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Rationality and International Domination: Revisiting Max Weber

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Rationalization, a core concept of Max Weber's sociology, has so far largely been ignored in International Relations (IR) theory discussions, although his ideas about rationalization open new pathways for theoriz-ing modernity and conflict. We revisit Weber's concepts of rationaliza-tion and domination to show the limits of two key bodies of related knowledge in IR: scholarship on international organizations as bureauc-racies and ideas on rationalization in the world polity approach. Rereading Weber's approach to rationalization provides a distinct ground for our understanding of the current internationalization of rule. We illustrate the contribution our approach to rationalization makes by looking at budget support to sub-Saharan African states, and Mozambique in particular. The article concludes with a discussion of the implications that a critical rereading of Max Weber has for international politics.

Keywords: Max Weber, Rationalization, Development Theory, International Organization, Modernity

"Die Vieldeutigkeit des Begriffs der Rationalisierung des Handelns wird uns noch öfter beschäftigen." (Weber [1922] 1980, 15)

In this article, we argue that Max Weber's ideas contain undiscovered, crucial contributions to International Relations (IR). In particular, Weber's insights on rationalization offer a promising strategy to come to terms with topics that are intensely discussed by IR scholars, such as international authority (Lake 2010) and international bureaucracies (Barnett and Finnemore 2004). Furthermore, rationalization processes with a transnational dimension provide the empirical background to the world polity literature (Meyer 2010) and to the study of globalization in light of social theories of modernity (Jung 2001).[1] While attempts to rationalize can most easily be observed in the field of development, they are also present in other globalized policies, such as health and education (Bayart 2004; Slaughter 2004; Avant, Finnemore, and Sell 2010). Here, we show how

[1] "The many possible meanings of the concept of rationalization will often enter into the discussion" (Weber 1978[1922], 30). This article has benefited from a number of comments on earlier versions presented at the IPSA World Congress in Madrid (2012), the Centro de Investigación y Docencia Economica (CIDE) in Mexico City (2013), the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva (2013), and the Institute for Intercultural and International Studies (InIIS) at the University of Bremen (2014). We would like to thank our interviewees in Maputo and Kampala for sharing their thoughts and ideas. Funding for these research stays has been provided to Klaus Schlichte by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) for the project "Policing Africa." We are furthermore grateful to Sebastian Botzem, Peter Mayer, and Eduardo Weisz, as well as to the reviewers and editors of IPS, for their comments on earlier versions.

rationalization drives the "internationalization of rule," an inherently political process full of conflicts and contradictions.

We argue that by resorting to Weber's ideas on rationalization, domination [*Herrschaft*], and organizations [*Verbände*], our ability to penetrate the reality of internationalized rule improves. Our approach gives analytical centrality to essential traits of international organizations, usually labeled as "pathologies" (Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 31), and examines "international authority" without reified concepts such as "social contracts" (Lake 2010) and "rationalized Others" (Meyer et al. 1997, 162). Applying some of Weber's core concepts, we consider policies such as development as attempts to rationalize both the ends and the means of political action. It is true that rationalizations have existed for thousands of years, but they have gained a global dimension and a high degree of formal rationality only in more recent times. Put differently, routine operations inherent to development policy, such as the definition of goals that the recipient state should pursue and the formal-rational means appropriate to achieve them, are a novelty when seen from a global historical perspective. From this viewpoint, all donors operate in the same way, irrespective of whether they are states, international organizations (IOs), or international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs). We can see more clearly what the state has in common with all these organizations if we leave aside coercion as the means of domination that distinguishes the state. In reality, they all resort to money and expert knowledge to wield more or less rational dominations, but this ambition leads to major conflicts among different rationalities.

This observation links development policy to the realm of organizations and of administration. According to Weber, organizations are inherent in most modern forms of domination and *all* organizations imply a certain level of domination (Weber [1922] 1980, 29; hereafter, WuG; Weber [1922] 1978, 54; hereafter, EaS). For our purposes, the important idea is that relations of domination are at play whenever organizations advance a rationalization. If domination is experienced as a matter of routine, then we talk of administration. In Weber's words, "in daily life domination means primarily: *administration*" (WuG, 125; EaS, 220). Thus, what seem to be the neutral techniques of administration—steering, management, governance—become visible again for the researcher as means of domination. Behind the supposedly apolitical realm of the "means of administration," highly political conflicts are hidden. When it comes to development policy, states, IOs, and INGOs are nothing but organizations.

Studying the rationalization of internationalized politics draws our attention to the different types of rationality and the conflicts among them. IR scholars would benefit from distinguishing between types of rationality because they are at the heart of what are known as "bureaucratic pathologies." Similarly, a distinctly narrow and undifferentiated conception of rationality in the world polity approach confounds bureaucratization as rationalization. We focus here on just two types of rationality, material and formal, although some Weber scholars have proposed further distinctions (Kalberg 1980, 2011, 18–34). Accordingly, we speak of "material rationalization" as the intellectual justification of ends; that is, aid policies that supposedly give general directions to coordinate the perennial action of development organizations. "Formal rationalization" is the depersonalized and formally logical use of means in the pursuit of stipulated ends, as in the case of modern bureaucratic techniques.

