA packages for R or Stata, and Tosmana. In my own research, I primarily use fs/QCA because of its more user-friendly interface than other applications. Importantly, a best practice is to perform necessity and sufficiency analyses for both presence and absence of the outcome to determine that configurations showing presence of the outcome are not subsets of configurations reflecting absence of the outcome, and vice versa.

Sometimes, truth tables have unobserved rows, known as counterfactuals. QCA allows researchers to account for counterfactuals in the analysis. If we want to include counterfactuals during the analysis, we could include both easy (i.e., consistent with theoretical knowledge and empirical evidence; for instance, the unobserved rows follow the theoretical expectations of having no cases that should exemplify the configuration) and difficult (i.e., consistent only with empirical evidence; for example, the unobserved rows are present because of the lack of cases showing the configuration) counterfactuals to produce parsimonious solutions or only the easy counterfactuals to produce intermediate solutions. Alternatively, we may choose not to include any counterfactuals during the analysis to produce complex solutions that represent findings as closest to the data as possible.

Nevertheless, QCA is sensitive to several methodological decisions. Therefore to ensure validity of the findings, robustness or sensitivity checks are recommended to mitigate alternative conclusions. For instance, in our QCA papers on IOs, we performed model respecification by adding or dropping conditions during the analysis and modification of the calibration thresholds as robustness checks.

Presentation of results. The configurations from the analysis can be presented as a Boolean formula or a configuration table using the notation suggested by Ragin and Fiss. I prefer to use the latter to help the readers visualize the resulting configurations.

Last, to interpret the findings, researchers should refer to the cases to make sense of the configurations, whether they are exemplified by typical or deviant cases. The cases also allow the researcher to identify any latent attributes underlying the resulting configurations. For instance, in our research on IGO boards' monitoring, case knowledge was instrumental for identifying two dimensions that formed the basis of the typology.

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What Challenges?

Although QCA has several advantages to study IOs, we may also face challenges in using the technique. First, the main challenge concerns whether QCA would be the appropriate approach for the research endeavor. To justify the use of QCA, the research should involve configurational theorizing, the three principles of causal complexity, and case knowledge (Parente and Federo 2019). A common pitfall is mechanistically using QCA by merely mixing several conditions to observe how their combinations would be associated with an outcome. In studying IOs that are inherently characterized with a multitude of factors, how to reduce complexity into a reasonable amount of theoretically defined conditions to explain an outcome perhaps poses a challenge for researchers.

Second, IOs are a different breed of organizations, which might be challenging to have a theoretical basis for data calibration when conducting QCA. Although an alternative way is through a borrowing approach in which researchers benchmark thresholds by using those from other types of organizations, this might not always be applicable when studying IOs because of their unique characteristics and activities. For instance, operationalizing organization size using number of employees and annual turnover may not be the same in IOs as with firms and public organizations, since IOs sometimes have a working force that is not employed by the organization and these organizations rarely have revenues because they rely on member state funding. Moreover, in the absence of theoretical basis, it might not be recommended to use calibration thresholds based on data distribution of smaller sample size studies, since such calibration is highly sensitive to the inclusion or exclusion of cases. Transparency in methodological decisions and strong case knowledge are key to support these decisions when using the technique.

Finally, QCA is still at an embryonic stage. Although QCA is argued to be a long shot to supplant the conventional regression-based methods to conduct analysis in large-N sample studies and falls short in providing comparable in-depth characterization of the cases offered by qualitative methods, it is not intended to replace current methods used in the literature; rather it should be viewed as a complement to other methods to provide alternative means of theorizing and empirical testing. Moreover, the strength of QCA lies in its ability to straddle between variable-based and case-based research methods by systematically comparing cases to identify patterns that could show which attributes would be necessary or sufficient to explain certain phenomena. Nevertheless, a configurational approach by theorizing and

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empirically examining IOs using the logic of necessity and sufficiency offers fresh perspective and fertile ground to understand IOs' complex world.

To Go Further

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CHAPTER 24

Structured, Focused Comparison

Vytautas Jankauskas, Steffen Eckhard, and Jörn Ege

Structured, focused comparison (SFC) allows a structured comparison of several cases (e.g., six international organizations), whereby the researcher conducts in-depth analysis within each case based on a standardized set of variables and general questions. The design not only increases the external validity of findings but also allows for cross-case comparison and a fine-grained theoretical analysis. Typical applications are research questions focused on processes or mechanisms and those that allow for the interplay of several interdependent conditions (causal complexity).

What?

The method of structured, focused comparison was first introduced in the early works of George (1979), George and McKeown (1985), and George and Bennett (2005). It aims at a systematic case comparison, which is built on an in-depth analysis *within* each case, while simultaneously allowing for the cumulation of findings *across* cases. The method can thus be positioned between small-N qualitative and large-N quantitative research. On the one hand, it rests on a process-based logic; on the other, it also relates to quantitative research from which it "borrows the device of asking a set of standardized, general questions of each case" (George 1979). This makes the method *structured*, since the same set of general questions—reflecting the research objective—guides data collection and is scrutinized in each case under investigation. The method is *focused*, as the researcher only deals with those variables of each case that are expected to be theoretically relevant.

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The following example illustrates the logic of SFC. In their study, Knill and colleagues (2019) defined and conceptualized administrative styles in IOs and explained their variation based on comparative case studies of four IOs. Selecting cases based on a most similar system design, they argued that the varying level of external challenges that IO secretariats face determines their administrative styles. For the empirical investigation, the authors used interview data and a survey of IO staff. Their analysis was thereby *structured* as the authors formulated general indicators that reflect both the dependent and independent variables and can be transferred to study further IOs. It was also *focused* as it only dealt with those theoretical features that were directly linked to administrative styles—IOs' internal and external challenges and functional or positional orientations of IO bureaucracies.

Historically, the SFC approach was motivated by the criticism of single-case studies, especially their noncumulative nature of empirical findings. The method was developed with the purpose of improving historical analysis of foreign policy events by accumulating findings from comparable case analysis into a broader theory. This should have discouraged "policy-makers from relying on a single historical analogy in dealing with a new case" (George and Bennett 2005: 67).

Analogously, we suggest that IO scholars bring their attention back to SFC to combine qualitative and quantitative research methods to facilitate larger collaborations between IO scholars who are ready to (1) agree on the same theoretical frame and variables, (2) commit to finding similar data sources, and (3) trace processes with attention to similar details. IOs can be treated as complex problem-processing systems (Reinalda and Verbeek 2004; Rittberger, Zangl, and Kruck 2012), so researchers who study them should be able to capture those interacting components that are relevant for specific research objectives. In this manner, SFC provides a systematic and rather simple way to increase studies' external and internal validity.

Why?

The methodological divide between quantitative and qualitative research designs is a well-known phenomenon in political science. Research of international organizations (IOs) also faces the challenge to balance between maintaining internal validity of findings and ensuring their generalization in other settings (see Eckhard and Ege 2016). Against this backdrop, the structured, focused comparison offers a promising alternative for scholars seeking to explore the methodological middle ground. By combining features from

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both qualitative and quantitative methods, we argue that SFC can increase validity, reliability, transparency, and scope of IO analysis, while at the same time bridging the traditional quantitative-qualitative divide.

First, SFC offers a coherent framework, standardized data sources, and transparency over how conclusions are drawn systematically from the sources often lacking in single-case studies and small-N comparisons. Single-case research design is usually criticized due to its tendency "to go its way, reflecting [the] special interests of each investigator and often being unduly shaped by whatever historical data was readily available" (George and Bennett 2005: 70). SFC, by contrast, offers a coherent, selectively focused treatment of empirical cases that enables better follow-up research by colleagues working on other IOs or trying to understand over-time changes when studying organizations at later points in time. When it comes to controlled comparisons, the combination of a theoretical focus and a structural case examination allows for a systematic comparison across cases. If new cases of the same class of events emerge, they can be easily included into the existing SFC frameworks, which fosters the cumulation of findings over time.

Second, SFC also benefits large-N analyses, since the results from the SFC applications could be used for case selection and further theory-testing endeavors. The prime methodology used to analyze large-N data covers the whole range of (usually regression-based) statistical models. More recently, new methodological approaches such as quantitative Social Network Analysis (SNA) and quantitative text analysis have gained ground in IO research. However, quantitative studies still rely on a few larger datasets that have not necessarily been designed to understand intra-IO dynamics (such as the Correlates of War project) or have known inconsistencies (such as the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination data). Where there is systematic data on organizational structures and dynamics, it is often limited to one or two organizations. Furthermore, quantitative studies tend to merely test and—sometimes—modify well-known theoretical assumptions rather than bringing forward innovations in the theoretical debates of IO research. In light of this, SFC results could serve as a good starting point to establish plausible medium-N theories or to generate hypotheses that may be sustained with more large-N endeavors.

Finally, the SFC method seems to be particularly applicable to some of the latest trends in IO research. The first trend points toward increasing interdisciplinarity in the study of IOs. For instance, while the interest of international relations (IR) in IOs remains high (at least after IR scholars have acknowledged IOs as autonomous actors; see Reinalda and Verbeek 1998), IOs are being increasingly examined by other political science sub-

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disciplines such as public administration, public policy, or comparative politics. In this regard, the use of general questions and focused theoretical frameworks (e.g., Ege, Bauer, and Wagner 2020) fosters the accumulation of knowledge across the increasingly diverse subfields of IO literature.

The same holds for the second trend, which relates to the increasing digitalization and availability of data that can be used in the study of IOs. Arguably, the problem IO researchers are increasingly faced with is less a lack of information than the availability of too many (fragmented) data sources. In this light, the use of SFC would bring more methodological clarity and transparency. One of the key benefits of the SFC method is that scholars can refer to existing findings and build upon them by applying the same set of general questions and theoretical elements to further studies. This implies that both the formulation of data as well as the specification of concepts have to be clearly defined, otherwise the structural and focused conditions of SFC are not met. Considering the critique by Church and McCaffrey (2013) on IO documentation and available information (i.e., that IO research lacks systematic and comprehensive IO data collections), meeting the requirements of SFC could help scholars increase the replicability of their data, thus fostering methodological clarity and transparency.

Overall, the use of SFC might bring the advantage of combining an in-depth case-oriented perspective with a comparative, more systematic approach. SFC is best applicable to so-called causes of effects types of research questions where scholars look for the causes for the occurrence of an observed phenomenon instead of the effect of one isolated factor (Mahoney and Goertz 2006). Naturally, SFC cannot be expected to solve the well-known problems related to the observation and analysis of complex IO realities. What it can do, however, is to outline a way in which a more systematic design of IO research can increase the generalizability of our conclusions and facilitate cooperation and knowledge accumulation in the future.

How?

This section highlights the main steps and presents some basic illustrations from our own research to show how the method could be applied to IO questions. In general, SFC case study data is defined and standardized by a set of general analytical categories, which are empirically linked through mechanistic processes. This allows a structured comparison of several cases, which is based on a careful case selection during which the researcher attempts to manipulate relevant explanatory variables (analogous to Mill's

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method of agreement or difference). SFC is therefore different from the congruence analysis that looks at whether the expected values of dependent and independent variables are observed empirically (pattern matching; see George and Bennett 2005: 181).

More specifically, the following steps should be followed in designing a structured, focused comparison study (see George and McKeown 1985):

- First, scholars should clearly spell out the research problem and objectives under investigation. For instance, in his study, Eckhard (2016) investigates what determinants enhance or impede organizational performance in postconflict police reform.

