INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS MULTIDISCIPLINARY DOCTORAL SCHOOL

THESIS BOOK

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WEAVING THE TAPESTRY OF LIFE

The United Nations and Global Governmentality

Doctoral dissertation

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Supervisor:

Anita Szűcs, PhD

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Institute of International Studies

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I. Research history and justification of the topic

This research was conceived as a project of understanding global governance. This concept, while it is an intriguing object for intellectual work, also has a practical side: the pressing problems with 'existing' global governance seem hardly possible to fix. As with any problem, the key to resolution is an adequate understanding – a general assessment on which my work stands. This research has no immediate intention to offer practical advices, rather, it attempts to explore a novel way of understanding global governance – in relation to the United Nations (UN) as an important actor –, with its potentials and shortcomings. In the beginning, as I read myself into the literature discussing its different aspects (from the diverse sets of actors involved, the complex interaction networks they have, the ways in which it changes the game for states), I realized that understanding requires to ask the most basic questions, to reveal the systems of assumptions (the grids of knowledge) on which this whole research agenda has been built in the past decades. The goal of my research thus came to be the deconstruction of the structures of knowledge in which global governance has been imagined and discussed in the recent decades. This broad goal was then placed in a theoretical and historical context, first, and then implanted into an empirical research. The UN, appearing as a central actor in global governance throughout the literature, seemed like a well-placed object for empirical analysis: it has often been identified as not only being affected by, but also as affecting the directions of 'change' in world politics.

In the past few years (I started the doctoral program in 2014), I slowly developed my understanding in this complex issue area. I participated in many conferences: as a doctoral student, among others in the ECPR's Graduate Student Conference, or the CEU's Annual Doctoral Conferences, and later as a young scholar at the ISA's Interdisciplinary Conference, and the EISA's Pan-European International Relations Conference, among others. On these occasions, I could present and discuss parts of my ongoing research and gain new insights from many talented scholars. I had the honor to be invited to the Annual Meeting of the Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS), as the winner of their 2018 Dissertation Award, where I could meet and exchange with leading scholars studying the UN system. They also supported my work when I traveled to New York to interview relevant people in the UN Secretariat. Finally, I gained much, especially from a methodological point of view, in discussions at the Discursive Atelier at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and at the Karl Polanyi Research Centre for Global Social Studies, where my colleagues provided helpful guidance and critical reflection.

These experiences, as well as my reading, convinced me that existing explanations (about change, about the UN, about global governance, and especially about their interrelations), are often misplaced: a main line in the literature, for instance, see the UN as a playground of (powerful) nation states, which thus have a say in how global governance looks like, not the least through the Organization. While these accounts say much about (a narrowly understood form of) power, they heavily underrate change in the logic of world politics (Waltz, 1999). Others stress this aspect by focusing on emerging norms and normative processes in global governance, the UN's (and other international organizations') role in creating and diffusing norms – emphasizing change –, but they tend to say less about power as a factor to count with (see explained Neumann and Sending, 2007). Yet another influential approach shares in this latter shortcoming, by neutralizing the concept of global governance and treating the UN as a 'manager', sitting in its complex networks – which branch of scholarship is, again, asking questions, which are hollow in this sense (Weiss and Thakur, 2010). The list of problematic approaches could go on – and they are discussed and evaluated in detail in the relevant chapters of my dissertation.

The most important insight to gain from a literature review is, however, that the main line of theoretical work on global governance has concurred largely with the approach taken by

global policy makers. The (neo)liberal understanding has been institutionalized on many levels, and has formed a system of statements which could thus be regarded as hegemonic (Brand, 2005). The problem with such interpretations is that they picture global governance as a complex mechanism that has rather naturally or *automatically* came to be and operation, as a reaction to 'new' challenges of the era of globalization (which most commonly stands for the decades since the 90s), enforcing a functionalist understanding (Brand, 2005; Bernstein and Van der Ven, 2017). This mechanism of automation enforces a sense of naturalness that has the capacity to fix not only meanings, but also power relations, especially on the long run. The most influential, 'mainstream' approach to global governance, therefore, visibly neutralizes the concept, stripping it from its connections to power, and (mostly implicitly) describes it as a necessity, a new chapter in the straight line of humankind's progress.

