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Another Weber: state, associations and domination in international relations

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Abstract *While there has arguably been a partial reception of Weber in international relations (IR), we argue here that his ideas have either been misunderstood or neglected. In order to highlight the most valuable Weberian insights, we focus on two topics of crucial importance to IR. First, in our view, Weber's crucial contribution to the study of states is not his alleged emphasis on the monopoly of violence but his concern with the problem of legitimacy, which is the key to understanding why individuals actually orient an action according to their beliefs in the idea of a state. Second, Weber conducted seminal historical investigations on religion, the rationalization of economic ethics, and organizations that show that the diffusion of isomorphism has little to do with supposedly uninterested and persuasive scientific and professional associations. Instead, more attention should be paid to rational domination and less to reified concepts such as John Meyer's 'rationalized otherhood'. These arguments are also examined empirically.*

An astonishing number of contributions and debates in international relations (IR) can be rephrased in the vocabulary of Max Weber's sociology. Of course, the Weberian ascent of post-war IR realism, with its emphasis on power and interests, has been firmly established (Turner 2009; Turner and Mazur 2009). But, besides the explicitly Weberian roots of realism, partial readings of his oeuvre also loom behind both constructivism and sociological institutionalism, as well as in historical sociology and in research on more specific IR topics, such as foreign policy bureaucracies.

Even though we acknowledge the partial reception of Weber in IR, our argument is that that his ideas have frequently been misunderstood or neglected by IR scholars. The roots of these misinterpretations lie deep in the history of post-war social

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sciences (Buxton 1985; Gilman 2003; Gouldner 1970). As crucial an author as Talcott Parsons was for Weber's reception, he was unable to interpret Weber according to the basic standards of the history of ideas, as the analyses of his influential translations of *The protestant ethic* and *Economy and society* have demonstrated (Ghosh 1994; Tribe 2007). Parsons's self-interested reading of Weber was later developed into his 'pattern variables' (Parsons and Shils 1951), on which an extremely influential version of modernization theory for political scientists was built (Gilman 2003). Another crucial problem has been the intricate posthumous edition process of Weberian works like *Economy and society* (Mommsen 2000). Despite the most recent and well-founded attempts to disentangle these knots (Scaff 2011, especially Part 2; Camic et al 2005), IR scholars have ignored compelling arguments on the existence of a different, and more relevant, Weber. Even today, political scientists lack appropriate training to interpret the whole opus of an author, particularly if it was published more than a few decades ago. Thus, specialized training in the discipline favours the diffusion of vague preconceptions about Weber's contemporary relevance. It should also be noted that part of the difficulty with Weber for IR scholars lies in the fact that he wrote in German; however, much better translations have been published in recent years (Kalberg 2001; Weber 2012).

Among all the possible topics, we focus here on two that are central to the subdiscipline: the concept of the state and the global process of rationalization. Generally speaking, there has been, to put it mildly, only a very limited dialogue between IR specialists and social theorists, but a turn towards the study of sociology is now making strides within the discipline, as is made apparent by the International Studies Association (ISA) journal, *International Political Sociology*, published since 2007, and by a growing body of literature (Albert et al 2013; Lawson and Robbie 2010). We aim in this paper to facilitate the incorporation of Weber's most valuable insights into this sociologically-informed IR debate. As for the concept of the state, Weber framed it within the broader one of 'association' (or 'organization' or *Verband*; see below). Thanks to his authorial and conceptual strategy, which we discuss below, we can explore the relations within the state and other associations. To be more precise, Weber's concepts make it possible to distinguish between those decisions made by the state which are backed by the threat of violence and those which are not. Weber's 'monopoly of violence', therefore, is not the key to understanding why individuals actually orient an action towards the idea of a state. Instead, the key is individuals' beliefs about its legitimacy.

Regarding the theory of worldwide rationalization and modernity, Weber's oeuvre offers an early, concept-based enquiry of remarkable historical depth into the common destiny of humanity under the condition of modern capitalism. Even if he is not always correct or accurate, as shown by contemporary scholarship on the history of religions, Weber made painstaking efforts to *pin down* both ideal and material interest and link them to specific classes and status groups. Conversely, the attempts to explain the worldwide diffusion of rational institutions by sociological institutionalists (that is, neo-institutionalists) *assume* supposedly altruistic professional and scientific organizations, as well as a 'world culture' (Meyer et al 1997a, 151, 157). Attentive readers of Weber will know better about the dangers of focussing exclusively on assumptions about 'ideal' interests instead of exploring their interaction with material ones. They will also mistrust the

replacement of research aimed at reconstructing actors' agendas and motives with reified concepts like 'rationalized Others' (Meyer 1994, 47; Meyer et al 1997a, 162).

The article is organized as follows: after an overview of the Weberian elements in IR, the next section proposes a different understanding of the state through Weber's original statements, which we then illustrate by discussing some paradoxes of development aid in the third section. In the fourth section, we reconstruct the main elements of Weber's theory of global modernity and compare it to Meyer's sociological institutionalism. In the fifth section we sketch the worldwide diffusion of *some* US social science. The conclusions summarize the new insights that we have obtained.

