

## Internal Dynamics as Drivers of Change in International Organizations: The Economists' Takeover at the World Bank

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*Abstract:* Using the largely untapped episode of the reconstruction of the World Bank's Economics Department in the mid-1960s, this article aims to augment our theoretical and empirical understanding of intra-organizational change in international organizations (IOs). By analyzing the instruments and mechanisms of dynamic staff agency, it highlights the capacity of norm entrepreneurs, professional groups, and internal administrative units to shape activities and initiate a change of IOs. The article makes a case for a more dynamic constructivist approach to the study of IOs and their ecosystems.

*Keywords:* World Bank, International Organizations, Constructivism, Organizational Ecosystem, International Public Administration

### Interne Dynamiken als Treiber von Wandel in internationalen Organisationen: Die Übernahme der Ökonomen bei der Weltbank

*Zusammenfassung:* Anhand der weitgehend unerschlossenen Episode des Wiederaufbaus der Weltbank Mitte der 1960er Jahre, vertieft dieser Artikel unser theoretisches und empirisches Verständnis des intraorganisatorischen Wandels in internationalen Organisationen (IO). Durch die Analyse der Instrumente und Mechanismen der dynamisch Personalvertretung wird die Fähigkeit von Normunternehmern, Berufsgruppen und internen Verwaltungseinheiten hervorgehoben, Aktivitäten zu gestalten und Veränderungen in IO zu initiieren. Der Artikel plädiert für einen dynamisch-konstruktivistischen Ansatz bei der Untersuchung internationaler Organisationen und ihrer Ökosysteme.

*Schlüsselwörter:* Weltbank, internationale Organisationen, Konstruktivismus, Organisatorisches Ökosystem, Internationale öffentliche Verwaltung

### Les dynamiques internes comme moteurs de changement des organisations internationales: la prise de pouvoir des économistes à la Banque mondiale

*Résumé :* À travers le cas peu connu de la reconstruction du Département des affaires économiques de la Banque mondiale au milieu des années 1960, cet article vise à élargir notre compréhension théorique et empirique du changement intra-organisationnel dans les organisations internationales (OI). En analysant les instruments et les mécanismes de l'agence dynamique du personnel, il révèle la capacité des entrepreneurs de normes, des groupes professionnels et des unités administratives internes à façonner les activités et introduire des changements dans les OI. De cette façon, l'article plaide pour une approche constructiviste plus dynamique dans l'étude des organisations internationales et de leurs écosystèmes.

*Mots-clés :* Banque Mondiale, organisations internationales, constructivisme, écosystème organisationnel, administration publique internationale

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## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Before Irving Friedman joined the World Bank in 1964, he had met for lunch with George Woods, the then-president of the Bank (1963–1968), who wanted to convince Friedman to accept the job of being his economic advisor. At that time, however, the position of economists and the role of economic analysis at the Bank was markedly different from what it is today. Nowadays, the World Bank is often portrayed as the reign of economists and it enjoys a considerable power in the discourse on economic development with scholars describing it as “an arbiter of development knowledge” (Bazbauers 2016, 410) and “the research powerhouse of the development world” (Broad 2006, 397). Yet, nothing like this was true before the re-emergence of the Bank’s research department (the Economics Department) in the mid-1960s. Friedman was about to learn that “it would be a demotion in the Bank to be called an economist [...] and death for a career” (Friedman 1974, 23–24). Thus, upon accepting Woods’s offer, Friedman helped to initiate the elevation of economists and economic analysis to the top levels of the Bank’s operations with considerable consequences on the Bank’s activities.

This largely untapped episode of the establishment of the Bank’s economic capabilities presents an interesting puzzle for theoretical approaches employed by scholars of international organizations (IOs), especially those which assume a monolithic nature of IOs and the decisive role of states on their behavior (Keohane and Nye 1971; Mearsheimer 1994/1995; Krasner 1995; Lake and McCubbins 2006; Rittberger et al. 2006; Da Conceição-Heldt 2010). On the contrary, the changes described in this article were primarily driven by events inside the Bank, without guidelines from the Bank’s shareholders, and without following an explicit reorganization strategy promoted by senior management. Such endogenous dynamics often escape the notice of the mentioned theoretical perspectives (Koch 2013). Approaches building on the insights coming from organizational sociology try to account for the inner dynamics of the IOs in analyzing their change and behavior (for a literature review see Badache and Kimber, this issue), yet these approaches often remain overly concerned with structural features of the organizational environment and are generally inward-looking, ignoring the larger organizational ecosystem. The individuals working at IOs are usually analyzed as a more or less homogeneous group or a component of an organization labeled “staff”. Attempts to introduce a more agency-focused view on IOs staff members often present a too narrow and overly

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schematic conceptualization of their behavior (some of the exceptions are Kardam 1993; Chwierothe 2008; Weaver 2008; Alacevich 2016; Nay 2020; Moloney 2022).