On the other hand, the UN, ever since its establishment, has been frequently and harshly criticized for various actions or inactions. The majority of the critiques, however, are misplaced, since they are not rooted in a nuanced understanding of the structures and orders of knowledge in world politics. In this sense, my research also addresses the ongoing debates about the role and place of the UN – and more general, the role and place of international organizations in a transformed world politics (Bröckling et al., 2011; Weiss and Wilkinson, 2013; Weiss and Daws, 2018). It also develops a special focus on the role and possibilities of the UN Secretary-General, placed in a historical context, and applying a recently elaborated approach, 'discursive agency' (Leipold and Winkel, 2017). The question is how the UN has been constructed by its Secretaries-General as a peculiar subject in world politics, and how this construction is linked to the cognitive structures in which global governance is imagined.

These problems are best comprehensible in a post-structuralist framework. Structures of knowledge and discourses are typical tools for such analyses, which have the capacity to reveal very different facets of the problem, generally formulated in IR as 'what makes the world hang together so that it looks like someone is governing' (Ruggie, 1998a; Avant et al., 2010; Sell, 2013). For the broader discipline, the problem remains to be outlined by a mixture of 'what makes the world hang together' and 'who governs the globe'. 'What' refers to the structural side – be them structures of cooperation, interdependence, capitalism or norms – while 'who' interrogates agency – is it the doing of powerful states, international organizations, norm entrepreneurs, the transnational capitalist class or bourgeoning civil

networks? I address similar problems, but from a definite point of view, which stands on a long and diverse tradition of scholarship when it hypothesises the UN's role, and structures of knowledge. My point is that these cannot be treated separately if the above questions are to be answered, and, that a promising entry point is to analyse discursive mechanisms.

II. Methodology

As the focus is, first and foremost, on a cognitive structure – and how the UN sits in it and informs it in the same time –, I found that a combination of post-structuralist theories and methods provided the best tools for interrogation. The theoretical framework, termed by William Walters 'International Governmentality Studies', or IGS (2012:83.) builds on Michel Foucault's work. His broad concepts, understanding of discourse, and works elaborating what he termed 'modern political rationalities' proved extremely helpful for my project. The discourse of world politics as global governance, structured by the dynamics of modern political rationalities, is assumed to be in a complex relationship with the UN, and especially the construction of its 'subjectivity' throughout the years, since its establishment. This approach places the focus on a cognitive structure, but also stays sensitive to agency, and pre-eminently 'discursive agency'. The key concepts and their most important connection points are the following:

UN's subjectivity: Very briefly, subjectivity is understood as a relational Self with the capacity of political action. It is not something pre-existing, but is formed in discourses, where the subject accepts or modifies the possible positions offered to it in a certain discourse (Williams, 2005; Leipold and Winkel, 2017). It links to political rationality and the discourse of global governance through the *kind* of subject the UN is claimed to be by its Secretaries-General throughout its years of existence. It is argued that, as a peculiar international organization, it is a perfect 'governing subject', functioning by the logic of a compound rationality, which is comprehensible only if world politics is thought of in terms of global governance.

Political rationalities: They refer to the broad cognitive frames in which politics might be thought of (Merlingen, 2003; Neumann and Sending, 2010). The kind of subject the UN is, for instance, is only possible in a global governance system. It does not mean that the UN (or international organizations) are the only relevant subjects to consider. Rather, that the

multiplicity of actors and the multiplicity of forms of interactions that constitute this historically specific order of knowledge (which is global governance), are only imaginable in terms of a specific political rationality, a *governmental rationality* on a global level. The plural form of rationality is justified because it is not the only one to consider: 'the reason of the state' is another form which is given relevance in this research, following a Foucauldian path.