Max Weber in the discipline of IR

Some important IR debates could easily be reformulated using Weberian concepts and research questions. These include the discussion on the judicialization of world politics (Sweet 2004; Shapiro and Sweet 2002), which could be read as the imposition of legal–rational codification, a core theme of Weber's sociology of law (Kennedy 2005). Similarly, enquiries into the legitimacy and 'authority' of international organizations (Hurd 2008; Zürn et al 2012) could be seen as a transposition of Weber's theory of domination. Furthermore, the regulatory issues that interest scholars of international political economy echo Weber's analysis of the rationalization of law across early modern Europe (Hirsch 2008). A completely different topic, human rights, can also be considered a form of rationalization; Weber went as far as to call human rights 'extremely rational fanaticisms' (Joas 2013; Weber 1980, 2; 1978, 6). By contrast to these implicit connections, Graham Allison (1971) explicitly drew on Weber's work on bureaucratic politics in his well-known study on decision-making during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Far from his being a mere neglected figure in the background of highly specialized debates, Weber's work is part of IR theory and of research on institutions and international organizations, sometimes explicitly, sometimes covertly. For IR, and in particular for realism, the reference that immediately comes to mind is in *Politics among nations* (1948), whose author, Hans Morgenthau, declared Weber to be his intellectual hero. The connection has been confirmed not only by Morgenthau himself (1978, 64), but also by other specialists (Turner and Mazur 2009). Even if Morgenthau's biographer, Christoph Frei, is more interested in the supposedly Nietzschean ascendency of his scholarship, he reluctantly admits to the Weberian inflows in Morgenthau's concept of power (Frei 2001, 95, 121).

Much less prominent is the presence of Weber in the more recent debate between 'constructivists' and 'rationalists' in IR theory, which could be read as a revival of Weber's thoughts on the role of ideas and interests in history (Fearon and Wendt 2003). Perhaps this 'reconstruction' should be conducted because the Weberian lineage of both constructivism and rational choice are regularly ignored within the subfield. If we consider constructivism in IR, at least one root brings us to Weber's interpretive sociology (*verstehende Soziologie*), as adapted and developed by Alfred Schütz (1973; Berger and Luckmann 1966; Wendt 1992). In fact, Weber was an advocate of a social science that should be capable of understanding actors' decisions. Thus, it is an endeavour that should depart from, but should not be limited to, the crucial analysis of means–end rationality. Accordingly, major rational choice scholars like James Coleman (1990, 5–10) and Jon Elster (1979; 2000)

have made their contributions through a dialogue with Weber. In turn, we find IR specialists drawing from authors such as Elster (Snidal 2008).

A Weberian inspiration is easily detectable within the different institutionalist approaches to IR. Since their advocates have never denied that Weber was a main reference for them, the claim is uncontroversial. Obvious examples would be historical institutionalism in political science (Immergut 1998) and, particularly for IR, historical sociology (Hobson et al 2010; Seabrooke 2006). In contrast, sociological institutionalism, predominant in IR (Brady 2001, 7560), remains in implicit dialogue with Weber. The scholarship of some of its representatives, most prominently Meyer's, focuses on the puzzle of organizational and regulatory isomorphisms, and considers the consequence of rationalizations (Meyer et al 1997a, 167, 169). Sociological institutionalism has also influenced the scholarship of prominent constructivists like Martha Finnemore. In an early work (1993), she argued that, in the 1950s, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) decisively contributed to the rise of an isomorphism, scientific planning bureaucracy, because it *persuaded* developing countries that it was a sound policy instrument. Whether it is appropriate to talk of 'persuasion' rather than 'domination' is a moot point that we try to settle by initiating an explicit dialogue between sociological institutionalism in IR and Weber.

There is little doubt that the uncritical use of the concept of rationalization gives cause to those IR scholars who have argued that classical sociology is inherently Eurocentric (Hobson 2012; Bhambra 2011). These criticisms have some grounding in fact; if we consider how IR scholars and modernization theorists used the Parsonian interpretation of Weber for their own purposes. However, this reading had been previously skewed by philanthropies like the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, and by the attempts of some American scholars to please the United States (US) government (Gilman 2003; Latham 2000). It is true that Weber did claim that modern capitalism appeared in the West as a consequence of specific occidental forms of rationality that were absent elsewhere. While he openly admitted that *his* interest in the subject was related to his being a *European* (1986a, 1), Weber explicitly denied that his Protestant ethic thesis should be understood to imply his personal endorsement, and implicitly refused that he considered the 'remarkable consequences' of those religious phenomena to be a 'blessing' (1964, 115; 1985a, 502; 2012, 312). In any case, Weber saw tendencies of rationalization not only in modern Western Europe, but in other regions and ages as well (Weisz 2012).

All this indicates that IR has not yet taken full advantage of Weberian sociology for our understanding of international politics. Within the subfield, the methodology, the argumentative context in which Weber's definition of the state is embedded and his theory of modernity have all been ignored, just like the debates on the interpretation of his scholarship.