- Second, researchers should specify the elements (variables, conditions, etc.) that will be used for the comparison. For instance, the main challenge in the study by Eckhard (2016) was to delimit explanatory factors linked to the organization from such factors linked to the country context in which missions acted. Internally, organization and management theory provided a conceptual framework consisting of six categories of strategic management for comparison. Externally, international relations theory served to specify outside conditions as alternative explanations for mission performance.

- Third, case selection must follow a careful consideration of the overall case universe and potential control variables (as well as alternative explanations). In this line, Eckhard (2016) conducted four case studies that were structurally selected based on internal and external factors. Internally, Germany, the EU, and the OSCE operated along different managerial strategies. Externally, Afghanistan and Kosovo served to compare police reform in a more or less challenging context. With the EU acting in both countries, a control case prevailed that allowed delimiting internal from external explanatory factors. Ideally, the number of selected cases is large enough to allow for variation in both the key explanatory variable (e.g., internal management) and the context conditions with potential causal relevance (e.g., country context).

- Fourth, the variance of variables or conditions should be described in detail—taking into consideration existing theory—and general analytical questions should be clearly formulated and reported. In

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Eckhard (2016), the efforts of process tracing in each case were focused on by a common framework of six analytical categories of strategic management, which in turn allowed for cross-case comparison and the isolation of causally relevant variables. This way, SFC enabled the author to benefit from extensive interview data and rich qualitative insights about individual missions and causal mechanisms within each, while at the same time comparing mechanisms across cases to enhance the external validity of the explanation. In this example, it turned out that the EU's internal management procedures (formalized planning in headquarters, lack of discretion at mission level, high frequency staff rotation) undermined the performance of assisting police reform not only in Afghanistan but also in the comparatively "simple" case of Kosovo.

What Challenges?

One of the main challenges of SFC is to formulate questions that are relevant for the specific case but at the same time can be applicable to the overall universe of cases. The same goes for its findings: the strength of SFC is internal validity regarding mechanisms and processes, but with only few cases there may be exogenous factors that the researcher did not control for. Case selection therefore is crucial. However, selecting the right cases may at times be challenging because the distribution of values in the population may be unknown or can only be identified in postanalysis.

Another challenge is the integration of SFCs in the state of the art. Qualitative studies are at times difficult to integrate with the state of the art, especially regarding more quantitative papers, because they differ substantively in the operationalization of variables. Researchers should therefore be extra cautious to ensure the compatibility with the state of the art, for instance by discussing how other (more quantitative studies) operationalize a given phenomenon and how this relates to their own approach.

A last, more practical challenge is about the space provided by publication outlets. SFCs often require researchers to report on a lot of qualitative data. Whereas single-case studies might just fit within the scope of typical journal article, reporting a comparative qualitative study with less than 10,000 words is often difficult. This is why SFCs might be more appropriate for book-length publication formats, or more recent hybrids such as Cambridge Elements or Palgrave Pivot with 25,000 to 50,000 words. In fact, the recent emergence of these publication formats might also be a chance for more SFCs being implemented in the future.

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CHAPTER 25

Process Tracing

Svenja Rauch[1]

"Process was the policy" (Maurice Strong in Weiss et al. 2010: 303). As highlighted by the secretary-general of the UN Conference on Environment and Development, the *process* of getting to an outcome at the 1992 Earth Summit was as important as the *outcome* itself. Processes within international organizations (IO) at large, including negotiations and drafting of reports, provide critical insights into the inner workings of multilateralism. Process tracing allows researchers to closely follow and qualitatively examine complex multilateral processes as they unfold, documenting critical moments and evaluating the mechanisms that led to a specific outcome. Used for conducting within-case analysis, rigorous process tracing requires the generation and triangulation of a significant amount of data through a combination of research methods, including but not limited to discourse analysis (see chapter 11—*Discourse Analysis*), direct or participant observation (see chapter 1—*Direct Observation* and chapter 2—*Participant Observation*), and interviews (see part 2—*Interviewing*). To illustrate the application of a process tracing approach, this chapter draws on my PhD research on the multilateral processes that led to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN General Assembly 2015).

1. The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.

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What?

Having first emerged in the late 1960s in US scholars' work on cognitive psychology, George (1979) introduced the term "process tracing" in political science. It was, however, not until the early 2000s that process tracing gained prominence in the social sciences. While not explicitly describing his approach as process tracing, Schimmelfennig in his work on enlargement of the European Union (EU) and of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), for instance, analyzed "the *causal process* that links independent and dependent variables" (Schimmelfennig 2003: 13).

George and Bennett first defined process tracing as examining "histories, archival documents, interview transcripts, and other sources to see whether the causal process a theory hypothesizes or implies in a case is in fact evident in the sequence and values of the intervening variables in that case" (2005: 6). Process tracing thus constitutes an approach to account for a causal mechanism, "the pathway or process by which an effect is produced or a purpose is accomplished" (Gerring 2007: 178, quoted in Bennett and Checkel 2015: 76).

While controversies around the notion of causal mechanisms persist, process tracing has demonstrated its value as a tool for qualitative analysis. Examining a series of political or social events, process tracing seeks to reveal the intermediate steps and the temporal order in which they occur, as well as the mechanisms that led to a specific result. This approach proves particularly valuable in the context of multilateral processes in which actors defend a multiplicity of interests. Process tracing allows researchers to reveal the factors that make those interests gradually converge in an outcome that is acceptable to all. To establish a sequence of events, a process tracing approach combines deductive and inductive elements (Bennett and Checkel 2015: 17).

Why?

Process tracing explores mechanisms within IOs to describe both institutional structures and practices, as well as the role of individuals in their daily work. Increased attention to process and mechanisms has allowed "capturing better the complex social reality" (Bennet and Checkel 2015: 89) of IOs, and their influence on state behavior and interests. Schimmelfennig, for instance, studied why the EU and NATO decided to expand to the east, whereas Autesserre (2009) examines the reasons for international

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peacebuilding failures. In both cases, process tracing helped reveal the motivation of actors, their constraints and the sequencing of actions that shaped decision-making processes.

While process tracing can be applied to study a wide range of phenomena, this chapter seeks to illustrate the approach by focusing on international negotiations. Process tracing proves valuable in identifying the negotiation *trajectories* (Bourque and Thuderoz 2011: 115) and the multiple interactions that steer the latter by going beyond the focus on their *outcome*. Thus process tracing may shed light on three aspects of the notion of "process" (Bourque and Thuderoz 2011: 110–11): the sequence of events or different stages of the negotiations; the dialectic process of formulating offers and counter-offers as IOs seek to facilitate joint decision-making by their membership (Zartman and Rubin 2000: 12); and the set of tactics used by negotiators.

A descriptive reconstruction of a process constitutes a first step, followed by an analysis of whether causal inferences can be drawn based on the empirical evidence collected. Identifying the different stages of the negotiations, the causal chain (George and Bennett 2005: 206) between a number of elements can be examined: (i) the agency of actors; (ii) the strategies they use to make the process manageable; (iii) the way actors frame their positions; (iv) the coalitions they form; and (v) the trade-offs being ultimately achieved. However, negotiation processes are not linear: phases may overlap and turning points might occur serendipitously. Process tracing can account for a change in tactics of key players at different stages of the process. Moreover, contextual elements, including the negotiation venue, the negotiation culture of the IO, and the political context in which negotiators interact, as well as the linkages of the deliberations to other multilateral processes, are important to understand the "give and take" in international negotiations. "Process dynamics" (Bennett and Elman 2006: 259) are salient to explain the various "ins and outs" of specific text proposals and help decipher the intricate language of international agreements. Furthermore, process tracing is dynamic in that it allows the researcher to account for surprises and adapt hypotheses based on the data generated.

In combining various methods and anticipating alternative explanations, process tracing may offer a better understanding of why and how specific norms and policy narratives were created. The evidence collected may, for example, suggest a constructivist reading of the role of "norm entrepreneurs" (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998) and ideas in international processes (see box r—*Studying Ideas*). At the same time, examining the same evidence through a realist lens may reveal underlying power dynamics. Process tracing thus explains not only the *what*, the outcome of negotiations, but more

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importantly the *how* and *why*, the negotiation trajectory and the factors that shaped the latter, as well as the *who*, the agency of individuals.

How?

Researchers pursuing a process tracing approach "apply information-gathering techniques that have been developed by historians and ethnographers, and they think very much like detectives and less like statisticians" (Blatter and Haverland 2012: 105). Process tracing, therefore, requires a significant amount of evidence to provide a *comprehensive storyline*, i.e., describing the structural conditions and the main phases of the process, to identify *smoking-gun observations* offering a detailed account of a given situation, and to reveal *confessions*. The latter encompass statements unveiling the perceptions and underlying motivations of actors (Blatter and Haverland 2012: 117) and can be analyzed to track how arguments are being used for shaping policy (Risse 2000).

Aiming at a detailed description, preparatory work is fundamental to contextualize the process at hand and to elaborate hypotheses on the expected negotiation behavior of key actors and interest coalitions. The compilation of a corpus of primary source materials and grey literature is a critical first step. These materials include archive material of previous international processes and frameworks, resolutions, decisions of intergovernmental bodies, and reports issued by the IO, among others.

In the case of the negotiations on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, I analyzed previous agreements in the sustainable development field and written materials pertaining to the development workstream within the UN. Furthermore, knowledge of the rules of procedure is essential to examine how the latter are being interpreted and applied, both by the cofacilitators of the process and the parties to the negotiation. Negotiators may also try to link the deliberations to other ongoing workstreams within the organization. Researchers should thus be aware of the "bigger picture" in which negotiations take place.

To identify the overall narrative that underpins the 2030 Agenda, I used discourse analysis (see chapter 11—*Discourse Analysis*) to study statements issued by the parties to the negotiations, the various iterations of the negotiation text, and accompanying documentation provided by UN system entities, academia, and major groups and other stakeholders.[2] Discourse analysis (Wid-

2. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/mgos (accessed March 31, 2021).

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dowson 2007), on the one hand, helps discover "how meaning is negotiated between the members of a discourse community" (Angermuller, Maingueneau, and Wodak 2014: 3). On the other hand, it is critical to understand the technical language of resolutions, negotiation documents, and reports to reveal the delicate political balance struck in the respective texts.

Second, researchers need to closely follow the process of interest as it unfolds. While the analysis of written material provides a solid basis for tracing changes from one iteration of the negotiation document to the next, data collected through discourse analysis tells little about the setting in which the deliberations take place. Direct observation, therefore, can generate additional data sets (see chapter 1—*Direct Observation*). It may yield many benefits, such as verifying the assumptions made on the behavior of different actors and revealing their day-to-day interactions within the IO and its "negotiation culture." However, direct observation requires access to the fora in which negotiations take place, which may prove difficult and oftentimes implies financial resources. If it is not possible to follow the process in its entirety, an observation period needs to be chosen carefully.