Discourse of global governance: A discourse is a system of statements organized around an order of knowledge (Foucault, 1972). In this case, statements about global governance are claimed to be organized around an order of knowledge allowing for a certain form of subjectivity (the governing subject) and political rationality (structure of knowledge about 'the international' imagined in terms of government). Outside of this order, the system of statements simply would not hold.

That world politics is imagined according to this combination of structure and agency, was nothing new around the end of the Cold War, but it certainly gained momentum, thanks in large part to the collective efforts put in elaborating the discourse of global governance (as argued in chapter II of the dissertation). The creation of the UN after the Second World War is a significant and symbolic development, which makes it an intriguing object of research. The above elements are thus argued to be entangled in a set of complex relationships, the unravelling of which is the primary goal of my project. I assume that it is the discourse of global governance which integrates the other parts under its 'order of knowledge', and has the capacity to embed the research question in a broader debate on the changing character of world politics. Making these linkages engendered the questions guiding this research:

RQ1: How has the UN's subjectivity been formed in relation to the shifting rationality of world politics?

RQ2: How has the discourse of global governance organized this interplay of subjectivity and political rationalities?

The empirical dataset I work on to answer these questions is one which I extracted from the Annual Reports of the Secretaries-General on the Work of the Organization. I consider the reports from the first one to Ban Ki-moon's last one, and analyse their introductory chapters as prime sources of the Secretaries-General's vision and strategy. I investigate the UN's

'subjectivization narrative' primarily with the tools offered by (Foucauldian) discourse analysis (Jäger and Maier, 2016). I define subjectivization as consisting of self-definition (operationalized as occurrences which answer the question what the UN is/was/will be/should be etc.) and agency construction (occurrences which answer the question what the UN does/did/will do/could do etc.). Filtering out verbs and substantive verbs in relation to the 'United Nations', and 'the UN', but also 'the Organization' or 'the UN family' is in line with my general assumptions: these 'subjects' refer to the Organization as a distinct unit, as a unified actor, as compared to one or more of the main organs, certain specialized agencies, the sum of Member States or similar formulations.

In a next step, I go through the long list of representations (meaning 546 mentions in all of the sources in the case of self-definition and 1138 in the case of agency construction) and group them under categories, with open coding, meaning that I do not have any preliminary stand on the structure and content of the representations: I try to cover the whole variety with as many categories as reasonably possible. This is a crucial part in putting together the method, the step which bears probably the most heavily on the structure of the results. This coding procedure is applied to keep the analysis as closely attached to the texts as possible, having the broadest possible grasp on the texts as a system of knowledge. After this, categories are amended, confronted and cross-checked, with the aim of building a structure out of them that cover the whole variety of representations, but remains manageable. The logic is largely semantic: it is the overall meaning of the representation and its immediate context that defines which representation goes into which category. In case equally important elements are found in a structure, all of them are applied as a category.

Through this process, a three level-category-system is created for both themes, consisting of main categories, categories and sub-categories. Importantly, this system does not differentiate in itself between relevant and irrelevant, or significant and insignificant categories. These qualities come out of the number and combinations of the actual representations, again, staying as close to the original source as possible, avoiding 'reading certain things into' the texts. In the analysis I mostly work with the main categories, as combined with the modalities, they already make the dataset rather complex, and they represent the biggest trends and patterns fairly. Categories and sub-categories are only specified in the detailed descriptions, to the extent it is necessary for a better understanding. In the body of the analysis, only those

categories are described, discussed, and presented on the figures which prove to be the most – or, occasionally the least – significant.

I present the analysis and the results in two steps: in the first, (mostly descriptive) narrative part, I present the dataset in numbers, with minimal contextualization and some preliminary analytical points. I count and weigh the occurrences of the different categories of self-definition and agency construction, and link the visible patterns and trends to the historical-political context, and the attitudes of the respective Secretaries-General. The raw results of this first part are used in the second analytical step, where I develop a discourse analysis, rooted in these contextualized numerical results. These investigations evolve around the forms and combinations of political rationality which have made such constructions of the UN's subjectivity thinkable in the discursive and institutional context, and the mechanisms between the structures on the one hand, and the Secretary-General's discursive agency on the other.

