The European Union as an Institutional Scavenger:

International organization ecosystems and institutional evolution

By

Kathleen R. McNamara and Abraham L. Newman

Georgetown University

Send comments to krm32@georgetown.edu or aln24@georgetown.edu.

International organizations (IOs) are dynamic institutions. They must manage both the day-to-day responsibilities posed by running large bureaucracies and a host of more dramatic policy challenges. Their memberships can change, and they often confront questions about their mandate and usefulness. Despite both external and internal pressures to address these challenges, we know that such organizations face a myriad of barriers to quick, seamless adjustment.

Much of the international relations literature that attempts to explain international organizational change has focused on the drivers, and not the content, of change; thus the long waged battle between the liberal intergovernmentalists and the neo-functionalists (Moravcsik, 1998, Stone Sweet et al., 2001). More recent attempts to focus on questions of institutional design have taken a decidedly rationalist tack (Koremenos et al., 2001, Abbott and Snidal, 1988, Nielson and Tierney, 2003, Pollack, 2003). In this approach, states, which hope to resolve commitment or information problems, delegate to international organizations engineered to carry out their goals effectively. While the rational design literature has made significant contributions to our understanding of the relationships between states and international organizations, its *tabula rosa* view of the world underestimates the historical and systemic constraints that shape the possible trajectories of change.

In this paper, we offer an alternative explanation for international organizational change, one that couples insights from organizational sociology with historical institutionalism. The core argument rests on two assumptions. First, we note that international institutions sit in a broader organizational ecosystem. This ecosystem develops over time and can provide the building blocks of change and evolution in particular organizational sites. As this ecosystem is a fundamentally social environment, understanding

IO change requires attention to the cultural materials that make up that environment and provide the building block for institutional change, as highlighted in sociological approaches. Second, the capacity to engage in institutional genesis is conditioned by the temporal sequencing of previous institutional trajectories. Choice is bound and shaped by past decisions, which form the distinct branches available for future moves. Here, insights from the historical institutionalist approach give us leverage over the ways in which institutions are likely to change and evolve.

From these foundational assumptions, we derive two ideal typical paths to international organizational change: institutional layering, and institutional incorporation. In the former, an international institution can compensate for internal limitations by layering its perspective or goals over another organization. In the latter, an international institution does a wholesale incorporation of another institution's policies, in both form and/or content. While the two may at times merge or overlap in messy empirical examples, we draw out the two pathways as distinct mechanisms by which the external environment may open up possibilities for internal institutional change (while at the same time conditioning the parameters of such evolution).

Our 'institutional scavenger' perspective has important implications for understanding international organizational change. Rather than assuming that political actors come to solutions for their functional challenges with a blank slate, or adapt in instrumentally abstract ways, we argue that the process of institutional change is always rooted in the broader social or cultural ecosystem within which these organizations are nested. The solutions that actors reach for when challenges are perceived are in large part conditioned on the broader organizational ecosystem in which they find themselves. This historically conditioned account means that these solutions often come with the pathologies

inherent in adapting previous remedies to new situations. But it also may mean that, if successful, institutions can borrow the form and content of certain organizations to increase their legitimacy, authority, and ultimately, power.

As an initial effort to develop the institutional scavenger argument, we examine two cases of European Union institutional evolution. In particular, we look at the relationship between the Western European Union and the Common Foreign and Security Policy as well as the development of higher education policy in light of the Bologna Process. In both cases, the European Union reached outside the EU to existing, external organizational solutions to resolve internal policy demands. We examine how institutional layering (in the Bologna Process) and institutional incorporation (in the case of the WEU) occurred and then assess the repercussions of this institutional pattern of change for EU governance.

In this paper, our empirical examples come exclusively from the EU, but we believe that these processes are likely to be found across all international organizations, and indeed, in domestic institutional settings as well. All political institutions are both products of their preexisting and broader institutional ecosystem, as the historical institutionalists remind us. But those ecosystems are also made up of human beings and thus social, so the particular nature of actors' rational approaches, and the content of how actors puzzle and solve policy problems, will be informed by that cultural environment, as the sociological institutionalist remind us. The results may not be as functional as rationalist accounts of international organization design would expect. Crafty political actors scavenge their surroundings to achieve their ends, but the fit of the accumulated institutional shells may not always be ideal.

Accounts of Institutional Change

Rationalist approaches largely assume institutional design is a conscious, purposive act where the design produces the outcomes desired by those empowered to determine the design choices (Nielson and Tierney, 2003, Koremenos et al., 2001). In this view, interested national political actors engineer institutions to achieve their goals, balancing the efficiency possible through delegation with the potential for their IO agents to undermine those goals if their is too much slack in the design (Pollack, 2003).

Given the high costs of individual oversight, states seeking either expertise or commitment mechanisms therefore delegate to international organizations. Such institutions then serve to promote information exchange or compliance (Abbott and Snidal, 1988). Depending on the issue-area, institutional design will reflect the particular goal at hand. This sort of rationalist reasoning also underpins much of the earlier intergovernmentalist approach to European integration. Emphasizing the relative bargaining power of the various EU nation-states, scholars like Moravcsik (1998) formulated approaches that drew a causal line from the desires of strong states through to the institutional design in Treaty law and onwards to the specific activities of the key European institutions. In this account, to understand the ways in which the EU (as an IO) changes, we need to look to the goals of powerful states who determine and drive the integration process.