The central argument we make in the article is that global policies such as development are attempts to achieve material rationalization. Conflicts between organizations arise when they act on diverging material rationalities or when they clash over formal rationalities—that is, the instruments chosen to achieve a

certain goal. Conflicting rationalizations have consequences for the recipients of development policy.

Before closing this introduction, we want to raise what we consider two frequent misunderstandings that hinder a thorough discussion of Weber in IR. First, Weber's argument is not Eurocentric and he does not proclaim the superiority of a Western set of values; even less does he claim that rationality is something peculiarly European. Criticisms of Weber are widespread in postcolonial studies, but discussions of his work are derivative to the point of citing not any single work, but rather a "Weberian historical sociology" (Bhambra 2011). Accordingly, all sorts of theories, philosophies, theological conceptualizations, and ethics fall under the category of material rationalizations (Kalberg 2011, 13). In fact, Weber's studies on the economic ethics of world religions can be considered attempts to understand to what extent *different* rationalities contributed to, or hindered, the rise of modern capitalism (Weber [1920] 1986b, [1920] 1930). Second, rational rule is not necessarily legitimate, democratic rule. In modern, mass societies, bureaucracies are irreplaceable since millions of citizens and consumers must be administered, but the effects of bureaucracies are in a constant tension with democratic ideals; the most rational bureaucracy can also be the most efficient instrument to harness individual freedom. Compared to this, whether the leader of a bureaucracy is appointed hereditarily, by a foreign power, or after an election is of limited importance (WuG, 155–58; EaS, 266–71). Rationalization does not imply a move toward a better world, even if some authors turned Weber into a prophet of democracy and modernity (Almond 1960, 2007). In reality, he made explicit the tension of a life under the conditions of modern capitalism.

The article develops in four sections. In the first section, we discuss the importance of rereading Weber's concept of rationalization and domination in the light of the IR literature, focusing on two approaches in particular: international bureaucratization and the Stanford School. The second section introduces in more detail Weber's ideas on the different types of rationality and on rationalization, focusing on two forms of rationality in particular. We illustrate in the third section the significance of our reading of Weber's rationalization by means of the introduction of the development instrument "budget support" in Mozambique. In the concluding section, we return to the importance for IR and our understanding of global politics of making rationalization a key question and concept of IR.

Rationalization in International Relations

The reception of Max Weber's thought in IR has, thus far, been dominated by seeing him as one of the apologists of the "Machtstaat" in a realist tradition. Indeed, there are strong links between Weber's political writings and, for example, the realism of Hans Morgenthau (Turner 2008; Turner and Mazur 2009). However, core elements of Weber's sociology have not been integrated into IR, not even into areas in which the connection is obvious, such as constructivist IR theory and its debate with rationalist approaches (Morcillo Laiz and Schlichte 2016). In this section, we briefly state the relevance of our argument for the scholarship on international authority, international bureaucracies, and rationalization in the world polity.

The growing literature on international authority constitutes an attempt to come to terms with the increasing number and importance of global policies. Health, environment, education, and development policies, among others, are now shaped by external actors such as international organizations, international non-governmental organizations, professional associations, and philanthropic foundations. Their regulations and recommendations, which states, IOs, and

INGOs abide by and apply as a matter of routine, lead to a global diffusion of similar organizations and policies. Paradoxically, this situation poses a serious challenge for international relations theory because it assumes *anarchy* outside the nation-state (Dunne, Hansen, and Wight 2013, 417). The available answers emphasize coordination (Simmons, Dobbin, and Garrett 2008), the prestige of science (Meyer et al. 1997; Meyer 2009), or the importance of arguments (Finnemore 1993). Without denying that, in some instances, these causes—coordination, prestige, arguments—are important, the international authority literature endeavors to bring to the surface the part played by institutionalized power relations; in Weberian terms, domination. According to these scholars, vast parts of the international system operate in ways far removed from anarchy—and from coercion (Onuf 1989; Lake 2010, 589, 594, 600–608; Zürn, Binder, and Ecker-Ehrhardt 2012; Zürn 2015; for a skeptical view, see Fogarty 2013). In our view, the main merit of this literature is that its authors are interested in the authority wielded not only by states but also by other actors (see, most explicitly, Lake 2010, 598). However, we differ from them in our attempt to place Weber's concept of domination within the wider framework of his oeuvre, in particular his ideas on organizations and on rationalization actors.

Any discussion of authority must include the crucial component that distinguishes domination from power—that is, legitimacy. In IR, a seminal contribution has been made by Ian Hurd (2007, chaps. 3, 4; 1999), who has forcefully argued that the UN Security Council benefits from a considerable measure of legitimacy. While we have no objections to Hurd's finding that the belief in the justification of rule (*Geltungsglaube*) plays a role in international politics, as it does in domestic politics, we disagree with his concept of legitimate authority. In contradiction to the Weberian approach, from which he departs, Hurd considers that authority is feeble or outright illegitimate whenever obedience is unrelated to interests and to the use of "positive incentives or coercive measures." While this definition excludes some important aspects of the concept of authority, such as resistance (Schlichte 2012; Zürn 2015), our more important objection is that domination cannot be severed from money, knowledge, and other means of domination, as the case study on budget support will make apparent.