The other Weber: the state as a constructed reality

With the exception of post-structuralism (Burke 2008), IR theories use Weber's concept of the state as a point of departure. On this basis, realists and some varieties of constructivism consider the state to be a unitary actor, usually analogous to a person (Wendt 1999, 198; Wight 2006). As a consequence of the emphasis on the specificity of its means, that is, the legitimate use of force, 'the state' has been reified and turned into a large, homogeneous machine with a

privileged relationship to violence. Instead, we suggest that, when studying the state, IR scholars should always pay attention to the fact that the state is an association that sometimes *cannot* threaten others with the use of violence. Nevertheless, its decisions and rules will *sometimes* be obeyed by other associations, including other states.

It should also always be taken into consideration that the ideal type of state is a heuristic tool, not a description of an empirical reality. Confounding these things makes it impossible for researchers to observe a whole range of important deviations. These deviations are not perceptible if we assume a sovereign state that autonomously enacts all its legislation as a perfectly consistent whole and guarantees its enforcement by a monopoly of violence. By contrast, they are identifiable if we employ Weber's neo-Kantian and—in a certain sense—radically constructivist method. Before we substantiate our criticisms and advance our arguments, to briefly look anew at Weber's *Basic concepts* is necessary (1980, 1–30; 1978, 3–62).

Herrschaft, or 'domination', means the probability of a command being obeyed without employing coercion. We employ here 'domination' or, occasionally, 'rule' to translate *Herrschaft*, rather than 'authority', precisely because of its denunciatory connotations (the Latin *dominus* also comes closer to the German root *Herr-*). Strongly related to domination is the concept of *Verband*, which is usually translated as 'organization' but which we render hereinafter as 'association' in order to remind the reader that the concept should be understood in the wider context of Weber's late oeuvre. An 'association' is a social relation whose orders (rules or *Ordnungen*) are enforced by a leader who gives commands to the other members, particularly to the administrative cadre; purposefully devised rules or regulations are called 'statutes' (*Satzungen*). If the association is de facto subject to statutes enacted by a *different* association, then it is called 'heteronomous'. An association is called 'heterocephalous' if *another* association appoints the leader who is in charge of securing the enforcement of its orders and statutes.

The members of the cadre are selected according to technical qualifications acquired through specialized training which makes them capable of applying technical rules (Weber 1980, 125–126; 1978, 217–223). Whenever it is available, a cadre implies a certain degree of domination (1980, 29; 1978, 54), because it is established in order to increase the *probability* of compliance. Put differently, at the core of any domination we find a cadre. In addition to the this, the leaders of an association resort to other means, like knowledge, as 'materialized' in the training of the officials and in the information preserved in files, which is decisive for *rational* domination (1980, 126–127; 1978, 223–226). The probability of the statutes being complied with depends, among other things, on whether this administrative cadre and the remaining means of domination are appropriate to sustain a belief in the legitimacy of the leader, their officials and the statutes. In order to achieve compliance, officials issue commands to the remaining members of the association and frequently to third parties (outward regulation; 1980, 26; 1978, 48), even if membership in the association is totally or partially closed to the outside. In other words, the rulings and statutes of associations influence the actions of its members, but they may also alter the behaviour of third parties, even against their will (Weber 1985c, 469; 2012, 298).

From a sociological perspective, the modern state is a political *association*. In this context, 'political; means that this association aspires to monopolize the use of violence. An association is called an establishment (*Anstalt*) if membership is compulsory; that is, unrelated to the consent of the individual. In addition to the

state, the other classic example of an establishment is a church, such as the Lutheran or Catholic, in which membership is determined by birth. Another distinguishing feature of the state is its territorial basis, while the availability of a staff and of material elements such as the means of administration—money, buildings, vehicles—characterizes all associations of domination (*Herrschaftsverbände*).

Domination is a social relation between these different individuals and should not be identified with the state. For a social science à la Weber, the state only exists when it wields domination. In some cases, the empirical validity of its statutes is extreme, because they are backed by legitimacy, a cadre and the threat of violence, and the scope of its rule is wider than in other cases. Even if all the resolutions and statutes of a state are, de jure, state acts, if they are not backed by the threat of violence, but by the regular means of domination, they are *sociologically* akin to those of a firm, a foundation, a non-governmental organization (NGO) or a professional association. In sum, the state is—nonetheless and in the first place—an association, even if it possesses some special attributes.

Weber's definition of the state is often invoked and understood as 'the ultimate ability to send someone with a uniform and a gun to force people to comply with the state's laws' (Fukuyama 2004, 8). This monopoly of the use of force is very high on the agenda of the 'international community', at least officially, and of the international organizations (IOs) that are active in places like Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and Somalia (Paris 2004; Bliesemann de Guevara 2012). Similarly, during the last two decades, the state has been discussed as an agent that encompasses the monopoly of the use of physical force (Zartman 1995; Rotberg 2003).