Using the reconstruction of the World Bank's Economics Department as a case in point, this article aims at improving our theoretical and empirical understanding of intra-organizational change of IOs. It analyzes the instruments and mechanisms of dynamic staff agency and highlights the capacity of norm entrepreneurs, professional groups, and internal administrative units to shape activities and initiate a change of IOs. From a theoretical perspective, insights from organizational sociology on bureaucratic culture, internal norms, and institutional resilience elicit a more dynamic constructivist approach to the study of IOs and their ecosystems (Nay 2020; Dairon and Badache 2021). The empirical analysis, besides illustrating the theoretical points on an overlooked episode of the Bank's organizational life, also contributes to the examination of the role of economists and economic expertise in IOs, a field opened up by Bob Coats (1986; 1996) on which the archival research is still limited.<sup>2</sup>

The next section constructs a theoretical framework pursuant to sociological perspectives on organizations to the study of IOs. It emphasizes the bureaucratic and cultural features of IOs and their ecosystems and underlines the possibilities and limits of dynamic staff agency. The complex image of an organization arising from the theoretical section serves as the guideline for the subsequent empirical analysis of the reconstruction of the Economics Department at the World Bank in the mid-1960s. The last section concludes.

## 2 Theorizing Change in International Organizations

### 2.1 IOs as Autonomous Bureaucratic Actors: The Birth of Constructivism

The theoretical analysis of IOs experienced an interesting evolution throughout past decades. Although it would seem natural for the scholarship to develop inside the field of international relations (IR), Verbeek aptly pointed out that the study of IOs had for a long time been considered as “the ugly duckling of the discipline of international relations” (1998, 11). Due to the prevailing statist ontology of the IR scholarship, IR scholars conceptualized IOs as unitary, monolithic objects whose operational autonomy was significantly constrained by their member states. Therefore, they ignored IOs as bureaucratic actors in their own right (Ness and Brechin 1988; Brechin and Ness 2013; Koch 2013) and mainly focused on the political dynamics among states taking place “under the roof” of IOs. Although the scholarship prioritized the position of states in the analysis of IOs' behavior, stud-

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2 Coats had written extensively on the institutionalization and professionalization of economics and on the role of economists and their expertise in the public sector (1978; 1993; 2000). Berman (2022) provides a recent examination of the role of economic expertise in the US public sector.

ies based on principal-agent (PA) theory also provided the theoretical possibility of IOs acting as autonomous actors (Nielson and Tierney 2003; Hawkins et al. 2006; Tamm and Snidal 2014).

Yet once it was theoretically conceivable that IOs can act as autonomous agents, questions such as how IOs form their preferences, how and why they undergo changes, what inner processes shape their behavior, and which factors influence the ideas that IOs promote on the global scene surfaced. However, the scholarship suffered from its narrow view of IOs as facilitators of negotiations among states facing collective action problems, and the PA model generally failed in accounting for what the IOs do with their autonomy (Chwieroth 2008). To answer these newly emerged questions, scholars needed to look beyond IR to discover new perspectives and analytical tools.

The work of Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore showed the potential of sociologically-inspired views of IOs. Building upon their central thesis stating that “we can better understand what IOs *do* if we better understand what IOs *are*” (2004, 9, emphasis in the original) they started bridging the gap between organizational sociology and IOs scholarship by reconceptualizing IOs as “autonomous and powerful actors in global politics” (1999, 700) and thus directly challenging the predominant view, especially in the IR discipline. Their work has quickly become one of the most influential applications of sociologically-inspired perspectives in the IOs scholarship and served as the foundational basis for the so-called constructivist approach to the study of IOs.<sup>3</sup> What had once been perceived as a nearly insurmountable distance between the study of IOs and organizational sociology (Ness and Brechin 1988) began to shrink. As shown in the introduction to the present Special Issue (Badache and Kimber, this issue), studies of IOs using the concepts and theories from organizational sociology penetrated the field. Furthermore, the recognition of IOs as *organizations* recently inspired studies, which analyze international bureaucracies relying on the insights from the field of Public Administration (see Eckhard and Ege 2016; Bauer et al. 2017; Fleischer and Reiners 2021; Thorvaldsdottir et al. 2021).