Students of the European Union have long found that the rationalist account explains some contours of the EU's shape and politics (Pollack, 1997) but fits uneasily with other elements of the EU's development. One early rebuttal to the rational intergovernmental account of how the EU develops institutionally is Pierson's (1996) historical institutionalist approach. Pierson argued that these approaches overstated the extent of member-state control over the integration process, and he offers an alternative historical institutionalist account that situates the EU's institutional development as a

process that unfolds over time. Member-state's preoccupation with short-term concerns, a plethora of unintended consequences, and instability in member-state preferences all conspire to move the EU in ways not foreseen or necessarily desired by its creators. Change resistant decision rules and sunk costs also push the EU to develop in path dependent ways that are not adequately captured in the more rationalist accounts (Pierson, 1996).

Pierson's insights engendered a host of new research that followed up by more precisely articulated accounts of how policies might be locked into institutions and produce unintended outcomes over time (Meunier and McNamara, 2007). The EU became the focus of a historical institutionalist literature, which built upon Pierson and others to develop sophisticated accounts of the ways in which institutions evolve. Nevertheless, much of this research has been inward looking, examining the internal politics of the EU. In this paper, we hope to take many of these insights and turn them back on the interactions of actors internationally.

For our purposes, we are particularly interested in exploring the importance of two workhorses of historical institutionalism: institutional stickiness and temporal sequencing (Pierson, 2004, Thelen and Steinmo, 1992, Zysman, 1994). In institutional stickiness, institutional structures often limit wholesale reform. As the policy context shifts over time, basic decision-rules and treaty provisions – the product of earlier hard fought political battles – moderate internal transformations. In the European context, for example, the pillar structure (and the accompanying voting procedures) has proved notoriously resilient despite its inherent limitations in dealing with new policy areas such as transnational terrorism or pan-European education. In addition, we look to a second critical insight, which highlights the role that policy sequencing plays in institutional change, as decisions taken in an earlier temporal moment shape choices in later periods. Research in the domestic setting has

shown, for example, that the construction of independent bureaucracies prior to broad based political incorporation influenced the usage of patronage politics (Shefter, 1977). Taking the concept to the international realm, we argue that sequencing effects may occur within the IO ecosystem. Decisions at T=0 in one IO, may structure the possibilities in other IOs at T=1.

While building on these basic assumptions of historical institutionalism, we also draw upon a second line of argument that offers a counter to the rational design approach from a more sociological approach. When confronting the puzzle of how institutions evolve, we not only want to situate them in time and place, but also in their specific cultural or social environment (Zucker, 1977, Meyer and Rowan, 1977, Powel and DiMaggio, 1991). From this viewpoint, organizations are viewed as both formal institutions and informal codes of conduct or social practices. Most importantly, bureaucratic, rationalized institutions (regulatory agencies, firms, central banks and so on) are not assumed to be constituted by 'objective' natural laws, but rather by cultural and social 'subjective' principles just as other areas of society (the arts, religion and non-profits) were always assumed to be (Dobbin, 1994a). As Dobbin states, "These works turned the prevailing rationalist approach to organizations on its head by arguing that supposedly universal precepts of organizational efficiency are simply abstractions from social practices that emerged for complex historical reasons."[1] Drawing on the broader social constructivist literature (Searle, 1995, Berger and Luckmann, 1966), scholars have depicted IOs as likewise socially constructed, and their practices the result of rationality, which is born of social interactions and experiences grounded in a specific place and time (Ruggie, 1982, Barnett and Finnemore, 2004).

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[1] Dobbin, "Cultural Models..." p. 122.

While some scholars have difficulty viewing rationalized organizations or practices as having both instrumental and symbolic foundations, we argue that both logics interact to clearly come into play in the EU's evolution.[2]   Political actors are highly strategic in choosing organizational forms and substantive policy content that will further their ends. Crucially, however, historical contingencies shape the very lenses through which actors see their environment and formulate those 'rational' responses.[3]   First, the external or social legitimation of certain forms of organization over others may exert a powerful force as compelling as functionalism (Spruyt, 1994).   It cannot be simple coincidence that the 20th century has witnessed the rise of IO assemblies and other parliamentary-like bodies, which flank bureaucratic secretariats. Second, in other instances, while policy forms or substance may be quite functionally appropriate at the start, they can be adopted in a variety of settings by actors whose needs are quite dissimilar and for whom the reforms may not be functionally appropriate in a narrow efficiency sense.[4]   This is the case for many countries

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[2] Many observers of the EU or other international organizations will agree that shared intersubjective understandings are crucial to their maintenance, but may argue that these normative understandings arise from a functional demand for solutions to certain collective action problems. This sort of rationalist approach to ideas is typified by (Garrett and Weingast, 1993). Ernst Haas tackles this problem in the area of nationalism by combining the two perspectives (Haas, 1993).

[3] These dynamics are well documented in the economic sociology literature on organizations. For example, Frank Dobbin's study of the development of industrial policy in the United States, France and Britain draws attention to the primary importance of culture in the construction of different logics of policymaking, while William Roy emphasizes the role of power, instead of efficiency, in the historical creation of American corporate structures. (Dobbin, 1994b, Roy, 1997).

