

Autonomy of International Bureaucracies:

On the Actor-Level Autonomy in the WTO Secretariat

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Veileder

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Summary

The research question in this study addresses actor-level autonomy as enacted by civil servants within an international bureaucracy, namely the WTO Secretariat. The objective is to identify underlying mechanisms arguably responsible for inciting patterns of behaviour among civil servants.

This study is premised on the assumption that autonomy may be studied by examining behavioural patterns of the incumbents and that such behavioural patterns largely are a consequence of mechanisms of pre-socialization, re-socialization and organizational affiliation. The study consists of two main parts. The first part is descriptive and addresses actor-level autonomy, whereas the second part is explanatory and seeks to identify the driving forces behind the emergence of supranational, departmental and epistemic behavioural dynamics.

The main conclusions drawn from this study is that the WTO Secretariat may reinforce and shape behavioural patterns in particular, and that these are related to the emergence of actor-level autonomy. Furthermore, the Secretariat is invested with the power to influence the outcomes of global policies through various formal and informal channels. Additionally, the study finds that pre-socialization is largely responsible for evoking supranational behavioural logics, and that re-socialization primarily impacts on departmental and epistemic behavioural dynamics, whereas organizational affiliation is unequivocally linked to departmental behavioural logics.

Contents

- 1. Introduction 1**
 - 1.1 Purpose and Research Question 2
 - 1.2 Literature Review 4
 - 1.3 Analytical Framework 11
 - 1.4 A Brief Description of the WTO Secretariat 12
 - 1.5 Data and Methodology 13
 - 1.6 Findings and Analysis 14
 - 1.7 Outline of the Thesis 14

- 2. Analytical Framework 15**
 - 2.1 Unpacking Actor-Level Autonomy 15
 - 2.2 Explaining Actor-Level Autonomy 23
 - 2.2.1 Pre-socialization 24
 - 2.2.2. Re-socialization 26
 - 2.2.3 Organizational affiliation 29
 - 2.3 Summing Up 32

- 3. Data and Methodology 33**
 - 3.1 Research Design 33
 - 3.2 Case Selection 33
 - 3.3 Choice of Method 35
 - 3.4 Sources of Data 35
 - 3.5 Evaluation and Methodological Challenges 39

- 4. Empirical Inquiry 41**
 - 4.1 The World Trade Organization 41
 - 4.2 The WTO Secretariat 43
 - 4.3 Behavioural Dynamics within the WTO Secretariat 50
 - 4.3.1 Supranational dynamics 50
 - 4.3.2 Departmental dynamics 55
 - 4.3.3 Epistemic dynamics 57
 - 4.4 Summing Up 60

5. Analysis and Conclusion	61
5.1 Actor-Level Autonomy in the WTO Secretariat	61
5.2 Explaining Actor-Level Autonomy	64
5.2.1 Pre-socialization	65
5.2.2 Re-socialization	67
5.2.3 Organizational affiliation	69
5.3 Summing Up	70
5.4 Final Conclusion	71
Literature	74
Appendix: Interview Guide	81

List of Abbreviations

Commission	European Commission
COREPER	Council of Permanent Representatives
DG	Director-General
DDG	Deputy Director-General
DSB	Dispute Settlement Body
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
GATT	General Agreement on Tariff and Trade
GATS Council	Council for Trade in Service
GC	General Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
Goods Council	Council for Trade in Goods
IOs	International Organizations
IR	International Relations
MC	Ministerial Conference
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PA	Public Administration
Secretariat	World Trade Organization Secretariat
SNEs	Seconded National Experts
TPRB	Trade Policy Review Body
TRIPS Council	Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
UN	United Nations
WTO	World Trade Organization

1. Introduction

Through the ever-evolving process of global governance the world has become exceedingly interdependent by an intertwined array of intensified action and cooperation across national borders. International organizations (IOs) have come to play an increasingly significant role as imperative facilitators of such comprehensive networks of transnational cooperation. Traditionally, permanent secretariats of IOs have been viewed as neutral, state-controlled bureaucracies, commissioned to execute merely administrative functions (e.g. Moravcsik). Conventional scholarship was more concerned with the overall importance of IOs and ascribed little importance to the aggregated outcome of actions and performance of IO secretariats. However, the nature of IO research has undergone significant changes throughout the past decades and new emphasis has been placed on the role of international bureaucracies. The question of understanding and explaining their actions is increasingly addressed (e.g. Ege and Bauer in Reinalda 2013).

Broadly speaking, bureaucratic autonomy refers to the extent to which “officials, in their actual behaviour, are constrained by the interests and actions of other actors, like the political leadership, interest groups, news media, and international organizations” (Egeberg 1998). It becomes increasingly evident that the actions and outcomes of international bureaucracies may dissent from the intentions of their creators. The gap between mechanisms of control and contesting actions of bureaucracies on one hand, and their de facto exercise on public authority on the other (Venzke 2010), has sparked a new line of research within public administration (PA) and IO scholarship. Bureaucratic autonomy has attracted much attention the past years, primarily due to their inherent powers challenging the conventional pattern of state-centric control of international policy making. In addition to conducting administrative functions, international bureaucracies increasingly influence politics by initiating and implementing international affairs. Over the last few years, a new wave of PA research has provided ample support for the assertion that international bureaucracies are not necessarily instruments of states, but rather, active and independent policy-making institutions (e.g. Trondal et. al 2010, Ege and Bauer 2013, Reinalda 2013).

Applying PA perspectives to the investigation of international bureaucracies marks a relatively new turn in the research on IOs seen that this field traditionally has been the domain of IR scholars (Reinalda 2013). While IR literature undoubtedly has provided invaluable insights on the importance IOs on the global arena, it has largely neglected effects of organizational features and transformations induced by the continuous expansion of globalization and processes of integration.

The effectiveness of bureaucracies relies heavily on the ability of autonomous action, i.e. the capabilities to act in accordance with own aspirations and ambitions without being halted or vetoed by elected authorities (e.g. Ellinas and Suleiman 2012). Sources of bureaucratic autonomy and authority are thus interesting objects of study. Central to the theories of bureaucratic autonomy is the assumption that autonomous action is fuelled by independence on the actor-level within an organization (e.g. Trondal et.al 2010). This study adopts this approach and views actor-level autonomy as a crucial source of independence in international bureaucracies.

Arguably, actor-level autonomy is measured by supranational, departmental and epistemic behavioural dynamics among international civil servants. This study is grounded on the assumption that such behavioural logics are related to certain formal and informal traits embedded in the organizational and institutional context of international bureaucracies.

1.1 Purpose and Research Question

This study is a case study of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Secretariat and is intended to be a contribution to the literature examining international bureaucracies from a PA perspective. The research aims at addressing the question of the impact of informal and formal structures on behavioural dynamics, which in turn is assumed to amplify independence amongst international civil servants.

The research question is as follows:

To what extent are WTO officials independent, and what can account for actor-level autonomy in the WTO Secretariat?

The aim of the study is twofold. Firstly, it aspires to elucidate actor-level autonomy within the Secretariat, that is, how the officials may be able to influence and shape the outcome of WTO policies and politics. The underlying assumption is that various organizational and institutional attributes evoke supranational, departmental and epistemic behavioural dynamics, which in turn foster identity formation that goes beyond the nation-state. This connotes a shift of loyalty away from the national preferences towards the international cause. The consequences of such are assumed to be a community of international civil servants who primarily regard themselves to be on a global mission detached from national preferences, demands and interests, and whose prime objective is the prosperity of the international cause to which they are committed.

The second objective of the study is to offer explanations for actor-level autonomy by evaluating the organizational framework and the institutional environment. Drawing on contemporary PA research on international bureaucracies, this study is premised on the assumption that mechanisms of pre-socialization, re-socialization and organizational affiliation are key contributors in evoking aforementioned behavioural dynamics.

The questions posed are both empirically and theoretically relevant. A growing number of studies of international executive organs validate the view that such bureaucracies continue to manifest themselves as independent actors, indicating a significant shift of power of the global executive order (e.g. Trondal et.al 2010, Reinalda 2013). In order to understand the process leading up to this shift of power, it is necessary to scrutinize the conditions and premises that encourage the developments of such among international civil servants.

The European Commission has traditionally been regarded as a showcase for actor-level autonomy and has thus been subjected to extensive research. Yet, due to the fact that the Commission was widely perceived as being *sui generis* in nature, there were generally little or no comparative studies. The realist-dominated tradition within international politics ascribed little importance to international bureaucracies; instead, they were viewed as mere tools for nation states to push their agendas onto the international stage. Since the 1990s, however, the claim about the *sui generis* character of the Commission has been challenged and a number of comparative studies have been put forward. Scholars began to direct attention towards other international organizations, aspiring to identify similar mechanisms and outcomes as observed within the Commission.

The WTO depicts an interesting case not only because it is a large and powerful executive operating on the world stage, but also due to the numerous organizational traits that are similar to that of the Commission. Comparative studies appear to suggest that “bureaucratic autonomy may be fostered equally inside bureaucratic organizations if they supply fairly similar capacities and in-house socialization processes” (Trondal & Veggeland 2013). Not unlike the European Union, whilst member states may legitimately push for national interests, the Secretariat must defend and consider the interests of the organization as a whole. Potential shifts and alterations in the balance of power within the WTO arguably entail serious consequences for the outcome of world politics.

1.2 Literature Review

IOs have long been the domain of IR scholarship. Various forms of collaboration efforts between governments during the 19th century Europe marked the beginning of the emergence of comprehensive networks of cooperation between nation states, and subsequent developments of inter-state cooperation fuelled increasingly extensive debates regarding the function and importance of IOs. These debates were essentially structured around the two main paradigms of IR theory, namely realism on one hand and liberalism on the other. Realism is a state-centric theory postulating that nation states, driven by competitive self-interest, are the main actors within international politics. Realists maintain that IOs have little real influence on world politics seen that the international arena is dominated by national interests and preservation. In contrast, liberalism holds that states may cooperate and that interaction between nations ultimately will result in less inter-state conflict. Despite viewing IOs differently, both approaches consider IOs as intergovernmental actors, i.e. actors that are controlled by nation states and have no de facto decision-making powers or authority. During the 1940s, realism emerged as the prevailing IR paradigm (Reinalda 2013). According to realist theory, IOs are created by states, dependant on them and act for their interest. IOs are thus seen as mere reflections of power distribution without any independent effect on state behaviour (Andreev 2007).

The debate took a new turn during the 1960s when the emerging process of European integration sparked new controversy on the existence of IOs. In 1969 Robert Keohane challenged the realist school of thought by arguing that studying IOs simply “because they are there” overshadows a more significant point. The fact that IOs are there, in a physical form with norms, rules and practices makes them “living collectivities interacting with their

environments” and bestows them with certain properties (Rochester 1993). The subsequent debate was driven by the realization that the increasingly complex international community entailed substantial consequences for domestic policies. Besides presenting a complex model of interdependence as a rival to realism, the debate also gave rise to the term “international regimes” which intended to encapsulate the “clusters of rules, institutions and conventions that go beyond the formal definition of IOs” (Reinalda 2013:7). It is worth noting, however, that such liberal institutionalist approaches remained state-centric and argued that “...IOs in the contemporary world are not powerful independent actors, and relatively universal actors such as the United Nations (UN) find it extraordinarily difficult to reach agreements on certain significant issues” (Keohane and Nye 1974 in Andreev 2007).

In the years that followed, various approaches to IOs emerged from both liberal and realist camps, yet the realist tradition remained the dominating paradigm. In 1979 Kenneth Waltz introduced structural realism, which differed from the classical notion in that it maintained that structural constraints, and not strategy or motivation as in the original approach, would determine behaviour of states in IR. The state-centric premises of realism were challenged in the late 1980s when the arising sociological or constructivist school propounded the view that “the social world, including IR, is a human construction and an intersubjective domain that is meaningful to those who engage in it” (Reinalda 2013). Constructivists rejected liberalist and neorealists underlying materialism arguing that the most important aspects of IR were in fact social, not material. To constructivists, the international system was much more than simply a physical entity, it was a complex system comprised of ideas, norms and beliefs. Constructivists argued that all institutions were socially constructed and that behaviour is determined by identity. The constructivist paradigm gained widespread support through influential articles and a book by Alexander Wendt titled “*Social Theory of International Politics*” (1999). Central to Wendt’s argument was the rejection of the neorealist position that identities and interests are given, and that states are aware of such before they begin interaction with other nations. Instead, Wendt argued that it was these processes of interaction that created identities and interests of states. According to Wendt, interaction with others “...create and instantiate one structure of identities and interests rather than another; structure has no existence or casual power apart from process” (Wendt 1992:394 in Jackson and Sørensen 2012:168). While Wendt was concerned with interaction between states, Martha Finnemore added another significant contribution to constructivist literature by directing attentions to norms of the international system and how these affected states. As a key point,

Finnemore argued “states are socialized to accept norms, values and perceptions of interest by IOs” (Finnemore 1996:5 in Reinalda 2013) IOs thus act as transmitters of international norms and subsequently shape national politics by providing a template of interests (Jackson and Sørensen 2012:169). Constructivists viewed IOs not just as bureaucracies, but also as “social networks and patterned sets of interaction that take on a life of their own” (Oestreich 2011:169 in Reinalda 2013). Peter Haas (1989) acknowledged epistemic communities potential influence on decision-making in that knowledge-based experts define the cause-and-effect relationships of complex problems that states are confronted with, and are involved in the process of identifying interests and framing issues for collective debate (Reinalda 2013).

Globalization, particularly the process of European integration, impelled further developments within studies of IOs and various theories regarding the nature and consequences of international cooperation were put forward. However, one major problem associated with IR approaches to IOs was that it rested its focus on explaining the importance and existence of IOs and less on the implications of IOs on the international community. Organizational traits of IOs were largely treated as exogenous to the outcome of world politics, and thus little attention was given to the organizational behaviour, policy-making and transformations IOs underwent as a response to the changing international arena. With only a few exceptions, interest in an organizational analysis of IOs remained minimal (Reinalda 2013).

In 1989 March and Olsen published their book “*Rediscovering Institutions*” in which they investigated how institutions influence change in politics and “regarded bureaucratic agencies as arenas for contending social forces and as collections of standard operating procedures and structures that define and defend values, norms, identities and beliefs” (March and Olsen 1989, Reinalda 2013). The main theoretical premise behind March and Olsen’s normative institutionalism was their sociological interpretation of institutions; they presumed that it was a “logic of appropriateness” guiding behaviour of actors and that this logic was driven by the prevailing norms and rules within a given institution (March and Olsen 1989). The concepts presented by March and Olsen gained wide support in the scientific community and is often referred to as the starting point of the neo-institutional turn (Ørsten 2008:146). The core argument behind their neo-institutional approach may be summarized as follows: “...life is organized by sets of shared meanings and practices that come to be taken for a given for a long time...actors act and organize themselves in accordance with rules and practices which are socially constructed, publicly known and accepted” (March and Olsen 1994:4-5 in Ørsten

2008:146). The logic of appropriateness thus views action as the outcome of a matching between situation, roles and rules. Behaviour derives from a specific set rules that govern the appropriate course of action given a specific role or identity (Balsiger 2013).

During the 1990s researchers began directing attention towards autonomy. Rational choice institutionalism proposed a rather straightforward explanation of autonomy by viewing the relationship between member states and a bureaucracy as a principal-agent relationship, in which the principal delegates, but does not cede authority to the agent (Reinalda 2013). In their rational choice analysis of delegation, Darren Hawkins and others found that principals delegate authority and allow for a marginal degree of autonomy in order for agents to perform a task more efficiently than would be the case if the principal themselves carried it out (van Bogdandy et al. 2010:73). Drawing on realist and liberalist ideas, rationalist approaches nonetheless accentuated the role of nation-states at the international arena (e.g Pollack 2003) and were consequently criticized for neglecting the importance of institutional factors and failing to explain agenda-setting within international organizations (Barnett and Finnemore 2004). Constructivist literature, such as the one presented by Barnett and Finnemore, emphasized the institutional aspect and maintained that core aspects of decision-making within IOs are socially constructed, i.e. they acknowledged the importance of social practices and interaction as a stimulant of socialization and social learning (e.g. Checkel 2005). While Barnett and Finnemore had used the terms bureaucracy and organization alternately, Frank Biermann and Bernd Siebenhüner narrowed down the definition of international bureaucracies to merely involve the secretariats (*“Managers of Global Change: the Influence of International Environmental Bureaucracies”* 2009) (Reinalda 2013). The same authors also concluded that international bureaucracies were more interested in resolving political problems than increasing their own powers. Relying on organizational theory and its empirical notions of organizational cultures and internal procedures, they conducted studies of international bureaucracies as social processes and collective entities comprised of their distinct cultures, structures and behaviours (Biermann and Siebenhüner 2009, Reinalda 2013). The empirical data validated the assumption that bureaucracies have substantial influence as actors in global environmental policy by acting as knowledge brokers, negotiation facilitators and capacity builders (Reinalda 2013). Overall, developments during the 1990s gradually acknowledged international bureaucracies as independent actors, thus called for a research agenda focusing on bureaucratic autonomy and its implications for the international community.

To recapitulate, because traditional schools of thought largely were concerned with debating the general importance of IOs, bureaucratic autonomy was long an understudied area in literature. Developments taking place in the second half of the 20th century fuelled renewed interest and debate on IOs, adding more dimensions and sub-disciplines to already existing theories in addition to introducing entirely new concepts and theoretical directions. IR understanding of IOs gradually evolved, as did the realization that traditional theoretical frameworks proved insufficient in providing an understanding of growing international interdependency and its implications. Scholars consequently began to investigate IOs and their secretariats by combining theories from various disciplines such as sociology and management studies (Reinalda 2013).