Direct observation can further prepare the ground for interviews to generate additional qualitative data. Interview-based research helps elicit the views of individuals involved in the process in a limited timeframe (see chapter 5—*Semistructured Interviews)*. The semistructured format offers "sufficient flexibility to accommodate the individual circumstances of each interview, while also providing a basic structure of questions that allows for comparison" (Lodge 2013: 187). With a set of preestablished questions, researchers may then tailor them to each interviewee. As interviews with international elites are—most of the time—"one-shot games" (Lodge 2013: 194) and involve power asymmetries, each interview needs to be prepared thoroughly. Prosopography (see chapter 26—*Prosopography*) can be a useful tool in this regard.[3]

Through synthesizing and systematically triangulating the empirical evidence, a comprehensive storyline can be established that allows researchers to identify critical turning points of the process and serves as the foundation for analysis on whether causal inferences can be drawn. In their analysis, researchers need to be clear about the selection of data presented while, at the same time, critically examine alternative explanations for all relevant aspects of the outcome. Finally, researchers evaluate whether the findings can be generalized, linking back to IO theories.

3. See, for example, *IO BIO—Biographical Dictionary of Secretaries-General of International Organizations* project, www.ru.nl/fm/iobio

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What Challenges?

Researchers need to be aware of the following both theoretical and practical challenges:

First, debates on the approach, particularly on causal mechanisms, have implications for researchers' choice between "process tracing," "process-tracing," and "causal-process tracing" (Blatter and Haverland 2012: 142). Researchers should thus be consistent in the terminology that they adhere to and be prepared to explain the specificities that this choice implies.

Second, process tracing requires the generation of a significant amount of data. While gathering as much information as possible is key, data collection needs to be systematic and rigorous. Researchers are thus confronted with the question of choosing the starting and end points of data collection as well as the combination of methods. If data generation through direct observation and interviews is envisaged, access to the negotiations and its various actors is as critical as is the timing: if interviews are scheduled too early in the process, the interviewer may not be able to tease out critical turning points. If interviews are conducted late in the process, negotiators might not be available due to unpredictable schedules and increasing politicization of discussions. Attending international meetings also involves resource requirements both in terms of time and costs.

Third, researchers need to carefully triangulate the data collected to increase the credibility of the explanation provided. This exercise involves anticipating alternative explanations from the outset and thoroughly evaluating them as the process unfolds, including being open for surprises. Counterfactual information can further be used to better grasp alternative paths of action.

Fourth, synthesizing and presenting the considerable amount of evidence to readers can be challenging. Researchers need to find a balance between abstract, technical language and a narrative that brings the process to life and, at the same time, links process tracing back to IO theories.

Fifth, process tracing is case-specific, and hence the causal mechanisms that it reveals may be difficult to generalize. While this limitation needs to be acknowledged, researchers can attempt to mitigate this challenge by carrying out an additional comparison between cases.

To Go Further

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CHAPTER 26

Prosopography

Aykiz Dogan and Frédéric Lebaron

Analyzing individual trajectories through biographical material to study their social spaces can be particularly useful in the research on IOs. This "social space" approach initiated by Bourdieu and Saint Martin (1978) and developed by others (including Lebaron 2000; 2008; 2010; 2016; Charle 1998; Sapiro1999) uses the prosopographical method to study social fields. While it is most often employed to study elites, it applies perfectly to different groups in an IO hierarchy, including decision-makers, staff members, employees, or national intermediaries.

What?

From Greek origin, *prosôpon* signifies the characteristics of a person, whereas *graphia* means description (Verboven et al. 2007). As a method, prosopography implies "the investigation of the common background characteristics of a group of actors in history by means of a collective study of their lives" (Stone 1971: 46). While there are various approaches to prosopography, it is first developed and mostly used as a historical research method especially since the 1960s (for literature reviews see Charle 2001 and Keats-Rohan 2007).

In our research, we use it not as an end but as a means to provide answers to research questions regarding large quantities of social actors to study the structuration of their social space and to investigate the relations between their positions, dispositions, and position-takings. Verboven et al. (2007) describe this kind of approach as "*sociographic*," as it allows researchers to study the composition of a specific social group and its characteristic features

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in the society based on a particular sociological paradigm that is, in our case, derived from Bourdieu's relational sociology. "It is never, therefore, 'neutral' or merely descriptive" (Verboven et al. 2007: 38). This approach has been defined by Broady (2002) and Deene (in Keats-Rohan 2007) among others as "French prosopography" or "Bourdieusian prosopography."

Why?

The prosopographical method allows researchers to study a group of social actors' biographical elements in a comparative perspective (i.e., members of an organization, a social movement, an occupational group, an intellectual, political, economic or artistic circle, etc.). It is typically used to understand the social functioning of institutions, decision-making processes, and other political action as well as social structure, stratification, and mobility (Stone 1971; Verboven et al. 2007). It allows researchers to objectify social relations as it aims "to collect data on phenomena that transcend individual lives" (Verboven et al. 2007: 41). Relations are understood here as shared sociological characteristics and differences, and not only personal or institutional connections.

Our research shows that individual biographies matter especially when the analysis is comparative and pays attention to the multidimensionality of trajectories. The comparative analysis of indicators such as sociodemographic, educational, and professional background; national and social origins; and political, ideological, and intellectual orientations allows researchers to show how biographical characteristics play a role in position-takings, hence influencing institutional decisions and policies. When applied in a diachronic perspective, examining different periods, it provides insights regarding the mechanisms of transformation and reproduction of the field. Furthermore, a prosopographical inquiry can help identify both normative and deviant trajectories and to build typologies (Lebaron and Dogan 2016).

For instance, our ongoing prosopographical study on the governing actors of the financial monetary IOs, the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), indicates that not only international but national affiliations are decisive in the access to top decision-making positions. It suggests a strong bias in favor of the Global North, a tendency that comparative research might reveal in other IOs as well. Furthermore, our studies on another international-regional organization, the European Central Bank (ECB), indicate many shared properties, especially regarding masculine domination, academic qualifica-

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tions in economics, and professional careers in financial institutions, that structure the social space of financial-monetary IOs' leaders (i.e., Lebaron and Dogan 2018).

A properly configured prosopographic database also enables geometric data analysis (GDA) for the visualization of connections and relations between individuals, the multiplicity of configurations and specific dimensions that structure a field (i.e., Lebaron 2000; 2008; 2010; Lebaron and Dogan 2016; 2018). It can also be configured to apply other quantitative methods such as network analysis to study network structures, personal and institutional relations, social capital of actors; or sequence analysis if data is available on career or institutional trajectories.

This methodological perspective therefore might be very useful to study IO actors as a social space, connected to a set of national and supranational other spaces. There is indeed an increasing number of prosopographical studies contributing to the IO literature, especially on past (Tollardo 2014; Torsten 2019) and present IOs (i.e., Georgakakis 2010; Mourlon-Druol and Romero 2014) and international professional groups (i.e., Belém Lopes and Oliveira 2017).

How?

Prosopography involves the construction of a database that allows statistical analysis among others. We explain here these steps in detail.

Study Design

As in all scientific work, research questions and hypotheses guide the choice and elaboration of research tools. We identify the study population and prepare a prosopographic "questionnaire" as in a sociological survey. A preliminary investigation is useful for defining the population and primary sources, and for building a first version of the questionnaire that will be adjusted during the research as we learn more about the population.

Sources

A prosopographical study mobilizes biographical material including archive documents and in-depth interviews. In our research, we combine published

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sources, especially the *Who's Who* collections, with much less conventional sources through detailed research on the web, including specialized websites, online press, or LinkedIn. We strongly recommend noting information with their sources in a more detailed manner than is required for a survey research. Observing which kind of information is available for which individual from which sources contributes both to the study design and analysis. We recommend also taking screenshots or recording online sources that might change content or disappear from the web. Note-taking programs are helpful to construct descriptive records for individuals organized by tags. This step allows researchers to link individual and institutional records, to turn back to the source to read the full description when needed, to make double-checks and comparisons between sources, and hence to verify the credibility of data.

Data Collection

Our questionnaire usually starts with questions that specify the actor's role in the institution that we study, then focuses on other characteristics depending on the population and research questions. The table below provides some examples based on our research.

Table 7. Example of Categories for a Prosopographic Questionnaire

Role in the institution	Ex.: Governor
Time frame	2000–2010
Sociodemographic characteristics	Sex, date, and place of birth, etc.
Education and academic qualifications	Discipline, academic qualifications, university, etc.
Professional background	Employment trajectories, main career or work experience in different sectors, etc.
National and international affiliations	Board memberships, think-tanks, foundations, groups and networks, political party, etc.
Political, ideological, and theoretical orientations	Religion, intellectual or political engagements, public statements and positions, etc.
Social origin	Ex.: parents' occupation

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Data Entry

The prosopographic questionnaire constructs a database with questions and their answers listed for each individual. Data entry should not be mixed with coding even when data is entered in a more or less harmonized manner. As a general rule, we suggest first entering detailed data before coding it in separate sheets.

Coding

Each question is in fact a variable and different answers might be regrouped into standardized modalities. We recode data in a more homogeneous way multiple times (especially when treating the data) reflecting on what kind of information is lost. This "cleaning" process adapts to the needs of the selected analysis techniques.

Analysis

The analysis starts during data collection and continues through coding, by noting preliminary observations and avenues for further inquiry. A prosopographical database allows quantitative analysis, while it is also possible to provide answers to research questions without using statistical tools. In general, quantifying the results has many benefits such as objectifying descriptions by numbers that can serve as proof for arguments. In our research, we start by an exploratory data analysis before applying more complex methods. Frequency or pivot tables examined together with charts allow researchers to statistically observe the population and the general properties of their social space. Qualitative methods such as biographical case studies focusing on the most representative or marginal individuals are also very useful. The originality of our own contribution is to combine the study of biographies with the GDA visualization techniques as well as other statistical tools, such as exploratory data analysis, linear regression techniques, or sociological (lexicometric) discourse analysis.

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Visualization

The analysis might involve visualization techniques. To learn more about mapping out the relations between individuals in terms of shared characteristics and divergences see chapter 18—*Multiple Correspondence Analysis*, and for visualizing their relations in terms of network connections see chapter 19—*Social Network Analysis*. Discourse and content analysis methods might also be useful in visualizing the position-takings of actors and their ideological tendencies (see for instance chapter 17—*Computerized Text Analysis*). In any case, the questionnaire should be designed at the beginning according to the analysis method(s) chosen to answer the research questions.

What Challenges?

One of the most evident challenges in a prosopographical study is the unavailable information for certain questions and individuals. As in historical research in general, it is important to acknowledge and precise the limits of the sources. The nonavailable information should be coded so. In fact it does not constitute a definitive problem, but on the contrary an object of analysis in itself assuming that data is not missing randomly. Observing which type of information is easily accessible and which is not provides valuable insights regarding the study population and their social space.

There are advanced methods to treat missing data depending on the selected statistical techniques. For descriptive statistics, we handle it in three simple ways. If many questions remain unanswered for an individual, we omit them from the population. If the responses are unavailable for a certain question, we note and exclude it (as a variable) from the analysis. Otherwise, we precise the number of available and nonavailable responses for each analysis (hence forming an empirical sample for each question), acknowledging that the results will be biased and trying to identify in which regards.

Information overload might also be troublesome both in terms of data collection and coding and analysis. For instance, in employment sequences we observe various individuals being a member of multiple company boards while serving as an administrator at an inter/national institution or lecturing at a university, or sometimes all and more at the same time. In fact, it indicates the multidimensionality of individual profiles cumulating multiple positions in various fields. As much as it is valuable for the analysis, it also poses certain complications. In our research, for instance, this kind of information is often unavailable at first sight, because unless a detailed CV is in

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circulation, most of the biographies privilege one of the professional activities at a time. We can hypothesize that either the individuals reporting their short biographies or the institutions publishing them make such choices. Hence observations on these institutional, public, and self-representations enrich the analysis. A second problem is the question of coding to efficiently integrate data into the statistical analysis as these tools usually function by regrouping singular categories ("Admin/Univ" constitutes a different category than "Admin" or "Univ"). A possible strategy is to count both for each category and compound categories. Third, not always the same kind of information is available in the same way for all. For instance, institutional roles might be detailed for certain individuals but very limited for others. We suggest focusing on samples or cases to make value of specific information, which otherwise limit a comparative perspective.