Alongside opening the “black box” of IOs and acknowledging their bureaucratic setting as inescapable for the analysis of IOs behavior, the sociologically-inspired scholarship highlighted the importance of organizational culture and its effects on the behavior and functioning of IOs. The study of cultural features – such as shared ideas about the objectives of the organization, routinized patterns of interaction, and standard operating procedures – and their impact on the behavior of organizations has a long tradition in organizational sociology, especially among (neo)institutional theorists (see Selznick 1957; Meyer and Rowan 1977; DiMaggio

3 The constructivist approach takes its name from social constructivism, a sociological approach that emphasizes social constructs such as shared meanings, identities, norms, and other ideational factors in the analysis of social reality (Berger and Luckmann 1967). Regardless of the similarities, it should not be confused with the constructivist theory in IR, which has its origins in the work of Alexander Wendt (1999) and focuses on shared identities in international politics.

and Powell 1983; Meyer and Scott 1983). Following the early efforts of Berger and Luckmann (1967), institutionalists stressed the importance of regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive aspects of organizations and research on organizational culture thus tended to focus on symbolic elements, traditions, organizational practices, schemas and typifications (see Albert and Whetten 1985; Dutton et al. 1994; Scott 1995; 2004). From these discussions, organizational culture developed into a complex phenomenon; a product of collectively shared beliefs and internal conflicts that becomes institutionalized and passed on as the rules, rituals, and values of the bureaucracy (Vaughan 1996). Once entrenched, organizational culture provides the individuals working in the organization with the appropriate sets of actions, strategies, interpretations, and constraints.

Barnett, Finnemore, and other scholars who have been bringing the insights from organizational sociology to the study of IOs rightly point out that individuals with a diverse professional background, who are often integrated into different administrative units in IOs, can “develop their own cognitive frameworks that are consistent with but still distinct from those of the larger organization” (Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 39; see also Martin and Siehl 1983; Kardam 1993; Reinalda and Verbeek 2004; Sarfaty 2009). Lines of conflict between different units, departments, and divisions as well as between different professions and expertise are constitutive of the character of the organization and its bureaucratic culture (Trondal et al. 2010). Due to these clashes among different internal subgroups with overlapping and often contradictory sets of preferences, organizational coherence is an accomplishment rather than a given. Hierarchical control is thus always incomplete, creating “pockets of autonomy and political battles within the bureaucracy” (Barnett and Finnemore 1999, 724). This point is especially valid for compounded IOs such as the World Bank, which are often large, complex organizations with porous managerial structures and blurred multilayered divisions of executive authority (Trondal et al. 2010; Moloney 2022). If one wants to analyze the behavior and developments of such IOs, the usual assumption that IOs change because their stakeholders want them to change becomes insufficient. The reconceptualization of IOs as bureaucracies demands combining the analysis of exogenous factors with the analysis of the endogenous dynamics, which translates the exogenous factors into the life of the IO.

## 2.2 Accounting for Dynamic Agency and Organizational Ecosystems: Towards a Refined Sociological Perspective of IOs

In analyzing endogenous organizational changes, the constructivist approach towards IOs resorts to the concept of a norm entrepreneur, i.e. an inner actor who pursues changes in organizational culture in order to achieve a change of behavior of the IO. The success of norm entrepreneurs in promoting new cultural features depends on their discursive influence within the organization, which enables them to outperform the advocates of alternative views (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998;

Chwierothe 2008). However, organizational culture, once firmly rooted, becomes quite stable and robust as the prevailing cultural features will resist attempts of radical modifications (Momani 2005). By taking on a specific bureaucratic culture, the organization develops a concern for self-maintenance and acquires a distinguishable identity (Hatch and Schultz 2002; Pullen and Linstead 2005). Scott observes that “[m]aintaining the organization is no longer simply an instrumental matter of survival but becomes a struggle to preserve a set of unique values” (1995, 18–19). Organizational culture can therefore rarely be manipulated easily, even by powerful principals, and the changes are typically slow, path-dependent, and often come as incremental alterations in response to current deficiencies (March and Simon 1958; Martin and Siehl 1983; Kapur 2000; Leiteritz 2005; Nielson et al. 2006).