In the empirical chapter, I also present the results of an original interview research, which is used in two ways: first, to describe accurately the process of producing the Annual Reports in the Secretariat, which is, surprisingly, not at all a well-documented process. Second, the interviewees' stories – who are officials of the UN Secretariat, working on different levels and various positions, and who are working on the Secretary-General's reports – are analysed from the point of view of the knowledge structures they are grounded in. It links these discussions to the subsequent analyses, which helps in uncovering and understanding the ways in which the reports of the Secretary-General construct the framework of world politics and within this, reproduce the Organization itself.

III. Key findings

The governmentality framework proved to be the coherent theoretical scheme within which my questions could be investigated and answered. Because of the nature of my research questions and the overall theoretical-methodological frames in which I was working, summarizing briefly the key results of the empirical analysis is a challenging task. Risking to be somewhat didactic, I could say that the descriptive first part answered more the question how the UN's subjectivity evolved from 1946 to 2016. In terms of self-definition, the answer is composed of the following key elements:

- All Secretaries-General awarded prime importance to talking about the Organization in three main forms: in terms of its 'Role', about the UN as a form of 'Agency', and prioritizing its 'Normative' aspects. Until the end of Cuéllar's term, 'Role' was by far the strongest representation, followed by the other two in a varied pattern. The strongest categories within this main category were the UN as a 'mediator', as an 'instrument' or a 'platform' – ideas that are perhaps the most familiar from public, as well as academic discussions.

- From the early 90s, 'Role' as a main category lost its significance. It signals the shift in rationality and the associated change in self-conception: briefly, by this time, the UN has become established enough in our collective knowledge, so there was no need to elaborate on such basic questions anymore. The focus could shift towards its normative values and its expanding agential capacities. The same process also showed in the slightly different case of the 'Character' category: it disappeared almost completely by the 90s.

- As the weighted results showed, however, the fact that the end of the Cold War saw a quantitative decline in occurrences, did not mean that subjectivization became irrelevant altogether, on the contrary: Secretaries-General in the era of global governance said more about the subjectivity of the UN, on fewer pages, accounting for a renewed importance of such questions within the 'new' frames of world politics, widely understood as having undergone deep transformations.

- In itself, the fact that 'Influence' as a main category stayed marginal throughout the whole time was interesting, especially compared to the findings in agency construction ('Positive action' – grouping the most forceful agency-representations – being clearly the most dominant type). This goes to anything which has at least something to do with defining the Self as influential (or powerful), and the presence of such self-definition attempts only weakened after the 90s, where this main category became virtually non-existent.

- In terms of its relations to states, it could be observed that the Secretaries-General talked primarily about the Organization's utility to states (as a more or less functional instrument, platform, or mediator), or its genesis, tied to relations between states (peace, war, conflict, or diplomacy).

The case of agency construction, the first analytical step also offered interesting results, especially when compared to the other pillar of subjectivization:

- Overall, the categories showed a similar quantitative trend: they were expanding until the end of the Cold War, and then experienced a sudden break: the frequency of representations fell, and many thus far important categories disappeared (here also, the quantitative decline did not mean a 'proportionate' one, as the weighted results showed).

- An important difference was, however, that the basic patterns were largely preserved in this case (while we saw that in terms of self-definition, 'Role' gave its primacy to the two strongest secondary categories): the dominance of 'Positive action' was plain and clear throughout the entire period, although it became less dramatic after the 90s.

- Another interesting result was that agency-accounts had been forceful and hearty under all Secretaries-General, irrespective of the level of activism or individual conceptions of the office attributed to them in the literature, and judged based on their own accounts. In this particularly, we could detect the impact of the bureaucracy, the functioning of which is more detached from contextual and personal factors than the Secretary-General's. Another explanation might be found in the dynamics of political rationalities, which is touched upon later in this summary.

- Introductions, thus, indeed proved to be texts where a strong agency construction unfolds. They used primarily present tenses, or discussed the past in relation to the present, and the future or future possibilities (similarly to self-definition).