Another challenge particular to the study of IOs and transnational actors concerns the reconciliation between "international" and "national" trajectories that proves to be complex even in a highly globalized world where common standards and norms structure national organizations. Hence data coding involves a continuous effort to reconcile national, regional, and international categories without ignoring or assimilating key specificities. Indeed, a privileged research objective should be identifying them.

In short, even though there seems to be no strong specificity in studying the IOs with the prosopographic method, there are particular difficulties (Lebaron 2016). Nevertheless, when analyzed reflexively, these challenges might constitute valuable observations for the study.

To Go Further

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BOX W

Research with LinkedIn

Monique J. Beerli

Founded in 2002, LinkedIn is a social networking service dedicated to "connecting the world's professionals" with a reported worldwide membership of 690 million users (LinkedIn 2020). Designed to facilitate communication between jobseekers and recruiters as well as among professionals, LinkedIn has the potential to be harnessed as a tool for social scientists in quests to access interviewees, collect biographic data, and analyze professional networks.

International organization (IO) studies scholars working with interviews typically offer snowball sampling, infiltration as a participant-observer, and allying with gatekeepers as techniques for securing dialogical opportunities. However, these strategies assume that the preconditions of access, such as knowing who to talk to and where/how they can be reached, have been met. As IO organizational charts and websites offer scant information on *who* does *what*, identifying interviewees and how to contact them might turn out to be surprisingly onerous—especially when dealing with geographically and/or institutionally fragmented global professionals who cannot necessarily be located in a tangible space at any given moment. Rendering individuals searchable by name, job title, organization, and geographical location, LinkedIn can be exploited as a global directory, albeit limited to registered users, to overcome germinal access obstacles. Potential interview subjects can then be contacted via LinkedIn's messaging function or, when provided, by email. Don't be fooled though, messaging isn't entirely free: for basic account holders, messaging is limited to individuals in your network, whereas paying subscribers can message who they wish.

LinkedIn is also a treasure trove for researchers employing qualitative

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as well as quantitative methods to investigate global dynamics of power, influence, and authority by mapping the structure of career pathways, professional networks, and social fields (Henriksen and Seabrooke 2017: 59; Kipping, Bühlmann, and David 2019). Resembling a CV though varying in their degree of detail (Zhu, Zhao, and Liu 2020: 91), LinkedIn profiles serve as keys to historicizing the emergence of new elites and professional groups, mapping career trajectories, or analyzing the types of resources (i.e., diplomas, organizational loyalty, linguistic capacities, etc.) required to accede positions of power. Displaying connections between users and user adhesion to groups, LinkedIn can equally provide the empirical base for virtual social network analysis (Papacharissi 2009).

Eliminating certain hurdles, doing research online through tools like LinkedIn also comes with a range of concerns and responsibilities that merit consideration, from the validity and robustness of profile data to ethical dilemmas that arise when considering principles such as informed consent and anonymity.

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CHAPTER 27

Practice Analysis

Vincent Pouliot

In many ways, what structures the work and politics of international organizations (IOs) are socially recognizable patterns of action, such as voting, budgeting, staffing, peacekeeping, negotiating, reporting, monitoring, and so on. Of course, these prevalent practices owe in part to the rules that constitute the organizations, such as founding charters and formal procedures. But the patterns of action that characterize IOs are also largely informal, emerging from day-to-day activities and fast-changing political expediencies. Practice analysis targets the daily routines, bottom-up experiments, and organically emerging ways of doing things that give movement and life to IOs.

What?

Practices are socially meaningful and organized patterns of activities; in lay parlance, they are ways of doing things (Adler and Pouliot 2011). One can think of myriad practices, from handshaking in our everyday lives to diplomacy in world politics. In a nutshell, anything that people do in a contextually typical and minimally recognizable way counts as a practice. Practice tracing, then, aims at inductively and interpretively recovering the patterned ways of doing things that structure a social site of interest (Pouliot 2014). In the case of IOs, some practices are common to several of them (e.g., "holding a bracket" as part of multilateral negotiations), while others are peculiar to each (e.g., the NATO practice of "joining the consensus"). Depending on the research question, practices may be construed at variable levels of aggregation.

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At the analytical level, the concept of practice presents a number of opportunities, one of which being that practices are both particular (as contextually embedded actions) and general (as patterns of actions). In other words, as a unit of analysis practices offer a common ground where concerns for contextual specificity and analytical generality can equally be met. In that sense, practice tracing is a hybrid methodological form that rests on two relatively simple tenets: social causality is to be established locally, but with an eye to producing analytically general insights. The first tenet, drawn primarily from interpretivism, posits the singularity of causal accounts: it is meaningful contexts that give practices their social effectiveness and generative power in and on the world. The second tenet, in tune with process analytics, holds that no social relationships and practices are so unique as to foreclose the possibility of theorization and categorization. Practice tracing seeks to occupy a methodological middle ground where patterns of meaningful action may be abstracted away from local contexts in the form of social mechanisms that can then travel across cases.

Why?

Practice tracing takes the reader on a journey to the engine rooms of world politics. By going inside IOs and looking at their everyday functioning, the methodology opens a window on a social theater whose inner dynamics have long been neglected. Analytically, the key payoff is to reconstruct interactions and situations in all their social productivity. Put differently, the everyday and the mundane are much more than a string of anecdotes: they are socially generative of broader political effects, for instance, in fostering inequality or in explaining the particular shape of a given outcome of interest. From the "infinitely small" emerge political orders. Tracing the ordinary operation of international pecking orders helps identify the concrete ways through which multilateral diplomacy produces inequality (Pouliot 2016) while focusing on mundane practices and symbols sheds light on how the European Union constructs its authority on a daily basis (McNamara 2015).

Practice tracing is also particularly apt at capturing informality—once again a dimension of world politics that is often neglected in IR scholarship, perhaps because of the inherent empirical difficulties involved. Written rules and textual accounts are by nature incomplete and the study of practices invites a focus on whatever happens "between the lines" of IO activities. Several of these activities are unwritten, sometimes even hidden from sight, but that is no reason to discount them as insignificant at the

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analytical level. Autesserre studies "on-the-ground peacebuilding" and identifies international interveners' dominant practices, habits, and narratives to better understand the ineffectiveness of peacebuilding (2014). In addition, the methodology of practice tracing steps away from the limitations of levels of analysis and preset categories of actors. By focusing on patterns of action, it does not matter where these activities take place or who they involve. By following practices regardless of who performs them, the framework admits much more variation in participants and sites than typical approaches would (Pouliot and Thérien 2023). Focusing on temporary international civil servants, Bode shows, for instance, how these overlooked actors can act as agents of change within the UN (2015).

It seems useful to conceptualize four analytically distinct spaces of the social: the situational (that is, the enacted practices within a given social locale), the dispositional (the historically accumulated know-how that goes into practice), the relational (the morphology of social ties), and the positional (the location in a social configuration from which the practice is being enacted) (Pouliot 2016). Because they describe fairly different processes at the ontological level, situations, dispositions, relations, and positions cannot be grasped through the same analytical tools. A well-organized combination of various methods is necessary.

How?

At the most basic level, practice theory contains a simple indictment: start with practices! Ways of doing things form the key empirical unit of analysis, which researchers inductively study. The main goal is to identify the key practices that structure the political site at hand (i.e., a given IO) and understand their structuring effects. Identifying them requires an inductive approach that pays equal attention to established and deviating patterns. Practice analysis also necessitates going beyond formal procedures, even though most of what global actors do, *in fine*, does rely on forms of textualization and codification.

In the interpretivist tradition, practices must be understood from within the community of practitioners so as to restore the intersubjective meanings that are bound up in them. This requires understanding the logic of practicality that organizes interaction. In order for practice *X* to do something in and on the world, what tacit know-how would practitioners need to have in order to grasp what is going on? In reconstructing practical knowledge, the objective is to understand the insider meanings that agents attribute to

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their reality. Thanks to induction, the researcher refrains as much as possible from imposing scientific categories, to instead recover practical meanings and locally enacted commonsense.

The key task amounts to the empirical redescription, as faithfully as possible, of what is actually happening on the ground taking the practitioners' point of view. This requires deep immersion and interpretation. After all, the generative power of practices stems from the meaningful context within which they are enacted, which instructs actors about what is going on. At the level of action, the meaning of the practice gets negotiated, in a more or less articulate fashion, between practitioners: what is happening here? Most of the time, rich interpretive clues are supplied by the existing intersubjective context, which renders the negotiation process not all that elastic. For the social scientist, the basic objective is to understand what the practice under study counts as in the situation at hand. The methodological implication should be clear: if the social efficacy of practices rests on the meanings that are bound up in them, then any social scientific account must go through the interpretation of social contexts and practical logics.

As an inductive, interpretive, and historicist methodology, practice tracing admits a variety of methods, several of which are covered earlier in this handbook—Observe, Interview, Document, and Measure. For example, various forms of interviews (ethnographic, biographic, prosopographic, semi-structured), discourse analysis (of documents, archives, speeches, images), and participant observation (direct or indirect, shadowing) are all possible options, depending on access and research objectives. What matters is to get closer to practitioners' experiences so as to understand everyday life inside IOs. For that reason, the method of choice often is ethnographic participant observation, which involves the researcher's direct and sustained participation inside of a social setting and its everyday dynamics. The unique value added of this method, on top of allowing direct observation of practices, is that it usually takes place within the natural habitat of practitioners, with limited disturbance from the outside.

In the actual practice of research, though, participant observation is often not feasible, whether for financial, organizational, legal, geographical, or historical reasons. The good news is that, even when practices cannot be *seen*, they may be *talked about* through interviews or *read* thanks to textual analysis. Tracing practices can be done in a variety of indirect ways. For instance, where practitioners are alive and willing to talk, qualitative interviews are particularly apt at reconstructing the practitioners' point of view. As conversations generative of situated, insider knowledge, interviews provide researchers with an efficient means to penetrate more or less alien

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lifeworlds. The main challenge, however, is that contrary to representational knowledge, which is verbalized and can be brandished, practical knowledge is generally unsaid and mostly tacit. The solution is to focus less on what interviewees talk about than what they talk from—the stock of unspoken assumptions and tacit know-how that ought to be presumed in order to say what is being said.

In order to turn interviewees into participant observers of sort, one may ask interviewees to recount in detail how they and their counterparts go about their business—what their daily schedule looks like, with whom they meet regularly, the kinds of negotiations they conduct, and so on. In discussing everyday whereabouts with interviewees, the objective of is to get indirect access to the action floor, by recounting lambda workdays, standard procedures of operation, routine practices, or conversely, unusual stories and extraordinary anecdotes. Interviewees generally proved quite willing to describe their everyday life with a significant amount of detail.

When practitioners are not available to talk, textual analysis can be put to work in order to trace practices and interpret the context in which they are performed. It is critical to select particular textual genres—those that record enacted practices, especially—in order to open up a window onto practicality, from memoirs to court cases through handbooks. Other useful genres include annual reports, diplomatic cables, meeting minutes, personal diaries, recordings and transcripts, written correspondence, and so on. Needless to say, studying practices through written documents is easier said than done, because the more informal ones are generally left unsaid. Ultimately, a combination of sources—ethnographic, conversational, and textual—is probably the best way to draw a full portrait of the practice landscape under study.