We think that this is a very partial reading of Weber's theory of the modern state; it leaves out the problem of legitimacy, which is central to a full understanding of the state. Admittedly, in his ideal–typical conception, Weber chose physical force as the distinctive feature of states vis-à-vis other types of associations. It is also true that Weber had a strong interest in the means of domination, including the means of waging war and of coercion. Nevertheless, the punchline of his state-concept lies in the word 'legitimate'; the *real* question is for what reasons do people *obey* in the absence of an official with a uniform and a gun. In Weber's words, 'For the state to remain in existence, those who are ruled must *submit* to the authority claimed by whoever rules at a given time. When do people do this, and why? On what internal justifying reasons and on what external means does this domination base?' (1988a, 507; 1994a, 311).

Hitherto, IR theories and scholars have discarded the problem of legitimacy and emphasized the monopoly of violence. This bias is counterproductive because domination, as wielded by states or other political associations, relies on coercion only as an instrument of last resort. Once rules have been accepted and internalized, they are incorporated into adapted patterns of behaviour. For social knowledge, the crux of the matter is why people perform, or abstain from, certain actions when members of the cadre are absent. In daily life, the internalization of expectations puts the monopoly of violence into the background. Put bluntly, Weber's understanding of the state is about the redundancy of the gun for effective rule.

The significance of individuals' reasons for any attempt to establish *why* people behave in specific ways reveals the subtleties of the legitimacy problem; it is also connected to the probability of conformity with the existing rules and to the

rationalization process. Statutes, which, as we saw, are rational, purposeful rules devised by a few, are *traditionally* obeyed by the rest. Weber makes this clear when he writes that 'the "mass" "traditionally" .. . performs the respective action ... mostly without knowing anything about the purpose and sense—or even the very existence—of the orders' (1985c, 473; 2012, 300). That is, even if regulations embody a rationality that could provide individuals with reasons to obey, individuals do not perform an action because of those arguments. At first, they obey because they are vaguely conscious of the order and of the opportunities and risks that its validity implies; the threat of violence possesses here a minimal and diffuse importance. Later on, individuals abide by this and other orders simply because they have obeyed in the past, without further justification. Even if Weber's typology may not be perfect for coming to terms with all dynamics of legitimacy, IR scholarship would benefit from taking legitimacy as a strategy to explain why individuals respect the statutes enacted by an association.

In the preceding quotes, Weber uses two terms—'masses' and 'association'—that suggest further layers of complexity and consequences that are regularly ignored. In fact, more attention should be paid to the different reasons why the cadre, on the one hand, and regular members and third parties—masses—on the other, consider statutes legitimate and obey them. The implications are numerous and crucial, but we will only hint at two of them. While the leader must reckon with the motives of the cadre to obey—booty, for instance—and assume the responsibility for them, any variation or even disruption of the ability to satisfy those expectations will immediately have a bearing on the probability of the commands being executed and statutes upheld. Another corollary is that if the state is a *type* of association whose statutes are backed by the threat of violence, then state decisions and statutes not backed by the threat of violence are conceptually and empirically comparable to those of other associations of domination, like multinational corporations or international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). This applies, for instance, to state's decisions based on international law (which is rarely guaranteed by the threat of sanctions), its activities within multilateral organizations, its development policy and many other decisions. This implication of Weber's definition of the state is explored in more detail in the next section.

As we have already mentioned, in order to take full advantage of Weber's concepts, more attention should be paid to his method. The ideal type of domination, in particular the most rational one, the legal domination, is an epistemological tool; it is neither a goal that a state should pursue nor a prediction about the future of the state. In his methodological writings, Weber is very explicit about this: ideal types are exaggerated abstractions that should help researchers gauge the differences between them and empirical reality (1985b, 190–200; 2012, 124–130). Accordingly, the ideal type of the modern state enables us to differentiate among diverse political associations—of which the modern state is just one instance. In most cases, it is built by combining a set of qualities that present extreme values in a way that can help establish causal relations and build hypotheses (1985b, 190; 2012, 124). With this strategy of concept formation, Weber sought a means to disentangle the empirical manifoldness that surrounds us by using precise and clear-cut concepts.

If an association does not rule in a way that adheres to the ideal type of legal domination, this does not imply that it is not a state. Especially in the literature on

'failed states', influential IR contributions have confused the abstract ideal-typical concept of the modern state with its empirical reality (Migdal and Schlichte 2005). However, the problem goes far beyond IR theory. A number of authors interested in 'defect democracies', 'state failure' and comparable topics have used this ideal type to study political associations in vastly different social and historical contexts. It is little wonder that they have detected all kinds of deviations from the ideal type, which they have labelled as 'informal', 'shadow', 'failed', 'defect' and 'corrupt'—using the derogatory terminology that is frequently used to character-ize states outside the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Migdal 1988; Reno 1995; Zartman 1995; Rotberg 2003). When we resort to these concepts, we, as scholars, implicitly formulate value judgements. From an empirical or analytical point of view, these terms add nothing to our knowledge about how political rule works. The ideal type of rational domination is by no means a prescriptive concept, and it is not a representation of reality.