Following the above outlined didactic logic, the second part elaborated on the more complex and theoretically informed question, how this 'subjectivization' related to the dynamics of modern political rationalities and particularly to (global) governance as governmentality. From an analytical point of view, it could be translated more into 'how could the first step be embedded in the theoretical framework?' This means a more pronounced focus on knowledge structures in this part, even though I was looking at back-and-forths between rationality and actor (between the structure and the agent). Governmental rationality was traced in the texts by following the relevant literature. I adopted especially much from Jaeger and his 'governmentalities' (2008) as they seemed to reappear regularly in the texts: achieving security and peace through policing, moving from warfare to welfare, postcolonial

pastoralism and discipline, the normative concern with human rights, and a pedagogical panopticism were therefore used to structure the discourse analysis. Stylistic elements of governmentality language (like neutrality, a managerial, professional style, normative utilitarianism) were also identified on several occasions.

So this part analysed the individual occurrences in their relations to each other, operating as a system of knowledge. Recurrent points from the narrative analysis (like frequency, primary and secondary categories, modalities) were developed further here, using these viewpoints to integrate the findings in the theoretical frames. I summarize the key findings in bullet points:

1. The founders (Trygve Lie and Dag Hammarskjöld)

- The story about the genesis of the UN displayed a clear structure of knowledge, elaborating a sublime myth for the Organization. These accounts were based on commonly shared truths about war and peace, freedom and welfare, or civilization and civility.

- War and peace, a classic binary in IR, showed the limits of political imagination (Walker, 1993) in terms of how we think about each, and what strategies this way of thinking offer (various forms of international cooperation, the archetype of which is the UN). A key insight of governmentality theory was clearly appearing here, in thinking about freedom in terms of the securitizing logic of permanent danger.

- The UN, an uncorrupted champion and guarantor of the welfare and freedom of peoples, an embodiment of civilization – in brief normativity – was connected to the genesis-myths. Its principles and aims (built around Western ideas, culture and lifestyle) were routinely discussed as universal values, which helped in forming an abstract and manageable mass out of the great variety of humankind.

- Governmentality presented itself as a useful theoretical frame again, as to govern is to uphold the welfare and freedom of the people, who, in return, can flourish, conduct their own conducts (and produce as much as possible). This rationality ran through the founders' texts. In order to understand the parallel, rather conservative 'Role' categories (instrument, platform, etc.) employed, the UN was argued to be (structurally) compelled to express the tension between the two forms of modern political rationality.

- The fusion of 'Strong action' with different representations (like 'normative' self-definition) depicted exactly the kind of world organization that the public would have wished for after the failure of the League: one that appears as a potent actor. This, as

summed up in the previous point, had to be accommodated with the sovereignty-principle, which the respective Secretary-General's solved differently (Lie by employing 'Successful action', Hammarskjöld by using 'Contribution' frequently, for instance).

2. *The Middle Trio (U Thant, Kurt Waldheim and Javier Pérez de Cuéllar)*

- 'Agency' becoming a primary category in self-definition reflected the growing number of engagements and responsibilities. Universality became a unifying theme, connecting membership questions and the scope of activities, symbolizing the benevolent efforts to integrate humankind on multiple levels. These arrangements were, however, not 'negotiated on equal terms' (as the mainstream governance approach would suggest), but were products of hierarchical relations and sophisticated power mechanisms.

- The expansion required definite strategies of governance, and knowledge as an emerging issue area seemed central to these efforts. 'Neutral action' employed often exemplary governmentality-language ('managerial' style, claiming a right to act on the basis of 'value-free' expertise, etc.). The governance strategies' prime targets were those societies which were in 'need' of normalization and education.

- 'Abstract action' accounted for how the UN kept mirroring the transformations in world politics. It fused with 'Strong action', representing the Organization as a pillar of guidance in these transformations. 'Character' representations also reached a peak in this period, stressing, apart from its 'political' character, 'complexity' and 'dynamism', evidencing the formation of an autonomous organization, in an increasingly globalized environment.