Research on international bureaucracies turned over a new leaf when PA scholars began to take interest in the ways formal and informal structures could provide explanations for behaviour and its subsequent outcomes. Their interest was sparked by the fact that domestic politics became increasingly affected by collective decisions in which IOs were involved. PA scholars conceived IOs as an additional level of policy-making in an already complex and multileveled system (Ege and Bauer 2013). While IR scholarship persisted to view the international level as primarily a function of interactions between states, PA scholarship was “better equipped to conceptualize actorness” as well as the exogenous role of organizational features (Ege and Bauer 2013).

Ege and Bauer distinguish three topics that caught the attention of PA scholars: 1) the functioning of the international civil service 2) management reforms and organizational change and 3) the influence of bureaucrats on international policy making (Ege and Bauer 2013). Studies of supranational norms of international civil servants (eg. Hooghe 2005, Ellinas and Suleiman 2012) fall under the first category, while the investigation of organizational implications of formal rules and procedures, as well as recent comparative studies of international administrations (e.g Trondal et.al 2010) are studied under the umbrella of the second tier. The third category recognizes that IOs matter “independently and autonomously of their national governments principals” and focuses on how such independence has been conceived in recent decades (Ege and Bauer 2013). It distinguishes between principal-agent approaches, rooted in rational-choice intuitionism, on one hand and sociological constructivism on the other. The former largely views IOs, notably their

secretariats, as unitary agents and focus on control and independence whereas the latter emphasizes IOs a bureaucratic organization that ultimately develops a life of its own by focusing on values, perception and culture (Ege and Bauer 2013). In their influential book *“Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics”* (2004) Barnett and Finnemore rejected the notion of IOs as mere servants of their principals and drew on “...Weberian understanding of bureaucracy to create a common analytical framework for evaluating different kinds of authority in international bureaucracies.” They intended to demonstrate how such authorities enabled the bureaucracy to influence organizational policy making and argued that it was in fact of less importance what the bureaucracies were formally mandated to do, and of more importance what kind of authority they possessed and how such authority may be utilized (Ege and Bauer 2013).

The so-called “third generation” of IO studies aspired to go one step further by “studying the criteria for and patterns, varieties and dynamics of international bureaucracies” (Trondal et. al 2010:10). The overarching goal was thus to identify different behavioural dynamics within international bureaucracies as well as addressing the “potential impact of structural traits, such as decision-making rules and bureaucratic hierarchies on organizational behaviour and policy making” (Ege and Bauer 2013). Central to this study, their book *“Unpacking International Organizations – the Dynamics of Compound Bureaucracies”* (Trondal et. al 2010) rests on the assumption that international civil servants find themselves amidst an inbuilt tension between primarily four behavioural logics; intergovernmental, supranational, departmental and epistemic dynamics, and that the subsequent interplay of these dynamics ultimately guide “behaviour and actions of actors because roles provide ‘conceptions of reality, standards of assessment, affective ties and endowments (...) and capacity for purposeful action’” (March and Olsen 1995:30, Selden 1997:140 in Trondal et. al 2010:13).

The aforementioned research was motivated by the lack of studies exploring the relationship between bureaucratic structures of international bureaucracies and behavioural logics among staff (Trondal 2010b). The following empirical inquiry countered four of the conventional claims in existing research. Firstly, contrary to existing beliefs the data suggested that legal mandates have little explanatory value in assessing behaviour among staff. Secondly, the study demonstrated that size of the bureaucracy proved insufficient in accounting for variations of behavioural logics. Thirdly, while it was generally assumed that the IO shaped administrative behaviour, the data suggested that international bureaucracies rather acted

fairly independent of the IO in which they were embedded. Finally, the evidence revealed that administrative behaviour to a larger extent was conditioned by bureaucratic structures than by processes of socialization (Trondal 2010b).

Apart from acknowledging international bureaucracies as independent actors in the system of global governance, the comparative study undertaken by Trondal et. al (2010) reaffirmed the existence of autonomy among international civil servants and strongly indicated a correlation between the organizational dimension and role perceptions and identities. Additionally, the importance of viewing political processes and systems in the context of their organizational framework was reestablished. Based on aforementioned research, it was noted: “international bureaucracies may possess considerable capacity to act relatively independently of member-state governments” (Trondal and Veggeland 2013). Arguably, this potential is substantiated first and foremost through the development of autonomy deriving from formal and informal structures. This study contributed to the growing literature on *de facto* effects on international bureaucracies and demonstrated that – given favourable organizational capacities – actor-level autonomy may be fostered equally within international bureaucracies. More specifically, it also indicated that the Commission is not substantially different from other international bureaucracies (Trondal and Veggeland 2013). To go back to an earlier point, the traditional perception of the EU as *sui generis* in nature had progressively been called into question during the past decade and contemporary literature has largely rebutted the claim. Upon this acknowledgment, scholars propounded the view that mechanisms at play within the Commission may indeed be observed and analysed according to similar formal and informal characteristics within other international bureaucracies.

There has been an inconclusive debate amongst PA scholars regarding concurrent causes of actor-level autonomy. In her article “*Several Roads lead to International Norms, but few via International Socialization: A Case Study of the European Commission*”(2005), Lisbet Hooghe found that the overall effect of international socialization in the Commission was fairly insignificant. In stark contrast, studies such as “*Is the European Commission a ‘Hothouse’ for Supranationalism? Exploring Actor-Level Supranationalism*” (Trondal 2007) countered claims that socialization processes mainly occur at the national level and endorsed underlying assumptions of international socialization. Also central to this thesis is research conducted by Egeberg et al. (2013) which attempted to elucidate the implications of staff

demography on the European Parliament (EP). Based on three theoretical conjunctures, pre-socialization, re-socialization and organizational affiliation, this research demonstrated the effect of formal and informal attributes on identity and role perceptions among staff within the EP. This debate guides the analytical frame of this study.

1.3 Analytical Framework

The analytical framework is governed by the study's purpose and research question. In order to understand and explain actor-level autonomy this study draws on organizational and institutional theory. The two analytical frameworks are chosen because they are seen as being complementary in developing an understanding of the emergence of independence within international bureaucracies.

The research question implicates a dependant and an independent variable, namely independence (actor-level autonomy) and explanations of such independence. The study is grounded on the premise that actor-level autonomy principally is measured by three behavioural dynamics: supranational, departmental and epistemic logics. Furthermore, it advocates the view that such behavioural dynamics to a large extent are fostered through mechanisms deriving from formal and informal characteristics. It primarily draws on research conducted by Trondal et. al (2010) as well as Egeberg et. al (2013).

The analytical framework is divided into two parts. The first section seeks to provide a theoretical understanding of actor-level autonomy within international bureaucracies, while the second part presents the theoretical framework for evaluating the driving forces behind such independence. Behavioural patterns are studied by examining indicators as own role-perceptions and sense of loyalty, contact patterns and cleavages of conflict. The independent variable, i.e. explanations of actor-level autonomy, will be analyzed across three theoretical pillars: pre-socialization, re-socialization and organizational affiliation, with a view to relating these mechanisms to the development of behavioural dynamics observed within the Secretariat.

The organizational perspective posits that formal structures inevitably will influence and shape behaviour of individuals operating within it, and thus formal structures are cornerstones in analysing and explaining independence. Formal structures are analysed by examining the organizational attributes, i.e. horizontal and vertical specialization within an organization.

Organizational traits are complemented by intertwined social structures of norms, perceptions, attributes and connections, serving as guidelines for conduct. Formal and informal structures comprise closely interrelated attributes that are considered decisive conditions for actor-level autonomy to emerge and unfold. Thus, formal and informal structures need to be evaluated simultaneously in order to apprehend and draw conclusions on actor-level autonomy and causes of such.

1.4 A Brief Description of the WTO Secretariat

The WTO is the only as the only global actor that manages trade between nations. It was established in 1995 as a successor to the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT), and signified a considerable advancement in multilateralism. The main objective of the WTO is to spur and liberalize international trade by decreasing barriers of such as well as providing a framework for establishing and negotiating trade agreements. The increased importance of the WTO has been illustrated through continuous expansion of member states as well as policy areas, rules and scope of activities. The WTO is an intergovernmental rule-driven organization and arguably the most powerful legislative and judicial body in the world.

The ministerial conference (MC) is the highest organ in the WTO. It holds supreme authority over all matters and is normally composed of the Ministers of Trade of the member states. Below the MC is the General Council (GC), which essentially is the driving force and engine of the whole organization. It is composed of several representatives from the member states and does also act as dispute settlement body and trade policy body. The GC delegates responsibility to three extensive bodies, namely the Councils for Trade in Goods, Trade in Services and Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS.) The Committee of Trade and Development, the Committee of Balance of Payments and the Committee on Budget and Financing also report to the GC. Additionally, numerous committees, working groups and specialized parties handle arrangements and other areas. The abovementioned organs constitute the political level of the WTO, whereas the Secretariat comprises the administrative level.

The Secretariat supports and assists an increasingly politicised and influential organization. Given that the WTO is an intergovernmental organization, the Secretariat does not have autonomous decision-making or initiating powers. However, it holds an important position as support for WTO members and key provider of expertise in WTO matters, rules and

regulations (Trondal et. al 2010). Responsibilities of the WTO secretariat include, amongst others, trade performance and trade policy analyses, assistance in trade disputes and interpretation of WTO rules and regulations. Provided that the WTO is a rule-driven organization, the Secretariat holds an important position as “guardian of treaties”. Arguably, through its economic and legal competences, the Secretariat has the potential to affect the agenda, the outcomes and the interpretations of rules (Trondal et. al 2010:96-97), thereby also the outcome of WTO policies and politics.

1.5 Data and Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach and draws on interviews conducted with officials working in the WTO Secretariat during the time period 2007-2008. These data are secondary as they were originally drafted and employed to conduct comparative research of behavioural dynamics within the Commission, the OECD Secretariat and the WTO Secretariat. The subsequent empirical observations and conclusions were presented in the book *“Unpacking International Organizations – the Dynamics of Compound Bureaucracies”* written by Jarle Trondal and his colleagues, published in 2010. Additionally, the study draws on official WTO documents and legal texts.

The data and methodology is guided by the overall aim of the study. While quantitative data is an effective means of establishing patterns and correlations within a large number of respondents, qualitative data is frequently applied for more in-depth studies of one or a few cases. It often aspires to identify underlying psychological or behavioural characteristics, commonly investigated on the basis of observations or interviews. Qualitative research is consequently less concerned with discovering generalizations and more interested in identifying certain aspects of culture, consciousness or behaviour (Little 2014). This considered, a qualitative research design appears to be the most fruitful given the research question and purpose of this study.

This study addresses the research question by undertaking a single-case study of the WTO Secretariat. Selecting a single-case contrary to a comparative study was largely motivated by the desire to investigate a fairly wide and diverse array of variables to determine the underlying driving forces of actor-level autonomy. A single-case study may provide a “nuanced, empirically-rich, holistic account of a specific phenomena” (Willis 2014).

1.6 Findings and Analysis

The empirical inquiry assesses actor-level autonomy by examining behavioural patterns within the Secretariat, namely supranational, departmental and epistemic behavioural logics. It finds that there is ample support for the claim that formal and informal structure of the Secretariat shape and influence identity and role perceptions amongst staff by evoking aforementioned behavioural dynamics. Moreover, such behavioural logics represent a shift away from national orientations and towards a collective, supranational community of civil servants whose prime motivation is their common global cause.

The subsequent analysis aspires to shed light on the underlying mechanisms of such behavioural dynamics by drawing on three theoretical pillars: pre-socialization, re-socialization and organizational affiliations. The main conclusions drawn from the observations are that the Secretariat possesses considerable clout to affect the outcome of policies and that it is dominated by supranational, departmental and epistemic behavioural dynamics that externalize themselves to various degrees and under various circumstances. Furthermore, it is concluded that pre-socialization impacts severely on supranational behavioural dynamics, while re-socialization is most evident in departmental and epistemic behavioural logics, and lastly, organizational affiliation is strongly related to departmental behavioural logics.

1.7 Outline of the Thesis

The second chapter will present the analytical framework and the two main theoretical perspectives on which this study is set. It addresses mechanisms of formal and informal structures and aims at providing a framework for analysing and understanding these concepts. Chapter 3 presents the methods of data collection and the methodological approach. Chapter 4 serves as a background chapter by firstly presenting a detailed review of the case under investigation, namely the WTO Secretariat, before it proceeds to outline empirical observations drawn from the interviews and documents. The final chapter connects the empirical inquiry to the theoretical considerations presented in chapter 2 and discusses the results in light of the analytical framework. The findings are summarized in a concluding section towards the end of the thesis.

2. Analytical Framework

This chapter intends to provide a framework for analysing and understanding the implications of formal and informal structures on decision-making behaviour. It will be divided into two parts: the first part will outline the theoretical backdrop for the dependant variable, actor-level autonomy. This section intends to elucidate the theoretical assumptions on which such independence is premised. Secondly, it will outline the independent variables and attempt to illustrate in what ways these may contribute to autonomy.

This study presumes that actor-level autonomy is measured by supranational, departmental and epistemic behavioural dynamics. These behavioural logics are studied by exploring contact patterns, cleavages of conflict and own role perceptions. In seeking to explain actor-level autonomy the study applies three independent variables, namely pre-socialization, re-socialization and organizational affiliation. These are expected to impact on behavioural logics within the Secretariat. The independent variables have been selected on the grounds of their ascribed importance in previous studies of EU administration and international bureaucracies (e.g. Egeberg et. al 2013, Trondal et. al 2010).

2.1 Unpacking Actor-Level Autonomy

Autonomy is a frequently applied term, but it is often applied in different ways. As a point of departure, Roness et. al (2007:5) view autonomy at the level of agencies as “the level of decision-making competences” and proceed to point out that autonomy primarily is related to discretion, i.e. the extent to which the agency itself may decide about matters it finds important (Roness et. al 2007:5, Verhoerst et. al 2004). In response to the conceptual ambiguity, Cohon and colleagues (2009) identify three basic strands of the concept bureaucratic autonomy in the literature. The first branch views autonomy as the “ability to enact policies that will not be limited or overruled by other political actors”. According to this view, bureaucratic autonomy entails the implementation of outcomes that diverge from the preferences of their principals, without prevention or punishment (Cohon et. al 2009). The second definition emphasizes preference formation “primarily with respect to the ability of agencies to shift preferences of their principals.” Central to this work, is Carpenter’s (2001) study of bureaucratic politics in which he defined bureaucratic autonomy as a situation in which “politically differentiated agencies takes sustained patterns of action consistent with their own wishes, patterns that will not be checked or reversed by elected authorities, organized interests or courts” (Carpenter 2001:14 in Cohon et. al 2009). Carpenter argued that

bureaucratic autonomy was conditioned by political differentiation, organizational capacity and legitimacy. The third branch identified by Cohon et. al (2009) explores the multidimensionality of bureaucratic autonomy and derives from literature focusing on the relationship between bureaucratic autonomy and departmental ministers in European parliamentary systems. There are several types of bureaucratic autonomy within this tradition (Christensen and Lægreid 2006:13 in Cohon et. al 2009). Verhoest and colleagues provide a useful conceptual mapping of bureaucratic autonomy in which they distinguish between “autonomy as the level of decision-making competencies” and “autonomy as the exemption of constraints on the actual use of decision-making competencies” (Verhoest et. al 2004). The latter has four components: structural autonomy, financial autonomy, legal autonomy and interventional autonomy (Verhoest et. al 2004). Structural autonomy refers to the extent to which agencies are “insulated from elected officials by intervening layers of hierarchy and supervision” (Verhoerst et. al 2004, Christensen 1999 in Cohon et. al 2009). Though these definitions highlight important sources of autonomy, the purpose of this study is to examine *de facto* autonomy by attempting to explain the effects of the three aforementioned independent variables. Most studies and definitions have been more concerned with the formal aspects of autonomy and provided a rather nebulous view of the question of what effectively fosters and sustains autonomy at the actor-level.

In their study of autonomy and control conducted 2004 on Norwegian state agencies, Lægreid et. al (2006:235) emphasised the importance of structural, cultural and environmental features in understanding and explaining autonomy. State agencies share a number of common traits with international permanent secretariats in that they are the administrative branches of their parent institutions, from which they are also structurally disaggregated. Furthermore, they are comprised of civil servants tasked with executing administrative and technical assignments. Both national and international executive organizations are organized according to principles of purpose and function (Cox & Jacobsen 1973). Lægreid et. al (2006:236) argue that an agency’s autonomy is multidimensional and not implicitly linked to its formal legal status. Rather, there are numerous dimensions and aspects of autonomy occurring to varying degrees. In their study, Lægreid et. al (2006:244) apply three theoretical approaches on organizations: structural-instrumental, cultural-institutional and environmental. The first one relates to selection mechanisms resulting from formal structures and procedures (“bounded rationality”). The second approach concerns informal norms, identities and the logic of appropriateness (March and Olsen 1989) and the third emphasizes the significance of external

pressures. According to Lægreid and others (2006:244), the extent and scope of autonomy and control may be understood by combining these three elements. Not unlike the study undertaken by Lægreid and colleagues, this study combines formal and informal elements to understand and explain autonomy. It also adopts the view that an agency's autonomy is not inherently linked to its formal legal status, but rather a result of a multidimensional set of formal and informal structures.