[4] The classic sociological work on this phenomena (Tolbert and Zucker, 1983); see also (Fligstein, 1990).

who adopted the organizational form and price stability policy content of central bank independence in the 1990s but for whom fighting inflation was a much lower need than the legitimacy and credibility that came from adopting that organizational form (McNamara, 2002).

The overall point is simple: efficiency *per se* or narrowly defined is an unsatisfactory explanation for the development and evolution of many international (or domestic) institutions and policies. The point is *not* that these strategies are irrational because they involve social dynamics, but that rationality cannot be understood in isolation from the particular circumstances, social and historical, that the action is taken in. The EU's institutions, like IOs more generally, are constructed within an ecological system of international organizations rich with alternative forms and policies. The environment may provide a host of important functional stimuli, but they are interpreted socially, in conjunction and collaboration with other actors, and actors rarely create their institutions de novo.

In sum, once we situate the development and evolution of EU institutions into their broader temporal and social environments, we may begin to understand the path of institutional development more fully. The institutionalist scavenger approach puts these historical institutionalist and sociological strands together to explain key parts of the evolution of the EU.

Institutional Scavenging:

Our model of IO change starts with the assumption that in many cases the possibility of internal institutional evolution is limited. This may be due to political blockages, legitimacy concerns, or resource constraints. Faced with new policy problems, however, IOs and the states that they represent are unlikely to give up. Instead, institutional

scavenging offers a number of external pathways through which to alter IO capabilities, activities, and solutions. At its most basic, scavenging occurs when external institutional routes are taken to achieve IO policy trajectories difficult to achieve through more organic development.

This potential bricolage has both a substantive and procedural dimension. Substantively, scavenging may occur on the level of the exoskeleton, whereby a scavenging IO takes advantage of the hard institutional structures of another organization. This may include the secretariat, the formal rules, oversight mechanisms, or institutional capacities. By contrast, other scavenging efforts may focus on the soft inner core. Here, substantive policy principles, ideas, and norms are targeted. In either case, the scavenging IO looks to institutions and ideas developed by other IOs to fill an internal policy-making gap.

On the process side, scavenging may occur in at least one of two ways. In some cases, the scavenging IO layers its goals and needs on top of another. Here the two continue to exist in parallel but their work streams overlap. The scavenging IO penetrates the complementary IO's policy-making process so as to inject its goals. The existence of institutional developments in an external setting then may reverberate in the scavenging IOs own internal policy process. At the domestic level, such layering strategies have been identified in a number of institutional settings (Thelen, 2004, Shickler, 2001). In the debate over pension reform, for example, policy makers often faced the institutional lock-in of pay-as-you-go pensions systems, where current workers fund current retirees. Altering such policies in isolation can prove politically deadly as politicians can only alter funding structures by absorbing the costs of current pensioners or cutting their benefits. Policy-makers, therefore, experimented with expanding private pension accounts to promote parallel institutional structures. As these alternatives were layered on the old pension system

they grew at a much faster pace from traditional pensions and thereby lowered the political costs to change. New workers were slowly funneled into new accounts that did not depend on pay-as-you-go taxes, undermining political opposition to the reform of tradition pensions (Hacker, 2004). International layering may not only occur at the level of specific public policy alternatives within a single polity but also among IOs as they interact. The development of best practices in transgovernmental forum such as the International Organization for Securities Commissions or the Basel Committee, for example, have opened up previously blocked policy areas for the traditional International Financial Institutions (Singer, 2007).

In other cases, the scavenging IO incorporates either the exoskeleton or the soft inner core directly into its operations (Thelen and Streeck, 2005). In short, annexing the other IO, the scavenger takes on the traits, characteristics and/or operations of the other. Here, the other IO may serve as a policy incubator until the political environment is appropriate for internalization of the particular organizational domain by the scavenger. Both layering and incorporation take advantage of the foreign institutional setting as a site that is potentially more conducive to policy development. Ultimately, the interaction between the scavenger institution and the foreign institution have the potential to significantly shift the internal policy trajectory.

While scavenging has the potential to overcome internal policy-making barriers within an IO, it comes with its own set of quirks and pathologies (Barnett and Finnemore, 1999). Most importantly, there is a significant risk that a form/function gap will emerge. Although the adopted formal structures or ideas may seem appropriate in the context of a specific functional challenge, depending on the type of scavenging, they may lack either the structural capacities to carry out the intended mission or the specific content that can resolve

the policy challenge. Over the long-term this gap may grow and disrupt the day-to-day operations of the host IO. Similarly, frictions may arise between the scavenging IO and other participating IOs. As the scavenger starts to dominate the relationship or direct the policy agenda, other IOs may balk at further cooperation. The scavenger must then attend to the interests of its partners if it hopes to continue such efforts. Finally, the host risks a Trojan Horse scenario, whereby the incorporated or layered party starts to dominate the relationship.

Given the potential benefits and risks to such strategy, the question then becomes when are such scavenging is more or less likely. A clear boundary condition concerns the density of the international institutional ecosystem (Alter and Meunier, 2009, Weber, 1994). Lone IOs off in social isolation from other bodies has little opportunity to engage in such behavior. In short, the primordial soup must be relatively rich to support such adaptation. Additionally, the barriers to organic change must be high. We would not expect IOs to engage in such behavior if they could easily adjust internal institutional structures or norms. This might include limits placed on the IO by member states under founding agreements or internal organizational deficits in technical expertise.