In the past twenty years, IR scholars have profited from Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore's work on international bureaucracies. In a seminal article (1999) and its follow-up book (2004), they have rightly insisted on the bureaucratic nature of IOs—invoking Weber's writings on the subject—and made explicit the contradictions of a rationalized modernity for an IR readership; they also mention, almost in passing, the "irrationality of rationalization" (Barnett and Finnemore 1999, 720; 2004, 39). However, Barnett and Finnemore (2004, 31) miss an essential point when they label the main traits of bureaucratic rule as "pathologies." In reality, these drawbacks of rational bureaucracies are not exceptional, but intrinsic to them. As we try to show, bureaucratic pathologies are, in reality, a consequence of conflicts among the substantive goals advanced by different organizations, and collisions between material and formal rationalities. We also distance ourselves from Barnett and Finnemore's attachment to the distinction between bureaucracies, depending on whether they are states or international organizations. While this distinction is relevant for specific problems—for example, those related to the use of means of coercion—IR problems related to development, health, education, and other policies would benefit from forsaking this essentialist differentiation and studying states, IOs, and INGOs as mere organizations.

Astonishingly, the concept of rationalization has to date attracted much less attention from IR scholars than from other scholars. Social and political theorists have intensively scrutinized the origins and consequences of rationalization,

supposedly a keyword condensing much of what distinguishes the fate of modern versus traditional societies. Experts have considered rationalization as *the* central question in Weber's oeuvre, particularly in Germany and France (Schluchter 1979, 1981; Colliot-Thélène 2001), although some scholars have raised objections (Hennis 1987, 1988). By contrast, the concept of rationalization has received scarce attention in IR, generally speaking. Among those scholars interested in international relations, a few have addressed the subject, but not from an IR perspective (Aron 1967; Albrow 1990, 199). Indeed, in the 700 pages of the *Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, "rationalization" appears only twice (Reus-Smit and Snidal 2008, 386, 681); it is not included at all in the index to a multivolume encyclopedia (Denemark 2010). Although Weber's rationalization thesis provides the backdrop for Jürgen Habermas's most important book (1981), the IR scholars who draw from him have not taken notice of the rationalization concept (Risse 2000; Deitelhoff 2009). In sum, if IR researchers want to explore the link between rationalization and global politics, they must resort to authors from other disciplines.

For example, IR scholars have followed closely the work on the global diffusion of rationality of John Meyer's (2010) sociological institutionalism (for a sympathetic account, see Krücken and Drori 2009). A group of sociologists of education, the so-called Stanford School, argues that professional and scientific associations, as well as environmental and human rights activists, advance different rationalizations, leading to similarities in terms of education and other policies. Around the globe, these isomorphisms would be a consequence of the activities of "rationalized Others" (Meyer 1994, 47; Meyer et al. 1997, 162), deprived of interests of their own (Meyer and Jepperson 2000, 115), which constitute "expanded versions of otherhood" (Meyer 2010, 12, 14, 15). These isomorphisms would signal the existence of a "world culture," rather than actual functional necessities. Unfortunately, it is not possible here to offer a fair account of a body of scholarship that spans three decades, to which about ten authors have contributed. Nonetheless, together with the gist of their argument and an acknowledgment of their wide reception, it is necessary to highlight the flaws of the Stanford School in order to connect our main arguments with sociological institutionalism, the most influential form of institutionalism in IR (Brady 2001, 7560). From our point of view, the importance of Meyer and his collaborators resides in their attempt to provide an explicitly global edge to the idea of rationalization.

Our critique, an admittedly Weberian one, emphasizes two problems: a methodological and a conceptual one. At least initially, the target of Meyer's neoinstitutionalism was "traditional functionalist explanations," according to which the worldwide expansion of Western educational institutions would be a response to some rational necessity (Boli and Thomas 1997, 179, 187; Meyer et al. 1997, 149, 171; quote is from Drori, Jang, and Meyer 2006, 220; Frank and Meyer 2007, 292–93). By contrast, Meyer argued that there was nothing rational in establishing the same type of schools in the United States and in Botswana (Meyer, Nagel, and Snyder 1993). Ironically, the accounts of Meyer and his collaborators share crucial properties with functionalist sociology, such as the complete disregard of history as a causal variable (Zaret 1980) and of the historically informed reconstruction of the agendas of those actors who participate in the global expansion of the policies under research. They are unconcerned with pinning down the interests of the actors who drive rationalizations, and the resulting conflicts, although the possibility of conflict among INGOs and other bureaucracies is acknowledged (Boli and Thomas 1997, 173; Drori and Meyer 2006, 74, 79; Meyer 2010, 7). Rather than reconstructing the specific interests of actors, Meyer and his followers employ something akin to a "facial composite" of an INGO, according to which its principles—that is, its "cultural framework"—are "universalism, individualism,

rational voluntaristic authority, human purposes of rationalizing progress, and world citizenship" (Boli and Thomas 1997, 180). In sum, conflicts among INGOs and other bureaucracies do not receive the appropriate consideration.