From a realist and neo-liberalist point of view, international bureaucracies are seen as intergovernmental tools designed to facilitate nations states in pushing their causes and interests onto the international stage. During the past two decades, however, several studies examining international bureaucracies from a PA perspective have been put forward. These studies challenge the secular claim of the intergovernmental nature of international bureaucracies by viewing them as composite establishments synthesizing a variety of characteristics and decision-making dynamics. Early contingency theory, integration research and neo-institutional approaches suggest that international bureaucracies tend to combine and integrate a multidimensional set of decision-making structures, namely intergovernmental, supranational, departmental and epistemic dynamics (Trondal et al. 2010:13). International bureaucracies are thus multidimensional organizations with inherent decision-making dynamics that are constantly shaping and altering the processes and outcomes of the organization. Assumably, through these dynamics, international bureaucracies incite a complex set of behaviour and role perceptions placing guidelines and restrictions on human action by providing “codes for behaviour and feelings of allegiance to organized communities”, furthermore: “...such perceptions may guide the actual behaviour of actors because roles provide ‘conceptions’ of reality, standards of assessment, affective ties, and endowments, and (...) a capacity for purposeful action” (Trondal et. al 2010:13).

Over the years, the institutions at the European – as well as the global – level have thus arguably become increasingly autonomous. Many scholars have challenged the traditional claim that international organizations are merely rule-driven Weberian bureaucracies. They are no longer simply passive administrative tools for nation states; instead they have progressively become active and independent contributors to policy-making throughout the international community. Autonomy is closely interrelated to actor-level autonomy. A supranational dynamic denotes a “shift of loyalty and a sense of Community that is integral and endogenous to actors’ self-perceptions” (Trondal et al. 2010:13), in other words norms

and values are internalized and adopted by individuals working within the institution. Upon realizing the potential implications entailed in these dynamics, actor-level autonomy has received increased attention in literature over the past few years (e.g. Hooghe 2005, Ellinas and Suleiman 2011).

Some studies of bureaucratic autonomy have discussed the concept of representation. Representation as a field of study has undergone a revival in the past years. Pitkin (1972 in Trondal 2006b) defines representation as “the making present *in some sense* of something which is nevertheless *not* present literally or in fact”. Furthermore it is noted that the notion of representation thus “directs attention first of all, to the attitudes, the expectations and behaviour of the represented” (Eulau et. al 1959:743 in Trondal 2006b). It follows in the same line of argument, that because an individual is a representative in a symbolic sense “by what he is or how he is regarded” (Pitkin 1972:113 in Trondal 2006b), role representations evoked by civil servants are essential in determining their representational role (Trondal 2006b). Role perceptions significantly impact on human behaviour, especially when there is some degree of behavioural discretion at the actors disposal (Sen 1998:5, Wilson 1989:54 in Trondal 2006b:7). Studying roles as conceived by the actors themselves may consequently contribute to explain their behaviour (Searing 1994:14, cf. Eulau 1959:746, Wish 1980:535 in Trondal 2006b:7). Traditionally, representation was regarded as the relationship between the elected and the electorate. Newer line of research, however, has expanded the scope of investigation with an emphasis on the relationship between individual civil servants and their executive institutions. On one end of the scale, representations implies evoking roles that are closely and solely linked to constituents (an imperative notion of representation), whereas at the other end of the scale representations refers to possessing free will to evoke representational roles that may depart from the default position (a liberal notion of representation). The middle ground between these two is “occupied by an institutional perspective on representation where representation is gauged at balancing a complex set of contending representational roles (an ambiguous notion of representation)” (Trondal 2006b). This study adopts an ambiguous notion of representation.

According to the institutional perspective roles tend to be fluid, inconsistent and constantly changing depending on the organizational and institutional context in which they are embedded. Moreover, actors will enact various roles in various situations and at different times (Trondal 2006b:13). The institutional perspective holds that because actors are

embedded within structures that direct focus on selected aspects of reality, organizational variables may bias actors' choice of representational roles (Olsen 1988:167-168, Schattschneider 1960 in Trondal 2006b:13). For example, a study on representational roles of seconded national officials (SNEs) in the Commission (Trondal 2006b) identified five scope conditions that systematically bias the representational roles evoked, amongst them formal structure, organizational affiliation, intensive and sustained participation and educational background.

Studies of international executives, such as the European Commission (e.g. Trondal 2006a) suggest that there is an inbuilt tension between these four behavioural dynamics. Officials operating in international bureaucracies often find themselves juggling multiple roles and affiliations evoking various behavioural logics. Trondal et. al (2010) identified four main groups of such behavioural logics: intergovernmental, supranational, departmental and epistemic behavioural dynamics. An intergovernmental dynamic indicates that officials are oriented towards formal mandates and tasks issued by their nation states and that their loyalty lies with their respective governments. On contrary, the remaining three behavioural dynamics weaken the intergovernmental logic by directing loyalty and devotion towards non-national mandates. Supranational, departmental and epistemic dynamics are thus frequently applied as indicators of actor-level autonomy. Behavioural dynamics are empirically studied by examining contact patterns, cleavages of conflict (along sectorial and/or territorial lines) and role perceptions (see below).

ACTOR- LEVEL AUTONOMY	Supranational behavioural dynamics	Contact patterns
		Cleavages of conflict
		Role perceptions
	Departmental behavioural dynamics	Contact patterns
		Cleavages of conflict
		Role perceptions
	Epistemic behavioural dynamics	Contact patterns
		Cleavages of conflict
		Role perceptions

Figure 1: The study of actor-level autonomy, dependant variables.

A *supranational dynamic* denotes a shift of loyalty and allegiance towards the IO. Rosamond (2000:204 in Trondal et. al 2010:138) provides a basic definition of supranationalism as “the development of authoritative institutions of governance and networks of policy-making activity above nation-state.” An IO may thus be supranational when it has a “separate identity and loyalty and exercises some measure of genuine autonomous power” (Slaughter 2004:22 in Trondal et.al 2010:138). Within the field of European Studies, neofunctionalist Ernst B. Haas theorized about identity-related concepts in his famous definition of integration: “the process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations, and political activities toward a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states” (Risse 2005). As noted by Risse, the conceptualization of “shifting loyalties” could arguably be understood as a statement about collective identity formation. Another of the so-called founding fathers of European integration theory, Karl W. Deutsch, also included socialization in his conceptualization of European integration by addressing a “sense of community” in his research (Risse 2005). International civil servants adopt and internalize values, norms and principles of the organization, becoming fully committed to their joint cause. Such a process may essentially be fostered through mechanisms of internalization and socialization, i.e. they may be present prior to entering a given position or they can appear through transformation and socialization processes after entering a position (see next section). In addition to pledged allegiances to the overall mission, a supranational behavioural dynamic is characterized by contacts and

coordination towards the leadership of the organization and co-operation and conflicts between enthusiasts and skeptics within the bureaucracy. It follows that supranational behavioural dynamics in this study are expected to externalize themselves first and foremost through expressed commitment and allegiances to the WTO mission and the overall objectives of the Secretariat.

A *departmental dynamic* builds on the Westminster model viewing the official primarily as neutral and loyal to their agency as well as guided by the preferences and concern of their units (Trondal et. al 2010:14-15). A departmental behavioural logic is characterized by decision-making on the basis of formal rules and regulations in accordance with classic Weberian attributes. Officials tend to attach their identity to their units and divisions; their loyalty is also directed towards their organization although they primarily perceive themselves as representatives of their units. Officials are expected to be “neutral, intelligent, generalist professionals who advise ministers” (Richards and Smith 2004:779 in Trondal et. al 2010:111). A civil servant guided by Weberian virtues of party-political neutrality, attaching identities towards their unit are expected to abide to formal rules and procedures of the international bureaucracies in which they are employed (Trondal et. al 2010:11). For example, previous studies conducted on the Commission (Cini 1997) found that officials within the Commission attached role perceptions and identities primarily towards their sub-units rather than towards the Commission as a whole. Additionally, it has been argued that departmental identities in the Commission are stronger than supranational ones (Trondal et. al 2010:113). Provided that the Secretariat shares similar formal traits with the Commission, it does not seem unreasonable to assume the disclosure of analogous patterns of behaviour within the Secretariat. Moreover, departmental behavioural logics are closely interrelated to horizontal specialization as this encourages inward looking orientations by directing focus towards own sub-units (see section 2.2.3). This indicates that specialization along sectorial lines in the Secretariat would enhance portfolio allegiances, i.e. departmental behavioural logics would be particularly dominating.

Finally, an *epistemic dynamic* is characterized by professional expertise. It derives from the term epistemology, which is a branch of philosophy concerned with the examination of knowledge. An epistemic behavioural logic implies that loyalties are expected to be vectored towards professional and educational backgrounds. An epistemic dynamic predicts professional expertise to be the main factor guiding the decision-making process. Assumably,

officials will argue and negotiate on the basis of their professional competences, on which they also will legitimize their authority (Trondal et. al 2010:14). Peter Haas viewed epistemic communities as a framework for investigation the impact of knowledge and expertise on international communities. An inherent trait of the control of knowledge production is the capability of articulating “cause and effect relationships and so frame issues for collective debate and export their policy projects globally” (Dunlop 2011). Haas theorized about epistemic communities in an *International Organization (IO)* special edition in 1992, where he defined epistemic communities as a group of professional that produce policy-relevant knowledge about complex technical issues (Haas 1992:16 in Dunlop 2011). Haas argued that the inbuilt belief system on an issue contained four knowledge elements:

“ 1) a shared set of normative and principled beliefs, which provide a value-based rationale for the social action of community members 2) shared casual belief (...) which serve as the basis for elucidating the multiple linkages between possible policy actions and desired outcomes 3) shared notions of validity, that is, intersubjective internally defined criteria for weighing and validating knowledge in the domain of their expertise and 4) a common policy enterprise, that is, a set of common practices associated with a set of problems to which their professional competence is directed, presumably out of the conviction that human welfare will be enhanced as a consequence” (Haas 1992:3 in Dunlop 2011).

Epistemic communities impact on policy outcomes by providing knowledge to policy makers. According to Haas, exercising influence is done by “1) elucidating cause-and-effect relationships and providing advice on the likely result of various courses of action 2) shedding light on complex interlinkages between issues and 3) helping define self-interests of states” (Haas 1992 in Dunlop 2011). Another implication of epistemic communities is the fact that by recognizing expertise as a form of authority, politicians also accept that this area is off limit with regards to intervention, as written by Trondal and others: “epistemic communities (...) do not in principle work under the shadow of politicians; they work under the shadow of the rules of the scientific community itself” (Trondal et. al 2010:158).

Because horizontal specialization (by purpose) often implies accumulation of expertise, it may encourage the development of epistemic communities with shared norms, values and understandings. Officials driven by epistemic behavioural logics are often less bound to

territorial borders and particular organizations (Haas 1992 in Trondal et. al 2004:10). Translated to this particular study, this implies that horizontal specialization within the Secretariat is likely to encourage epistemic behavioural patterns as it unites experts with similar educational backgrounds. Moreover, given that epistemic communities in general are granted a significant degree of freedom from strong political control, it would be reasonable to assume that the experts within the Secretariat are not subjected to strong vertical chains of authority.

The proxies outlined below are applied to assess the complexity of international bureaucracies. They are summarized in the following table:

<i>A supranational dynamic</i>	<i>A departmental dynamic</i>	<i>An epistemic dynamic</i>
Loyalty to “the mission and vision” of the international organization as a whole	Loyalty towards the international bureaucracy and/or their own portfolios/dossiers	Discipline loyalty
Mandated by the leadership of the international bureaucracy	Mandated by department and unit rules	Professional discretion and room for manoeuvre
Preferences for “the common good”	Guided by departmental preferences and concerns	Guided by professional preferences and considerations
Contacts and co-ordination with the leadership of the international bureaucracy	Co-operation and conflict follow organizational boundaries within the bureaucracy	Contacts with professional experts
Co-operation and conflict lines between “organizational visionaries” and “non-visionaries” within the bureaucracy		Co-operation and conflict follow professional boundaries that transcend the borders of the bureaucracy

Figure 2: The Compound Nature of International Bureaucracies (Trondal et. al 2010:15)

2.2 Explaining Actor-Level Autonomy

Arguably, certain traits or characteristics of organizational factors will influence behavioural patterns and create a systematic bias, making “one process characteristics or outputs more likely than others” (Trondal 2014). This is the building block of an organizational approach to actor-level autonomy. The assumption is that certain characteristics and aspects embedded within the organizational factors will interfere with an actor’s identity and behavioural perceptions, inevitably affecting the process and outcome of their work. According to Schattschneider (1975:30), “organization is itself a bias in preparation for action”. Formal and informal characteristics place guidelines on conduct by systematically classifying, simplifying, routinizing and directing attention towards certain aspects rather than others (Schattschneider 1975:58).

This study applies the following three theoretical propositions to explain the development of behavioural dynamics (see below). These are examined by looking at the main proxies: educational and professional background, age and gender; length and intensity of service; organizational affiliations and specialization. It is expected that the impact of these variables on behavioural dynamics will differ. As outlined below, mechanisms of pre-socialization are likely to primarily affect supranational behavioural logics, while mechanisms of re-socialization are predicted to impact on departmental and epistemic behavioural logics. Lastly, effects of organizational affiliations and specialization will presumably be most evident in departmental behavioural dynamics.

Independent variables	Proxies	Predictions
Pre-socialization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Educational background b) Professional background c) Age d) Gender 	Will impact primarily on supranational behavioural dynamics.
Re-socialization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Length and intensity of service 	Will impact on departmental and epistemic behaviour dynamics.
Organizational affiliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Organizational specialization b) Organizational affiliations 	Will impact primarily on departmental behavioural dynamics.

Figure 3: Independent variables.

2.2.1 Pre-socialization

The idea of individual pre-socialization assumes that officials may already have been partly exposed to favourable socialization processes prior to entering their position within the international bureaucracy (e.g. Hooghe 2012). As argued by the theory of representative bureaucracy, demographic attributes may play a crucial role in explaining decision-making (Trondal 2010a:79). Individual pre-socialization is an important contributor to this study as

most studies of elite socialization often omit to control for the effect of such (Egeberg et. al 2013). This study focuses on two main attributes: educational and international background, yet also considers age and gender. The effects of organizational demography are closely related to socialization, which in turn is a crucial contributor to the development of an organizational identity and organizational actorness (Bátora 2011:7).

The theory of representative bureaucracy holds that individual's backgrounds will shape their behaviour and values and subsequently impact on decision-making in organizations (Meier et. al 1999, Veggeland and Trondal 2012). For example, in her study on the European Commission, Lisbet Hooghe (2012) found that socialization outside the organization appeared to be substantially more significant than socialization within the Commission. The theory of representative bureaucracy thus claims that demographic attributes of civil servants may prove crucial in understanding government decision-making (Pfeffer 1982, Selden 1997, Trondal 2007). It also presumes that organizations perform better if it is representative of the public it serves as it this would make it more inclined to take decisions that benefit the public (Meier et. al 1999). Following this chain of reasoning, a bureaucracy will consequently alter its performance according to its composition of staff (Veggeland and Trondal 2012:6).

The assumptions made by the theory of representative bureaucracy argue that demographic attributes may place guidelines on role perceptions on behaviour. This leads to the prediction that highly educated civil servants with international backgrounds and experience are more likely to regard themselves as independent sector experts rather than representative for her/his nation state (Trondal et. al 2010:32, Cortell and Peterson 2003:6 in Trondal et. al 2004:16). According to the institutional perspective, educational backgrounds may influence their selection and role perceptions (Selden 1997) and neo-functionalist scholarship suggests that epistemic communities of highly educated experts support the evolvement of supranational role perceptions (Trondal 2007). Assumably, officials with international education are more likely to adopt a supranational mind-set than officials wit national educational backgrounds (Trondal et. al 2004:16). Studies demonstrate that educational backgrounds are the most important factor in understanding decision-making behaviour within government officials (Christensen et. al 2001, Trondal 2006b:17). Both length and type of education is of importance. Due to educational and professional backgrounds it is probable that most of these officials have already adopted some degree of a supranational oriented mind-set and thus, are

more inclined to view themselves as representatives of the international community rather than representatives of nation states (Trondal 2007:10).

With respect to age and gender, it is argued that because younger officials often have not been subjected to domestic pre-socialization, they are more inclined to adopt supranational and epistemic behavioural patterns than their older peers (Trondal et. al 2010:35). Furthermore, studies conducted on the Commission have suggested that female officials are somewhat less supranationally oriented than their male colleagues (Trondal et. al 2014, Kassim et. al 2013 in Egeberg et. al 2013). Similar findings may thus be expected in this study of the WTO Secretariat.

2.2.2. Re-socialization

There is growing support in literature for the claim that pre-socialization on actor's role perceptions are modified by organizational re-socialization (e.g. Checkel 2005, Meier and Nigro 1976, Trondal 2007). At the organizational level, socialization is the process in which an organization obtains some sort of common values and meaning. A socialization process at the individual level refers to mechanisms through which employees become acclimated to the culture of a new workplace. Thus pre-socialization prior to employment may be reinforced or altered upon entering the position in the organization (Egeberg et. al 2013:9).