After having claimed here what the state is not, we want to spell what the state actually *is*. Following a neo-Kantian tenet, Weber distinguishes sharply between the concept we construct when we talk about the state—both in academic and in ordinary language—and the state as an observable social phenomenon. As we already said, the state is something *different* from rational domination or the enforcement of statutes. What the state actually *is*—its *empirical reality*—will not be found in regulations, statements of rules, or actions. To identify the state with its legal system (*Rechtsordnung*) would be the same as falling prey to a Kelsenian understanding of the state. Instead, to *apprehend* what the state is, we should establish to what degree ordinary people *believe* in the existence of the state and *act* accordingly (Migdal and Schlichte 2005). In brief, the state is both a maze of beliefs *and* the resulting contradictory actions. The concept of the state is merely an abstraction and should not be considered to be the last cause that explains a phenomenon.

In order to clarify why the state only shapes individual action if people *believe* in a certain idea of authority, a longer Weber quote is needed:

> When we ask what, in empirical reality, corresponds to the idea (that we have) of the 'state', we find an infinite number of diffuse and discrete human actions and acts of acquiescence, and of relationships regulated in practice and legally, of which some are unique, while others recur regularly; and all (this) is held together by an idea, namely, the belief in norms and relations of domination of some human beings over others. (1985b, 200; Weber 2012, 130)

The mental mechanism that Weber highlights here implies that the state will only have validity insofar as people have internalized these ideas. Since these are hard to pinpoint, researchers may also examine individuals' actions as a way to test whether the beliefs in the state and in authority are empirically relevant. In reality, the state is *nothing more* than this amalgam of beliefs, as revealed by actions. This concept of the state is Weber's constructivism *avant la lettre*.

If the state is an amalgam of beliefs and actions, then its character must also be *fragmentary*. The 'real state' is fragmentary because not all actions oriented towards it are coherent, for two main reasons. On the one hand, the state, like many other associations, expects compliance with statutes that contradict each other. On the other hand, actions oriented towards the state may be *opportunistic*; that is, their authors may consider the state to be an instrument. For instance,

references to the state—or the national community—are frequently made to justify policies that only benefit particular interests; those references mutate when these interests change or new ones become predominant. Other actions are oriented towards empirically valid statutes enacted by the state, but aim at circumventing them, like those of a taxpayer who seeks legal advice on the safest way to evade taxes. Interestingly enough, Weber's distinction between the concept and the phenomenon is paralleled in the scholarship of other theorists, in particular Pierre Bourdieu (2012) and Michel Foucault (2004).

The emergence of internationalized rule

In order to illustrate some of the preceding points, we now turn to the politics of a group of states that we call 'internationalized states'. These cases will help us strengthen some of the arguments we made hitherto: the fragmentary character of what we usually call state; the fiction of state sovereignty; the range of state activities that are not backed by the threat of coercion.

In Mozambique, and a number of other sub-Saharan African states, up to 35 per cent of the central government budget stems from foreign donors. From this, almost ten per cent are direct contributions to the budget from a group of Western donors like European governments and IOs like the World Bank or the European Union. Germany, for instance, negotiates with the Mozambican government every third year about the policy sectors in which the donor should be more active. During the negotiations, the recipient country advances the proposals in the first place, but they have been previously drafted in a working group with the donor. Incidentally, this practice of preparing the blueprints is reminiscent of what Finnemore called 'persuasion'. She showed how, back in the 1950s, UNESCO officials wrote down legal proposals for countries like Lebanon, where its favoured scientific bureaucracy was to be enacted (1993, 587). Another similarity between both cases, now and previously, is the disparity between the donor and the recipient in terms of the specialized training of officials. These attempts to steer the policies of other states reveal how far we are from a negotiation among equals (Whitfield 2008).

The difficulties experienced by the recipient country in order to coordinate the different goals and preferences of donors are easy to imagine. In particular, many of these hurdles derive from the limited readiness of donors to compromise. Recipients must adapt to the statutes of donors, which rarely grant funds on an ad hoc basis, instead orientating their decisions towards strategic documents defined in the respective capital, according to their own planning procedures and time horizons (Schlichte and Veit 2012). Furthermore, all donors are themselves bound and inserted into other large plans, like the Millennium Development Goals, the Paris Declaration on Efficient Aid and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation. Encroachments upon the budget of a state are not exceptional, as every government within the Eurozone knows, but budgetary aid is also not an exception. It is in fact part of a wider industry called 'developmental' or 'humanitarian' aid. Worldwide, in 2009, funds for humanitarian action added up to about US\$16–18 billion per year (Donini 2010, 222) and those for peace-keeping up to US\$8 billion (Benner and Rotmann 2010, 115). More than 120,000 personnel, both civilian and military, are employed in development aid in Africa alone.

From our Weberian perspective, the reality of stateness in many countries is that even in crucial aspects—like the budget—they are not 'sovereign' but rather

heteronomous associations. In other words, these states orient their actions towards the statutes of third parties, in this case donor countries. If donor organizations, governments and IOs make a minimal effort to coordinate among themselves, the politicians and the officials in the recipient country *must* persuade themselves of the coincidence between their policy preferences and those of the donors. For their own part, donors orientate their decisions towards their own statutes and to those enacted by other associations, like the Millennium Development Goals. In a certain sense, both recipients and donors are heteronomous associations, but the donors first consented to the larger international plans while the recipients must adapt their *budgets* to the donors' respective aid policy. Of course, the numerous foreign statutes towards which the recipient country must orientate its decisions are not consistent, even less so the way and the degree to which they are actually enforced. All this adds to the fragmentary character of the state and makes clear the limited utility of assuming that a state is a unitary actor that pursues one goal or a consistent set of goals.