- Processing contextual changes and preparation for a 'new' role for the UN in the 'new' world became a central structure of thought in this period. With political rationality shifting, the Secretaries-General were imagining the world as a complex, multi-layered totality, necessitating the aims of governance of '*omnes et singulatim*' (Foucault, 1979).

- 'Global' did not appear as a self-conception directly in the texts, rather as an adjective for a growing number of notions: society, subjects, partnerships, or solidarity. Many representations disappeared completely parallel to this, leaving the structure of subjectivization tighter and more definite.

3. *Practitioners in global governance (Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Kofi Annan, Ban Ki-moon)*

- Among the key points in these texts were the occasions where the new idea of global governance met the UN's subjectivity. 'Strong action' appeared in 'confronting' the new threats to human security, 'developing' new techniques to deliver services to peoples – all with proper governmentality-connotations and the logic of the subjectivity changed substantially.

- 'The agent-structure problem' also more visibly came to the surface in this period, in relation to the UN's subjectivity and evolving around the idea of change: either it was seen in an extremely structuralist light, almost as a natural fact of the new form of life, or appeared in the 'Strong action' representations dominating the era, and 'Agency' as a self-definition, imagining the UN as a lead of change.

- This era also saw several emerging ideas, in close association with how scholars imagine global governmentality. Governing international relations through establishing norms and principles appeared in the shining career of human rights, the principle of 'r2p' or 'good governance'. The UN's agency in devising, defining and promoting, or enforcing norms went way beyond the initial ideas, corresponding with the interview analysis.

Finally, what could be highlighted more generally as results drawn from the entire textual corpus are the following points:

- The fact that all the above results came from formulations which are *directly* addressing what the UN is/was, etc. and what it does/has done, etc. is an especially strong argument for making the link I made between subjectivity, political rationalities and the discourse of global governance. A serious methodological choice was made when I decided that I would not subject the entirety of the report introduction's texts to a discourse analysis, and it proved to be a relevant approach. As the results leave less space for generalizability like this, it has more potential to talk to the relationships between the main pillars of my research.

- There was a high level of continuity in the vocabulary of the Introductions and their inventory of ideas. Where differences were identified (illustrated by the above points), was in the strategic usage and combinations of ideas, leading to contextually informed solutions in the analysed periods. This conclusion points to the importance of knowledge structures defined by modern political rationalities: they are the unifying factors providing continuity throughout the 70 years. It shows also the role played by the bureaucracy in such an

organization: their standardized language and mechanisms keep the organization going and provide the necessary coherence and continuity – as shown by the interviews.

- Variation, on the other hand, took shape in line with historically specific strategic goals and needs of institutional manoeuvring of the Secretaries-General. It was also clear that the Secretaries-General extended their 'subject positions' much more in terms of agency than in terms of self-definition. It appears that identifying the Self with something particular was more problematic under the limits of political imagination than engaging in action and narrating it. With this, nevertheless, the Secretaries-General could slowly tailor the space to manoeuvre for their bureaucracies, which took up the ever newer conceptions of agency under the governmental rationality.

- Both political rationalities had their role in the construction of the UN's subjectivity. When legitimacy was at stake, *raison d'état* as an eternal principle was repeatedly confirmed. Questions of self-definition and the related results beg to be mentioned here, as a broad conclusion: stepping up, defining the Self as an autonomous actor – or one with genuine authority, as some of the literature like to suggest – seems to be out of the line for the Secretaries-General of the UN, at least in these reports. The preservation of the order of states 'no matter what' seeps through the self-definition pillar of the subjectivization narrative. Otherwise, the governmentalization of the inter-national was strongly and persistently represented, depicting an organization that is striving for a certain form of control in world politics, and following the rationality of government in this endeavour, as its basic rationality. This showed, more than in the other pillar, in agency-construction: narrating the ever expanding agency seems a less risky enterprise than defining the Self 'in the image of states', still widely claimed to be the only legitimate players in international relations.