A classic dilemma of agency versus structure arises from the debates on the role and practices of norm entrepreneurs (Crozier and Friedberg 1980; Giddens 1984; Sewell 1992). If the organizational culture is constitutive of the behavior of the organization’s officials, how can they act as agents and change it? This dilemma is only reinforced by prominent approaches among institutional theories that have adopted a rather deterministic view about the extent to which institutions shape agents’ behavior (Bell 2011). One way of softening the dilemma is to better understand the behavior of norm entrepreneurs in IOs, especially during episodes of large organizational transformations. How these actors promote their viewpoints, how they are constrained by the organizational settings, how they select strategies of their action and what determines the success of these strategies – answering questions of this sort, both on the theoretical and empirical level, would contribute to the refinement of the constructivist approach to IOs, which has so far left these questions largely untouched. Quite the contrary, the IOs constructivists – together with institutional theorists in general – often tend to overlook the possibilities of staff strategic agency (Fligstein and McAdam 2012). As observed by Chwierothe, in the constructivist analyses of IOs “[s]taff are depicted as overly socialized creatures of habit that are incapable of looking beyond a particular world view and guided solely by the ‘logic of appropriateness’. An unduly static understanding of staff behavior ... plagues work on organizational culture” (2008, 492). In a similar vein, Nair observes that “[w]hile [international] bureaucrats’ servant performances are widely acknowledged, we know very little about how bureaucrats actually perform servant roles, the mental, physical, and emotional labor that goes into staging them, and their effects in enabling bureaucrats to do more than what meets the eye” (2020, 586).

Besides the focus on the “micro-sociological lens on bureaucracy” (Nair 2020; Dairon, this issue; Christian, this issue), the dynamic agency and bureaucratic maneuvering of IOs norm entrepreneurs, broadening the analytical perspective to account for larger organizational ecosystems might also prove useful in refining our sociological understanding of IOs. The organizational ecosystems are made up of individual and collective actors such as experts, academic communities, professional

networks, and non-governmental organizations, which operate in its immediate environment (Nay 2020). Most importantly, the ecosystem also comprises the organization with its internal administrative units and gives it the central position in the analysis. This helps the analysis not to lose sight of the organization under investigation, which is often the case of other approaches focusing on organizational environments that stress the structural features of organizational fields or international regimes (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Scott 1995; Verbeek 1998; Fligstein and McAdam 2012; Greenwood et al. 2014). Recent work employing the concept of organizational ecosystem demonstrates its potential for the IO scholarship (Nay 2020; Dairon and Badache 2021).

The following investigation of the reconstruction of the World Bank's Economics Department in the mid-1960s adopts the refined constructivist approach discussed here. It relies on documents from the World Bank Group Archives and oral records of selected Bank's personnel from the World Bank's Oral History Program, especially those of Irving Friedman and Andrew Kamarck, the main proponents of the reconstruction. The historical interpretation of these documents brings attention to internal debates at the Bank and provides the analysis of endogenous dynamics sparking change of an IO.

### 3 Building Up the Economics Department: The Economists' Takeover at the World Bank

#### 3.1 The "Black's Bank"

Under the leadership of its third president Eugene Black (1949–1962), the World Bank developed a strong global reputation as a conservative financial institution with sound judgment when it came to loans and their execution (Alacevich 2009; 2016). The "Black's Bank" was primarily involved in large infrastructure investment projects around the world such as building roads and dams. Although such a modus operandi proved financially successful, the Bank struggled with finding new bankable projects as the borrowers' loan requests often lacked the satisfying quality, regardless of the Bank's incidental attempts to educate the officials from borrowing countries in order to improve the quality of their loans proposals. Among the many factors contributing to this situation was the Bank's professional profile. The investment projects were prepared and executed by the Bank's bankers, lawyers, and technical engineers, i.e. professions which were effectively in command of the Bank's operations. As observed by Friedman:

*The Bank was an institution of the highest kind of personal integrity, but the fact that you can go for seven years without making a loan to Brazil, or that you wouldn't make a loan to Greece because they still owed you five bucks*



*from pre-war debts, that didn't seem to bother them. They were just being good, hard-headed bankers. The idea that, in the meantime, you were losing the opportunity to help the economic or social development of a country, that wasn't their job.* (1974, 28)

At that time, the central Economic Staff unit consisted of only a few economists, who were “kept on the leash” (Kapur et al. 1997, 129) since the Bank’s reorganization in 1952. Central economists were not directly involved in the preparation and execution of loans and they mostly worked on the analysis of the creditworthiness of the borrowing countries (Alacevich 2016). Since this work was not directly linked to the Bank’s operations, the interest in the activities of the department was not overwhelming as can be read in the documents from that time (de Wilde 1962; Avramovic 1964). In the early 1960s, it was a department more in concept than in reality. In fact, the Economic Staff unit lacked the departmental status, it was not allowed to build up, and it did not have a permanent director. Several internal memos pointed out the unsatisfactory setup (de Wilde 1962; Avramovic 1964; Gilmartin 1964; Mason 1964), but the appropriate reaction was missing, mainly because Black seemed content to let the Bank run itself in his last years as the president, after he was slow to recover from a surgery (Oliver 1995). It was generally understood that new incentives will have to come with new leadership.

### 3.2 From a Bank to a Development Agency: Raising the Voice of Economists

When George Woods became the president of the World Bank during the time of renewed global interest in development, he came to the office with a vision of transforming the Bank into a development agency by strengthening the role of the International Development Association (IDA), the Bank’s affiliate, which provides zero to low-interest loans and grants for the poorest countries, and whose resources come from member states’ contributions. Woods was aware of the discouraging position of economists at the Bank and of the importance of economic analysis for his objectives. This importance was further reinforced when it was decided that the Bank’s president will be put in charge of the second IDA replenishment negotiations. The Bank had played a relatively passive role in the first replenishment, which was mainly the product of the US Treasury in consultation with other governments. Yet if the second IDA replenishment was to become a Bank-driven initiative, the Bank needed a position on how big it should be, how should the concessional money and grants be used, which countries could have access, and for what purposes (Friedman 1985/1986).

In Woods’s view, IDA eventually needed to become bigger than the Bank. He explained to Friedman that countries which could afford to service the Bank’s loans could get financing from other sources, but as he reportedly told Friedman “the IDA countries are the ones that no one is going to touch but us, so that’s where our



emphasis should be” (Friedman 1985/1986, 15). As the gap between developed and developing countries grew and gained attention in global politics, Woods saw IDA as the potential bridge between them, and he assigned Friedman to help him build this bridge by rehabilitating the role of economic analysis at the Bank (Friedman 1974).

Friedman, however, did not find a receptive audience at the World Bank, as the Bank’s officials were primarily oriented towards servicing infrastructure loans. They would have been able to “build a bridge”, but they were not particularly interested in analyzing the gap between the poor and rich countries or in its economic consequences. Furthermore, Friedman was viewed as an outsider who came into the established institution to a top managerial position closely linked to the president’s office, without first climbing the Bank’s career ladder, which caused some unease (Demuth 1985). Despite having a strong international reputation for his economic and managerial work at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and earlier at the US Treasury, he did not enjoy the benefits of this reputation inside the Bank (Friedman 1985/1986; 1985a). Partly for this reason, he decided to appoint Andrew Kamarck as the Director of the Economics Department in February 1965 (Friedman 1985/1986).

Kamarck was a long-time Bank insider who worked as the economic advisor to the African Department and was highly regarded both at the Bank and in the economics profession.<sup>4</sup> Notwithstanding having him in the lead, however, only around one quarter of the professional staff with a Ph.D. in economics was willing to participate in the restructuring of the Economics Department. When Kamarck pondered the idea of bringing all economists from area and project departments to the central Economics Department from where they would be seconded to other departments, he quickly realized that “[h]ad they come [in], they probably would have sabotaged the program” (1985a, 24). Many of them liked their job of being economic advisors and a lot of them were skeptical that the central economic department would survive. When asked about his beginnings at the Bank, Friedman recalled in an interview for the Oral History Program that “a lot of people came and spoke to me ... about how I wasn’t going to last and why did I bother coming here ... and [that] I’d be out of a job in a few months because [of] all the tightness of the place, the princes and the dukes of the place [who] would regard this as a threat” (Friedman 1985/1986, 54).