When an organization is institutionalized it has successfully integrated values and objectives into the structure and culture of the organization. Institutionalization of an organization may involve the infusion of shared norms and values, a particular demographic composition and also the building and place associated with the organization. Arguably, in order to be characterized as an institution, an organization needs to embody societal values and seek to impose these values on society (Selznick 1984). Institutional theory is a theoretical posture maintaining that normative pressures arising either from their external or internal environment, influence the organization. New institutionalism or neo-institutionalism is a sociological-oriented theory that focuses on how institutions interact and affect society. It attempts to explain why institutions emerge in a certain way in a given context. New institutionalism assumes that institutions become entrenched in various formal and informal organized arrangements, which take on a "life of their own" over time (Bátora 2011:5). New institutionalism is frequently applied as a point of departure when exploring socialization and learning processes. It abandons the traditional actor-centred approach that builds on rational choice and principal-agent theories and merely view IOs as multilateral tools for member

states. Rather, it considers IOs to be comprised of a variety of power constellations ranging over different levels of governance (Paulsen 2012:7).

The classical definition of socialization is that actors internalize norms and standards of behaviour by acting in social structures (Zürn and Checkel 2005). Socialization was a central term in the work of Durkheim, who claimed that it did not only represent behaviour, but also the rules that govern behaviour and give it meaning (Collin 1997). The term is deeply rooted within sociology and psychology; it is used to describe the process by which individuals adopt certain norms and standards within a community. The outcome of the socialization process is referred to as “internalization” and entails that individuals have established certain values and norms that are favourable for a certain group or people. An individual is introduced to norms and values and then goes through the process of understanding how and why these norms and values are important before finally accepting and adopting the norms as their own viewpoint (Scott 1971). This is known as a “socialization-process”.

Socialization and internalization of norms and values are widely applied to explain behaviour within organizations and institutions and have thus become of increasing importance to scholars within the field of organizational theory. Norms are defined as “a standard of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity” and place constraints on behaviour and choices, making it easier to predict action. It is often a determinant for the outcome of an institution (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998:891 in Davis Cross 2011:3). Furthermore, socialization is closely linked to the concept known as “the logic of appropriateness” (March and Olsen 2009). This perspective views human action as driven by rules of appropriate and ideal behaviour. March and Olsen write: “actors seek to fulfil their obligations encapsulated in a role, an identity, a membership in a political community or group, and the ethos, practices and expectations of its institutions. Embedded in social collectively, they do what they see as appropriate for themselves in a specific type of situation” (March and Olsen 2004). Such informal, internalized perceptions of what is right/good and legitimate, cause actors to take reasoned action by answering three basic questions: What kind of situation is this? What kind of person am I? What does a person such as I do in a situation like this? (March and Olsen 2004:4). Thus, role and identity perceptions become an elementary component of the decision-making process. Officials are inclined to take action that they perceive to be in accordance with the norms, values and purpose of the organization to which they belong, i.e. there is a decision-making bias towards what social norms and values view as the best

alternative rather what is considered optimal according to cost-benefit calculations (logic of consequences) (Balsiger 2013).

Socialization is widely applied to explain behaviour within organizations and institutions and the Commission is often cited as the most prominent case of such. Arguably, shared identities will affect both the decision-making process and the outcome, and subsequently also affect the future of the global community. Internalization of values and norms are an essential contributor to this arising supranational community. The Commission is often used to exemplify supranational governance and social learning. Empirical studies have found that officials working within this institution get socialized into a collective European mind-set. Theories on identity shaping on the supranational level are given additional weight through studies demonstrating the ability of European institutions to impact on patterns of conduct (Trondal 2007). Numerous Europeanists thus conclude that supranational institutions have substantial potential to socialize the individuals working within and it is assumed that similar patterns may be observed in comparable international bureaucracies.

A large literature argues that two casual variables are positively related to socialization, namely duration and intensity of interaction (e.g. Haas 1958, Checkel 2005). This assumption rests on socialization theory affirming a positive correlation between intensity of participation with a group and the development of affiliations towards this group as well as an esprit de corps (Trondal 2007:12). Informal contact patterns increase the probability that individuals will act in accordance with what they perceive to be preferred by the others (Johnston 2005:1032 in Trondal 2007). Furthermore, loyalty towards the international bureaucracy is arguably positively related to length of service (Trondal et. al 2004:17). Social constructivist literature also suggests that duration of interaction will enhance socialization potential of institutions (Checkel 2005). Extensive and intensive interaction will amplify internalization of norms, rules and interests of the community (Checkel 2005). For example, studies of COREPER (Council of Permanent Representatives) and Council Working Parties lend support to the claim that there is a positive relationship between intensity of interaction and the development of a sense of collectiveness (Lewis 2005, Niemann 2006 in Trondal 2010a:81).

2.2.3 Organizational affiliation

Contrary to the theory of representative bureaucracy, the Weberian bureaucracy model claims that bureaucracies may shape staff through a set of mechanisms, e.g. socialization, discipline and control that ensure that tasks are performed relatively independently from the individuals (Veggeland and Trondal 2012:6). This model thus implies that officials will act upon roles that are shaped by their bureaucracy and that bureaucracies develop their fundamental characteristics fairly independent of society.

The organizational perspective emphasizes the organizational context guiding a decision-maker in seeking tangible solutions to problems. Studies of organizational properties of international bureaucracies appear to suggest that similar behaviour dynamics are encouraged through organizational characteristics of these bureaucracies. Arguably, behavioural dynamics within international bureaucracies is much more a consequence of organizational variables than it is a reflection of the international organization in which they are embedded (Trondal et. al 2010). An organizational structure defines how activities, responsibilities and tasks are allocated and distributed within an organization, thereby also defining interests and goals that are to be pursued. Formal organization structures reflect power constellations and provide guidelines of behaviour for the individuals working within it. Because actors are likely to favour the most satisfactory solution utilizing the possibilities in their immediate environment, organizational structures always represents a “mobilization of bias in preparation for action” (Egeberg 2012:78). Hence, organizational structures possess the potential to influence the effectiveness of an organization. It is also important to consider the actual behaviour, i.e. informal structures, in organizations by studying for example organizational communication – and information flows. Exploring formal and informal structures will provide a complex picture of an organization and thereby a more resilient picture of decision-making (Bátora 2011:6).

Institutional theorists have elaborated on the aforementioned organizational aspect by invoking a greater casual role for organizational structures in the socialization process. Organizational structure may be a facilitator of conduct and behaviour as it focuses the actors’ attentions towards certain solutions and alternatives rather than others. In 1947, Herbert A. Simon coined the term “bounded rationality” denoting the idea that decision-making is confined by cognitive and computational limitations prompting decision-makers to apply their rationality on simplified choices contra a complete spectrum of all possible alternatives

(Simon 1957). Selection mechanisms and filters governing decision-making within an organization may be studied by examining the organization structure and its implications on behaviour.

The status of primary and secondary affiliations is measured by the length and intensity of the affiliation to each of them (Trondal et. al 2010:31) Long and extensive exposure to an organization undoubtedly increases the likelihood of developing ownership and commitment to an organization, or - as noted by Trondal and others (2010): “these institutions become ‘real’ in a social psychological sense to the officials.” A distinction should be made between length of service in the organization and length of service in a particular unit or division as civil servants often tend to work within different units.

Many international servants tend to hold multiple organizational affiliations. A primary affiliation is the main engagement of the decision-maker, signifying that this will be the structure in which she/he will be primarily occupied with. Part-time involvements, like for example membership in committees, are known as secondary affiliations. Advocates of the organizational approach claim that such organizational affiliations may have implications on how a decision-maker perceives their role (Trondal 2014). Actors are limited by cognitive capacities preventing them for evaluating all possible alternatives and consequences, and are thus inclined to opt for a satisfactory solution rather than an optimal one (bounded rationality) (Egeberg et. al 2013:10) This also implies a reduced capacity to attend more than one organizational affiliation at the time. Although it is assumed that the behaviour and role perceptions are a result of their primary *and* secondary affiliations (Trondal et. al 2010:31), the logic of primacy suggests that the primary affiliation is likely to affect behaviour more extensively than the secondary (Trondal 2014). Thus, following this line of argument, it can be expected that officials who primarily are occupied in the WTO Secretariat will have directed their identity and role perceptions towards their specialized division.

A typical formal organization contains elements of both horizontal and vertical specialization. Organizational specialization “leads to local rationalities and local and routinized learning cycles among incumbents” (Olsen 2006 in Trondal 2010:79). It may be grouped into two main dimensions: horizontal and vertical differentiation. Horizontal specialization refers to the distribution of different tasks; they are grouped into units and tied to concrete positions (Christensen et. al 2007:24). It is commonly distinguished between four different principles of

horizontal specialization: purpose, process, client and geographical (e.g. Gulick 1937, Christensen et. al 2007). The focus of this study are the functional divisions of the WTO Secretariat, i.e. specialization by purpose. This is likely to active patterns of co-operation and conflict among employees along sectorial lines. Hence, it may be expected that role- and identity perceptions are governed by a bureaucratic organization where preferences and strategies are targeted towards sectorial objectives, divisions and units (Trondal & Veggeland 2013). Previous research has shown that “actor’s roles are transformed more easily in highly issue-specific situations” (Zürn 2003:20 in Trondal et. al 2004:9). Stronger degrees of horizontal specialization according to purpose and function call for more exclusive competences, which in turn ensures a greater degree of discretion and autonomy in horizontally specialized organizations (Trondal et. al 2004:9). A second effect of horizontal specialization may thus be the emergence of epistemic communities of experts.

This study draws on the assumption that horizontal specialization of international bureaucracies catalyses departmental role-perceptions among incumbents, presupposed that international bureaucracies represent the primary organizational affiliation of international civil servants. It is argued that specialization by purpose will incite patterns of cooperation and conflict along sectorial lines (Egeberg 2006 in Trondal 2010) and result in “less than adequate” inter-unit and better intra-unit coordination (Ansell 2004:237, Page 1997:10 in Trondal 2010b:6). Seen that officials spend most of their time and energy within divisions and units, it is expected that they “make affective ties primarily towards their sub-unit and less towards the organization as a whole” (Ashford and Johnson 2001:36 in Trondal 2010b:6). If the Secretariat is dominated by strong patterns of horizontal specialization, one may thus anticipate officials to portray strong departmental logics and orient themselves towards the their unit rather than towards the vertical chain of command.

On contrary, hierarchies of command and differentiation characterize a purely vertical specialized bureaucracy by degrees of authority. In a vertically specialized organization power emanates top down with a clearly defined chain of command. Vertical specialization implies stronger mechanisms for discipline and control through administrative commands and individual incentives such as promotion and salary (Egeberg 2012). Studies suggest that formal rank is linked to behavioural patterns and role perceptions. Arguably, officials with top rank positions are more likely to evoke a logic of hierarchy than officials in lower positions (Trondal 2010b:5). Lower rank officials are assumed to be more inclined to adopt a logic of

portfolio (Mayntz 1999:84 in Trondal 2010b). It is argued that vertically specialized international bureaucracies are likely to have stronger impact on officials' role perceptions and behaviour than less-vertically specialized bureaucracies (e.g. Bennett and Oliver 2002, Egeberg 2012, Trondal 2006b). However, the relative administrative capacity within a bureaucracy may account for variations in the extent to which officials are guided by a logic of hierarchy (Trondal 2010b:5). Provided these theoretical assumptions, one would expect role perceptions and behavioural patterns within the Secretariat to be strongly guided by vertical principles of organizational structure, yet under the conditions of strong administrative capacities at the top level as well as strong vertical chains of command. Weak capacities at the top level indicate more variation at the lower levels, and one could expect to find that the horizontal dimension will impact more strongly.

Lastly, the actual size of an organization may also entail implications on organizational structure, hence behaviour. Size is an important predictor of specialization and formalization in that size increases specialization, which in turn leads to lower task uncertainty and subsequently more formalization (Donaldson 1999: 96). It is expected that a smaller bureaucracy allows for a larger degree of cross-unit and cross-level contact patterns between incumbents. Furthermore, a smaller bureaucracy and subsequent closer ties between officials, compels the prediction that employees overall will feel affiliated to the bureaucracy as a whole.

2.3 Summing Up

This study is premised on the assumption that actor-level autonomy may be measured by examining supranational, departmental and epistemic behavioural dynamics within a bureaucracy. These dynamics are studied by examining contact patterns, cleavages of conflicts and role perceptions of officials. Whereas previous research has focused strongly on the definition and implications of formal autonomy, this study intends to shed light on the underlying causes of *de facto* autonomy enacted by civil servants. Mechanisms of pre-socialization, re-socialization and organizational affiliation are expected to impact to various degrees on the aforementioned behavioural dynamics. This section outlined the theoretical assumptions behind the dependant and the independent variables, and highlighted the ways in which the latter interacts and affects the former.

3. Data and Methodology

The purpose of this study is to examine actor-level autonomy within an international bureaucracy, namely the WTO Secretariat. It intends to be a contribution to the growing literature examining international executives from a PA perspective and builds on previous studies that continuously have found clear indications of shifts of identity-perceptions amongst civil servants within international bureaucracies. This chapter presents the methodological approach of the study.

3.1 Research Design

A research design is a systematic approach to a scientific problem. It outlines the process and structure on how one reaches conclusions about relationships in a given dataset. Research design and data collection ought to be derived from the main purpose of the study, i.e. the research question. Researchers of social sciences commonly ask two types of fundamental questions: *what* is going on (descriptive)? and *why* is it going on (explanatory)? (Gerring 2012). This study aspires to assess actor-level autonomy (descriptive) as well as offer explanations of such (explanatory).

This study is conducted using a case study paradigm with qualitative method. The notion of “case study” is not clearly defined in literature and subsequently it may refer to a variety of characteristics (e.g. that the research method is qualitative and includes only one or a few cases, the research is characterized by process-tracing etc.). Nonetheless, a case study is generally defined as intensive studies of a single unit with the aim of generalizing across a larger class of similar units (Gerring 2004). A qualitative approach was chosen for this study because it enhances the interpretation of social realities as it endorses immeasurable qualities such as personal experience and observations. Provided the goal of this study, qualitative methods appear to be more suitable as they produce more accurate and detailed information compared to numerical results.

3.2 Case Selection

This study addresses the research question by conducting an in-depth case study using elite interviews and document analysis. The case under investigation is the WTO Secretariat. The purpose of the study is twofold; the aim of the first part is to address actor-level autonomy in the WTO Secretariat and the objective of the second part is to explain the emergence of such independence. Subsequently, the dependent variable of this study is independence of officials

that operate within the Secretariat, whereas the independent variables are factors that may explain such independence. The independent variables are studied through the lens of the three theoretical propositions presented in chapter 2.

The overall purpose of this study is to analyse and explain the emergence of the empirically observed emergence of shared norms and values at the international stage. The role of international executives has evolved significantly in the past decades and they have become an increasingly active part of the international community. An empirical focus on actor-level autonomy is useful for two main reasons. Firstly, potential power within a bureaucracy is externalized through individual officials and secondly, institutional transformation, i.e. the emergence of relatively independent international bureaucracies, elicits a change in the preferences and conceptions of international civil servants (Olsen 2005 in Trondal and Veggeland 2013). The vast majority of literature on the emergence of independence among international staff has been conducted on the European Union, namely the Commission. Because IR scholars traditionally dominated the literature on international organizations, the Commission was initially regarded as being *sui generis* in nature; however, upon the entry of PA scholars during the 1990s this claim was questioned and eventually curbed, paving the way for comparative studies (e.g. Trondal et al. 2010). This study intends to annex the line of previous studies examining international bureaucracies from a PA perspective.

The WTO Secretariat portrays an interesting case not only because it is the administrative branch of one of the most powerful international actors, but also due to its organizational and institutional features. Studies conducted on similar institutions (e.g. Egeberg et al. 2013; Trondal et al. 2010) suggest a positive relationship between actor-level autonomy and the independent variables outlined in chapter 2. Assumably, analogous mechanisms and outcomes are likely to be identified when examining the WTO Secretariat.

Following a wave of extensive research from various scholarships, the Commission has manifested itself as a template for independence. Compared to the Secretariat, the Commission holds substantially larger capacities for independence; the Secretariat thus falls under the category “least-likely” case study. If a theory is to have any application at all, it should at the very least be confirmed when applying it to most-likely cases, whereas least-likely cases are the ‘tough-tests’ in which a given theory is rather unlikely to provide good explanation (Bennett and Elman 2010:505 in Willis 2014). Willis (2014) writes: “ Levy

(2008) neatly refers to the inferential logic of least-likely cases as the ‘Sinatra inference’ – if a theory can make it here, it can make it anywhere.”

A comparative study could have been an alternative for this study; however, the purpose is to examine the WTO Secretariat in particular. Moreover, a thorough in-depth evaluation of two or more cases against the theoretical background would be difficult due to limitations of time and resources.

3.3 Choice of Method

Undertaking a single in-depth case study enables the investigation of the behavioural dynamics at a more detailed level. There is no clear-cut definition of case study, however, it is generally agreed that it may be defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin 2004:13). This definition captures the essence of a case study, namely that – contrary to more generalizing methods – the overall objective of case studies is to “provide a level of detail and understanding” (Willis 2014). Furthermore, Gerring emphasized that a case study was “intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units” where ‘units’ refer to “spatially bounded phenomena – e.g. a nation state, revolution, political party, election or person – observed at a single point in time or over some delimited period of time” (Gerring 2004:342). Similar definitions can be found in e.g. Seawright and Collier, who defined a case study as “a research design focused on one (N=1) or a few cases where cases are defined as ‘the units of analysis of a given study’” (Seawright and Collier 2004:275).