In the two preliminary case studies that follow, it is apparent that scavenging is occurring in the EU, with significant impacts on the form and direction of European integration. In the first case, the development of foreign policy and defense capacity in the EU, we see the EU taking advantage of a very dense institutional environment and reacting to both NATO and the Western European Union (WEU) in ways that profoundly shape the evolution of the EU's own posture. Both the sequencing of the long historical development in this area, and the perceived legitimacy of preexisting organizational forms of the WEU are consequential for the ways in which the EU develops in the foreign policy realm. Although

the various IOs start out as layered, the WEU is ultimately completely submerged into the EU and incorporated. In the case of education policy, the institutional ecosystem is much thinner, but the particular attractions of the relatively loose, ad-hoc intergovernmental Bologna process, which begins outside the EU system, has clear advantages for the EU and the highly political sensitive area of education policy. Here, scavenging through institutional layering has enabled the EU to move closer to achieving some vital goals in terms of youth and worker mobility, without creating outspoken opposition. However, the education area has not resulted in incorporation as in the case of foreign policy.

The following sections sketch out these dynamic processes of institutional scavenging, linking the role of external institutions to the overcoming of political obstacles, legitimacy challenges, and resource constraints on the part of the EU.

The Need to Scavenge: Limits to Defense Cooperation within the European Union

Since the signing of the Treaty of Rome, the European Communities have held high aspirations for broad-based integration. Nevertheless, attempts to fold security cooperation into the EC's remit have repeatedly met debilitating political barriers. During the founding years, British opposition spelled the end of the European Defense Union, which would have established a supranational defense force in Europe. A decade later, the Fouchet Plan pushed by France, which would have created an intergovernmental pan-European defense initiative, met a similar fate (Parsons, 2003). Then again in the early 1980s, Germany and Italy in the Genscher-Colombo Plan attempted to expand European Political Cooperation to incorporate defense issues. This was blocked by neutral EC members (e.g. Ireland, Denmark, and Greece) (Smith, 2004). While the exact reason behind the failure of the EC to expand into defense policy shifted over time, it repeatedly confronted the limits of

competence included in the original Treaty of Rome and the changing alignment of member state interests.

The Institutional Eco-system

The post-war period saw a massive genesis of international organizations with tasks relevant to Europe. In the security field, in particular, a number of institutions were created with overlapping and complementary missions. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is perhaps the best known and ties the United States into a defensive alliance with the continent. While NATO long dominated the political and operational space devoted to security cooperation within Europe, a number of other organizations emerged and evolved.

Even before countries came together to sign the North Atlantic Treaty, a group of five European countries including Britain, France, and the Benelux adopted the Brussels Treaty in 1949. The Brussels Treaty, which would soon expand to include Italy and Germany and be renamed the Western European Union in 1952, created a mutual defense commitment within Europe as well as a cooperative framework for the integration of security cooperation. In its early years, the work of the WEU focused on resolving tensions between France and Germany in the Saar region and coordinating interactions between the UK and the continent. With the referendum in the Saar region and the enlargement of the EC to include the UK, the WEU went dormant in the 1970s (Cahen, 1989).

Finally, as part of Détente, the parties involved in the Cold War formed the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Extending from Vancouver to Vladivostock, the CSCE formed the largest regional security organization in the world. Its work focused on conflict resolution and prevention.

The Adaptive DNA of the WEU

As the EC cast about for possible paths to European defense integration, the WEU enjoyed several adaptive advantages. In contrast to both NATO and CSCE, WEU membership facilitated closer union. In particular, the WEU did not include either of the global superpowers, freeing the organization from becoming merely a tool of hegemonic influence. Perhaps equally important, the WEU did not include the neutral countries of Ireland, Denmark, and Greece, which repeatedly blocked security cooperation during the Cold War within the auspices of the EC. The WEU constituted a site where a set of countries with roughly common goals could meet and exchange ideas (Cahen, 1989).

In addition to its membership structure, the WEU had several institutional advantages over other regional fora. Unlike NATO, the WEU Treaty had no explicit geographic limitation. As a result, the WEU was not encumbered by the "out of area" discussion that shackled NATO. Additionally, the WEU was a treaty-based organization that enjoyed its own secretariat, think tank, and parliamentary assembly. These features meant that the WEU could serve as a convener for transgovernmental cooperation on defense issues that was supported by mechanisms of both technical expertise and democratic accountability. With the repeated failure of EC efforts in the area, the WEU was the only European forum where defense ministers regularly met and discussed policy issues. As these meetings included foreign ministers, the WEU offered an important site for a simultaneous conversation on foreign and security policy (Rees, 1998).

The Reawakening of the WEU

During the 1980s as Détente waned, European leaders again searched for a path towards greater defense cooperation. Finding political barriers to the expansion of European Political Cooperation under the auspices of the EC, France led an initiative to reawaken the WEU and build its capacity. Starting with the Rome Declaration in 1984, the

WEU took on a new level of significance in regional cooperation. Biannual meetings of defense and foreign ministers began.   A number of standing committees were formed among lower level civil servants, the WEU assembly forged links to the European Parliament, and the secretariat began to organize a framework for European defense (Luoma-aho, 2004).