Once it became clear that it would not be possible to staff the Economics Department from the inside, Friedman, Kamarck, and other likeminded economists started recruiting from the outside, especially from academia (de Vries 1986). Their personal professional reputation as economists soon proved to be essential, especially if compared to the World Bank’s reputation, which in the economics profession

4 Upon his arrival, Friedman asked selected people in the Bank to put down the names of five people whom they would regard as being most qualified to be the head of the Economics Department. Among others like Dragoslav Avramovic, John Adler and Gerald Alter, Andrew Kamarck was consistently either first or second on all the lists (Friedman 1985/1986).

was that of a place where good economists do not work (Friedman 1985a). In fact, professors of economics at Harvard University still remembered Kamarck from the time he had studied there, which enabled him to have their best students recommended for Bank's positions. Similarly, Friedman contacted people he knew from government agencies and international organizations.<sup>5</sup> Other economists and even new recruits were sending letters, asking their fellows for names of people who would be interested in working at the Bank and offering jobs to recommended candidates (Reutlinger 1968).

This semi-concerted effort resulted in a rapid growth of the department – in 4 years, more than 200 people were hired, which alone increased the staff of the Bank by 25 % (Oliver 1995). It is noteworthy that the hiring process did not follow any managerial strategy as the speed was more important than organizational clarity or strategy of staffing. Kamarck saw the window of opportunity provided by the enormous expansion of the budget and he wanted to fill the open positions as soon as possible. At the same time, the guidance of the department coming from the top managerial levels weakened. Woods, who did not want to be involved in the organizational aspects of the Economics Department in the first place, became largely preoccupied with the problems of the IDA replenishment (Alter 1985; Oliver 1995) and Friedman began to focus almost exclusively on his so-called Supplementary Finance Scheme proposal.<sup>6</sup> Importantly, member states also did not interfere in the building-up of the department. As Friedman pointed out: “[w]ere completely protected from any interference by governments; we never went to a government to ask to recommend anybody; we never even went to them for references” (1985/1986, 57–58).

### 3.3 “A Very Elaborate Bureaucratic Game”

With the rapid growth of the department, tensions emerged between economists from the area departments and the centralized economic staff of the Economics Department. This was accompanied by the deficient organizational mandate of Friedman. In his position of The Economic Advisor to the President, Friedman was formally responsible for all economic work done at the Bank, including the work done at area departments, although he did not have the administrative control over it (Friedman 1985/1986). Since many area economists thought it was wrong for the Bank to be concerned with the economic analysis of the sort generated by the Economics Department, they preferred to consult their own directors, who also often did not appreciate the new economic work and were reluctant to participate in it (Oliver 1995).

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5 See the correspondence related to the recruitments in the archival collection at World Bank Group Archives on the activities of the Economics Department, Folder IDs: 1069863 and 1790412.

6 The Supplementary Finance Scheme was an attempt to deal with unexpected shortfalls of export revenues of developing countries.

This resulted in “a very elaborate bureaucratic game” (Friedman 1985b, 33). In front of Woods, people would not disagree with Friedman, but then they refused to cooperate in practice. If a department director was in favor of the increased role of economic analysis in the Bank, his economists would cooperate, but if he opposed it, his economists tended to be less cooperative (Friedman 1985b). Friedman tried to elevate the status of area economists by making them deputy directors of their departments and therefore by creating a joint leadership of the operational and economic side, but as he noted: “I never could get that accepted even when Woods was there. I was constantly opposed by people who muttered that economists were meant to be advising, that’s all” (1985b, 32).

One attempt to reconcile the differences among economists based in different organizational units and thus strengthen the unified professional identity of economists at the Bank was the revitalization of the Economic Committee. The idea was to create a space where economists from all departments could meet, consult their work, and discuss issues with other economists who faced similar or related problems under different circumstances (Oliver 1995). To further facilitate the contacts among economists, Kamarck even initiated an informal monthly luncheon for all the senior economists in the Bank. This turned out to be successful in improving the cooperation among economists and the administration department supported the idea so strongly that it approved adding the costs to the Bank’s budget for the first few years. Kamarck also tried to convince the directors of area departments to have monthly lunches with him, but many of them refused to attend (Kamarck 1985a).