To opt for a broad description of INGOs, rather than conducting research on their agendas, has further implications for the method of the Stanford School. Beyond the collection of quantitative data, Meyer and his collaborators widely renounce conducting empirical research aimed at identifying actors and their agendas; rather, they employ reifications such as "rationalized Others" (1997, 162). This strategy has serious drawbacks, which explains why two former students of Meyer argue that "the core of world culture," which supposedly behaves according to the principles of INGOs, is "heavily economic," composed of organizations of professionals—"physicists, radiologists, electronic engineers." These professionals "set standards, discuss problems, disseminate information, argue points of law, and write codes of ethics" (Boli and Thomas 1997, 182–83). Even if we concede that these INGOs are nonprofit organizations, the truth is that they help other bureaucracies earn money; they advance the interests, material and otherwise, of the companies and professionals that finance them. We can assume that INGOs are rational actors, but only in terms of the means employed. While Boli, Thomas, and the other members of the Stanford School argue that INGOs "merely" set standards, sociologists and historians of science have shown that standards setting has nothing to do with universalism and progress (Timmermans and Epstein 2010) but rather addresses the advancement of economic interests and power (Mahon and McBride 2009). An organization may be nonprofit, but nonetheless it shapes the economy and, of course, it will be exposed to the influence of economic and material interests (Swedberg 1998, 162–63, 192–94).

This widely arbitrary allocation of characteristics to INGOs was made possible by the use of collective, reified concepts, which has attracted serious criticism to the Stanford School. The growing emphasis on individuals' actions and on the microfoundations of social behavior has compelled Meyer to elaborate a reply (Coleman 1986, 1990; Hedström and Swedberg 1998; see his response in Jepperson and Meyer 2011; see also Meyer and Jepperson 2000). Incidentally, "to put an end" to the use of "collective concepts" [*Kollektivbegriffe*] in sociology was Weber's last intellectual project: "sociology, too [like economics], can only be pursued by taking as one's point of departure the actions of one or more (few or many) *individuals*, that is to say, with a strictly 'individualistic' method" (2012a, 946; 2012b, 410).

Our second criticism refers to the concept of rationality used by the members of the Stanford School, which leads them to "over-rationalize rationalization." Their understanding of rationality is distinctly narrow and undifferentiated. Meyer and his collaborators overlook a number of crucial distinctions, including the most fundamental one between material and formal rationality. Meyer and his collaborators frequently consider isomorphism as a token of rationalizations that are not particularly rational from a local perspective but are part of world culture. In doing so, they draw their attention away from the consequences at the local level of actions driven by a "world culture." While they rightly claim that actions inspired by "world culture" are not always rational in view of very different local circumstances (1997, 146, 156), both their emphasis on the idea of "world culture" and their reliance on desk research have prevented Meyer and his collaborators from explaining where conflicts between the rationality of world culture and local circumstances and rationalities originate. In reality, the origins of these conflicts are closely related to the interests of the employees of the organizations that propel the attempts to rationalize. Since the world polity approach assumes that the INGOs and those employed by them are "altruistic," it ends up ignoring the concerns of employees with career advancement; it also fully disregards the

power asymmetries between the allegedly benevolent "experts" and the subjects that are the objects of these policies. Furthermore, such a macro approach has moved Meyer to equate rationalization and bureaucratization. Admittedly, in the past he showed himself to be more skeptical about how rational the inner workings of organizations were (Meyer and Rowan 1977). However, this nuance subsequently vanished, thereby glossing over an important distinction in Weber's oeuvre, namely that bureaucratization does not necessarily imply rationalization, as explained for instance in the ideal type of the "patrimonial domination." Bureaucratization, therefore, does not necessarily indicate rationalization, nor does it imply overall rationality (Olsen 2006). In contrast to the world polity approach, we contend here that rationalization is no more than a series of attempts to rationalize the world, whose outcomes are necessarily mixed for they can be evaluated differently, depending on the respective point of view.

Weber, Rationalization, and International Rule

A large body of literature has dealt with the question of how to interpret the concept of "rationalization" in Weber's work, in part because he never wrote a fully-fledged discussion of it. Weber conceded that there are disparate ways of understanding rationalization, depending on the point of view of the actor and the value whose realization she pursues, and on which *sphere* of life athat value is located ([1920] 1986b, 12; [1920] 1930, 26). Accordingly, his sociology addresses diverse rationalizations, such as those of the state, law, and economy, but also of music and, most prominently, of religion (see the Weber texts cited in Feher 1987; Braun 1994; Kennedy 2005; Anter 2014; Tribe 2014). However, for our purposes, the crucial insight is that legal-rational domination can be considered a rationalization of the political sphere. Drawing on a leading Weber expert (Breuer 1994, 41), we understand rationalization as the intellectual and practical systematization of a life sphere in a "theory," that is, a body of general principles and operations that are arranged in logics of hierarchy, departments, or sequences. Rationalization, by design, minimizes mere coincidences and seeks regularities; it aims at rules, procedures, and categories by which a sphere of life becomes first intelligible and then apt to be systematized.