What Challenges?

Practice tracing is full of challenges. First, in order to trace practices, one must find them. There are different ways to go about this and whichever strategy works best depends on the nature of the social site under study. Happily, IOs form relatively closed and circumscribed sites, to the extent that headquarters are geographically located at and around a few multilateral hubs distributed around the world. That said, IOs' activities often extend across a variety of transnational networks whose ramifications often span the entire globe. Also problematically, several IOs are rather hard to penetrate as a researcher. This obviously has to do with confidentiality and the sensitiv-

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ity of diplomatic matters, especially with real and consequential negotiations unfolding in the background. The world of multilateral diplomacy and global policymaking tends to be highly secretive, not least because information is power in the everyday life of a permanent representative. The problem is not just that access to the action floor is severely restricted. In fact, the difficulty is compounded by the fact that, even where access is granted, stringent confidentiality agreements often significantly reduce the value of the data that may be published.

Second, the identification of practices may run into difficulties. On the one hand, the issue of scale is always lurking: at what level of aggregation should the analysis operate? Should the researcher describe micro activities—e.g., how particular committee meetings function—or is it preferable to zoom out on broader patterns of action, such as coalition-making for instance? Finding the proper scale depends on the research question being asked. Some problems are best addressed by reconstructing minute interactions, whereas others require a more macro perspective. On the other hand, scaling is connected to another challenge, that of naming the practices under study. In general, it is preferable to hinge on practical categories, that is, replicate the language that practitioners use in describing their activities. This is easier to do with granular activities, several of which already have tangible existence for actors (e.g., "I was holding a bracket in the proposed text when this and that occurred"). As soon as the researcher scales up practices, however, more work is needed in labeling broader patterns, which do not necessarily exist as such for practitioners. Superimposing alien categories on practices is acceptable so long as it serves analytical objectives.

Third, getting at practical logics presents daunting challenges. In order to decipher the meaning of a practice, its practicality must be both alien *and* native to the interpreter's own system of meanings. If, on the one hand, the meaning of a practice is too deeply embodied by the interpreter, chances are that it will remain invisible as a second nature. If, on the other hand, the logic of practicality is completely alien to the interpreter, then it may not be properly understood within its context. Epistemically speaking, the researcher is sitting on the fence between the community of practitioners and that of researchers, a position that generates a form of knowledge that is at once native and foreign. As ethnographic or inductive as one may go, studying practices implies ordering, dissecting, and organizing them in a way that ultimately constructs them as units of analysis within an analytical narrative. Instead of perfect correspondence, the objective should be to capture practical logics so as to explain their social effects, bearing in mind the reconstructive process that the interpretation of meanings necessarily entails.

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Fourth, practices are by nature polysemous, contested, and multiple. Because the everyday is an inexhaustible stream of data, studying practices means inventorying an infinite pool of ways of doing things. It is never possible to brush an exhaustive portrait, from a practice perspective, or to capture everything that goes on that matters. This kind of maximalist notion of data gathering is problematic and potentially paralyzing. Many diplomatic practices are so casual—who plays tennis with whom, who goes out to smoke during the break, and so forth—that it is plainly impossible to achieve any kind of exhaustiveness. Sometimes, focusing on the lambda habitus—the common stock of tacit know-how from which variations spring—is the only practicable road. Carefully drawing a sample of practitioners, sites, and areas of action helps cover a variety of national viewpoints, agencies, career echelons, and professional backgrounds, in order to identify convergences but without disregarding discrepancies. Ultimately, practices and practical logics are always plural, especially in IOs where there is a ton of circulation across networks and organizations.

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CHAPTER 28

Feminist Approaches

Georgina Holmes

International organizations (IOs) are not gender-neutral but complex, fluid, and changeable gendered systems shaped by the politics of exclusion and inclusion. Disrupting mainstream analyses in IO studies, scholars apply diverse and creative research methods and methodological approaches to examine how institutional change processes take effect in and through gendered power relations. The aim is to expose and explain the political consequences gendered processes have within IOs and within international society, while being mindful that formal, institutionalized equality and diversity initiatives can potentially strengthen existing institutional power settlements.

What?

The creation of feminist (and multiple) knowledges about IOs requires critical and creative approaches to access, gather, and analyze data. Research methods used by feminists, gender scholars, and queer scholars are not in and of themselves "feminist" and/or "queer" and any research method may be used as a tool to collect data about gendered IOs. Rather feminist and/or queer methodologies determine research strategies and the ethical decisions made by researchers. Connell conceded early on that "the complexity of organizations, and the complex character of the gender system [has] meant a single research strategy [is] inadequate." Connell also expressed concern that quantitative research alone—for example, statistical analysis of the gendered division of labor—cannot explain gendered power dynamics within com-

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plex, open, and dynamic IOs (Connell 2005: 4). This is particularly the case when trying to map an IO's gender regime. Feminists have therefore tended to adopt either qualitative or mixed methods approaches to study IOs from the bottom up.

In the early 1990s, Acker challenged the normative view that "gender" was a singular, binary category (male/female) and argued that gender constituted an ordering principle within institutions (Acker 1992). International organizations were dominated by men, but their organizational structures were not gender-neutral, as many feminists at the time perceived. For Acker, IOs were sites marked by women and other minority groups' absence and marginalization, but also sites of multiple and intersectional forms of structural oppression and violence, including racial, sexual, and class-based. Defined by the politics of inclusion and exclusion, gendered processes produced and sustained institutional power hierarchies, institutional cultures and subcultures, and governed the social actors operating within them. Raewyn Connell coined the term "gender regime" to describe the "patterning" and "continued patterning of gender relations" within an organization. An entire IO has a gender regime, but gender regimes may also be present within "a particular site within an institution" and "can be applied in a parallel way to an organizational process such as policy formation." For Connell, the task of researchers investigating how IOs are gendered and their gendered effects is to "understand and illuminate distinctive patterns in organizational life" (2005: 7). This has required creating new feminist knowledges about IOs by deconstructing what appears to be normal, naturalized, and often invisible within them (Gherardi 2009).

Feminist analyses of IOs can be found in several fields including development studies, organizational studies and management studies, political science, international law, and more recently feminist security studies, but gendered IOs are still an understudied area of research. In the early 1990s, feminists were influenced by the liberal feminist focus on women's equal opportunities, integrating women into IO workforces and incorporating women's issues into IO external programming. For these feminists, IOs were not international and failed to promote universal human rights because they did not represent at least 50 percent of the world's population (Charlesworth 1995: 79). Developing case studies about the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme, International Labour Organization, and United Nations Security Council, feminists began to investigate how gender mainstreaming—a policy tool designed by gender practitioners in the development and aid sectors—was being institutionalized within IOs to readdress gender imbalances in organizational cultures, structures, policies, processes,

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and programming (see Prügl and Lustgarten 2006; Hafner-Burton and Pollack 2002; Charlesworth 2005).

In parallel, feminist security studies scholars investigated the gender politics of global governance, largely influenced by agency-structure debates within the field of international relations; actor-network theory; constructivist debates on the emergence, diffusion, and institutionalization of international human rights norms; and Foucauldian-inspired literature on governmentality. Drawing on conceptual and analytical tools developed by feminist institutionalists within political science, feminist security studies scholars began to examine how the international women, peace, and security agenda was implemented and how security policies were gendered and have gendered effects, prompting analyses of international and regional security institutions including the UN Security Council, NATO, and the European Union (Guerrina and Wright 2016; Basu 2016; Chappell et al. 2020). What motivates IOs to engage with gender is a central question, although feminists continue to seek out the ambivalent, the contradictory, and the paradoxical within IOs.

Why?

Soumita Basu suggests that gendered analyses are important because IOs are "arenas of emancipatory politics" (2019). Contemporary IOs were established in the post-World War II era to ensure global populations could exercise their human rights and carry out their everyday lives free from all forms of discrimination and violence. However, they also protected the status quo among major powers, and protected sovereignty more broadly. Decolonization in the 1950s and 1960s, which saw the inclusion of new state actors within IOs, was to be one outcome of this aim. Feminist scholars are therefore driven by a political project to redefine the power settlement within IOs and facilitate the design and maintenance of "gender-just" institutions, ideally by adopting an intersectional approach. Increasing the proportionality of all women and minority groups within IOs—for example, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ+) persons—redistributing institutional power and exposing and eradicating all forms of discrimination and violence support these aims. This requires investigating the paradoxes and ambivalences of gender regimes as both violent and emancipatory; examining how feminists, gender experts, and their critical friends operate within IOs; monitoring institutional change and assessing whether institutionalized gender reform agendas are transformative and actually redress

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power hierarchies and institutional rules, norms, practices, and cultures (Prügl and Lustgarten 2011).

Mainstreaming gender equality and diversity is still a relatively new arena of politics within IOs. The United Nations first began to take what was then called "the Woman Question" seriously in 1975 (Bessis 2003: 636). The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted in 1979. Women's rights were further institutionalized after the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, the Millennium Development Goals, and the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in 2000. Although at the time these policies were progressive and a major success, gender scholars and queer theorists have levied criticism against the Western, liberal feminist approach to mainstreaming gender equality, with its emphasis on a singular and stable category "woman," and subsequent neglect of how a diversity of people (assigned categories within the institution and broader society according to sex, gender identity, sexuality, age, race, ethnicity, class, ableism, and so on) experience intersectional forms of institutionalized discrimination and violence (Ahmed 2012; Hagen 2016).

However, there are still important areas that require investigation including the transnational and transregional dimensions of IOs; exposing how competitions and partnerships between different patriarchal regimes within the international system manifest in and through IOs and the effects these relationships and tensions have both on creating gender-just IOs and integrating gendered and inclusive approaches into IO external programming; and mapping more systematically structural changes that are taking place in IOs over time and temporality (Holmes et al. 2019; Holmes 2020).

How?

Scholars who are not feminists often take inspiration from the creative approaches feminists develop to gather gendered knowledge about IOs. However, one of the first steps any scholar can take is to pay attention to how their gender or perceived gender identity might affect their access to IOs, data collection processes, and data analysis. Feminist ethnographic methods, including participant observations, in-depth interviews, focus groups, life history interviewing, and surveys are among the most common research methods used to examine formal and informal IOs. Feminist ethnography—the study of the "dynamics of power in social interaction that starts from a gender analysis"—emphasizes the experiential and draws

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strongly on the feminist tradition of centring the bodies and experiences of institutional actors in analyses (Davis and Craven 2016: 9). Emphasizing the performativity of gender and connections between the body and embodied knowledge and observing the partial, situated, and intersubjective tensions at play in data collection, feminist ethnography aligns with Wacquant's carnal sociology (see box d—*Carnal Sociology*) but focuses on how carnal sociology is itself gendered and produces gendered embodied knowledge, as well as gendered representations and affects. More attention is also paid to centering research participants and achieving equity between researchers and research participants than during mainstream positivist IO research. Techniques that feminists might use here include engaging research participants in the research design, feeding back research findings to research participants, and being attentive to the power dynamics at play during field research—for example, by reflecting on how the researcher's own embodied presence and experience within an IO might influence the kind of research data obtained (Davis and Craven 2016: 84).