In 1987, the WEU released the Hague Platform on European Security Interests outlining a European Security Defense Identity (Taylor, 1994). These discussions attempted to navigate a politically touchy debate about the role of European efforts vis-à-vis NATO. One group of countries, spearheaded by France, hoped to create a European defense arm that would complement NATO. Another group, led by the UK, pushed for a European defense pillar under the auspices of NATO (Luoma-aho, 2004). The ESDI forged an important middle ground, highlighting key areas of cooperation for European countries while leaving ambiguous the NATO relationship. In the end, countries from both camps supported the WEU because it could represent both visions.

In the early 1990s, the WEU expanded its institutional capacity and organizational mission. Moving its secretariat to Brussels and consolidating its think tanks, the WEU built an institutional structure that could support collaboration among Europe's defense ministries (Cornish, 1996). These discussions produced the Petersberg Tasks, which spelled out a set of humanitarian and crisis management responsibilities including missions outside of Europe. This established the WEU as more than a mutual defense treaty and an institution with global reach. The document is cited as the cornerstone of an analytic framework for defense cooperation within Europe (Taylor, 1994). While the WEU had no independent troops of its own, it had become an important site for transgovernmental cooperation and the development of a European defense initiative. At the same time, the

WEU created a planning cell with a situation center and intelligence section in the Brussels headquarters. In May 1995, the WEU released the first assessment of threats to European security in its *Common Reflection on the new European Security Condition.*

WEU then coordinated a number of military missions during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Most notably, it served as the umbrella for the European embargo of Iraq and a series of minesweeping missions during the first Gulf War (Salmon, 1992). The WEU, however, never established itself as a counterpoint to NATO within Europe. It relied on "double hated" troupes and often lacked the political mandate to take charge of European securities issues, a gap that became painfully clear during the Bosnian crisis. Rather than establishing a European military, the WEU created a space for European leaders to develop a European security identity that was distinct from NATO objectives but not directly a challenge to them (Rees, 1998).

The Incorporation of the WEU in the EU

During the Maastricht negotiations, the members of the European Union first formally integrated the Common Foreign and Security Policy into its mission. The original CFSP pillar, however, limited cooperation to foreign or security issues that had an economic dimension. As such it did not provide for an institutional structure to facilitate cooperation among defense ministers (Smith, 2004). Additionally, there was no organizational capacity to facilitate the broader defense implications of CFSP.

As part of the Maastricht Treaty, therefore, the EU explicitly layered its institutional mission on top of that of the WEU. In article J.4.2, the Treaty states, "the Union requests the Western European Union (WEU), which is an integral part of the development of the Union, to elaborate and implement decisions and actions of the Union which

have defense implications. The Council shall, in agreement with the institutions of the WEU, adopt the necessary practical arrangements."

The reliance of the EU on the WEU during the 1990s intensified. As part of the Treaty of Amsterdam, the Petersberg Tasks were formally incorporated into the EC aqui. More generally, the Treaty paved the way for full incorporation of the WEU with in the EU as stated in Title V, article J.7, "The Western European Union is an integral part of the development of the Union providing the Union with access to an operational capability notably in the context of paragraph 2. It supports the Union in framing the defence aspects of the common foreign and security policy as a set out in this Article. The Union shall accordingly foster closer institutional relations with the WEU with a view to the possibility of the integration of the WEU into the Union, should the European Council so decide." Then in 1999, at a meeting of European defense ministers in Cologne, the WEU was formally annexed by the EU. The WEU secretariat and think tank were transferred to the CFSP in 2002 and facilitated its bureaucratic expansion (Luoma-aho, 2004).

The Quirks of a WEU Inspired EU Defense Policy

While the WEU, as such, ceased to exist, much of European Security and Defense Policy builds on its legacy. Most important, ESDP concerns itself primarily with the Petersberg Tasks – humanitarian and crisis response. The genesis of the Petersberg Tasks stemmed in large part from the WEU's dance with NATO. The WEU sought to establish itself as a complementary force that did not challenge the fundamental mission of NATO as a defensive alliance. The WEU thus focused its efforts on non-core, out-of-area missions. This well-defined agenda offered the EU sensible ready made content for an embryonic ESDP. But at the same time, the EU has been forced to focus its defense program on difficult humanitarian missions in weak states such as Congo and the Ivory Coast. In ceding

much of the traditional military operation to NATO, the WEU agenda shackles the EU to some of the most intractable conflicts across the globe.

Additionally, the annexation of the WEU by the EU has stymied a broader defense conversation in the European area. One of the major benefits of WEU cooperation was a variable membership system. In addition to the full members, a system was put in place for associate members. These included key non-EU NATO countries such as Iceland, Turkey, and Norway. From a transgovernmental perspective, there was very little difference between full and associated members. As such it provided a unique platform for integrating non-EU members into a European defense conversation. With the dissolution of formal WEU structures and the imposition of EU procedures, it is much more difficult for these non-EU members to actively participate in the ongoing dialogue (Howorth and Keeler, 2003).