All instances of rationalization have interesting characteristics. We use two types, which Weber highlighted in his later work as fundamentally different: material rationalization and formal rationalization (WuG, 44; EaS, 85). Here we would like to further specify their specific traits. *Material rationalization* is about content and can be viewed as "a growing control over the reality by resorting to an increasingly precise abstract concept" (Weber [1919] 1986a, 265–66; [1920] 1946, 293) or simply as the theoretical systematization of normative ideas and the policies derived from them. It stipulates ends and gives intellectual justifications for them, typically rationalized statutes [*gesatzten Ordnungen*] designed to provide general directions to coordinate the perennial actions of individuals and organizations (WuG 27; EaS 50). Efforts to increase material rationalization bolster "higher moral ground" theories that justify the existence of the state, such as missions that states have to fulfill and values they have to spread. Among further instances of this material rationalization, we find communitarian and emancipatory utopias, as well as the ideologies of minority nationalism, which are employed by social movements, religious communities, environmental movements, and INGOs to rationalize their agendas.

According to Weber, material rationality differs from formal rationality in that the results of actions are evaluated in the light of "ethical, political, utilitarian, hedonist, status-based (*ständische*), egalitarian or any other such requests" (WuG 45; EaS, 85), rather than only on the basis of efficient use of means. All religious

ethics, as well as political programs and policies, are thus material rationalizations. Material rationalization is deeply embedded in the "project of modernity" (Habermas 1981), that is, societal modernization and the intellectual attempts to come to terms with it (Jung 2001). Under the conditions of modernity, some ma-terial rationalizations are translated into policies; early functionalist theories about international organizations are particularly evident cases of these transla-tions (Steffek 2016). Conversely, modernization theories could be seen as aca-demic rationalizations of the interests, for example embodied in US foreign poli-cies (Gilman 2003; Rist 2008, chaps. 4–6).

Formal rationalization is not about the coherence of content; it is about means and efficiency. It is a "technical" form of rationalization that revolves around the depersonalized and formally logical use of means in the pursuit of stipulated ends. Formal rationalization means applying a logic of means and ends, based on actions that are cognitively structured, systematized, and codified in statutes. Such a codification makes each formalized step safe, predictable, amenable to numerical expression, and reproducible. Formal rationalization has been occurring in European states since early modern times (Dreyfus 2000). As states attempt to "dominate everything by means of calculation" (Weber [1919] 1985b, 594; [1919] 2012c, 342), statutes and statistics become integral technologies of government, increasing the predictability of individuals and organizations. The codification of rules as well as the standardization of description, of counting and accounting, were in the interest of all bureaucracies and, one might argue, a requirement of the administration of modern societies with their millions of taxpayers or customers. The result of this secular process is an inevitable tendency toward formal rationalization in other spheres of life so far untouched by it.

Following Stephen Kalberg (2011, 24), we suggest two empirical indicators of formal rationalization: the numeric calculation of means and results and the codification of rules as statutes. The enactment of statutes is the main empirical indicator of attempts at formal rationalization. A statute is a purposefully enacted regulation that orients the actions of an organization's members—and often those of nonmembers as well (Weber [1913] 1985a, 450; [1913] 2012d, 287); statutes prescribe procedures that replace individual discretion. Specific types of statutes, such as systematized legal codes, are examples of the formal rationalization of law (WuG, 503; EaS, 880). Statutes are fundamental for the type of legal-rational rule that now connects different organizations among, and beyond, states. Unsurprisingly, the epitome of formal rationality is money, as it offers "the maximum of formal calculability" (WuG, 45; EaS, 85); its use is widely seen as an indicator of formal rationalization in economic history.

In economic life, the rationalization of action within an organization is dependent on formal rationality. Only this type of rationality provides a modicum of calculability, which in turn makes it possible for capitalist enterprises to rationalize the deployment of means, taking costs and benefits into account. The requisite of calculability concerns not only the cadres of the organization. A similar reliability is also expected from business partners and from the legislation; the actions of third parties should be predictable and amenable to numerical expression. The probability of correctly anticipating how third parties will behave increases substantially whenever these expectations are inferred from statutes backed by an organization that can employ the means of domination, including coercion as an extreme case. For Weber, this is the link between corporate and state action: under the conditions of modern capitalism, interest in the predictability and calculability of economic actors will force the state to rationalize; this is a substantial part of the argument of Weber's legal sociology (WuG, 387–514; EaS, 641–900) and of his developmental history of the city (WuG, 727–815; EaS, 1212–372). Subsequently, the state may further boost rationalization by compelling third

parties to observe the statutes. Thus, formal rationalization expands through the statutes of organizations that influence the behavior of outsiders, even against their will (WuG 26; EaS, 48).

Material rationalization and formal rationalization tend to expand jointly into the bureaus in which officials work. The close connection between both types of rationality stems from the convenience of adopting formally rationalized means to achieve the ends defined according to a material rationality (and certain ultimate values). As a result, codification and numerical representations are used to measure, document, and evaluate the efforts undertaken to reach those ends. Formal rationalizations, on the other hand, presuppose the previous definition of ends according to a theory, that is, a specification of material rationality. Boosted by modern capitalism, "the most fateful power of our times" (Weber [1920] 1986b, 4; [1920] 1930, 17), these means of formal rationalization have spread into many other spheres of life and have become a fundamental component of international politics.