In the context of development aid, the threat of violence as a means to secure the enforcement of state statutes is also irrelevant. Even if we are dealing here with 'states', donors and recipients of aid do not wage war. If donor expectations are not fulfilled, the flow of aid may momentarily stop, aid workers may be invited to leave the country, the issue can be taken to arbitration etc, but violence is simply out of the question; because to what end is violence an appropriate means in this context of development aid? One of the conceptual implications thereof is that sociologically, if not legally, the interaction between a recipient country and a donor takes place in the same terms as between the recipient country and an IO or a foreign investor. Weber draws our attention towards *who* enacts statutes, who *obeys* them and *why*, rather than towards the threat of violence and towards fictions like state sovereignty. This is the wide scope of internationalized rule vis-à-vis the IR fixation with the relations among states that are defined by a monopoly of violence. In addition—and this is the argument of the next section—Weber's ideas about modern rule and the process of rationalization can be used to explore forms of international rule that go beyond the classical understanding of inter-state relations or are unrelated to issues of stateness.

A Weberian theory of a global rationalization

The worldwide ubiquity of apparently rational institutions has been explained by sociological institutionalism and neo-institutionalism as a consequence of the prestige of the science and of the activism of both idealistic NGOs and professional associations. By contrast, we argue here that the explanation for the isomorphisms among school systems, environmental policies or academic disciplines around the world should be found in the domination wielded by certain associations. This Weberian approach to the problem actually connects well with the Stanford School and its predecessors.

As David Strang and Meyer admit (1993, 491), they took the concept of isomorphism from Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell's organizational research, who, in turn, built their argument on a Weber's ideas on the drivers of rationalization. Their very selective reading was based on a few pages from *The protestant ethic* and from *Economy and society*; DiMaggio and Powell (1983, 150) did

not mention the several additional hundreds of pages written by Weber which are directly relevant to the problem of rationalization, and thus lack an overall interpretation of Weber's scholarship. Unsurprisingly, they fail to notice that their three types of isomorphisms actually boil down to Weber's concept of statute. In a similar fashion, DiMaggio and Powell affirm that one of the 'great rationalizers of the second half of the twentieth century' is professions. However, the alleged novelty of this claim is based on ignoring that, in *Economy and society*, Weber explored at length the connection between professions and *rational* domination which relies on officials who consider their office to be their single or main *profession* (1983, 147). On this, Weber is fairly clear: a profession is 'a *rationally* augmented quotidian action' (our emphasis; 1986b, 263; 1946, 291). In addition, candidates to become members of a cadre are selected because of their ability to *fulfil* a certain job; that is, according to a means–end rationality. In other words, the expansion of rational domination is based on bureaucracies staffed by professionals. By engaging with DiMaggio and Powell, rather than with Weber, Meyer and his co-authors incur the same confusion between rationalization and bureaucratization as the two authors of 'The iron cage revisited'.

No matter how flawed DiMaggio and Powell's account is, the pivotal element in Meyer's explanation of isomorphism is also the profession. According to Meyer's argument, professional associations and, in particular, the associations of a specific type of professionals—namely, scientists—account for the worldwide rise of comparable, purportedly rational, institutions in all or most nation-states which add up to a 'world culture'. Among those institutions are primary and secondary schools as well as university curricula, environmental policies and textbooks. In these and many other respects, cross-country isomorphisms will be a consequence of the activities of 'rationalized others', which is the term they use to refer to professional and scientific organizations and NGOs (Meyer 1994, 47; Meyer et al 1997a, 162). These 'rationalized others' are globally active actors who not only embody rationality, but are also altruistic; that is, they are not supposed to have interests of their own (Meyer and Jepperson 2000, 115). In the words of Meyer et al, 'the dependence of the modern world on rationalized scientific culture' (1997b, 647) makes it difficult for nation-state governments to ignore the advice of professional and scientific organizations that are considered to be part of 'world culture' (1997a, 166). Because states everywhere adopt the same ideas coined by a limited number of experts, the same policies—isomorphisms—can be detected across the world. More recently, Meyer has argued that NGOs, professional associations, consultants, etc, characterized by altruism or the 'absence of petty self-interests', constitute 'expanded versions of otherhood' that establish rational standards considered binding by most nation-states (2010, 7, 12, 14–15). Even if a connection between altruism and professions actually exists (Merton and Gieryn 1982), we have no reason to assume that professional associations are deprived of their own interests and agendas. To put Meyer's point in a nutshell, the existence of a 'world culture' driven by altruism and 'Otherhood' accounts for the advance of rationality and the diffusion of isomorphisms.