The Need to Scavenge: the EU's Higher Education Policy

The second area that provides an example of the process of institutional scavenging is higher education policy in the EU. Education as a policy arena is of interest to European officials for several reasons, but it also brings with it significant barriers to institutionalization. First, historically, education has played a central role in the development of citizenship and identity (Weber 1976). Insomuch as there is a belief among some in Europe that the EU project as a whole is likely to be more successful if it has a social infrastructure that promotes a feeling of "we-ness" and proscribes a series of rights and obligations that come with European citizenship, the EU has an interest in all levels of education. However, primary and secondary education are closely guarded by national, regional, and local political authorities and there is little appetite for aggressive movement into those realms.

The arena that therefore makes the most sense for the EU to pursue given potential national resistance is higher education, and indeed there was a major incentive to get university education under a common framework. Arguably, facilitating the movement of university students across national borders for extended periods of study in universities out of their own member states is crucial to encouraging the development of European identity. There is a perception among academics and Commission officials alike that it is the younger generations who, should they experience what it means to live and share in life outside their own member states, will be more likely to form the foundation for the development of a European identity. This drove the founding of the EURAMUS program, set up in 1987. ERASMUS provides for reciprocal study programs (where students do not have to pay the fees of the university where they are visiting), stipends and credentials for exchange students across Europe. At its twentieth anniversary in 2007, over 1.5 million students have taken advantage of ERASMUS to study abroad, a relatively small percentage of students. But in a sign of the importance of this area, the EU plans to double that amount, to 3 million, by 2012, a very short span of time.

The dynamic some EU officials fondly hope for is captured very well in the 2002 film, "L'Auberge Espanole," where the narrator, Xavier, comes from France to attend university in Barcelona on the ERASMUS program. He lives in an apartment with students from all over the EU and gradually they come to learn about each other and themselves within the frame of being "European." In a voiceover at the start of the film, Xavier says:

> "When you first arrive in a new city, nothing makes sense. Everything's unknown, virgin... After you've lived here, walked these streets, you'll know them inside out. You'll know these people. Once you've lived here, crossed this street 10, 20, 1000 times... it'll belong to you because you've lived there. That was about to happen to me, but I didn't know it yet."

The film also has the characters explaining that to hold multiple identities, as Catalan, as Spanish, as a European, is perfectly normal and in fact desirable.

However, despite goals of ERASMUS and the now ever increasing EU budget devoted to funding student exchanges, a persistent and important barrier to student mobility has been the lack of recognition of degrees and credits taken at universities outside of national borders, confusion over how to translate credits, and very different educational cycles and timetables that made transitioning between undergraduate and graduate studies complicated and awkward for students attempting to study at different points in their career across the EU. It likewise made it difficult for researchers and professors hoping to apply their training and degrees to professional situations outside their own national academies. Finally, when it comes to creating a truly European job market, standardizing higher education and making more transparent and translatable the various degrees and credentials is an essential foundation. These problems had to be solved, and it was not clear how to do it within the existing EU institutions.

Limits to Education Cooperation within the European Union

Despite the obvious functional pressures for convergence, as with the area of national security, education policy in the European Union has traditionally been a sensitive and jealously guarded policy arena, falling as it does within the realm of social policy and engaging a host of important national values in its substance and execution.   Alongside these political barriers, both legitimacy issues and resource constraints further complicate the development of education policy. There is no legal language in the Treaty of Rome establishing a common education policy, although there is language supporting vocational training. Education was formally recognized, however, as an area of European Union competency in the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. The European Commission's Education and

Culture Directorate General's website declares that in terms of the treaty basis for education policy, "The role of the EU in education and training policies is a supporting one. The national governments of Member States are in charge of their education and training systems, but they cooperate within the EU framework in order to achieve common goals." Maastricht's treaty language is indicative of the constraints placed on full fledged EU action in this area: "[t]he Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between member states and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the member states for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity."

Moreover, beyond the legal issues, education systems have long figured prominently in nation-building projects, so the institutional landscape at the national level is extremely well developed and historically entrenched. Likewise, some of the European universities go back almost a thousand years and thus present a formidably entrenched area for policy change. For example, the University of Bologna, considered the oldest university in the western world, was founded in 1088, with the University of Paris and Oxford University less than 100 years behind. The elaborate national credentialing systems for educational achievement have likewise extremely deep historical roots, that have evolved over centuries and have many stakeholders potentially resistant to changes in the form and content of the education systems and their credentials. This set up a dilemma for EU policymakers: to achieve their dream of a Europe full of students experiencing their own "Auberge Espanole" semesters, they needed to have much more mutual recognition, at a minimum, and ideally, standardization and convergence, in scholarly timetables and credentialing. How could they do this without a developed internal EU capacity?

The Institutional Ecosystem

"Europe is not only that of the euro, of the banks and the economy: it must be a Europe of knowledge as well. We must strengthen and build upon the intellectual, cultural, social and technical dimensions of our continent. These have to a large extent been shaped by its universities, which continue to play a pivotal role for their development"
— Sorbonne Declaration, 1998

Fortunately for the EU's goals on student and labor mobility, and creating European citizens, the broader international institutional ecosystem was developing a set of initiatives that could provide a ready made solution to some of the EU's problems, if EU officials could be strategic, creative and persuasive enough to take advantage of them. A series of ad hoc conversations and efforts had been bubbling up in the 1970s and 1980s in the area of a European education policy (Smith, 1985). These efforts were drive in part by national leaders seeking to reform the cost and quality of their own educational systems but needing the legitimacy and coalitional support to do so (Haskell, 2008).