Based on this reading of Weber, we want to stress here the commonalities and continuities of states, IOs, and INGOs. From the perspective of international rule, they are all mere organizations endowed with a bureaucracy; as we mentioned in the introduction, *all* organizations imply a certain level of domination because their leaders and administrative staff are in charge of inducing members—and third parties—to comply with the decisions and statutes of the organization. However, compliance is not a necessary consequence, and other reactions are possible, including resistance, as we will show later. In any case, the organization possesses statutes that orientate the actions of the leader and the cadre. If the organization has enacted its own statutes, then it is autonomous. Otherwise, it is a heteronomous organization. Similarly, we may observe organizations whose leading officers and governing bodies are appointed by donors; they are heterocephalous (WuG, 26–7; EaS, 49–50). Just as a link exists between the rule of law and bureaucratization (Weber [1920] 1986b, 4), a similar one connects international rule and IOs and INGOs. As the number of international treaties, agreements, and policies grows, so does the number of bureaucracies, since their specialized personnel are the most appropriate instruments to enforce them. Consequently, IOs and INGOs try to dominate and administer individuals and other organizations through their cadre and other means of domination—such as numeric indicators—just as the state, firms, and other organizations do. The fact that means of coercion—soldiers, weapons—are available to states but not to IOs and INGOs makes no difference when it comes to understanding global policies on development, health, and climate. In short, all these bureaucracies are vectors of the same process, the rationalization of rule.

INGOs are in the same business as states and IOs. They participate in the production of statutes enacted by the state and IOs, regulate their activities according to them, try to impose those statutes on third parties, administer their resources in a bureaucratic fashion, and come up with numeric benchmarks in their criticism of government politics and the corporate world. INGOs enlarge the agenda of global problems by asking for ever more coordinated governmental activities to fulfill criteria such as transparency and accountability. These regulations contribute to the establishment of more IOs, which are in charge of securing compliance to those rules. Arguably, development policy is a worldwide extension of the social policy tasks Weber identified as one of the factors driving bureaucratization at the state level (WuG, 561; EaS, 972). Put differently, global policies create additional waves of bureaucratic organization, formalized procedures, and codified routines (Dezalay and Garth 2002; Bliesemann de Guevara and Goetze 2012). What is of interest, then, is not so much which types of organizations can impose rules on others—states on IOs or the other way around—but rather the practices shared

by the entire spectrum of organizations. It is this increasing internationalization of politics by an ever larger number of IOs and NGOs for which Weber's ideas about rationalization are particularly telling.

Rationalization at Work: The Policy of General Budget Support

To further clarify the preceding arguments, this section offers an empirical illustration of the politics of budget support. The budget is central to determine the "real structure of domination" (WuG, 166; EaS, 283). Since this development policy instrument became prominent in the early 2000s, more than twenty governments of sub-Saharan African states, along with those of Afghanistan, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Vietnam, have become recipients of this form of aid. Individual European governments, as well as the World Bank and the EU, regularly contribute to states' funds with grants and loans based on a complex system of negotiation, agreements, reports, and applications (Dijkstra, de Kemp, and Bergkamp 2012; Hickey 2012; Molenaers 2012). In a number of states, this form of developmental aid accounts for up to fifty percent of public expenditure.

The funds come with an internationalized technology of budget management. Most prominent are the strings attached to these cash flows, as "donors" heavily influence how and where the funds are spent by the recipient "partner" governments (Schlichte 2008; Whitfield 2009; Diallo 2012). To a significant extent, foreign personnel administer this technology: budget support requires the involvement of an army of expatriate consultants and development workers who switch between employment by governments, development agencies, and international organizations.

Mozambique is a typical case of a country receiving budget support. Its government is surrounded by a hive of nineteen donors, who influence how Mozambique is ruled. Out of a central government budget in 2012 of 5 billion USD, 460 million USD were grants and loans as direct general budget support from donors. Loans come predominantly from the World Bank; grants stem primarily from single-donor governments. Apart from this budget aid, which is divided into policy sectors, donors give additional grants to single projects; in the end, about thirty-five percent of Mozambique's central government's expenses is derived directly from donors.[2] Between 2005 and 2012, donor states and international organizations disbursed around 3.3 billion USD as budget aid in Mozambique (European Commission 2014, xii). Since these transfers are subject to numerous conditions in terms of the objectives to be pursued, the G19 (which is made up of all the Scandinavian governments as well as the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, the Netherlands, the EU, and the World Bank) codetermines Mozambique's national policies in most fields: health, education, environmental protection, infrastructure, the judiciary, public administration, and local government. Annually, the capital city of Maputo hosts "development laboratories" in which donors and government and civil society representatives discuss and develop annual plans, all of them with their own policies based on theories about growth or progress. Both these plans and the definition of policy goals are instances of material rationalization.