The advantage with a single case study is its intensive focus on the case examined (Lijphart 1971) as such studies desire to obtain a detailed and in-depth understanding of one case. Subsequently, the main rationale behind choosing a qualitative case study is the ambition to gain in-depth understanding and knowledge on specific phenomena. According to Yin, evidence for a case study may come from six sources: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observations and physical artefacts (Yin 2004:83).

3.4 Sources of Data

All the data used in this study is secondary and previously published. The interviews were conducted by Trondal and others and originally applied for comparative research on behavioural dynamics within the Commission, the OECD Secretariat and the WTO

Secretariat (*Unpacking International Organizations – The Dynamics of Compound Bureaucracies* by Trondal et. al, 2010). All primary data have been made available and re-analysed for the purpose of this study.

This study draws on the 19 interviews conducted with officials working within the WTO Secretariat. All 19 informants belong to trade units; they include 2 top-level directors (Deputy-Director Generals), 4 medium levelled officials (Director, Head of Unit) and 13 low lever officials (Adviser, Counsellor or equivalent) (Trondal et. al 2010). Data collection took place in several stages and in various sequences and was conducted in Geneva during the time period 2007-2008. Respondent anonymity is protected by referring to them by interview number, e.g. WTO 5, WTO 14 etc. All interviews were fully transcribed. These 19 transcriptions have been applied to conduct the research in this study.

Moore (2007) points out that a secondary analysis of data should be regarded as a process of recontextualizing and restructuring data rather than merely an analysis of pre-existing data. Like primary data, secondary data has its pros and cons. A clear benefit of using secondary data in this case is access to data that most likely would have been difficult to obtain otherwise (the interviews). Additionally, utilizing secondary data often implies that there already is an established degree of validity and reliability and it will often be the most efficient alternative in terms of time and resources. Disadvantages include possible undiscovered biases in the original interviews, lesser degree of control and divergence between the interview guide and the research question posed, i.e. the questions are not optimized for the given research question.

Semi-structured Interviews

Contrary to structured interviews; semi-structured interviews are more open and flexible allowing the researcher to bring up new questions and thoughts in response to answers and comments given by a respondent. The structure is generally organized around an interview guide, as is the case with the interviews used in this study. Semi-structured interviews in this case present themselves as favourable over structured and unstructured interviews for two main reasons: firstly, as already pointed out, the fluid structure allows for further elaboration and secondly, the structure ensures incorporation of important theoretical perspectives relating to the analytical framework.

Given the purpose of this research, interviews with officials are an essential source of data seen as this enables the researcher to capture the informal aspects within the bureaucracy. The transcriptions reveal important aspects with respect to personal perceptions and beliefs, contact patterns and daily operations within the respective units. The interviews thus complement the remaining methods and provide important insights that one would have been unattainable by the sole use of document analysis.

The personal nature of interviewing is beneficial in many ways, particularly because it allows for a dialogue between the interviewer and the informant. For the very same reason however, there is a constant danger of introducing errors and bias. Mathers et. al (2002) list four possible sources of such: deviations from written instructions (e.g. changing the words of the questions), interrogation error (i.e. when questions are phrased differently from one respondent to the next, choice of words may affect the answer), interpretation error (related to subjective judgements) and finally, recording error (not writing down the answers correctly). More often than not, interviews require a certain degree of trust and common understanding of the objectives; the relationship between the interviewer and respondent is thus key to obtaining a good set of data.

Document Analysis and Secondary Literature

Public documents and legal texts published by the WTO are often referred to during the interviews and serve as the main framework for formal rules and procedures. These have also been applied to contextualize the institutional and organizational environment within the Secretariat as well as providing background information about the case under investigation.

Document analysis is a frequently applied technique in qualitative methods. It involves examining and interpreting the data in order to “elicit meaning, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge” (Corbin and Strauss 2008 in Bowen 2009). A qualitative researcher is expected to draw on multiple sources (at least two), and generally, document analysis is applied as a complementary method to other research methods (Bowen 2009). Atkinson and Coffey urge researchers to carefully evaluate the explanatory value of documents for a specific research purpose: “...We should not use documentary sources as surrogates for other kinds of data. We cannot, for instance, learn through records alone how an organization actually operates day-by-day. Equally we cannot treat records – however ‘official’ – as firm evidence of what they report (...) That strong reservation does not mean

that we should ignore or downgrade documentary data. On contrary, our recognition of their existence as social facts alerts us to the necessity to treat them very seriously indeed. We have to approach them for what they are and for what they are used to accomplish” (Atkinson and Coffey 1997:47 in Bowen 2009).

Relevant to this study, is first and foremost that document analysis provides valuable background and context, as well as supplementary data. This entails both advantages and limitations. On the plus side, amongst others, is the fact that documents are often easily accessed, as many of them are public and/or obtainable online. As Bowen puts it: “...An maxim to keep in mind is that if a public event happened, some official record of it most likely exists” (Bowen 2009). This study draws on official WTO legal texts and reports, which primarily have proven useful in asserting the formal framework, i.e. formal constraints and allowances placed upon officials operating within the Secretariat. This in turn, contributes to provide an overview of the organizational background required to draw conclusions on the dependant and independent variable.

Document analysis is consequently an attractive and efficient tool for qualitative researchers. Another advantage is the fact that documents are ‘unobtrusive and ‘non-reactive’ meaning that they are unaffected by research and/or the researcher. Other advantages include exactness (names, references, details) and broad coverage (many settings, events, long time periods) (Yin 1994 in Bowen 2009). The abovementioned features are both relevant and beneficial with respect to this particular research. On the downside, applying written sources to a study may often imply a ‘selectivity bias’. As noted by Bowen (2009): “ ... In an organizational context, the available (selected) documents are likely to be aligned with corporate policies and procedures and the agenda of the organization’s principles (...)” Thus, one should always bear in mind the objective and agenda of the source. This is closely linked to the notion of source critique. In addition to being aware of underlying motivations of the source, one should also be critical in selecting documentation given that there is always the possibility of obtaining unreliable material. In this particular study, the documents originate from the WTO. Legal texts are fairly straight forward as they reflect the legal mandates in their current and official form. There is always a danger with official reports, however, that they may be biased or flawed by inaccurate use of statistics or methodology.

Secondary literature refers to previous studies have analysed the current variables under investigation. In such cases, there is nearly always an underlying threat of misinterpreting foregoing research and analysis, which in turn endangers the validity of the study. Nonetheless, as in this case, previous studies may often serve as a point of departure and offer important analytical insights and information facilitating ongoing research.

3.5 Evaluation and Methodological Challenges

Validity and reliability is a reoccurring concern in virtually all research within social sciences. Validity refers to the success (or failure) of measuring what the researcher set out to measure, whereas reliability is concerned with the extent to which the results are verifiable, i.e. if a measuring procedure will yield the same data if repeated.

Validity thus largely relates to the operationalization of variables. Construct validity entails identifying the correct operational measures for the concepts being studied, whereas strong internal validity implies that there are reliable measurements of dependant and independent variables, as well as strong justification for linking these two. Given that this study builds on previous research, which largely affirms the explanatory values of the indicators utilized in this study (cf. Trondal et. al 2010, Egeberg et. al 2013), the overall validity in regards to operationalization and causality is found to be at a good level. However, a note of caution should be added as it is generally difficult to draw direct links between empirical observations and outcomes when undertaking qualitative case studies. External validity in this case refers to the ability to generalize the study to other institutions. A common weakness of case studies is fairly low possibilities to make generalizations. This study may not be generalized directly onto similar institutions, however, given that previous studies suggest that parallel mechanisms may be detected in similar institutions, the empirical observations on this study may provide important indicators for possible findings within similar institutions.

Reliability refers to the extent to which it is possible to replicate this study and thereby obtain the same results (Yin 2004). Whereas the written sources (documents) are public and available online, the interviews are difficult to replicate first and foremost due to the anonymity of respondents. Written sources may often result in excess information and difficulties in identifying relevant information. Another challenge may be the reliability of the documents; it is thus crucial that the researcher evaluates the material carefully. Documents and secondary literature that have been used in this study emanate from reliable sources and

have all been selected in response to the research question posed. The validity of written sources is thus found to be at a good level. Furthermore, elite interviews may generally pose a challenge to reliability. Though personal biases are not thought to be an excessive problem (Berry 2002), the presence of a researcher may influence a situation and the respondents may, for example, downplay or exaggerate their roles or beliefs. Though despite the drawbacks, there are enormous benefits in interviewing elites. This primarily relates to their function as exclusive sources of first-hand knowledge and insights into international bureaucracies that could not have been obtained otherwise.

Furthermore, the discussion and subsequent conclusions drawn in this study are to a large extent based on written sources, and reliability will thus relate to personal interpretations and presentation of the empirical material available. It is thus possible that results will vary from researcher to researcher depending upon emphasis placed on statements and how these statements are interpreted. Overall the reliability of this study is seen as being at a satisfactory level.

4. Empirical Inquiry

This chapter provides a detailed account of the findings from the interviews and documents described in the previous chapter. As outlined, the data was collected and processed using qualitative techniques. The objective is to identify characteristics associated with the dependant variable discussed in chapter 2, namely actor-level autonomy, which is done along the lines of three behavioural dynamics arguably responsible for inciting the process of collective identity formation at the international level. The chapter is structured as follows: firstly, it provides a general overview of the WTO, followed by a comprehensive description of the Secretariat. Secondly, it proceeds to outline the findings related to patterns of behaviour.

4.1 The World Trade Organization

The WTO was formally inaugurated on January 1st 1995 under the Marrakesh Agreement as a successor to GATT, which commenced in 1948. It marked a significant advance in multilateralism, aspiring to be a pragmatic and result-oriented international organization setting new standards to international economic cooperation. While GATT had been functioning well according to its intentions and purpose, the developments on the global trading system called for a more comprehensive and broad trade organization. The WTO was thus established covering a wider range of practical and functional areas, amongst others it now covered trade in services and trade-related aspects on intellectual property as well, contra to trade of merchandise goods only as was the case under GATT rules. Additionally, there was also a desire to create a permanent organization with institutional and symbolic value that would strike roots on the international stage. In contrast to the WTO, which was to become an institutional body, GATT was merely a set of multilateral agreements agreed upon by nation states, thus lacking the desired institutional manifestation. The creation of the WTO was consequently the primary objective of the GATT Uruguay Round Negotiations, which were held between 1986 and 1994 (e.g. Trondal et. al 2010, Fergusson 2007, Xu and Weller 2004, WTO 2014).

”The World Trade Organization (WTO) deals with the global rules of trade between nations. Its main function is to ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely as possible.” (WTO 2014a) The main objectives of the WTO are thus supervision and liberalization of international trade. There are currently 160 member states and 24 observer governments,

additionally; the European Union is also a member. Since its launch, WTO members have continuously stressed their commitment to making the organization universal in scope and coverage and as of 2007, the WTO member states represented 96.4% of global trade and 96.7% of global GDP, using 2005 data (WTO 2014a). While it may take credit for several remarkable advancements and milestones of international trade, the growing number of member states, the complexity of its mission as well as the changing international economic environment, entails a series of significant challenges in finding tangible solutions and compromises as well as ensuring compliance among member states with rules and agreements. Additionally, the WTO role as a promoter of free trade has been very controversial and subjected to heavy criticism. Amongst others, it has been seen as being hijacked by richer countries, resulting in policies that only widen the global inequality gap - making the rich even richer at the expense of the poor.

The highest authority within the WTO is the Ministerial Conference, composed of representatives from each member. The MC is to meet at least once every two years to make decisions on all matters under the multilateral WTO Agreements. From 1996 to 2013 there have been 9 conferences. The daily function of the WTO is carried out by the General Council, which represents the second level of the decision-making structure within the organization. The General Council consist of three bodies; the General Council, The Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) and The Trade Policy Review Body (TPRB). It acts on behalf of the MC and is composed of ambassadors and permanent representatives from the WTO members. Thirdly, there are three subsidiary bodies reporting to the General Council: Council for Trade in Goods (Goods Council), Council for Trade in Service (GATS Council) and Council for Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS Council). These comprise the apparatus for the General Council and have numerous subsidiary committees, which make up the fourth level of the WTO. The abovementioned levels may be seen as being the political level of the WTO as they are comprised of, and overseen by, the member states. On the other hand, the WTO Secretariat represents the administrative level of the WTO. Though arguably, given the economic and legal competences the head of the WTO Secretariat, the Director-General, also holds a political position in addition the administrative function (Trondal et. al 2010:91).

4.2 The WTO Secretariat

The WTO Secretariat is located in Geneva and headed by the Director-General. The Director-General is appointed by the WTO members for a four-year term and is responsible for overseeing the administrative functions of the WTO. Furthermore, there are four Deputy-Directors General (DDGs) fulfilling supportive roles and forming the senior management of the WTO Secretariat together with the Director-General (Van den Bossche and Zdouc 2013:136). The Secretariat holds a central position as guardian of treaties in addition to its official function as the administrative branch of the WTO. It employs around 600 staff members and has an annual budget of approximately 160 million Swiss Francs (Trondal et. al 2010:92). There are over 60 nations represented in the WTO Secretariat, the majority of which have either a legal or economic educational background and originate from developed countries; particularly France, United Kingdom, Spain, Switzerland and the United States are heavily represented. The number of staff from developing countries is increasing, yet remains a clear minority, thus a point of concern for many (Van den Bossche and Zdouc 2013:137).

With a size equivalent to that of the DG Trade of the Commission, the WTO Secretariat is a fairly small bureaucracy. Theoretically, one implication of a small-scaled bureaucracy is more limited capacity to act relatively independent from member-states compared to larger bureaucracies (Biermann and Siebenhüner 2009 in Trondal 2010b), however this claim has been challenged by comparative studies on international bureaucracies, which largely concluded that “the size of international bureaucracy is not a key explanation of variation in behavioural logics of international civil servants” (Trondal 2010b:3) The structural composition of the Secretariat follows a portfolio logic among staff and is strongly horizontally organized into divisions with functional, information and liaison and support roles (Trondal et. al 2010). Divisions come directly under the DG or a DDG. As of 2008, there were 16 functional divisions (see below). Additionally, there was a separate secretariat to assist the WTO Appellate Body in dispute settlement.

- Accession Division
- Agriculture and Commodities Division
- Council and Trade Negotiations Committee Division
- Development Division
- Doha Development Agenda Special Duties Division
- Economic Research and Statistics Division

- Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation
- Intellectual Property Division
- Legal Affairs Division
- Market Access Division
- Rules Division
- Technical Cooperation and Audit Division
- Trade and Environment Division
- Trade and Finance and Trade Facilitation Division
- Trade in Services Division
- Trade Policies Review Division

The divisions fulfil a pivotal role in ensuring that activities within their respective fields are conducted in accordance with existing agreements. Their work also includes arranging meetings for members and writing papers to facilitate the review process of implementation of WTO rules. According to the WTO the role of the Secretariat includes:

“Its main duties are to supply technical and professional support for the various councils and committees, to provide technical assistance for developing countries, to monitor and analyse developments in world trade, to provide information to the public and the media and to organize the ministerial conferences. The Secretariat also provides some forms of legal assistance in dispute settlement process and advises governments wishing to become Members of the WTO.” (WTO 2010)

Put more figuratively by one of the respondents:

“It’s the conductor of an orchestra” (WTO 9).

The Secretariat is a small bureaucracy, yet handles a substantial amount of work. It has “few formal powers and resources, but (...) nevertheless has the potential to make a difference in the operations of the WTO” (Trondal et. al 2010:106). Or, as one respondent said:

“It is a small Secretariat, and it is a very informal and empowered Secretariat.”
(WTO 5)

As predicted by organizational theory, horizontal specialization tends to encourage patterns of co-operation and conflict among officials within the same units (intra) rather than across units (inter). The Secretariat is also organized according to a vertical (a number of hierarchical positions) principle where the Director-General holds the top position. A Cabinet consisting of officials primarily from the Secretariats divisions supports the Director-General, a position currently held by Roberto Azevedo, who succeeded Pascal Lamy in September 2013. At the next level are the DDGs followed by a number of specialized divisions, usually headed by a Director who reports to the DDG or the Director-General. The Economic Affairs Officer and the Counsellor are the two main positions below the Director, although formally, there is no hierarchy within the Divisions (Trondal et. al 2010:94-95, WTO 2014e).