Another approach is to gather institutional artifacts, documents, and discourses. Institutional artifacts may include formal, publicly available policies, speeches, press releases, promotional materials, and other grey literature, as well as restricted and confidential institutional documents such as internal policies, procedures, and training materials (see box o—*Artifact Analysis*). Publicly available institutional artifacts are obtained by conducting archival and desk-based research.

A third approach is to collect data in order to record and construct practices within institutions, or to identify formal and informal rules and norms that govern actors within IOs (see chapter 27—*Practice Analysis*). For example, feminists examine how gendered, embodied practices are performed by people who engage with IOs—either as employees and employers or as outsider actors who interact with them; how practices become institutionalized and embodied within institutions; and how actors working within institutions seek to disrupt or change institutional practices (see Bode 2019).

Each strand of feminism—whether it be radical feminism, Marxist feminism, psychoanalytical feminism, poststructural feminism, postcolonial feminism, and queer studies—adds new perspectives to the study of gendered IOs and determines research design (Gheradi 2005). The positionality of women, in particular women of color, women from the Global South, LGBTQ persons, and other minority people within the international system has meant they have been required to design and conduct research projects at the margins of IOs, global politics, and their academic disciplines (See Holmes et al. 2019). One approach, suggested by Basu, is to have multisited

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analysis of IOs. Here researchers do not just undertake research within the headquarters of IOs but explore what the IO looks like from different locations around the world. Applying postcolonial and critical race theories (see box x—*Postcolonial Insights*) to examine global power relations within IOs helps to complicate what is meant by the "marginalized" within IOs, and it is crucial to observe the contradictions and tensions within and between the groups of institutionalized actors which the researcher identifies as "subaltern" (Holmes et al. 2019).

What Challenges?

Accessing IOs is a major challenge for feminist researchers, in part because gender politics are often regarded as very sensitive and data is often restricted. Often the process of networking, gaining the trust of institutional gatekeepers, and obtaining permissions to conduct field research can take months or years. Institutional gatekeepers may attempt to influence research design, co-opt research agendas, or prevent access to institutional actors who they perceive may threaten to undermine official institutional gendered discourses about IOs. Working in the capacity of a critical friend is one strategy frequently adopted, although the ethical issues and effectiveness of this strategy are widely debated (see Chappell and Mackay 2021). Collaborations with institutions are another approach, though as Connell observes they can be costly, time consuming, and require the researchers to make compromises (2005). Institutional gatekeepers may have particular expectations about how the outsider-researcher should perform within an IO and researchers are mindful of how their own bodies may or may not "fit" an institutional culture and may prevent them from building relationships with institutional actors or from accessing alternative stories and narratives. Feminist, gender, and queer scholars are also acutely aware that their positionality may prevent them from observing certain practices, whether violent (such as casual racism) or emancipatory.

A second related challenge concerns how to investigate the informal, the invisible, the silenced, and the unspoken about within IOs, which in turn raise ethical concerns around ensuring that research participants who confide with the researcher are not exposed. Formal rules, norms, and practices, or indeed gatekeepers, may prohibit researchers from using some of the more creative feminist ethnographic research methods, such as producing artwork and making photographic or video diaries that are used in collaborative and community-based research projects. Institutional sensitivity con-

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cerning gender issues within IOs and logistical challenges therefore compel researchers to think creatively about how to access and analyze research data.

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BOX X

Postcolonial Insights

Soumita Basu

The passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women and Peace and Security (WPS) in 2000 is widely considered to be historical, as this was the first substantive engagement of the Council with issues relating to women and armed conflicts. The nature of its implementation, selective, underfunded, and directed primarily toward conflict-affected countries in the Global South but driven largely by actors from the Global North, lend credence to concerns that the resolution—and later its sister resolutions—were "reinscribing racial-sexual boundaries in international security" (Pratt 2013; see also Parashar 2018). These concerns draw on and resonate with postcolonial critique in international relations. Such critique "has served as a deconstructive tool challenging universalizing discourses of colonialism, modernity and nationalism (even in its anti-colonial form)" (Duvall and Varadarajan 2003: 84). In the study of IOs, extrapolating from scholarship on global governance (see Muppidi 2005), this can draw attention to "the negotiation and regulation of difference" (274), as well as the ways in which the structure, policies, and practices and indeed our imaginations of IOs constitute some as "the governors," with agency, and others as "the governed" (280). Discourse analysis that focuses on power-knowledge nexus, often conducted using textual analysis, is well-suited for postcolonial investigations that spotlight such hierarchies. In ethnographic research, it can be valuable to decenter fieldwork, studying not just headquarters and conference sites but also "subaltern" spaces within institutions as well as peripheries where IO policies manifest (Holmes et al. 2019: 220). More generally, giving due consideration to the postcolonial question about "whose knowledge" matters, as reflected in the study and practice of IOs, can enrich

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the field by engaging with diversity. This can be factored into selection of interview respondents and primary documents, as well as citation of secondary literature. For instance, advocacy papers and reports of local women's peacebuilding organizations could provide context-specific critique of international organizations and their policies alongside proposals for alternative formulations. Research choices of this kind would recognize and potentially reinforce the agency of the "governed," challenging prevalent hierarchies of knowledge production.

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BOX Y

Reflexivity in Practice

Audrey Alejandro

Researchers are commonly encouraged to be reflexive about the knowledge they produce and their positionality. However, they often find themselves at a loss when it comes to implementing reflexivity in practice due to the lack of adapted methodological material.

To address this challenge, I developed Reflexive Discourse Analysis (RDA) as a methodology for reflexivity. RDA "aims to reflexively assess and transform our socio-discursive engagement with the world, so as to render it consistent with our intentional socio-political objectives" (Alejandro 2021: 3). I define discourse as language in context and reflexivity as the practice of making conscious and explicit our practices, beliefs, and assumptions (see also chapter 11—*Discourse Analysis*).

RDA comprises three components:

First, you create a "compass-discourse," by which I mean a sentence that summarizes an alternative to the biases you aim to avoid in your discourse. For example, researchers may inadvertently produce unethical or invalid discourses regarding the agency of so-called local actors (e.g., the beneficiaries of IO policies) by either denying their agency or romanticizing their role. To address this issue, I suggest using the following compass-discourse: "all agents connected through IO interventions *potentially* play a role in the production, modalities and outcomes of these interventions, which cannot be assumed without being investigated."

Second, you empirically assess your writing—e.g., drafts—via discourse analysis to see whether the implicit dimensions of the discourses you produce match your compass-discourse. To investigate whether you inadvertently deny the agency of so-called local actors, you may, for example, look

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for subject positionings (e.g., who are the subjects in my text? What are the adjectives and verbs associated with these subjects?), and processes of passivization (i.e., the transformation of potentially active sentences into passive ones leading to the discursive disempowering of the actors being passivized).[1]

Third, you engage in self-resocialization: you identify and transform the social dispositions that led to this problematic discourse. The objective of RDA is not about switching a few words in an effort to be more politically correct; rather it is about using textual material to empirically assess your discourse as an entry point for long-term social transformation. Denying the agency of those we write about can enable us to position ourselves as their savior, potentially satisfying our own interest to their detriment. It may also reveal that we project our own emancipatory quest onto their journey.

RDA is an iterative process: go back and forth between DA and the transformation of your dispositions and repeat the steps until the implicit dimensions of your text match the intentional sociopolitical objectives you have set up for it via your compass discourse. Reflexivity is not easy, but it is far from impossible!

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1. Search handbooks such as Baker and Sibonile Ellece (2011) to identify relevant DA tools.

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CHAPTER 29

Composing Collages

Working at the Edge of Disciplinary Boundaries

Anna Leander

Is it possible to think of methods in a way that does not turn them into a Procrustean bed for knowledge, cutting off any body part extending beyond the frame while stretching those that don't reach it? This chapter suggests that the answer to this question is yes. It is possible to work with methods not as instructions but as "heuristic devices" (Abbott 2004). The fundamental question is not "does the method allow this?" but rather "what/how does it help me discover?" Methods do not have to work like recipes in a cookbook. They can be "thinking tools" (Leander in Klotz and Prakash 2008). This chapter introduces *one* such thinking tool associated with an affirmative understanding of methods: the Composing of Collages (Leander 2020).

What?

In the humanities and critical social sciences (including decolonial, gender, and racial studies, see chapter 28—*Feminist Approaches*, and box x—*Postcolonial Insights*) methods have a poor reputation. They are charged with stifling observation, thought, and creativity by regimenting observations, disciplining knowledge, and providing a false sense of scientific security where none is warranted. They reinforce the regressive politics of science Rosana Paulino criticizes in her collage *Amor pela Ciencia* (fig. 12). Refusing methods—often by opposing them to theorizing—has therefore been the default position for the longest time and is still the norm in some areas including, for example,

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Figure 12. Rosana Paulino: *Amor Pela Ciencia*. Print and embroidery on textile
Source: Courtesy of Rosana Paulino

political theory, the humanities, or visual studies. However, in most quarters, including the study of international organizations (IOs), this refusal tends to become a form of self-exclusion as the ability to articulate a methodology has become the sine qua non condition for doing research. Often therefore there is little choice but to own "methods" and develop a "pluralist" language for talking about them (Bleiker 2015). But how? Working with methods as Composing Collaborationist Collages is one avenue.

The term *composing* emphasizes that methodological choices constitute, define, and frame the observed (Austin 2019). We see what we look at as we decide which "paths" to follow in our research (Rancière 2009; Mitchell 2015). When we make methodological choices regarding which sources to focus on and how to deal with them, we are also "composing" our object of observation. When deciding what to include in our research on IOs we are composing a specific image of them.

The term *collage* signals an openness to variety and disjuncture. Collages are by definition made of heterogeneous materials and consequently draw on an open-ended variety of techniques to connecting these. When we work with IOs, there is a wealth of possible materials at our disposal including, for example, academic publications (secondary sources), documents, observations, interviews, visuals, smells, tastes, sounds, atmospheres, affects, concepts, and so on. The techniques and tools helpful for exploring them vary correspondingly as do the images generated by joining them.

Composing *collages* to explore IOs cultivates knowledge directing careful attention to (dis-)connections in view of making theoretical and empirical discoveries and contributions. It defies the disciplinary policing that ham-

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pers cross-disciplinarity and novel agendas and research geared at discovery *tout court* by imposing questions, criteria, sources, and tools. The Composing of Collages actively invites and encourages research that draws inspiration beyond their own disciplinary boundaries and questions the boundaries of knowledge. Composing Collages is a method for doing disciplinary "edgework," to speak with Wendy Brown (2009).

Why?

Contributing knowledge by working at the edge of disciplinary boundaries sounds like something most methods would claim to facilitate. Four caveats connected to the radical openness of the Composing of Collages, and the relevance of this for the study of IOs, clarify the difference Composing Collages makes.

(i) Composing Collages is neither regimented by a specific "analytical framework" that posits what *questions* to ask nor is it confined by the regime of knowing imposed by it. This is particularly important for raising questions not already raised. For example, work on gender, race, or material agency that is now mainstream in IO research has only been possible because scholars did *not* "apply" methods associated with prevailing analytical frameworks, but instead mobilized methods to answer their own questions and often also to transform these questions. They simply refused to answer the "what is this a case of?" question. They were interested in problems that were not "cases" of prevailing theories and methods but obscured and deepened by them. This was/is no abstract consideration as the black woman in Paulino's collage "love of science" recalls (figure 12). Strict "academic rigour" would have meant "rigor mortis" for the research agendas around class, gender, race as it tends to mean for innovative research agendas generally (Czarniawska 2016). Composing collages—mobilizing methods as heuristic devices—is a way of eluding this fate as it is associated with a decidedly "counterdisciplinary" (Koskenniemi 2012) view on research.