Many of these external actors' endeavors consist of advising ministries, municipalities, and district administrations on how to redesign their institutions to make them more "efficient" and more "accountable." In other words, donors ask recipients to implement measures aimed at formal rationalization. The nitty-gritty of those measures is specified through indicators that relate to development goals, such as per capita health spending, the percentage of households with electricity

[2]Interview with German aid delegate, Maputo, October 2012.

or sanitation, school enrollment rates, and so on. Other indicators, such as the timeliness of audit reports and the percentage of corruption cases judged per year, indicate the efficiency of public institutions (European Commission 2014, 129, 159). International agencies teach government officers to collect this information, respect labor regulations, plan water supply systems, and organize interministerial cooperation. These foreign experts work within the ministries of Mozambique but are usually paid by donors. While on paper they are not in charge, their presence, and the fact that the foreign paymasters stand behind them, suggest that the de facto heads of some administrative units are appointed abroad.

Every year, donors and representatives of the recipient government convene in Mozambique to deliberate and negotiate benchmarks, milestones, and the contents of government policies, as well as monitoring technologies. However, gaps and huge contradictions in this "concerted" attempt to rationalize Mozambique (and other African states) exist. Despite all international agreements and proclamations on "donor coordination"—including Paris 2005 and Busan 2011 (Glennie 2011)—donor policies are not properly coordinated, since all donors have their own planning procedures and time horizons.[3] Admittedly, a significant number of donors are integrated in the G19. However, countries that are not part of this group discuss their activities with the Mozambican government, not with the G19. Outside the group are donors that cannot be considered unimportant, such as Brazil, Japan, South Korea, India, and South Africa; likewise the United States, which does not grant direct budget support, as it fears a "Dutch disease" effect.[4]

The most visible, possibly the most important, effect of these efforts is a wave of bureaucratic activity. Donor agencies, the IMF, the World Bank, and other IOs, as well as countless INGOs, design plans, apply for or decide about funds, try to implement policies with their partners, and constantly report to their funding organizations back in the "Global North." The resulting scope and number of the strategies implemented in Mozambique and other African countries, such as Uganda, are startling. They include Millennium Development Goals, various African governments' five-year plans, the national development strategies of donor countries, and sector plans negotiated between donors and the receiving government's officials.

It is equally evident that material rationalization is at work in the conceptual debate about development policies: poverty reduction has ranked high on the agenda since the 1990s; behind this stipulated goal is a conviction and a theory that stresses both the moral obligation "to help" and the economic rationality of reducing poverty to achieve other goals of development (for critical histories, see Kunkel 2008; Rist 2008). The most globalized form of this can be seen in the Millennium Development Goals as a material rationalization of human progress, one that incorporates a bridge to formal rationalization by giving numeric values as benchmarks. In interviews, diplomats and aid agents explain their activities along established theories of development according to which, for example, roads and other infrastructure would improve market access for peasants and this, in turn, would increase their wealth. Others reproduce theories of modernization, which proclaim that formal education would engender responsible and productive citizens able to enforce their governments' accountability.

Thus, the bureaucracies specialized in development—agencies, embassies, and missions—are bureaucracies that employ *formally* rational means. In this respect, the differences between donor agencies, IOs, and INGOs seem less and less relevant, contrary to the distinction between states and IOs that is so important to the

[3]Interview with Austrian aid delegate, Kampala, February 2014.

[4]Interview with Scandinavian aid delegate, Maputo, October 2012.

established discussion about international organizations (Barnett and Finnemore 2004). While donor agencies, IOs, and INGOs compete over turf and resources, there are few differences in their operational logics: the utmost importance of numbers, established procedures, and formalized approaches is evident. Grand strategies, single plans, meetings on coordination and implementation, reports, and evaluations flood the daily lives of those involved in this business. These activities are thus ruled by statutes, contracts, and numerical benchmarks, all of which are measures of formal rationalization. However, the essence of this form of rationality regularly goes against the preferences of politicians. While formal rationality implies an application of budgetary rules *sine ira et studio* (without anger and bias), influential officeholders resist formal rational techniques. The reason is simple: these "unruly agents" (Simson and Welham 2014, 7) of foreign donors need room to maneuver to be able to balance the aspirations of different clienteles.

These forms of resistance partially explain why in "developing countries" we observe a continuing bonanza of mere rationalization *attempts*: states, IOs, and INGOs participate in the rule of entire regions and attempt to rationalize this governance according to their self-image. What a leading development agent identified as his main mission, to "change management,"[5] is thus only the most recent version of various attempts to rationalize developing states. As layers of declarations, programs, and projects of different agencies overlap and contradict one another, and foreign experts populate ministries, the efforts result in recipient countries characterized by a heteronomy of statutes and a heterocephaly of governing bodies (WuG, 27; EaS, 50). Statutes enacted by a multiplicity of donors may easily impinge on one another; local personnel may resist the commands from foreign experts. One necessary consequence of thwarted rationalization attempts is limited calculability and predictability. Policies do not always achieve their goals, as the following illustrates: in Uganda, a case of budget support similar to Mozambique, donor representatives consider the result of budget support to be a mixed one. While it apparently improved financial accountability and planning processes, it did not lead to the envisaged reduction of poverty.[6] Ugandan experts confirm this assessment and hint at the battles between ministries, which try to get a bigger share of the government budget by overstating their personnel numbers. Irregular budgeting was still frequent, as a result of the needs of the clienteles.[7]