We want to propose a different, Weberian, understanding of the global 'rationalization' process. Admittedly, he uses the term in a famously vague way (Kalberg 1980, 1169–1177; Schluchter 1989, 100). We limit ourselves to the question of why the worldwide tendency towards *formal* rationalization seems so strong as to appear unavoidable; more detailed accounts of Weber's theory of

rationalization are available elsewhere (Roth and Schluchter 1979). 'Tendency' conveys the idea that a development in a certain direction exists, even if this should *not* be understood in terms of a *necessity*, historical or evolutionary. This tendency is composed by two empirically interrelated processes: the formal codification of laws and procedures in statutes and the use of numerical codes in the representation of the social for administrative purposes. Both are part and parcel of rational domination. But whose actions promote formal rationalization so consistently across time and space as to become a worldwide tendency?

The leaders and the cadres of associations are the main sponsors of formal rationalization (Weber 1988b, 322–323; 1994b, 146–147). Driven mainly by two types of associations, the state and the capitalist enterprise, the rational, purposeful and written codification of aims and procedures in statutes pervades all spheres of life in modern societies. We previously explained that these regulations have effects beyond the boundaries of the associations that enact them, mostly because the leader and the administrative staff also try to move third parties to observe the regulations. Obviously, an administrative cadre that is committed to enforcing the statutes of the association and endowed with additional means of domination will contribute decisively to the global diffusion of formally rational institutions that Meyer et al called isomorphisms. To sum up, associations increase the predictability and similarity of individual actions, by establishing in statutes what cadres, members and third parties should do, and by providing their officials with the means for a rational domination. In the next section, we show how the domination wielded by associations—of professionals and other types—explains the global diffusion of isomorphisms.

Foundation and professions as 'rationalized others'?

As an example of the insights provided by a Weberian account of the expansion of rationality, we offer a brief account of how philanthropic foundations have shaped the worldwide diffusion of professions, with an emphasis on 'formal rationality' and on the social sciences. In addition, we will also show how professional associations do not embody institutionalized altruism, but are instruments to advance their leaders' careers and research agendas. This choice of 'cases' to illustrate our points is not casual, but an attempt to pick two 'extreme cases'. According to the Stanford School, scientists—and their professional organizations—are supposed to be interested only in the search for truth. As for philanthropic foundations, they are, at least according to their charters, deprived of other concerns beyond promoting 'the well-being of mankind throughout the world' (Rockefeller Foundation [RF]) and 'the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding' (Carnegie Corporation).

By contrast, our goal in this article is to highlight how *concrete* associations, not 'rationalized others' (Meyer 1994, 47; Meyer et al 1997a, 162), diffuse (formal) rationality. Another point we want to advance is that, in opposition to certain claims (Meyer and Jepperson 2000, 115), the importance of altruism or 'voluntaristic eagerness with which people and groups … espouse models of … rationalized actorhood' (Meyer 2010, 12) is negligible when compared with institutionalized power relations, that is, domination, and interests. We need a political interpretation of how different 'rationalizations' are imposed and transmitted which should not be based on eschewing the question of who obeys and why.

Put another way, the following is a micro-account of how foundations established relations of domination with their foreign partners in order to pursue donors' statutory goals that were from the beginning more specific than the mere practice of altruism. As a result, they 'created' almost anew, and then fostered, the international expansion of certain professions. While this is our interpretation, most of the following factual account is considered uncontroversial among experts.

Even if IR scholars have paid almost no attention to philanthropic foundations, they possess a particular relevance for the international diffusion of professional ideas (including the study of IR; Berman 1983; Gilman 2003; Guilhot 2011). Professions had been a concern of the large US-based philanthropic foundations since very early in those foundations' histories. During the Progressive Era (1870–1914), the rationalization of professions like doctors and social workers received a first impulse (Siegfrist 2001) which some foundations later replicated by defining the training necessary to access new professions, like sociologist, political scientist and international lawyer. Arguably, the most crucial intervention of the foundations took place through the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), where, among other things, the quantitative methodological standards for sociologists and political scientists were defined (Fisher 1993; Turner 1999). These skills were a necessary means to study political behaviour and public opinion but their quantitative character granted a scientific outlook and 'rational' basis to the new disciplines. In the future, part of the requisites required to become a social scientist would be familiarity with quantitative methods and with cognate theoretical paradigms like behaviourism (Platt 1998a; Turner and Turner 1990). What seems obvious to us was, at the time, a novelty and a decision made by only a few foundation officers.

These transformations created conflicts and their outcomes can only be explained by using concepts like domination. Within sociology and political science, the SSRC distributed resources to members who were coopted into the committees according to no clear criteria. Other scholars were excluded or marginalized if they were critical of what the most influential committee members, the SSRC and the foundation officials considered *the* consensus. A well-known instance is the work of the Committee on Comparative Politics (CCP), chaired by Gabriel Almond (1954–1963), and its concept of political development, which was ruthlessly advanced by excluding scholars with different opinions (Gilman 2003, 122, 137). By the mid-1970s, the foundations had already dispersed this blend throughout the world as the recipe to understand politics in developing countries. By that time, this version of modernization theory had been fully discredited back at home; one of the reasons being the readiness of the theory's promoter to deliver scholarly products that could be useful for US foreign policy (Gilman 2003, 174–190).