But the real push came in 1998, when the French Minister of Higher Education, Claude Allegre, convened a meeting of his peers from Germany, Italy and the UK to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the founding of the Sorbonne in Paris. There, the ministers agreed on a Joint Declaration calling for a "Europe of knowledge" centered on its universities.[5] Subsequently, in 1999 in Bologna, 29 ministers signed the Bologna Declaration, beginning the Bologna process that was to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010. Bologna envisioned a new era for Europe, where students and researchers can have their credentials, work and status recognized, allowing for the movement across quite historically variegated education systems.

The Adaptive DNA of Bologna

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5 For detailed analysis of the origins of Bologna, see Corbett 2005, Ravinet 2005, de Wit 2003, Keeling 2006.

What advantages did Bologna have for the EU in terms of its institutional DNA? Overall, the impression is of an organizational form and genesis that the EU could claim was organic to the nation-states and to the publics in them, rather than being driven by the EU itself. First, the membership structure was broad and inclusive, with 15 then members of the EU, the 11 then accession states, and three members of the European Economic Area (and Cyprus joined a little later). The structure was quite loose, as a series of working groups were set up, with a nationally rotating Chair and secretariat. The involvement was entirely voluntary on the part of states, not required by statute, the organizational methods were cooperative in the manner of the EU's soft, "open method of cooperation", not coercive, and the mechanisms of cooperation were traditional intergovernmental ones. The overall impression was of a bottom up, networked type of cooperation, although clearly the national governments were interested and motivated to see this process unfold. A series of "observers" were pulled into the institutional network, both from a grassroots level (National Unions of Students in Europe) as well as traditional IOs in the education field (the Council of Europe, and the OECD both had observers participate).

In terms of the content of this new organizational regime, six key areas were first identified as needing attention (Haskell 2008).

> 1) Adoption of system of easily readable and comparable degrees; 2) Adoption of a system essentially based on two cycles [undergraduate and graduate level] 3) Establishment of a system of credits; 4) Promotion of Academic Mobility; 5) Promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance; 6) Promotion of a European dimension in higher education.

As the process gained speed over the next eight years, lifelong learning, involvement of higher education institutions and students as "active partners," enhancement of the "attractiveness" of the new European area, and doctoral studies as a new third cycle and an emphasis on building synergy between the EHEA and the European Research Area. This

last dimension was in line with the EHEA's emerging linkage to the EU's Lisbon Strategy, discussed below, and the membership expanded to 46 members. The content of the initiative, as well as the form, could be argued to be ideal for adaptation by the EU into a European Union education policy regime, but one which looked driven by bottom up concerns.

The EU's Predatory Involvement in Education Cooperation

As the Bologna process began to move forward, the EU had on its doorstep a potential solution to the legal constraints of the EU's treaty law. While education harmonization was critical to achieving the creation of a European citizen and to promoting mobility of a new generation of Europeans, the EU faced serious barriers to achieving this goal by itself. The Bologna process offered the EU an opportunity to overcome this institutional dead end by layering the organizational structure already developing outside the EU onto the EU's own DNA.

By the first ministerial meeting after the initial Bologna declaration, the EU had achieved an important foray into this realm when it was recognized as a participant, not an observer of the process, in contrast to other IOs involved. The difficulties of steering this complex bureaucratic process challenged the intergovernmental set up, and the EU offered the national governments a way to move the process forward. In particular, the EU set up a series of seemingly technical support structures to assist in the collection and dissemination of data, such as Eurydice (and information network on education, based in Brussels) and a journal for scholarship on European education (the *European Journal of Education)*. Such efforts were important in logistical terms as they offered ongoing bureaucracies to assist in formulating policies, but they also could have more subtle impacts in legitimating the EU as an actor on education, and as a site for authority in this area. Such activities as Eurydice and

the journal do this by reinforcing a seemingly benign framing of the very notion of

"European education", based on apolitical information gathering and diffusion. The EU has

also taken a role in the encouragement of various networks of social groups throughout the

EU, who are nested within it but seem autonomous (see Haskell 2008).

The Effective Layering of a Scavenged Exoskeleton and its Soft Core

The critical stimulus to the absorption of the education area into the EU's remit

came with the Lisbon Strategy, however. As the EU considered its role in broader economic

growth and development across Europe, formulating the Lisbon Strategy in 2000, the

emphasis on the need for a world class knowledge economy fit perfectly with the educational

reform efforts underway.   Lisbon linked the competitiveness of the EU directly to the need

for an upgrading in the European higher education sphere, and conceptually formulated the

problem and the solution at the European (not nationally segmented) level (Kaufman, 2008).

This reframing of the issues within the EU allowed actors to think differently about their

interests in an EU-wide education policy by creating a hook that linked to the traditional

arena of EU activity, the economy (Fligstein and Drita, 1996, Jabko, 2006). The EU's new

push, rooted in the new rhetoric of the Lisbon Strategy, resulted in the elevation of the

Commission from participant to full membership in the Bologna Process in 2001, putting it

on par with the member-states and making it an important driver of the institution, even as

the Process still remains officially outside the EU legal framework.