Putting the above point in a somewhat oversimplified way: out of the two modern political rationalities, while the reason of the state showed more in self-definition, governmentality showed more in agency construction. From the fact that this latter category was visibly stronger – both in qualitative and quantitative terms – than the first one, we could conclude that the research indeed identified the shifting political rationality of 'the international', establishing a connection between rationality, subjectivization and global governance. The empirical case fitted in the research field defined by global governmentality theory. In terms

of contributions, this original research worked itself through a large corpus of texts, the 544 pages of the Secretary-General's Annual Report Introductions, an object that has never been analysed so systematically before. It also means that a database was created (manually) from these texts, comprising every occasion where the 'UN' was referred to as 'being something' or engaging in action.

This means an empirical contribution to the debates on the UN's place and role in world politics (Roberts and Kingsbury, 1993; Ruggie, 1998b; Thakur and Weiss, 2010; Simai, 2015; Mingst et al., 2018). It is also worthy of mentioning that I found a way to do the analysis in which actors' agency is not dwarfed by the study of knowledge structures. While the relevant (Foucauldian) literature usually acknowledges the importance of the study of agency, actual empirical cases are not particularly popular or frequent. Much of the existing literature, when it approaches the question, it deals with subaltern agency (Munck, 2007; Caldwell, 2007; McNay, 2010; Zanotti, 2013), or a specific, neoliberal form of subjectivization, which works through 'responsibilization' (Gleadle et. al., 2008; Pyysiäinen et. al., 2017; Yoon et al, 2019). This study was rather about how a potentially powerful actor shapes its own space to manoeuvre under the cognitive constraints posed by rationality. 'Discursive agency' (Leipold and Winkel, 2017), the analytical tool developed recently, paved the way for my research, which can thus be understood as an empirical case for how 'structuration' actually works. The contribution is also to the emerging research on discursive agency (Albrecht, 2018; Lang et al., 2019): it seems that it could be fruitfully combined with the study of IOs as bureaucracies, which is a well-established direction in IR, with the potential to channel this concept into the discipline.

The interviews are original contributions to the study of the UN as a distinct research field. Even though the Annual Reports are the only written document by the Secretary-General mentioned in the Charter, they have not been studied in this depth so far. From this point of view, the main contribution of the interview-research was that it helped reconstructing the process of drafting them in the Secretariat, shedding light on some notable formal and informal mechanisms. On a more abstract level, the interview analysis was an empirical contribution to the branch of IO literature, which sees them as bureaucracies detached from states, developing authority on their own (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004; Ellis, 2010; Barnett and Duvall, 2013; Hooghe and Marks, 2015; Bauer and Ege, 2016; Busch and Liese, 2017).

Agency (and discussing agency) proved to be more important than talking about what the Organization was. Acting (proactively governing) instead of entering into abstract – and politically slippery – excursus of the Self seems to be in line with a bureaucratic approach: this kind of power does not spend time on directly reaffirming and claiming sovereignty. This circumstance offers interesting pathways also towards governmentality theory, as explained on multiple occasions in the text.

Discourse analyses are always case-specific and distinct in their exact methods. Methodologically speaking, a contribution still worthy of mentioning is that the discourse analysis I developed covered a large textual base, while it 1. remained theoretically focused, and 2. did not detach itself from the texts. The quantitative analytical step was necessary to meet these goals, which resulted in an original, and hopefully convincing research approach. Finally, and most importantly, this research presents a complex understanding of global governance, as a hegemonic discourse of world politics. The question is not so much why it became hegemonic or what makes it hegemonic (the text offers multiple answers, based on the relevant literature). The emphasis is, uniquely, on the complex relations between this discourse, political rationalities, and the UN's subjectivity, as explained in the above points.

These complex relations were elaborated through meticulously examining each of the elements from the inside: the discourse of global governance as standing on the dynamics between academics' and practitioners' endeavours; the rationalities, as being in a dynamic relationship themselves, transforming as modernity itself is transforming; and subjectivity, constituted continuously in the dynamics of self-definition and agency-construction, in intimate relations with all the above. This perspective cannot give a one-sentence answer to the research questions, but hopefully gave a substantial one all the same.

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