The modernization theory and other US theories among Latin American comparatists and IR scholars proliferated thanks to the experience that foundations already had in scientific planning, both in the US and in the region. Part of the philanthropic goals of foundations was to offer a liberal, US-made alternative to Marxist social science (Morcillo Laiz 2014). In fact, since the early 1940s, the Rockefeller and other foundations had supported elite research centres with small teaching programmes, like El Colegio de México and the Escola de Sociologia e Política de São Paulo and, later, the Instituto Di Tella in Argentina. Applications that were formally submitted by the recipients were moulded beforehand by the foundation officials; incidentally, this was also done by aid

donors and UNESCO officials. In this manner, they contributed to the dispersion of 'isomorphic' associations across the continent, through which the foundations also introduced professions, like the 'scientific' sociologist and the IR scholar. Foundations were involved to such a degree, financially and organizationally, in these new research centres that the director of the Centro de Estudios Internacionales (CEI) at a public organization like El Colegio de México sent long letters to a high-ranking RF officer in New York, bypassing the director of El Colegio. This displacement of allegiance towards the donor is less surprising if we considered that the CEI was at the time a heterocephalous association, since the RF had in practice chosen the first head of department (Morcillo Laiz 2014).

In the crucial case of Argentina, foundation officials studiously picked the person who was most open to quantitative methods, Gino Germani, as their proteǵé. After reforming the sociology curriculum at a public organization, the Universidad de Buenos Aires, he founded a sociological research centre at Instituto Di Tella. Despite his broad familiarity with the sociological tradition, Germani wrote papers in the jargon of the CCP that brought him so much support from the US that he was elevated from a secondary figure to chairman of the Argentinean sociology association (Pereyra 2010). In reality, he founded *his* Asociación Sociológica Argentina as an alternative instrument to the pre-existing Sociedad Sociológica Argentina, which was controlled by the established main figure, Alfredo Poviñ a. After becoming the main official of a national professional association, Germani managed more easily to obtain different positions within the International Sociological Association (ISA) from which he managed to demote Poviñ a to the International Institute of Sociology. At the time, this club of sociological notables was in notorious decline, among other reasons because its members, like Conrado Gini, were marred by a pro-fascist past. In a parallel fashion, the activities of ISA were hampered by Cold War divisions later on (Platt 1998b).

To sum up, the foundations, the SSRC and its committees lacked anything but their own interests. Their statutes were defined first nationally and then implemented abroad by allocating resources to the most apt individuals who were also ready to adapt to their agendas and to coax third parties (such as other Argentinean sociologists) into them. The protégé of the foundation instrumental-ized the national professional associations as well as the international ones. Both were used by leaders and officials to advance their interests, and were, in any case, hampered by global political conflicts, of which they were part and parcel. For professional associations, just like for philanthropic foundations, statutes specify what exactly the equivalent of 'the interest of the state in itself' should be (Offe 1975, 13). Even if an individual establishes a foundation, engages in an NGO or works for their country's development policy for altruistic motives, this does not mean that the actions of these associations (*Verbandshandeln*) will possess the same properties. In fact, from our perspective here, there is no altruistic associational action; once altruism is incorporated into the statutes of an association, to 'implement' this altruism will become the material and, perhaps, ideal interest of the leader and the members of the cadre.

Conclusion

In this article, we have claimed that the IR discipline should attempt to take full advantage of Max Weber's foundational contribution to the social sciences. From

the advantage of his *Basic concepts*, we are able to see how 'sovereign' states abide by the statutes enacted by other associations like states, IOs and philanthropic foundations, whose goals get inserted in, and supplant, those which would have been pursued by the state acting on its own. Interestingly, states turn other states into heteronomous associations without resorting to the threat of violence that has gained an undue importance in our understanding of the state. Instead, beliefs about the means of rational domination deserve more attention, because the core of the hard power of the state with monopoly of legitimate violence is the *tranquil* strength of the cadre, endowed with its superbly trained officials, technical knowledge and money.

Associations with altruistic goals, like those stipulated in development policies and in the charter of philanthropic foundations, pursue their objectives as relentlessly as capitalist enterprises pursue profit; they constitute the interests of the leaders, whose realization becomes the interest of the cadre. Some associations possess a markedly international focus; their statutes specify global aspirations that lead to 'isomorphic' results across the globe. The explanation of these apparent similarities is not so much altruism, or persuasion, as domination.

Our argument on the international diffusion of rational domination goes beyond the process that Weber explicitly detected in all modern states, even if it is grounded in his ideas. In our discipline, 'international' means going beyond the state frontiers, as established legally in international treaties. But, in many contexts, it would be more appropriate to focus on domination or internationa-lized rule. This wider concept, relevant across time and space, refers to empirically relevant social relations; it is ignorant of territorial borders and juridical a prioris that regularly mislead us to claims like, to quote Finnemore (1993, 571), 'Mozambique and the United States may be very different states, but they are both states nonetheless.' By focusing on rational *domination*, we, as social scientists, may finally get rid of concepts that are not only historically and spatially bound, but also reified.

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