(ii) Composing Collages allows multiple, messy *ontologies* (Law 2004). Contrary to many methods, it therefore does not assume that a singular, universal epistemic logic or world is pertinent for research (de la Cadena 2015). Rather, as "quantum physics" or "new materialist" anthropology, it admits the existence of mul-

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tiple, contradictory, and perhaps incommensurable logics to be at work at the same time and in the same space. In IOs, multiple cultures and beliefs coexist. More strongly, so do different ontological "'realities." In IOs, different professional practices inhabit partially connected worlds irreducible to each other that produce different policy initiatives. Composing Collages is particularly useful for shedding light on the relations and frictions between these multiple worlds and the implications of this for IOs.

(iii) Composing Collages is also open to a wide range of *sources and data*. Many methodologies provide strict instructions for how to regiment what counts as data. Working with Composing Collages is different in this respect in that, in line with anthropology, it invites combinations of sources (Latour 2005; Czarniawska 2007; Ingold 2008). For IO research, this openness is interesting for heuristic reasons. It encourages us to explore a variety of sources—images and/or sense-making beyond language (Mitchell 2015; Howes and Classens 2014; Introna 2018; see also box d—*Carnal Sociology*)—either in relation to existing lines of research or to generate novel ones. More than this, the openness to heterogeneous sources, and the pragmatism this allows for in terms of what is required for any specific study, is appealing to IO researchers constantly negotiating restrictions stemming from, for example, political sensibilities, confidentiality, or limits to access/participation.

(iv) Composing Collages is not limited to a specific *form of research communication*. On the contrary, it connects the heterogeneous in shifting ways. It can move beyond the narrative not only to the lyrical (Abbot 2007) but also to images, videos, objects, and beyond. One might imagine also exhibitions or performances. For IO researchers who often have the ambition to convey their research results to an audience beyond the scholarly, this openness has considerable advantages and remains a reason for working with the approach.

How?

Is it possible to provide "instructions" for how to do counterdisciplinary research by Composing Collages? The answer is (paradoxically?) yes, pro-

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vided the instructions are commensurate to the ambitions. Four *hows* appear particularly central to the Composing of Collages:

(i) *Establishing a fit between research focus and method*: For the Composing of Collages, this is particularly challenging. The method does not come with predefined criteria for how to do this. Rather researchers are asked to establish the fit thinking it through, possibly adjusting it in the process of doing the research. This is unsettling for those who think that methods are there precisely to fix this fit. However, it is also an advantage. Research is done to discover things not already known. To revisit assumptions about the fit between focus and method once basic "cultural competence" is acquired is therefore a considerable advantage for any research that explores something not already known (Neumann in Klotz and Prakash 2008). More affirmatively, mobilizing methodological choices, combining and crossing them, can serve as a "heuristic device" generating research foci (Abbott 2004).

(ii) *Working imaginatively*: The radical openness of Composing Collages leaves little choice but to exercise methodological imagination, pragmatically adjusting to and working with the ready-made and available in each given context. Imagination is called for in the engagement with sources, analytical tools, concepts, theories, and writing/communicating scientific findings. This makes research creative and fun (Haraway 1997). The risk that it detonates the disciplinary canons is steadily diminishing. The expanding space made for imaginative forms of work and the pressure to prove "impact" and "relevance" conspire to locate imaginative forms of research and research communication more acceptable. For instance, exhibitions are increasingly part of scholarly communication, for example, about the governance of human rights and torture (Jasanoff 2017; Austin 2019).

(iii) *Flattening Epistemological and Ontological Hierarchies*: To work with Composing Collages allows and requires a flattening of the hierarchies that permeate research. At the core of the Composing of Collages sits the idea that the best way of providing a grasp of the world is *not* to construct an empirical generalization or a general explanation even if delimited by "scope conditions" but to accept that also concepts and theories are situated and inexact. Collaging

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therefore strives to give voice to and show the observed on its own terms. To do this demands making space for the nontheoretical and nonacademic, that is for nonacademic practices, images, sense-making, resonances, atmospheres, artifacts, documents, filing practices, track-change software, big data, tracking technologies, and beyond. To Compose Collages is to collaborate or colabor *with* the observed to gain knowledge rather than simply "'objectifying" it (Bourdieu et al. 1991; Haraway 1997; de La Cadena 2015).

(iv) *Checking Positionality through Frictions*: Logically following from the above, as anyone acknowledging the situated nature of knowledge, those Composing Collages must grapple with the "positionality" of the researcher and its consequences for what can and will be observed, understood, analyzed, and written (see box c—*Multipositionality*, and box x—*Postcolonial Insights*). "Reflexivity"—that is reflection on one's own research practices—remains crucial in Composing Collages. However, in addition to reflexivity collaging relies on the frictions generated in collaboration as a check on positionality. The flattening of hierarchies and mobilization of a diversity of materials provide information. More significantly, they place the research in perspective. Instead of assuming that positionality is best dealt reflexively, by looking into a mirror, Composing Collages mobilizes frictions, as Paulino shows when juxtaposing scientific texts about race with the embodied black woman (fig. 12). The "disturbances" generated in the encounters with heterogeneous others marks the points where positionality matters for research (Czarniawska 2007; also Bourdieu et al. 1991; Law 2004).

What Challenges?

Composing Collages is a methodology geared to support discovery, imagination, and creativity. These are values professed by most researchers. However, they are also values exceedingly difficult to practice in real academic life (and beyond). Academia is inherently conservative. It is the guardian of authoritative knowledge. For good reasons, academic institutions see themselves as bulwarks against fads, fashions, fabrications, and fakes. This makes them suspicious of claims to novelty and calls for change. Academic institutions therefore often generate processes where research that disturbs established truths, orders, and hierarchies is unwelcome, actively discouraged, marginal-

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ized, and if possible buried (Stengers 2000; Law 2004; Csarniawska 2016). Methods are core to academic disciplinary disciplining. Innovative method (by definition!) fails to faithfully "'apply" analytical frameworks, "conform" to "the cannon," and "live up to" established "standards," "criteria," and "expectations." It breaks and transgresses them. As it departs from authoritative knowledge, innovative research also necessarily challenges the academic foundations and guardians of that authority. Researchers practicing such methods (and this includes composing collages) therefore balance on the narrow ridge separating disreputable impostors and respected researchers. Their work is on the edge and must remain there (Brown 2009). The alternative is submitting to the conservativism of conventional academia and reinforcing it on the one hand or driving the dissolution of academic authority exposing all research to manipulations, markets, and solipsistic manias and turf constructions on the other. The peculiar "edgework" required to remain in balance on the ridge poses three challenges to the Composing of Collages.

The first is internal to the research: the challenge of justifying methodological choices without reverting to disciplining disciplinary criteria. This assumes a methodological literacy and fluency considerably higher than what is needed for those who resort to ready-made instructions. Yet in many contexts little is done to nurture such literacy. Methods training is mostly narrowly focused on the quantitative, statistical, and formal, leaving researchers ill prepared. To become autodidact is a time-consuming commitment made at the cost of research. Better, broader, and more varied method conversations are much needed. (This book is a step in that direction.)

The second challenge is related to the outward communication of methods choices to externals who have a say over, are involved in, or are concerned by the research. This includes among others peers, students, scholars from academic specialties beyond one's own, but also obviously the professional world, like IO practitioners, and wider society. All have more or less articulated assumptions and expectations about "methods" (Jasanoff 2017). Conveying methodological reasoning that breaks with these unarticulated assumptions requires researchers to master their own reasoning, as well as locating it in relation to the prevailing "common sense" of others.

The third, most significant, challenge is therefore posed by the temptation to "pragmatically" take ready-made shortcuts and/or surrender to the nostalgia for firm foundations. Giving way to this temptation throws the researcher off the edge, back into bolstering the conservativism of academic conventions, and back into "the science" Paulino's collage criticizes (figure 12). To avoid this, there is little choice but that of tackling these challenges. This chapter is an invitation to do precisely that.

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BOX Z

Expeditions as a Research Method

Doaa Abdel-Motaal

Expeditions as a research method are considered highly problematic in the contemporary social sciences because of their deep roots in imperial conquest, extraction, and settler colonialism. And yet how can we know the world without exploring it? How can we study structures governing highly remote places without traveling there? Expedition and exploration are two sides of the same coin, and surely one must distinguish between scientific research expeditions and expeditions that were designed to conquer new lands, appropriate their resources, and subjugate their original inhabitants.

Studying the earth's extreme environments, without scientific expeditions would be severely limiting. There is no doubt that traveling to the Arctic and the Antarctic opens up a universe of new research questions. Researchers can see their initial research questions completely upended when they experience firsthand the remoteness and isolation of the polar regions, the fragility of their flora and fauna, and interact with their inhabitants such as the indigenous communities of the Arctic, and the near permanent research communities and relatively few human settlers of the Antarctic.

In *Antarctica, the Battle for the Seventh Continent*, a book published in 2016 based on two scientific research expeditions through the Antarctic and the Arctic, this is precisely what happened. Despite years of research on the Antarctic, its changing climate, and the Antarctic Treaty System that governs the continent, the first landing on Antarctica's shores turned my research questions upside down. For, no amount of readings can prepare travelers for what it means to arrive at a continent with no political borders, no immigration officers and therefore no passport controls. The simplest of research questions became the foundation for the book: what happens when a person

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decides to live, die, marry, or give birth in Antarctica? In short, who owns the earth's last remaining continent?

Born in 1959, the Antarctic Treaty demilitarized the continent and dedicated it to peace and scientific research. However, it took decades (2004) for parties to create the Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty, an international organization to administer the treaty, placing it in Buenos Aires (Argentina). Hailed as one of the greatest successes of the international system, it took a research expedition through Antarctica to understand that the Antarctic Treaty and its secretariat were just as fragile as the continent. In fact, the melting of Antarctica's ice and the rising competition for its living space and resources, is a threat not just to the continent but also to its governance structure.

Expeditions are an essential tool for the study of international regimes, and of the international organizations behind them, when they are intrinsically linked to specific geographic locations. They become vital to understanding whether governance structures truly respond to the needs of those regions, to their pace of change, and to the hopes and aspirations of their inhabitants. They can provide vital insight into the real questions that need to be addressed. In fact, the best expeditions are the ones that allow research questions to evolve, with a framing and multiple reframings of the problem, as the discovery and exploration proceed.

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INTERLUDE V

Controversies on Methodological Pluralism

J. Samuel Barkin

All research into IOs relies on a mix of methods. The chapters throughout this book show how to use a variety of methods to their full potential and in this section specifically how some methods can be combined with others to good effect. Yet no individual method suffices to answer research questions about international organization or international organizations. There are methods for getting raw information in the first place. One can do interviews, observe practices, read primary documents, study histories, or find handy data sets that someone else has done the work to compile. Entirely different sets of methods can extract data from that raw information. A review of the same set of primary documents, for example, can yield a historical narrative, a discourse analysis, or a set of quantified data points. These in turn can be understood through a variety of techniques. The historical narrative, for example, can be deployed as comparative case study or as genealogy; the quantified data set can be deployed as description or in various forms of models for statistical hypothesis testing.