Interpreting the politics of budget support or developmental aid as a general example of material and formal rationalization does not imply denying the role of interests. Obviously, many donor states pursue all kinds of economic or political interest through their development policies. Brazil, India, China, and Western governments, for example, look for access to Mozambique's coal and gas reserves. Even Norway combines its interest in offshore gas production with an "energy governance" scheme for Mozambique based on its own national experience.[8] Furthermore, as documented by the enormous efforts of public relations around aid, all donors strive for symbolic capital, that is, the prestige they hope to produce as a result of their generosity. However, theories based on national interest cannot explain the elaborate form and size of the apparatuses; the size of the development sector, which spent more than 130 billion USD in 2013 (OECD 2014); the form of a highly bureaucratized apparatus; or the moral fervor with which development is debated. We claim that a Weberian theory of rationalization

[5]Interview, Maputo, October 2012.

[6]Interview with German aid delegate, Kampala, February 13, 2014; interview with EU representative, Kampala, February 18, 2014.

[7]Interviews with a Ugandan political journalist and with a Ugandan NGO official, both February 23, 2014.

[8]Interview with Scandinavian aid delegate, Maputo, October 2012.

accounts much better for both the content and the form of these engagements in internationalized rule.

To sum up, budget support is one further attempt to rationalize, which necessarily produces more statutes and bureaucracies. All these encroach on one another and add up to what we call "material irrationalization." The irrationalities of rationalization add doubts about the overt optimism of the world polity approach. More convincing accounts of these shortcomings have been proposed. Twenty years ago, observers of African politics already considered policy bending to be characteristic of African politics (Clapham 1996, 174), while the anthropology of development has shown how rules are ignored or wrongly interpreted in practical application, even by official agents (Rottenburg 2009). The critique of development policy has hinted at the inadequacy of the plans propounded by large organizations (Hibou 1998, 2015; Ziai 2007; Latham 2011). Weber's ideas about rationalization suggest new explanations for such "policy failures."

Conclusions

We have argued in this article that an essential element of Max Weber's sociology has been overlooked in IR—his ideas about material and formal rationalization. By presenting the core of these investigations, we intend to reopen a debate about the relevance of his diagnosis of modernity for our attempts to theorize about international politics. Weber's ideas on rationalization can be labeled as a theory of a dilemmatic, "unreconciled modernity" (Schluchter 1996), rather than as a "modernization theory" in a 1950s sense (Latham 2011). Weber had a particular interest in explaining how certain forms of rationality had contributed to the rise of modern capitalism in Europe and North America and, with this economic form, to the culture of modernity. However, he remained at a critical distance from the institutions and achievements they brought about during his lifetime. The reasons for this might have been anchored in a cultural pessimism Weber shared with many German intellectuals of his time (Löwy 2012). Irrespective thereof, we argue that his ideas about rationalization enable us to see international politics—and, in particular, globalized policies—in a different light, offering new analytical and critical insights.

One advantage of his perspective is that it sheds light on the political nature of phenomena that are all too easily seen as merely technical. For Weber, bureaucracies are not apolitical; bureaucracies are the instruments of organizations that wield domination in order to "rationalize." Their means are means of domination, forms of wielding institutionalized power; the attempts to rationalize are themselves political acts. This connection makes apparent why the paradoxes of rationalization should be part of the current debate on international authority (Lake 2010; Zürn, Binder, and Ecker-Ehrhardt 2012). This also applies to the field of development, which tries to appear void of partisan politics. With Weber, we intend to shift the debate on IOs from the old controversy between functionalist and rationalist explanations toward their political structuration efforts, which have diverse outcomes in a highly asymmetrical world (Steffek 2016).

Weber's ideas about rationalization also allow us to pose larger questions: Has the world really become more rational or, even better, more reasonable (*vernünftig*) in the full Kantian sense of the word? Or does rationalization only lead to more and more layers of administration? Looking at globalized politics from a Weberian perspective would probably lead to a critical distance regarding the great expectations of global governance (Rosenau 1995). It would rather dampen the hope that, for example, a future legalization of globalized politics would lead to a corresponding increase in freedom. Rationalization will bring massive increases in regulation, both in scope and in numbers, but not a better world with

higher levels of material justice. Its outcome, it seems, is rather an "undemocratic liberalism" (Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 172) in a world that is marked by increasing inequalities.

The Weberian perspective we have suggested here has, perhaps, more in common with other critics of liberal thought. It can easily be combined with Michel Foucault's contribution on the history of governmentalities (Bayart 2004; Schlichte 2012) in which different material rationalizations are at work. Also, new interpretations of international politics based on the political sociology theories of Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu 2012; Adler-Nissen 2013) seem to converge with the "other Weber" we presented here. He was the first to fully comprehend the inner contradiction of an ever more "administered world," taken over by the irrationality of administration (Adorno 1979, 145).

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