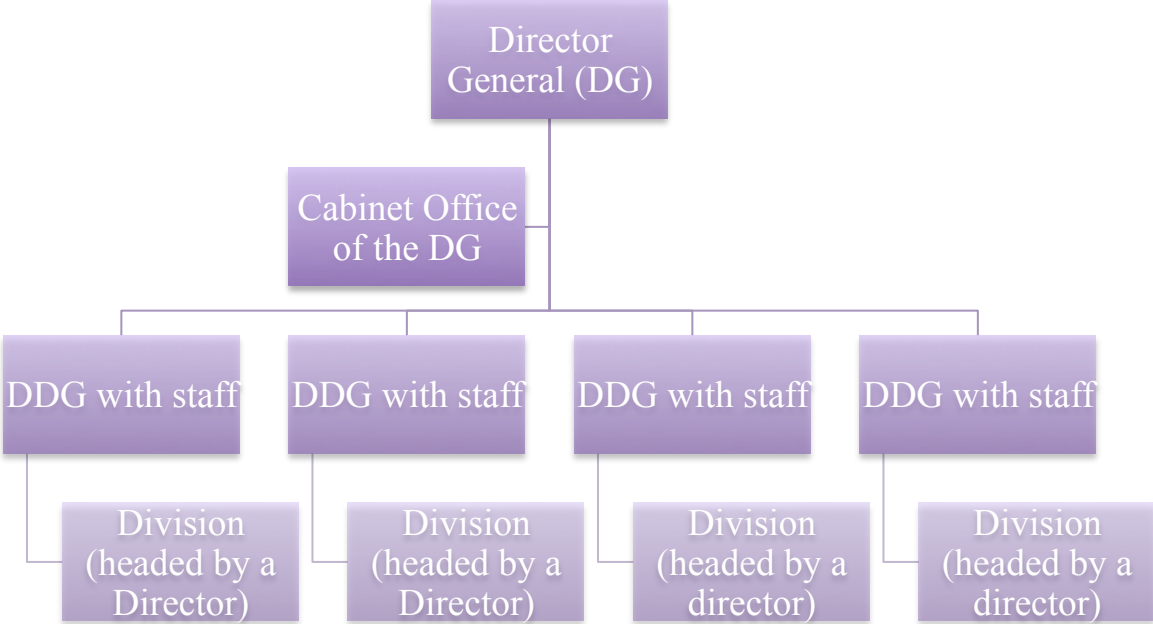


Figure 4: Hierarchical structure of the WTO Secretariat

Respondents generally report frequent contact patterns within units and to their immediate superiors and relatively limited interaction across units and levels. The civil servants receive little direct instructions and commonly find that they enjoy a fair bit of flexibility in their daily work and functions. The administrative capacities are relatively weak and there are no clear indications of strong hierarchical steering mechanisms. Overall, the specialized structure is stronger reflected than the vertical hierarchy.

The legal basis for the Secretariat is regulated on the basis of Article VI of the Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization. While it does clearly state that the Secretariat and the Director-General are to be neutral and “not seek or accept instructions from any other government or any other authority external to the WTO” (WTO 2014b) it does not clearly specify their duties or powers. The WTO Secretariat and the Director-General are subsequently formally considered to be executing a purely administrative function, which is merely supportive and technical in nature i.e. neither exercises any form of independent decision-making powers, nor do they have any formal right of initiative. The Secretariat serves as the “institutional memory” of the WTO and provides expertise on WTO issues and rules (Trondal et. al 2010:92) - it is involved in the majority of ongoing work and functions of the WTO.

The actual day-to-day operation of the Secretariat, however, calls the aforementioned “purely administrative” role into question as it - informally - is involved in launching initiatives, submitting proposals and advising member states on trade matters (Footer 2006). Situated at the core of the complex and capacious international stage, civil servants constantly find themselves juggling a multidimensional set of interests, values and cleavages of conflict. With an increasingly compound bureaucracy comes a diversified and extensive workload. The Secretariat is a fairly small bureaucracy responsible for executing core functions of the WTO. Although it is intended to fulfil a purely administrative role, the Secretariat seems to gradually take on a more political role as well, as it is constantly being given more responsibilities and tasks from the member states. Simultaneously, one consequence of such developments appears to be increased bureaucratization with more formalized procedures and increased transparency, and in this sense it is comparable to national administrations. There is an important distinction, however, in that the officials within the Secretariat have more flexible and shifting tasks and assignments. Additionally, organizational traits allow for more freedom. When asked about the differences between working in the Secretariat contra to national government, one official said:

“There are several. One that is the WTO Secretariat is a much smaller bureaucracy (...), which provides for more flexibility and autonomy in our work.” (WTO 15)

More often than not the respondent indicate that they do have some degree of leeway in performing their duties and tasks. Moreover, some respondents imply that this also applies

when advising on certain issues, though they are careful to underline their subjectivity when doing so.

“I can give my own opinion, but I try to still keep it neutral. I just say, ‘this is my own personal opinion on how I think it would work best.’” (WTO 8)

A significant increase in size as well as expansion of scope and function has provided the Secretariat with opportunities to take on a more independent role (Xu and Weller 2004:268), e.g. a study conducted on the Secretariat's influence on Trade-Environment Policies concluded that the WTO Secretariat is not merely a passive bureaucracy, but an active participant in shaping trade-environment issues, primarily by utilizing various sources of bureaucratic autonomy to influence how trade-environment issues are framed and discussed (Jinnah 2010). Xu and Weller write: “the notion of a member-driven organization does not preclude Secretariat influence, but shapes it” arguing that the member-states to some extent even depend on the Secretariat's guidance and responsibilities (Xu and Weller 2004:266-267).

Influence may be exerted through various channels. The interviews indicate that close ties to the Chair are a possible gateway to influence on particular issues. Furthermore, advising delegations and drafting proposals also provide the civil servants considerable clout to shape the ways in which issues are defined and addressed. The notion of “invisible governance” (Mathiason 2007) is frequently applied to conceptualize the extent that international secretariats unseenly shape and influence global politics and policies. Abbott et al. (2012) coined the term “orchestration” delineating a new mode of governance in which IOs may enlist intermediaries through which they can shape and influence global governance without employing hard instruments. In the context of the WTO, one may differentiate between individual orchestration in a narrow sense, i.e. the Secretariat, and collective orchestration by the organization as a whole (Elsig 2013). Arguably, such individual orchestration by the Secretariat is mainly materialized through the “DGs ‘convening power’ and the possibility to grant to intermediaries access to specific information (and to provide behind-the-door counsel) supplied by the WTO staff” (Elsig 2013). Yet at the same time, the danger of developing too close ties to private actors (and member states), thereby endangering perceived neutrality, is repeatedly stressed by the informants.

Despite constraints placed upon it through formal structure and legal framework, legal and economic competences provide the Secretariat with important tools for influencing and affecting agenda, process and outcomes. While formally, the Secretariat is a neutral and rule-driven bureaucracy, informally the potential to influence and shape policies is arguably present, though there appears to be some disagreement regarding the de facto power of the Secretariat amongst the respondents. While some claim that there is a significant room for influence, others renounce this claim arguing that the inbuilt limitations of the Secretariat ensure neutrality and subordination. Though in general, the majority appear prone to the possibilities of exercising some form of influence.

“I think the Secretariat has a hugely unrecognized influence, because in almost everything the WTO membership does, the Secretariat is generating the analysis, drafting the documents...So to the extent that we introduce the ideas, we shape existing ideas. So we influence, but it is totally invisible, because it goes out as a committee report or a member tables a paper or a dispute case report of a panel. My perspective is that the Secretariat has quite a bit of influence, but is also probably not fully using the influence (...)” (WTO 6)

“ (...) the question of WTO first being a member driven organization, and then the role of the Secretariat in that member driven organization, which tends to be a little bit less than people from the outside believe it is. The possibilities for the Secretariat to move issues, it is limited.” (WTO 4)

Assuming there is substantial room for shaping policies, it clearly needs to be conducted in a subtle and unobtrusive manner. Because member states ultimately have the power to “make or break” individuals, divisions and the Secretariat in general, one needs to be careful not to step on any toes. Officials are well aware of the restrictions and limitations placed upon them by the organizational framework, but do not all dismiss the possibility of pulling some strings in the shadows of the official power constellation.

“(...) Knowledge is power. And sometimes you can very well help to shape the thinking of people about what’s a good solution and what’s a bad solution. But you have to do that more indirectly than directly. You know, you can’t just sort of say, I’m in charge here, so you have to do it my way. You have to help shape their thinking and

influence. You very often find people, if you talk to people in the delegations who will say, you know, so-and-so in the Secretariat staff is one of my mentors, I've learned a great deal from this person." (WTO 18)

"(...) I think I sort of walk the line between being a WTO representative and needing to be impartial and not appear to be biased in any way (...) But then at the same time I have to have some kind of the researcher side. I think I tend more towards being open in the debate and discussion (...)" (WTO 6)

One official even implies that it is virtually expected that the Secretariat presumes some kind of influential role.

"...But you do want a Secretariat that is moving things forward through its own initiative, otherwise, what are we doing? But it should never look like the Secretariat is doing it. I think that is important, and I think that we are not so bad at that." (WTO 12)

The formal processes in the Secretariat are supplemented by a considerable degree of informal contacts between various actors such as staff members, national delegations and member states. It may be worth remarking that contact patterns, be it formal or informal, may run more freely given the fairly small size of the Secretariat.

"Because the members are very touchy about intervention from the Secretariat, unless they take us informally and say, you know, can you think of something which can work this out. We may have an idea, and we can share it with them. One has to distinguish between the formal process and the informal process." (WTO 14)

Trondal et. al (2010:100) conclude "the WTO Secretariat can thus take on a number of functions and roles in the WTO – some formal, others informal. The WTO is clearly a member-driven organization and the WTO Secretariat officially has no influence on the WTO decision-making (...) However, in practice, there is room for the Secretariat to make a difference". Such observations constitute the foundation of the assumption that international bureaucracies, like the WTO Secretariat, are capable of altering and shaping the outcome of world politics. Assumably, as explained in chapter 1, the potential to do so, is largely a consequence of the development of a supranational-oriented mind-set, i.e. emergence of

shared identities, norms and values within a bureaucracy. To sum up, there is substantial evidence corroborating the notion that WTO Secretariat - through its expert knowledge, institutional memory and central position within the organization - entails significant potential for “invisible governance.”

4.3 Behavioural Dynamics within the WTO Secretariat

Global order transformation includes the formation of a collective identity among civil servants operating within the frames of international bureaucracies and organizations. The Secretariat evokes and combines a multidimensional set of representational roles and behavioural dynamics amongst its officials. These behaviours are both reciprocal and concurrent, and encourage the development of autonomous attitudes and ideologies. As outlined in chapter 2, supranational, departmental and epistemic behavioural dynamics are frequently applied as indicators of actor-level autonomy. Several of the respondents indicate that the roles they assume are dependant upon situation and circumstance.

“It depends on where I’m going and what I’m asked. There are times where one is clearly going as the WTO representative, you may be focusing on a particular area but you’re identity is going to be as the WTO representative primarily. There are times when I or some of my colleges are asked to participate in expert consultations where clearly we are there as an expert in a particular field. It varies (...)” (WTO 15)

“Well, it’s a mix of WTO representative and the expertise that is under discussion, let’s say. It’s a mix of both (...)” (WTO 11)

These quotes illustrate that the multidimensional work environment activates various behavioural logics. Officials in the Secretariat often find themselves balancing various roles, identities and commitments. The civil servants regard themselves as being WTO representatives; yet do also frequently accentuate roles related to portfolio or expertise. This next section looks at the three behavioural dynamics that arguably invigorate supranational identity formation.

4.3.1 Supranational dynamics

Civil servants in the Secretariat are committed to their cause. Several of the respondents view commitment and belief to be a precondition for working in the Secretariat. They perceive themselves as being part of a larger, global network and align their beliefs and values

accordingly. The interviews confirm that WTO officials commonly also feel a deeper and more personal affiliation towards the global cause.

“(...) In terms of work, you are not here for the money, but you believe in what you doing. You work for an institution, which you believe is instrumental in contributing to the global effort to reduce poverty worldwide. It is the believe that extracts you to the job, so it’s not about the money” (WTO 3)

“(...) It’s narrow-minded in the sense that you work for a national or European interest, and here you work for a global, public good so to speak.” (WTO 2)

A certain degree of endorsement towards the overall objectives of the WTO as a whole is often emphasized. Though identities often are directed towards sub-units, the importance of an elementary belief in the mission is regarded as a prerequisite.

“(...) In a way you are a part of a division, but obviously you shouldn’t loose sight of the fact that you are working for an organization where you can’t decide and can be in another division tomorrow (...) I think we have to be committed to what the WTO is an institution, which basically is for trade liberalization, so clearly you have to believe in that.” (WTO 3)

“I think that one thing that is true for the Secretariat is that the people who are here believe in what the role of the WTO is, and what the role of international trade in development is also (...) I think that is something you get throughout the house.” (WTO 4)

The Secretariat generally employs officials on a permanent basis. Subsequently, the Secretariat more often than not represents the primary organizational affiliation. The majority of respondents have little professional ties to their respective governments, some also report having limited emotional attachments towards it. A few of the respondents have secondary affiliations to teaching and education. As already established, the prevailing perspective of own identity is as an international civil servant, with little to no responsibilities or commitments towards their nation states. Nationalities are thus of little importance and play a

rather insignificant role. The respondents devote little attention to national backgrounds and commonly take on more global and neutral identities.

“ (...) but here I don't feel like I am an American working in the WTO. I don't feel any attachment to the US government more or less, support their position or anything, I feel completely neutral. Actually, I have more contact with developing countries now, and the countries where I used to work.” (WTO 8)

“They (national government) know that my interests here are to preserve the organization.” (WTO 9)

Supranational behavioural logics may already be rooted in officials before they enter the IO, primarily through consistent exposure to conditions that foster loyalty and conviction towards the international community. The composition of staff as well as recruitment procedures may provide indications of what kind of behavioural logics may be expected. As pointed out previously, a large proportion of officials within the WTO Secretariat share similar educational backgrounds and many of the officials have specialized in international trade policy. Recruitment of personnel to the Secretariat is based on merit only; although age is of less importance, some experience is required. The majority of staff thus possesses experience relating to trade policy and international trade relations from national governments, international organizations and other organizations. Many of the respondents also report having studied or worked abroad prior to entering their position at the Secretariat. The respondents generally have at least a few years of work experience within domestic governments, private sector and/or international organizations, only two of the entered their positions more or less directly after their studies. There is no distinct career path leading to a position in the Secretariat. The professional backgrounds are highly diversified; yet do share one common feature in that virtually all have had positions in which they have dealt with international questions. Often these questions have been trade-related and involved different global players such as private companies, international organizations or national governments. Some of the respondents first made acquaintance with GATT/WTO through their previous positions.

Whereas some respondents had acquired their positions by chance, others more determinately pursued a career within the WTO. The main incentives for seeking employment in the Secretariat is the opportunity to work for an international organization that advocates policies to which the officials are personally committed to, and also the opportunity to be a part of a highly respected community of experts and researchers (see section 4.3.3.)

“Because I wanted to come here. I was working in the private sector and I had started a little sort of society intellectual academic society, society on international economic global had a little conference journal. And I wanted to do more GATT/WTO (...) The legal division already had a fascinating role of advising, and I wanted to do that. It was my dreams, I studied, and it worked.” (WTO 5)

“(…) since I was at the university the idea of going to work outside and inside an international organization, I thought it was a good idea to research, to be in an international environment with people from all over the world (...) (WTO 17)

Officially, there are no national quotas and recruitment is based on merit only, but it is implied that the Secretariat does attempt to ensure a balanced composition of staff. Overall, the respondents reflect the general distribution of nationalities with an underrepresentation of officials from less developed countries, and a slight overrepresentation of officials from the US and France. When asked about nationality as a factor of recruitment, many of the respondents state that countries of origin play a fairly insignificant role.

“Q: (...) Is nationality a factor in the work or in the recruitment?

A: In the recruitment, no, although I am not 100% sure. Officially not, and I have recruited a number of people in this division and, and it has never been a criterion, never.” (WTO 2)

An important observation relating to the demographic profile is the fact that the WTO Secretariat appears to have relatively many employees with long tenure. The Secretariat is inclined to employ staff on a more permanent basis. Figures presented in the study undertaken by Trondal et. al (2010) reveal that 5-15 years of employment is the most common tenure among Secretariat staff, there is also a striking proportion of personnel with 15-25 years of

service. Furthermore, the figures also show that the proportion of staff with more than five years of employment actually increased between 2000 and 2007.

Years of service	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
0-5	33	28	26	27	26	26	23	24
5-15	39	43	43	42	33	43	45	38
15-25	17	17	17	16	17	19	20	18
25-35	10	11	13	12	11	10	9	7
Over 35	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1

Figure 5: Distribution of years of service of WTO staff 2007-2007 (percentage of staff) (Trondal et. al 2010:104).

On average, the respondents have been working within the Secretariat approximately 13-14 years and around 5-6 years on their current portfolio. Two had been employed by the WTO for more than 30 years, whereas the newest staff addition amongst the respondents joined the Secretariat 3 years ago. Most of them have been involved in various aspects of they day-to-day functioning of the Secretariat. It may be worth pointing out that long tenure is a key element in theory of socialization. It is thus reasonable to assume that there is substantial socialization potential within the Secretariat given that these figures show that there is a significant amount of personnel with secular exposure to WTO’s culture, norms and social pressures (Trondal et. al 2010:104).

Geneva is home to a variety of international organizations active in fields ranging from humanitarian aid to trade to sustainable development. It has become the European centre of international governance with an international sector that engages more than 28 000 employees (Graduate Institute Geneva 2014). Geneva has consequently become a vibrant multicultural city and a major international crossroad for numerous international civil servants. Not unexpectedly, respondents report cultivating contacts to this international community outside the office as well. While some build personal friendships with their work colleges through social or private events, others maintain ties to the international circle through family commitments and other long-term personal relationships. Overall, social interactions outside the office are diversified yet international in character.