In other words, a complete methodology requires at minimum distinct methods for the acquisition, modeling, and analysis of information. What is often referred to as mixed methods in social science research uses different methods within one or more of these stages of research in specific methodological contexts. But published IO research always mixes methods, whether inside or outside these contexts. Even the publication of a data set without accompanying analysis of the data, for example, involves mixed methods, insofar as the methods for acquiring the raw information and for quantifying that information are distinct. Saying that our methods are mixed or combined, then, tells us nothing new. The more interesting question is *how* we are mixing our methods.

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Because the combining of methods is necessary to do social science, and therefore IO, research, the mere fact of doing so cannot be controversial. Therefore this essay, despite being in the part of this volume on combining methods, is not about controversies in method combination but rather about controversies in methodological pluralism. The key shift here is not from questions of "combining" to questions of "pluralism." It is more subtle; it is the shift from methods to methodologies. The bulk of this essay focuses on the relationship between these two concepts and will return to the issue of methodological pluralism at the end.

What Exactly Is a Qualitative or Quantitative Methodology?

I understand a method to be a specific tool—in this context a specific tool for the acquisition, manipulation, analysis, or contextualization of information relevant to the study of international organizations. These tools can be employed more or less effectively, and the various chapters in this volume give invaluable advice on how to apply many key social science research methods well. The most effective use of a tool is also context-specific, whether the tool is statistical modeling or interviewing or observing. Methodology can then be understood as "the strategy by which methods are selected, given research questions," and, more broadly, "the way in which scholars think about the relationship between methods and research questions" (Barkin and Sjoberg 2017: 4). Methods are the tools, methodologies are the ways in which the tools are utilized in combination to address specific questions about international organizations.

Methods are then quite distinct from methodologies (some authors in this volume refer to research designs; I take the term research design to be more or less equivalent to methodology). Furthermore, methods do not necessarily map onto methodologies. A good illustration of this claim can be found in the distinction often drawn, both within IO studies and across the social sciences, between quantitative and qualitative. When used to describe methods, this distinction might make some but limited sense. Statistical analysis, for example, seems pretty clearly quantitative (although it is less how one might characterize something like fuzzy set theory) (see, e.g., Bennett and Elman 2007). Formal rational choice models are less clear. They are mathematical, but they are not actually quantitative in the sense of using quantified data. Surveys are often used for statistical analysis but need not be. Historical research can be quantified or not; historical narratives can reference descriptive statistics. There are, in other words, a few methods

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that are clearly quantitative, but the boundaries of the category are unclear. "Qualitative" as a descriptive default category tells us little, and in some cases does not even indicate whether statistics are being used.

However, the distinction between quantitative and qualitative is often drawn at the level of methodology or research design (see chapter 25—*Process Tracing*). At this level, it makes even less sense than at the level of method. In this usage, "quantitative" is usually meant to describe a research design that uses statistical modeling to inferentially test formally stated hypotheses. Qualitative methodologies might then be understood as a default category covering everything else, or more narrowly as a research design that is interpretive in intent. A quantitative research design understood in this way is likely to include a quantitative method narrowly defined. But many research designs that use statistics would not be included (anything, for example, that uses descriptive statistics but is not designed as an exercise in inferential hypothesis testing). Furthermore, it is not clear where a set of comparative case studies designed to test hypotheses would fit, since the logic of the research design is inferential rather than interpretive.[1]

What people often mean when they refer to a quantitative methodology, in other words, is neither quantitative per se nor a methodology. It may be better understood as inferential or neopositivist,[2] and as epistemology[3] rather than methodology. It might be contrasted most simply with an interpretive epistemology, or more robustly with a range of other understandings of what we are trying to do when we do social science (Jackson 2011). This might sound at first like a terminological quibble, but confusing our methods with our methodologies with our epistemologies can, and often does, put unreasonable limits on our ability to think creatively and productively about using methods and about building the methodologies that will most effectively address our research questions.

The most pernicious effect of thinking in terms of quantitative or qualitative methodologies is that it often yields a set of false assumptions linking method, methodology, and epistemology. In the quantitative case, statistical

1. King, Keohane, and Verba 1994 refer to such studies as qualitative but then go on to argue that the rules of inference that inform such studies should be the same as those in quantitative inferential research.

2. I use neopositivist here following the definition of the term in Jackson 2011, with its focus on hypothesis testing.

3. Epistemology referring here to general ideas about how we should go about studying and understanding the world, as distinct from methodology, which is a strategy to address a specific question. Epistemology in this sense is roughly equivalent to what Jackson 2011 refers to as philosophical ontology.

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analysis is assumed to be the appropriate or preferred method for inferential hypothesis testing that is assumed to be the only legitimate methodology for epistemologically positivist social science (this is essentially the argument that King, Keohane, and Verba 1994 are making). In the qualitative case, narrative case studies might be assumed to be the preferred method for interpretive methodologies that are assumed to be the only legitimate methodologies for epistemologically critical social science. However, neither set of assumptions is remotely accurate. Some methods might be more or less appropriate for addressing specific research questions, but there is no reason in principle that specific methods cannot be used within different epistemologies. Thinking in terms of quantitative or qualitative methodologies serves only to limit our creativity in thinking about methodologies, about how best to answer our research questions.

Two examples may help to illustrate this claim. Process tracing and social network analysis (SNA) are two methods often used in the study of international organizations (see chapter 25—*Process Tracing* and chapter 19—*Social Network Analysis*), as discussed elsewhere in this volume. They are both methods of organizing information; each can work well with a broad variety of methods for acquiring information, depending on the specific process being traced or social network being analyzed. They are also very different approaches to organizing information; process tracing looks to isolate a causal story within a case history while SNA looks to isolate certain kinds of relationships among predetermined categories of actors or institutions. The commonality between them that is key in this context is that neither is limited to specific epistemologies or methodologies.

That they are not limited to specific methodologies has already been suggested by the observation that each can be matched to a wide variety of methods for gathering information. They can also be matched to a variety of methods for analyzing information. A network map, for example, can be read to determine which specific individuals or organizations are at its center, or can be analyzed statistically to determine its network properties. A process tracing narrative can be analyzed to determine primary cause for comparison with other cases or to understand the ways in which cause is complicated in the specific case.

That they are not limited to specific epistemologies either is perhaps the more important observation in this context. Both methods, for example, can be used equally effectively in positivist hypothesis testing exercises and in interpretive analyses of specific contexts. Neither, in other words, is in any meaningful methodological or epistemological way either quantitative or qualitative per se. Efforts to put either method in either camp serve only

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to artificially and unnecessarily delimit the utility of the method, the range of questions to which the method might usefully contribute to a response.

Method, Methodology, Epistemology, and Theory

It matters, then, whether or not we keep method and methodology conceptually distinct from each other. All social science research is at some level mixed methods research, because we use different sorts of methods to do different sorts of things within any given research project. It does not, however, make sense to speak of any given research project as mixed methodology, inasmuch as methodology is the way we bring together methods to address a specific set of research questions. A research project's methodology, understood in this way, is singular. But again it necessarily involves several methods, not all of which can be neatly categorized as quantitative or meaningfully categorized as qualitative. Methodology more broadly is difficult to neatly categorize, because it is (or at minimum should be) specific to each research project.

Epistemology is a little trickier. When IO scholars speak of a "quantitative methodology" they are usually referring to a combination of a neopositivist epistemology, a large data set, and statistical modeling used as hypothesis testing. This combination makes sense in its own terms but is unnecessarily limiting. Neopositivist epistemology does not mandate either large data sets or statistics, and both data sets and statistical modeling can be useful in the context of other epistemologies. But our discipline has trained enough scholars in "quantitative methodology" that focuses on combining these, and enough other scholars have reacted against the combination, that neopositivism, large data sets, and statistical modeling tend to be either embraced or rejected as a set. This may be useful for disciplinary boundary-building, but at the cost of needlessly constraining methodological creativity (for a more developed version of this argument see Barkin and Sjoberg 2017).

When IO scholars speak of "qualitative methodology" they often mean quite different things by it. It may be used to refer to research that adopts a positivist epistemology but uses case studies, implying that epistemologically nonpositivist work, being neither a quantitative nor qualitative methodology, is not really social science research at all (e.g., Barkin 2008). Alternatively, it may refer to research that eschews positivism in favor of various interpretivist epistemologies. Either way there is often an assumption that mixing methods that do and do not use statistics is somehow conceptually different than mixing methods none of which use statistics. This assumption has a dubious epistemological basis.

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What then of a mixed epistemology? There are different ways to look at this question. If one is an epistemological purist, whether that epistemology be neopositivist or any of a variety of antipositivist positions, then epistemology is prior to methodology, prior to the research question. It defines both what we should and what we should *not* be doing as scholars of international organizations. Methods must still of necessity be mixed, but methodology must fit within the given epistemology. If one is more prone to begin with a research question than epistemology, then the question itself will point to the appropriate epistemological position. Questions about conditions of possibility imply different epistemological constraints, for example, then questions about relationships. Such scholars may not be able to successfully mix epistemologies within specific pieces of research but can reasonably mix them across questions within a broader research trajectory.

Finally, what of theory, the thing that provides actual explanatory/interpretive/political content to our attempts to address our questions about international organizations?[4] Theory is in fact orthogonal not only to method but to methodology and epistemology as well. Take as an example two theoretical constructs frequently used to study international organizations, neoliberal institutionalism (understood as the application of Coasian logic to IOs) and gender analysis (understood as the study of the effects of gender as a social or discursive construct on the practice of international organization). A neoliberal lens is compatible with, among other things, formal modeling (to determine what should happen in the abstract), statistical modeling (to determine what tends to happen), and discourse analysis (to determine how the discourse of neoliberalism affected regime shape in particular historical settings). A gender lens is similarly compatible with various kinds of discourse analyses, but is also compatible with various kinds of statistical analyses, for example in answer to questions about what kinds of roles women play in IOs.

In both cases, the epistemological underpinnings of the questions being asked about international organization and IOs differs across methodologies. This is not to suggest that either neoliberal institutionalism or gender analysis are infinitely epistemologically malleable. Rather it is to suggest that questions of politics, of how the political world works, are distinct from questions of epistemology, of how we should go about studying that world. This is another way of phrasing a cautionary tale told often, but not often enough, in discussions of methods and methodology in IR generally; using methods and methodology well is critical to good scholarship, but we must

4. Theory understood here in a broad and inclusive sense, to forestall argument about what theory really is.

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not lose sight of the fact that our work is ultimately about the politics of international organizations, not methods for methods sake.

Pluralism

Different questions demand different mixes of methods in their methodologies. Any given methodology, of course, needs to make sense in its own terms. It needs a supporting story of how, and in what epistemological context, the methods combine to effectively address the question. And those individual methods, in turn, each have their own internal rules, and can each be used well or poorly. Pluralism in this context is a measure of how willing we are to accept methodological stories that are different from the ones that we are used to.

Since methodologies are the way we connect methods to research questions, though, the more pluralist we are willing to be in our thinking about methodology, the more pluralist we can be in the questions that we can ask about international organizations. Insisting *ex ante* that only a limited set of methodological stories is acceptable as social science or as critique is in this sense not just an act of methodological or epistemological exclusion. It is also an act of political exclusion, because it limits the kinds of questions we can ask about politics. The key controversy in methodological pluralism in IO studies, therefore, is whether we are willing to allow our epistemology (or, worse, the limits of our methods training) to dictate what we consider legitimate to study.

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