The results of this institutional scavenging have been significant, both impacting the

Bologna Process itself while having clear impacts on the EU's abilities to achieve its goals in

the area of student and worker mobility. First, observers have noted the transformation of

the Bologna Process to reflect the Lisbon strategy in both structure and norms (Striedinger

and Uhart, 2006).   From the EU side, the Bologna Process has by many accounts succeeded

in the goal of increasing mobility, in institutional cooperation on quality assurance and mutual recognition of credentials, and in the European dimension in domestic curricula, (Mittereder, 2008). One change that is remarkable when placed in the context of how deeply rooted educational practices are is the standardization of the degree sequences, so that most universities in signatory countries, in most fields, use a 3 year first degree timeframe, plus 2 year second degree (the US's masters level), and the 3 or 4 year or plus doctoral degree, whereas before there were varying time cycles for degrees. Most countries use a common European Credit Transfer System, and provide a "Diploma Supplement" which offers a standardized transcript. A variety of more substantive efforts to require research training at the doctoral level and other quality assurance efforts have also gone forward.

Spread of the Three Cycle Structure of Higher Education Compliant with the Bologna Process 2006/7

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Source: Eurydice, 2007

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Overall numbers of students taking advantage of the increasingly convergent European educational space continues to rise as well. The above graph depicts the overall rise in aggregate student mobility in the EU since the late 1980s. But it should be remembered that European students who go abroad to study are still a relatively small percentage overall, as low as 2 percent in some countries but up to 10 percent in others. Interestingly, when comparing the mobility of European students with those in the US, there is less of a difference than one might imagine. The percentage of US students at university outside their own state hovers around 18% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). While the US clearly demonstrates higher inter-state student mobility, the vast majority of students still remain in their home state.

An additional by-product of these education processes, is the increase in bi- and multilingualism in the EU and the spread of the use of English as the *lingua franca*, also, most notably by increases in the study of other languages in primary and secondary school years (Eurostat data 2004). Many of the ninety percent of European universities who participate in Erasmus now make available a selection of courses in English for these foreign students, who are often not native English speakers.

The Quirks of a Bologna Inspired EU Education Policy

The EU has used its scavenging to overcome significant obstacles to its forward movement in the education area, but there are some shortcomings to this approach. Most obviously, Bologna remains outside the formal acquis communitaire structure, and therefore may represent to some in Brussels a second best strategy. The EU has arguably gone much further, much faster in this sensitive area than it would have otherwise, but what did it give up along the way? For example, by confining itself to be focused at university level, with much less extension into primary and secondary education, it will not be able to duplicate the state and nation building projects of the member-states. There are interesting spillovers, however, to the primary and secondary levels, as the incentives to go elsewhere to study outside your national borders create even more incentives for bi- and muli-lingual education, and for the study of English, which is becoming the lingua franca for European education.

The voluntary/intergovernmental structure of the Process, which includes 45 countries, has focused the organization on standardizing the cycling structure of degrees. While this is an important achievement, it does not attempt to influence content within the system. As such the EU finds itself in a highly bureaucratic exercise about credit recognition and semester plans, minimizing any discussion about, for example, liberal arts education in Europe. While such standards debates are typical policy tasks for the EU, in the area of

education and cultural policy, the Process limits the EU's ability to expand into the construction of content that could further consolidate European identity.

Conclusion

Much of the work on international organizations has focused either on "optimal" descriptions of organizational management and function or on the drivers of change. In this paper, we hope to spark a debate about the content of such change. In particular, we are interested in the international institutional ecosystem in which IOs are embedded and how this ecosystem structures adaptation and evolution. In contrast to internal mechanisms, we suggest the external IO environment offers building blocks for strategic actors to alter the context of institutional reform. This may include the procedural rules and structures developed in other organizations or their ideas and principals. Through processes of institutional layering and incorporation, scavenging IOs are able to turn to their external environment to disrupt the policy process and potentially overcome internal political barriers. Because the ecosystem is a product of both long historical processes and social interaction, they shape the opportunities available and condition rational calculations concerning change.

Looking to the cases of defense and education policy, we have attempted to depict how the EU has used its external institutional setting to accomplish core governance tasks. While far from a comprehensive test for a model, the cases provide an initial plausibility prove for the argument, highlighting its core dimensions, boundary conditions, and pathologies. Further research will be needed to examine our claims in other policy domains. A cursory look at EU governance reveals similar dynamics at work in critical areas such as the use of the Schengen Agreement for issues of border control and the incorporation of

Council of Europe political rights in the Copenhagen Criteria. In all of these areas, the founding treaties long circumscribed direct EU policy activity.

We also do not believe that our findings should be limited to the European context. Clearly, the literature on comparative federalism and international diffusion both suggest that institutional development is often influenced by interdependent interactions with outside actors (Simmons et al., 2006, Scharpf et al., 1976). An important next step, will be to examine IO behavior in different ecosystem environments. How might scavenging differ in dense versus thin settings? Similarly, what allows some institutions to become the scavenger? In the 1950s, few would have expected the European Coal and Steel Community to necessarily become a dominant IO in the European ecosystem. Finally, what are the conditions that activate scavenging behavior? One promising avenue for further research will be to examine the policy entrepreneurs and networks that forge cross-institutional linkages.

International organizations do not exist in a bubble. Rather, they are constantly interacting with other organizations in their environment, which are themselves a product of long-term social processes. We believe that these interactions matter and offer an important source of international change.

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