4.3.2 Departmental dynamics

Departmental behavioural dynamics are characterized by a loyalty towards portfolio and divisions in addition to a general loyalty to the organization as a whole. Specialized divisions are arguably the fundament of the Secretariat as these are responsible for executing the vast majority of tasks and assignments. Such horizontal specialization often elicits inward looking behavioural patterns where the civil servant regards him-or herself as being “neutral, intelligent, generalist professionals who advise ministers” (Richards and Smith 2004:779 in Trondal et. al 2010:111). Such views are confirmed throughout the interviews. The Secretariats function as advisor to the member states is repeatedly stressed and many of the respondents perceive themselves as neutral experts whose task is to support the member states, or as one respondent put it:

“We are the guardians of the book.” (WTO 9)

A specialized organizational structure encourages frequent contact-patterns and interaction within divisions. Respondents generally report that the bulk of interaction takes place within their sub-units and that they frequently communicate with colleagues within the same division. It is a common observation that horizontal specialization is a key element in fostering portfolio identities. Officials within the Secretariat express a strong sense of loyalty towards their divisions, though identities and role perceptions are also directed towards the WTO Secretariat and the WTO as a whole. Arguably, strong sub-unit identities may to some degree be the premises for the development of identities towards the subsequent levels within an organization (Trondal 2010). The Secretariats’ dependency upon smoothly functioning sub-units is regularly implied and acknowledged by the respondents. The Secretariat is not a strongly vertically specialized bureaucracy although there is a noticeable formal hierarchy. Information flow typically runs through the division director and then up. When vertical contact patterns occur, it is usually between consecutive subordinates, rarely overlapping levels of authority. The relatively weak administrative capacities on the top level allows for a more flexible and adjustable structure at the lower levels.

Article VI of the Agreement establishing the WTO clearly states that the Secretariat is to be neutral and independent for member states:

”4. The responsibilities of the Director-General and of the staff of the Secretariat shall be exclusively international in character. In the discharge of their duties, the Director-General and the staff of the Secretariat shall not seek or accept instructions from any government or any other authority external to the WTO. They shall refrain from any action which might adversely reflect on their position as international officials. The Members of the WTO shall respect the international character of the responsibilities of the Director-General and of the staff of the Secretariat and shall not seek to influence them in the discharge of their duties” (WTO 2014b).

It follows that officials within the Secretariat must maintain allegiance towards the WTO as a whole and be committed to serving the organization rather than their respective nation states. The WTO Staff regulations state:

“Staff members shall discharge their duties with the interest and objectives of the WTO in view and, in so doing, shall be subject to the authority of, and responsible to, the Director-General” (WTO 1995).

The respondents repeatedly emphasize the importance of being perceived as an independent and neutral wing of the organization. Loyalty and affiliations towards divisions are repeatedly implied throughout the interviews. Attachment to units are expressed in various forms, primarily by declared devotion towards specific issues related to their dossier, but also by highlighting relationship to colleges and an overall sense of belonging to their units. Many of the officials feel that there is a team spirit within their divisions. It is also noteworthy that many of the respondents elaborate thoroughly on the missions, tasks and procedures of their portfolios. Though this is clearly not unexpected, it does further underline personal commitment and involvement.

“When I say I feel an attachment for the WTO, its not the economic philosophy (...) I’m talking more about the colleagues (...) I like to work for development, and that is nice in my division, that everybody works for the interest of developing countries. (...)” (WTO 2)

“Being in the development division, we tend to become more sensitive to the concerns of developing countries.” (WTO 4)

“I have an attachment to the WTO, and I have a special attachment to rules (rules division).” (WTO 9)

The Secretariat derives its legitimacy from the member states, which frequently seek its expert advice, yet at the same time are sensitive to threats towards their authority and supremacy. The Secretariat thus depends on a great amount of trust from the member states and is careful not to push the limits too far. The formal implications of neutrality are an important consideration for the civil servants. There is an overall agreement on the importance of being perceived as impartial.

“They (the member states) come to you because they trust you. If they don’t trust you, or feel that you are more biased towards one part of the membership, and not towards the other, it becomes difficult.” (WTO 2)

The Secretariat is a comparatively small bureaucracy with a relatively low turnover. Especially officials with long tenure have commonly worked on different portfolios and in different positions. Most officials have an extensive immediate network and report various forms of contact patterns and communication with their colleagues and superiors. Some respondents also draw direct linkages between their long history of employment in the Secretariat and attachments towards their portfolios.

4.3.3 Epistemic dynamics

Essential to its role as provider of expert advice and guidance, knowledge and expertise are the building blocks of the Secretariat. An eligible candidate for the Secretariat staff is well educated, experienced and specialized on trade-related issues.

”The organization is serviced by a small Secretariat, the professional staff of which consist primarily of economists and lawyers specialized in international trade policy. A person wishing to apply for such a position in the Secretariat should possess a post-graduate university degree in economics, international relations or law, with an emphasis on trade issues. The academic qualifications should be supplemented by at least five years of experience with a national government or with an international organization or other organizations or enterprises dealing with issues of trade policy and international trade relations.” (WTO 2014d)

Mouritzen (1990 in Trondal et. al 2004:11) emphasized the relationship between organizational autonomy and recruitment procedures. Different recruitment procedures are assumed to affect conduct and role-perceptions differently. Recruitment based on merit provides neutral, permanent civil servants on the basis of competence (Trondal et. al 2004). As mentioned in previous sections, nationalities are evidently of lesser importance, particularly to the civil servants themselves. The officials often express that their identities are strongly linked to their role as experts and advisors and take great pride in their work and professions.

On nationalities: “I’m not sure if it’s important to the staff, because at least the staff wants to believe that they are a body of experts.” (WTO 5)

Virtually all of the respondents possess post-graduate degrees in either law or economics with specialization in trade-related issues. There is a variety of former institutional affiliations, the majority have at least a few years of professional experience from various organizations, national as well as international. A consequence of such meticulous hiring objectives is an extensive network of highly professional civil servants whose knowledge and skills are recognized and relied upon by the member states. Not surprisingly, such capacities and responsibilities promote a third set identity perception, namely the role as an expert and researcher.

“For many delegations we are very trusted, like mediators, or we are trusted experts in technical issues (...)” (WTO 2)

The WTO generally employs on permanent basis and do not employ seconded experts to the same extent as the Commission (Trondal et. al 2004). The interviews confirm that long tenure within the Secretariat is common, as is circulation of personnel within the Secretariat.

The diligent work of the Secretariat staff is widely acknowledged and admired among professionals. Coupled with a remarkable level of specialization and expertise renowned to be the highest within the field of trade-relations, the dynamic and challenging work environment of the Secretariat attracts professionals from all over the globe. Many of the respondents indicate that it was their professional expertise led them to seek employment in the

Secretariat. When asked about the motivation for entering a position in the Secretariat, one official answered:

“(...) when I was a delegate I always had the highest respect and regard for the quality of work produced by the Secretariat. In those days, in the Uruguay round, the Secretariat was called upon to do what was called background papers. They were really high quality research material (...) And also what really struck me was the expertise.” (WTO 13)

Due to the fact that civil servants are invested with knowledge required by the member states to create policies and outcomes, they subsequently enjoy a significant degree of flexibility and freedom. Because expertise is the guiding principle of decision-making, it lies within the nature of professional networks that rigid working procedures and guidelines from outside authorities are more likely to halt progress than to encourage it. Generally, officials do not have clear-cut work descriptions and often feel like they do have some degree of leeway in expressing their opinions and conducting their work.

“I have quite a bit of discretion, but it’s partly because of my recognized expertise in the area (...) I think it varies a lot among colleges depending on their level of expertise or recognized level of expertise, but certainly when you have been working in the area as long as I have, most of our members and delegates I think recognize that and they accept that how much freedom really depends on the situation.” (WTO 15)

“We have a lot of freedom because we have a lot of expertise (...)” (WTO 16)

It follows that traditional hierarchies are of less importance. Many of the respondents indicate that the hierarchical control mechanisms are rather loose, and that they are more inclined to look to their Director or colleges for instructions or endorsement. Moreover, disagreements are often laced along disciplinary lines and specific kinds of knowledge. It thus appears that both synergy and conflicts within the Secretariat often are entrenched in scientific research and proficiency activated by epistemic behavioural dynamics.

The dominating professions in the Secretariat have strong traditions and many of the respondents report cultivating contacts to their academic communities. This does not only

ensure updated and expanded knowledge within their fields, moreover it allows them to nourish their identities as experts and researchers.

4.4 Summing Up

WTO holds a key position on the global stage as the only international organization dedicated to regulating and overseeing trade between nations. It has progressively developed into a powerful and complex organization providing an encompassing rule-based framework on international trade. Yet, shifting economic circumstances, advancements within technology and new players on the market constantly present new challenges, additionally, the WTO is repeatedly criticized for neglecting the needs and demands of the developing nations.

Though formally sanctioned as the purely administrative arm of the organization, there is growing support for the claim that the WTO Secretariat holds substantial potential to influence and shape the outcomes of WTO policies and politics. Its invaluable role as institutional memory, knowledge base and body of expertise provides a range of possibilities to supply inputs into the global system. The civil servants thus find themselves amidst formal constraints and informal latitudes, obligated to neutrality and driven by personal conviction and affiliations. This chapter attempted to illuminate the underlying question of subsequent effect on self-perceptions and behavioural patterns by highlighting the findings relating to three such behavioural dynamics.

The Secretariat evokes multiple roles and identities among staff members. These seem to be dependant upon situation and circumstance and may often occur simultaneously. Secretariat staff is comprised of a variety of nationalities, yet the majority share similar educational and professional background in which international connections appear to be a reoccurring factor. Overall, the officials report relatively long tenure within the Secretariat. Supranational behavioural dynamics are particularly evident through professed allegiances to the overarching global cause and a genuine belief in the WTO mission. Departmental behavioural logics are facilitated through favourable organizational structures that stimulate strong orientations towards units and portfolios. Lastly, as a consequence of increased professionalization of international bureaucracies, epistemic behavioural dynamics unfold themselves through the accumulation of prestigious expertise.

5. Analysis and Conclusion

This chapter summarizes and presents the research and subsequent analytical insights. The data obtained through the interviews as well as relevant documents have been processed and evaluated in response to the research question posed in chapter 1:

To what extent are WTO officials independent, and what can account for actor-level autonomy in the WTO Secretariat?

The objective of this chapter is to discuss the theoretical framework presented in chapter 2 against the empirical observations outlined in chapter 4. The ambition is to understand actor-level autonomy in particular and behavioural dynamics more generally in the light of the three theoretical conjectures presented in previous chapters. This study assumes that the behavioural dynamics enacted by civil servants are biased by mechanisms of pre-socialization, re-socialization and organizational affiliations. The following analysis intends to illuminate, firstly, how actor-level autonomy evolves and prospers within the WTO Secretariat, and secondly, how such independence is conceived and refined. The chapter is completed by a concluding section that sums up the study and highlights the main findings.

5.1 Actor-Level Autonomy in the WTO Secretariat

The Secretariat is an autonomous actor in the broader sense of global governance in that it is invested with the potential to produce independent effects by operating above the level of interstate cooperation. If taken to the uttermost extent, actions and intentions that run beyond member state control may be pushed onto the international stage and from thereon infuse various levels of governance. International bureaucracies, like the WTO Secretariat, may thus present a challenge to nation states. Because the Secretariat is entrusted with a wide range of responsibilities and tasks, the potential to wield influence on policies and outcomes are greatly enhanced. Though it remains comparatively small in size, the Secretariat has undergone significant changes the past years; it has increased in scope, function and size and it has manifested itself as an imperative platform of knowledge, expertise and institutional memory on the global trade arena. As foreseen by institutional theory, the Secretariat has taken on a life of its own.

The empirical inquiry indicates that the abovementioned features of the Secretariat equip the civil servants with the power to influence and shape process and outcomes. It also shows that the majority of the civil servants are aware of the possibilities and potential to do so. The extent to which such discretion is exercised, however, remains unclear, though one may assume that this will vary according to the nature of the specific task or assignment as well as personal convictions and preferences. Several of the respondents expressed personal interest and commitment towards their respective fields of operation, and it seems reasonable to assume that their views also will be reflected in the sum of their work. This further demonstrates the importance of assessing the development and implications of values, norms and preferences of office-holders of international bureaucracies.

One implication of this increase in scope and function is a larger degree of specialization, which, as predicted by organizational theory, leads to more formalization. This development appears to be confirmed by the respondents. The Secretariat may be compared to a national bureaucracy in that it is organized by purpose, and staffed by civil servants whose main task is the execution of technical and administrative tasks. An important distinction must be made between formal and informal powers. Formal powers are fairly straightforward and limited but they do equip the staff with some fundamental capacities to exert influence. Combined with informal powers, there is considerable room to affect policies and outcomes. The informal powers stem from interpersonal relationships and networks, norms and culture and are driven by personal viewpoints. As mentioned in chapter 2, an important source of informal power is expertise as this automatically implicates a larger degree of leeway given that political authorities generally do not interfere with knowledge-based work. The empirical material demonstrates that this is also the case within the Secretariat. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the civil servants are attentive towards the gap between formal and informal powers. The connection between informal powers, discretion and potential to influence outcomes becomes increasingly evident. Overall, informal processes appear to run parallel to formal ones. It is also interesting that the empirical inquiry indicates that such informal processes may also be initiated by member states in that they turn to the Secretariat for advice and guidance on particular issues, including ones that are not formally on the table. Such informal contact patterns between Secretariat staff and member state delegations provide sizable room for influence in that it gives the civil servants the opportunity to shape thinking by directing attention towards certain issues rather than others. However, there appears to be a fine line between accepted amounts of informal contact pattern and the need to uphold the

formal principle of neutrality. It is important that the civil servants are not perceived as biased towards one membership more than towards others. Thus, though informal contact patterns are common and extensive, the civil servants are careful not to step too far out of their official domains. Formal restrictions and possible repercussions from the member states thus appear to limit the exertion of influence.

In response to the aforementioned changes of the Secretariat, that is, increase in scope and size; there is an evident growth of multidimensionality, primarily externalized through an entangled set of behavioural logics enacted by the civil servants. Officials possess multiple identities and often shift from one identity to another. Context and circumstance are typically responsible for determining which identity moves to the foreground. Supranational, epistemic and departmental behavioural dynamics are not mutually exclusive and are often interacting and overlapping. Though it is possible to draw some general conclusions on enactment of these dynamics, the degree to which officials feel affiliated to them varies from individual to individual.

Supranational, departmental and epistemic behavioural dynamics are all enacted to various extents within the Secretariat. However, the overall impression from the empirical inquiry indicates an especially strong degree of departmental behavioural logics. Such behavioural patterns are conveyed in that much attention is given to various aspects relating to sub-units. Besides taking pride in their work and positions, civil servants also appear to connect a sense of meaning to it. It is thus not surprising that loyalties, personal commitments and interests towards divisions are repeatedly emphasized. Given the theoretical posture outlined in chapter 2, notably section 2.2.3, it does also appear reasonable to draw the conclusion that the organizational structure of the Secretariat is largely responsible for evoking such inward-looking orientations. Although departmental logics often stand slightly at the forefront, supranational and epistemic behavioural logics are also clearly present.

Because the responsibilities and goals of the divisions relate to the overall objectives of the WTO, a certain belief in the global causes advocated by the organization, is arguably necessary in order for the civil servants to fully commit to their work in the sub-units. More often than not civil servants seem to be prone to the ideas represented by the WTO, often even prior to entering their positions, which arguably relates to pre-socialization (see next section). It also appears that such supranational behavioural dynamics are further consolidated at the

organizational level, assumably as a result of re-socialization (see next section). Nationalities appear to be rather insignificant during recruitment; much more emphasis is placed on educational and professional backgrounds. The recruitment system thus ensures a culturally diversified staff with similar educational and professional backgrounds, which would imply the encouragement of supranational and epistemic behavioural dynamics in particular.

Furthermore, strong horizontal specialization and subsequent departmental behavioural logics are correlative to epistemic behavioural dynamics, primarily due to the fact that specialization implicates the accumulation of expertise through the employment of highly educated civil servants. The fact that the divisions under scrutiny are dominated highly specialized professions, namely lawyers and economists with similar specializations and professional experiences, suggest a rather homogenous group of professionals. It could be contended that this sort of uniform workforce enhances the development of epistemic behavioural dynamics. For many civil servants, the renowned work of the Secretariat strengthens the imperative to seek employment, which indicates professional pride and the desires to excel at their respective domains. Additionally, the Secretariats' strict recruitment procedure ensures a top-level group of professionals. This considered, epistemic behavioural dynamics are bound to be an inevitable component of Secretariat staff. To sum up, it is evident that the three behavioural dynamics are closely interrelated and even mutually reinforce each other. Departmental behavioural dynamics do appear to stand out, although they are closely followed by epistemic and supranational behavioural logics. Departmental behavioural dynamics are arguably largely a product of the organizational framework, i.e. horizontal specialization. Epistemic behavioural logics primarily emanate from professional backgrounds and expertise, and supranational behavioural dynamics may arguably be the underlying pre-condition for the two aforementioned to fully externalize themselves.

5.2 Explaining Actor-Level Autonomy

The empirical inquiry confirms that the explanatory value of the independent variables is diversified. As expected, these impact to various degrees on the behavioural dynamics. As described in chapter 2, this study expects to find that pre-socialization primarily impacts on supranational behavioural dynamics, while mechanisms of re-socialization are mostly reflected in departmental and epistemic behavioural dynamics and lastly, organizational affiliations are predicted to principally influence departmental behavioural logics.

5.2.1 Pre-socialization

The empirical inquiry lends support to the claim that mechanisms of pre-socialization amplify the development of supranationally oriented civil servants by exposing them to favourable conditions prior to entering positions in the Secretariat. Pre-socialization appears to impact primarily on supranational behavioural dynamics, followed by epistemic behavioural logics.

Preconditioned by their genuine belief in the global system, officials perceive themselves as contributors for the global benefit. The empirical material clearly indicates that the civil servants feel a stronger attachment towards the international community than towards their nation states. One could argue that nationalities become increasingly blurred and insignificant, which seems to be particularly true for civil servants who have devoted most of their lives to the service of the international community. Though it is assumed that previous engagements with international organizations may increase supranational orientation, the empirical inquiry does not provide substantial evidence to draw conclusions on the effect on type of previous organizational affiliations. Because the majority of the respondents share similar educational and professional backgrounds and have been involved with international questions prior to entering their positions in the Secretariat, it is not possible to account for the isolated effects of these two proxies. The empirical material does show, however, that international backgrounds, be it educational, professional or a combination of both, are positively related to the progression of supranational behavioural dynamics.

It would be highly unlikely that such attitudes are consequence of in-house socialization mechanisms entirely, and it thus seems reasonable to put forward the claim that such attitudes are already infused and nurtured through various processes occurring prior to employment. Through international educational and professional backgrounds, there is certain familiarity associated with an international environment and it is generally reasoned that individuals are often drawn towards what they are accustomed to. As established in the forgoing chapter, the officials share similar educational and professional backgrounds in that they have attended international universities and/or have been in contact with international actors and questions through previous professional engagements. It seems evident that individuals with international backgrounds are more inclined to adopt a broader and more global perspective and chose their career paths accordingly. In an even narrower sense, the delimited field on which the Secretariat operates attracts professionals who are specialized and experienced in trade-related issues. The empirical material indicated that one rationale for applying for a

position at the Secretariat was the desire to be a part of an eminent community of experts, which relates to epistemic behavioural dynamics. A second reason appears to be the opportunity to contribute to and engage in the international community. Arguably, the civil servants have pursued career paths that appeal to their core values and beliefs. This strengthens the assumption that pre-socialization mechanisms are decisive in predicting attitudes, perceptions and subsequent behavioural dynamics. These findings are in accordance with the theory of representative bureaucracy. Attributes of the demographic profile of the civil servants are indirectly contributing to the outcomes of policies by pre-programming values and beliefs, and thereby also patterns of conduct. Additionally, by applying strict recruitment and selection policies, the Secretariat ensures a culturally diversified and international staff.

Based on these data it would thus be reasonable to conclude that there is unequivocal support for the assumption that pre-socialization mechanisms impact significantly on supranational behavioural dynamics. In this case, this relates primarily to educational and professional backgrounds. The data does not provide abundant evidence to make any conclusions regarding the relationships between age and gender on one side and supranational behavioural dynamics on the other.

As already touched upon, more direct causal links can be drawn between pre-socialization mechanisms and epistemic behavioural dynamics since expertise and knowledge relate back to educational and professional backgrounds. Overall, officials feel strongly connected to their disciplines and professions. Again, it is worth remarking that recruitment procedures play a crucial part in ensuring highly qualified personnel and consequently also in fostering a strong epistemic culture. The empirical material appears to support the theoretical claim that officials with international educational and professional backgrounds are more inclined to view themselves as independent sector experts rather than national representatives. It is also noteworthy that the length and type of education arguably also contributes to the evolution of both supranational and epistemic behavioural logics. While law and economics does not itself necessarily imply international occupations, specialization in trade-related issues on the other hand, may foster a latent preference for, and bias towards, cross-national objectives, systems and processes.

The effects of pre-socialization on departmental behavioural logics appear to be limited. It could, however, convincingly be argued that loyalty to divisions are preconditioned by loyalties to the organization, i.e. global cause, as a whole. It follows that there is an indirect conjunction between pre-socialization and departmental behavioural patterns.

In sum, pre-socialization appears to impact severely on supranational behavioural dynamics, followed by epistemic behavioural logics. Overall the empirical inquiry confirms the theoretical assumptions presented in chapter 2. Though given the prestigious educational backgrounds and the subsequent extensive professional experiences as experts, it may even be argued that mechanisms of pre-socialization potentially impact more or less alike on these two behavioural logics. As established in section 5.1 behavioural dynamics may vary from person to person, which makes it reasonable to assume that pre-socialization mechanisms may unfold themselves more strongly either in epistemic or supranational behavioural logics, however, contingent upon individual personalities. Pre-socialization mechanisms are less evident in departmental behavioural dynamics, yet there is compelling reason to assume that departmental behavioural logics are conditioned by some degree of supranational orientation.

5.2.2 Re-socialization

The WTO has successfully institutionalized global trade and become a powerful player in the field of global governance. It has incorporated core values into a wide range of policies, processes, systems and procedures. Attitudes, values and norms are consolidated and embedded at the organizational level. As anticipated by constructivist and institutionalist theories, the organizational context of the Secretariat fuels the emergence – and reinforces already existent supranational identity perceptions.

The fairly low level of conflict among incumbents suggests likelihood of alignment of values and culture and it seems reasonable to assume that this is largely a result of processes of socialization. As predicted by institutional theory, existing values and beliefs may be modified by sustained interaction and involvement in an organization. Given that the Secretariat has become institutionalized, one may expect that behaviour to some extent will be the aggregate of collective norms, values and beliefs. Combined with little disagreement, the fact that officials often look to colleagues or direct superiors for advice may arguably imply a set of shared opinions and an overall consensus on the majority of issues. This in turn, provides strong indications of the dissemination of norms, culture and values, i.e. it is likely that mechanisms of re-socialization are at play. Consequently, there is substantial ground to

argue that a logic of appropriateness motivates officials within the Secretariat to act in accordance with what is perceived to be appropriate given the prevailing norms and values. This may account for relatively little disagreement within the Secretariat.

The main theoretical premise behind the neofunctionalist approach to re-socialization is that a positive relationship between potential of re-socialization on one hand, and duration and intensity of interaction among actors on the other (Egeberg et.al 2013). The longer officials remain in the Secretariat, the more they become exposed to supranational values and attitudes. Low turnover and long tenure in the Secretariat are thus in all probability significant contributors to supranational behavioural dynamics. Officials with long tenure are assumed to express a more profound belief in a supranational community than newer staff members. The substance of this particular claim, however, remains somewhat inconclusive in the data given that the respondents in this study generally report fairly long tenures within the Secretariat. A comparison with officials of shorter incumbency may possibly have provided ground to draw clearer conclusions. Yet, it is indeed noteworthy that long tenure and evidence of re-socialization mechanisms coincide in this study. On a different note, one effect of longer periods of employment in the Secretariat appears to be an enhanced sense of ownership towards their positions and work. Many of the civil servants have first-hand experiences of processes of change and expansion and have contributed to build and shape the Secretariat to what is today. It does not seem unreasonable to assume that such experiences may strengthen processes of socialization.

Similarly, extensive contact patterns and interaction amongst officials are likely to enhance socialization processes, i.e. accustom officials to collective attitudes and beliefs. Empirical findings indicate that intra-unit contact patterns are more frequent than inter-unit interaction. The fact that the vast majority of interaction takes place between colleagues within the same units also indicates that re-socialization may impact primarily on departmental and epistemic behavioural logics.

Reflecting the international atmosphere of Geneva, the Secretariat is dominated by a multicultural workforce. Nationalities are overshadowed by social interaction across national backgrounds and boundaries, both at the professional and private level. Continuous exposure to such extensive networks of cultural diversity seem likely to increase detachment from national backgrounds, which in all probability also implicates that overall national preferences

and interests of respective governments become of lesser significance. This line of argument would imply that the institutional and social context facilitate socialization processes that first and foremost enhance supranational behavioural dynamics as the civil servants ultimately feel a stronger sense of belonging to the international community.

All the above considered leads to the conclusion that mechanisms of re-socialization first and foremost impact on departmental and epistemic behavioural dynamics, principally due to regular exposure to sectorial objectives, norms and culture that arise from the organizational structure. Incidentally, organizational architecture indirectly manifests itself as a determinant for behavioural dynamics. Furthermore, assuming that supranational behavioural dynamics constitute the bedrock of the remaining two behavioural logics, it could also convincingly be argued that re-socialization to a certain degree also consolidates supranational attitudes and beliefs.

5.2.3 Organizational affiliation

Permanent and long-term contracts imply continuity of personnel, which effectively implies that the WTO represents the primary organizational affiliation for the vast majority of its office holders. This inevitably impacts on supranational behavioural logics. In a more narrow sense officials additionally feel strongly affiliated to their subunits. Due to strong horizontal differentiation, organizational affiliation seems to impact primarily on departmental behavioural logics.

The structure of the Secretariat reaffirms the role of horizontal specialization in fostering departmental behavioural dynamics. Strong portfolio allegiances are a reoccurring observation throughout this entire study. Although the respondents essentially identify themselves as WTO officials, they attach substantial weight to their departmental identities. Coupled with weak administrative capacities at the top level, the specialized structure of the Secretariat encourages intra-unit contact patterns while limiting interaction across levels of authority. Consequently, civil servants become more inward looking and orient themselves towards their units. This is in accordance with the theoretical assumptions outlined in chapter 2. The empirical inquiry thus appears to support the claim that affective ties are made primarily towards divisions and sub-units and to a slightly lesser extent to the organization in general. As expected, affiliations to national governments are weak.

The theoretical framework suggests that bureaucratic structure is an important determinant of role and identity perceptions. The organizational structure of the Secretariat verifies this claim in that it clearly fosters allegiances towards sub-units (departmental behavioural dynamics). The findings indicate that several of the respondents view themselves as neutral experts who orient their preferences towards sectorial objectives. Although conflicts appear to be rather rare, they generally take place along sectorial lines. The empirical material reveals that cooperation is most common within units and that cross-unit collaboration occurs rather infrequently in comparison.

The hierarchical structure thus does not appear to reflect the de facto power constellations of the Secretariat. In a strong hierarchy one would expect a rather inflexible structure with authority concentrated with a few top officials, whereas the respondents describe a general lack of hierarchical control mechanisms in the Secretariat, primarily externalized through considerable room for manoeuvre among personnel. It follows that there is a tangible discrepancy between formal and actual power. As indicated previously, such flexibility is often associated with the evolvement of epistemic behavioural dynamics. A relatively reserved upper management is reflected in the successive hierarchical structure. Although the top-level officials hold formal authority, their roles and presence in the daily operations of the Secretariat are generally kept to the sidelines. In sum, the organizational setting of the Secretariat is effectively more dominated by horizontal structure and less so by its hierarchical architecture. Such observations are in line with the theoretical premise outlined in section 2.2.3. Because the administrative capacities of the Secretariat are fairly weak, vertical specialization does not impact as strongly as arguably could have been the case. Mechanisms of organizational affiliation clearly impacts strongly on departmental behavioural logics.

5.3 Summing Up

The foregoing sections attempted to illuminate actor-level autonomy in the Secretariat as well as the effects of pre-socialization, re-socialization and organizational affiliation on behavioural dynamics. Section 5.1 discussed actor-level autonomy. The first main conclusion drawn is that there is considerable room for civil servants to exert influence on policies and outcomes. As theorized, these capacities largely arise from the Secretariats formal role as key provider of knowledge-based technical support. The empirical inquiry shows that informal interaction and processes frequently occur in the Secretariat and that these processes enhance the possibilities to influence policies and outcomes. Secondly, the empirical material confirms

that supranational, departmental and behavioural dynamics occur to various degrees and under various circumstances. Departmental behavioural dynamics appears to be slightly more dominant than the remaining two. Section 5.2 evaluated the theoretical premises of pre-socialization, re-socialization and organizational affiliation against the three behavioural dynamics. Based on the empirical observations, the following conclusions were drawn: firstly, mechanisms of pre-socialization impact primarily on supranational behavioural dynamics. Secondly, re-socialization largely influences departmental and epistemic behavioural dynamics. And thirdly, in addition to being a strong determinant of behavioural dynamics, organizational affiliation is resolutely related to departmental behavioural logics. This study consequently supports the theoretical assumptions outlined in section 2.2.

5.4 Final Conclusion

This thesis set out to examine the complex and intertwined layers and dynamics of actor-level autonomy within the WTO Secretariat. The main motivation behind choosing this particular subject as a field of study was a renewed scholarly interest in international permanent secretariats, as well as a general lack of PA studies of international executives. While traditional PA studies have been criticized for ‘methodological nationalism’ (Bauer and Trondal 2015), traditional IR scholarship has proved insufficient in explaining the developments and subsequent dynamics that continue to unfold themselves on the international stage. Actor-level autonomy is a broad and somewhat diffuse term. Empirical evidence suggest that international bureaucracies have significant potential to influence and shape the outcome of world politics, primarily due to their role as experts and advisors in technical issues. The acknowledgement of international bureaucracies as shapers of world policies compels the question of underlying motivations and driving-forces of the civil servants (Biermann and Siebenhüner 2009). Establishing role perceptions, values and preferences provides indicators and explanations of behaviour and patterns of conduct, which in turn may account for the outcome of decision-making within the organization.

The study consisted of two main components. The first part is descriptive and intended to address actor-level autonomy within the WTO Secretariat by examining three behavioural dynamics, namely supranational, departmental and epistemic behavioural logics. The second part is explanatory and aspired to explain the emergence and development of the three behavioural dynamics in view of the mechanisms of pre-socialization, re-socialization and organizational affiliation. The study builds on research conducted by Trondal et. al (2010) and

Egeberg et. al (2013) and was executed by re-analysing a set of 19 interviews with officials working within the WTO Secretariat. Additionally, the study drew on official documents and secondary literature.

The empirical inquiry and subsequent discussion established that the Secretariat is an autonomous actor in the broader sense in that it has the powers to influence and shape policies and outcomes through formal and informal channels. Furthermore, it also confirmed that supranational, departmental and epistemic behavioural dynamics are frequently occurring and firmly entrenched throughout the institutional and organizational context of the Secretariat. These dynamics often reinforce each other and unfold themselves simultaneously.

Behavioural dynamics and the mechanisms of pre-socialization, re-socialization and organizational affiliations are closely interrelated and entangled. Based on the theoretical framework and empirical inquiry, the following conclusions regarding the relationship between the dependant and the independent variable are drawn: firstly, pre-socialization impacts primarily on supranational behavioural logics. Moreover, this study supports the view that supranational behavioural dynamics is a pre-condition for departmental and epistemic behavioural dynamics to fully unravel at the organizational level. A certain degree of inclination towards the overall tasks and objectives of the Secretariat is required in order to fully commit to the sub-units and assignments. Secondly, re-socialization mainly affects departmental and epistemic behavioural dynamics. Thirdly, organizational affiliation is arguably the strongest determinant of behaviour and impacts heavily on departmental behavioural logics. Overall, this study confirms the theoretical assumptions outlined in chapter 2 and thus also recent studies of international administration (e.g. Egeberg et. al 2013).

This study targeted actor-level autonomy as enacted by civil servants in an international bureaucracy, which is a field that has been largely understudied. The vast majority of literature has been concerned with defining and theorizing formal autonomy, and little attention has been given to the ways in which such autonomy effectively externalizes itself in the day-to-day operations of administrative executives. Thus there is an explicit need for more research on de facto autonomy. Furthermore, although PA literature is attentive towards comparable cases, a criticism has been the lack of comparative studies (Derlien 1992). The

current state of research thus calls for more comparative studies of international bureaucracies.

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Appendix

Interview guide to officials at the Commission, the WTO Secretariat, and OECD Secretariat

(Trondal et. al 2010:208-209)

Background

What is your educational and professional background?

For how long have you worked in your current institution/unit/portfolio?

When, why, how and from where were you recruited to this institution?

What are the main differences between working here and in previous positions?

General institutional questions

How would you generally describe your daily work?

Currently, what issues are central in your work?

What is your current position, rank, unit?

Do you have a clear-cut work description?

Inside your unit/division/portfolio, what issues cause divisions of opinions/conflict? (Are these large or minor conflicts?)

Behavioural questions

With whom do you regularly interact with at work?

- Colleagues in your unit/division?
- Other units/divisions/DGs?
- Head of unit?
- The top administrative leadership of your DG/institution?

- Domestic government institutions? – ministries/agencies (Within your own portfolio or across portfolios?)
- External experts/universities/research institutions?
- Industry/consultancies etc?
- Other international bureaucracies?

With whom do you regularly interact *outside office*?

- Colleagues in your unit/DG?
- Own nationals?
- Other nationals?

In general, what would you consider to be *the most important contacts* in your position?

Personal perceptions

Does your nationality or the nationality of your colleagues ‘matter’ with respect to your daily work?

Has an *esprit de corps* developed within your unit/division?

To what extent do you identify with or feel a personal attachment towards:

- Your unit/portfolio?
- Your institution as a whole (the Commission, the OECD Secretariat, the WTO Secretariat)?
- Your profession, educational background?
- The member-state central administrations?

What kind of roles do you regularly emphasize at work?

- As a representative for the institution as a whole (supranational)?
- As a representative for the unit/portfolio (departmental)?
- As a representative for your professional expertise (epistemic)?

- As a representative for the member states or for your own country of origin (intergovernmental)?

What considerations are vital for you?

- Your institution as a whole?
- Your unit/division?
- Your profession/expertise?
- The member states?
- Your policy sector/portfolio?
- Formal rules and procedures within your institution/unit?