As more and more economists were willing to actively participate in the meetings of the Economic Committee, the resistance towards it on the part of economists faded away and it was the centralized economics staff that was gaining the organizational ground as opposed to area economists. Even Sydney Cope, the director of the European Department and a strong adversary of the new dynamics of economic analysis at the Bank, gradually looked to the central economic staff to provide him with economic reports, as his department was constantly shriveling, and he was giving up his economists (Kamarck 1985b).

While tensions among economists weakened, the conflict between economists and other professional groups at the Bank became central as the revitalized Economic Committee was put on a par with the Loan Committee (Kamarck 1985a). The Loan Committee had the constitutional responsibility of recommending a loan for approval to the Board of Governors and it was thus directly involved in the Bank’s operations. If Bank’s officials wanted to have a loan proposal accepted, they first needed the approval of the Loan Committee. But now the revitalized Economic Committee also had to give its approval and both committees needed to collaborate on a joint memorandum for the Board of Governors. While the Loan Committee discussed the economics of the project, the Economic Committee discussed the

economics of the country and addressed the question of whether the loan proposal was sound from the point of view of development economics (Friedman 1985b).

Such a step represented a real organizational innovation as it elevated the economic analysis to the top levels of the Bank's operations and redrew the lines of inner organizational conflict. In the view of its custodians, the role of Bank's economists could not only be providing a background for decisions. The Economic Committee thus became the answer to the question of how to build a mechanism into the World Bank so that the economic analysis of a country became a major element in its decision-making (Friedman 1985a). The idea of having economists operationally relevant – and also the reason why it had been so strongly opposed at the Bank – led to the attempt to reconfigure the Bank's established *modus operandi* from the Black's era. The goal of the Bank's activity was now supposed to be the economic development of countries accompanied by changes in their economic policies and loans were supposed to be the carrot (Oliver 1995). The World Bank, in other words, needed to create its own views on economic development issues and have its judgment on the appropriateness of countries' policies (Friedman 1964; Kamarck 1970).

### 3.4 The Evolution of Economic Analysis at the Bank: External Audiences and the Rise of Non-Operational Research

The Economics Department started developing these views by researching various aspects of economic development such as external debt structure, resource allocation, commodity economics, balance of payments pressures, and international capital movements (de Vries 1986). The scope of the work ranged from analyzing pricing policies for public services to the taxation of agriculture (The World Bank 1968). A major focus of the Bank's economic work was on country economic reports – which reviewed and evaluated the performance of developing countries – and on their comparative analysis. The department also started receiving requests from area departments to help them examine the public finance sector in the countries where their missions were going and provide these missions with economic data and statistical services (Kamarck 1986).

Although much of the work was intentionally done in order to be operationally as relevant as possible, the attentiveness of the Economics Department to the economic performance of developing countries went far beyond the Bank's immediate lending needs (Friedman 1967). At the same time, a lot of the work was often not directly visible to the executive officials at the Bank who sometimes struggled to realize that the reports they were getting were often prepared largely by the Economics Department. Friedman and Kamarck had to constantly educate the Executive Directors and the senior staff about what the central economists were doing (Friedman 1966; Kamarck 1966). The operational relevance of their work thus became crucial as the emerging Economics Department had to make a convincing case that

its cause is worthy of the attention and resources. Non-operational research did not thrive at the Bank. When Friedman recruited economist Guy Orcutt from Harvard to establish a long-term basic research program, there was virtually no support for it and Orcutt eventually left in despair (Friedman 1985a; Kamarck 1985b).

One strategy for improving the position of economic analysis inside the Bank was to build its reputation in its broader organizational ecosystem. Kamarck realized that “[i]t would help the economists in the Bank to have people outside the Bank recognize the work they were doing” (1985b, 23). To achieve this, the Bank’s publication program was established with the Occasional Papers series in 1966. The economic section was also added to the Bank’s Annual Report, which set the scene for later publications like the *World Bank Atlas*, *World Tables* and the flagship *World Development Report* (Kamarck 1985c). The Bank also started providing financial support to the academic world, which became appreciated especially in the 1970s when many US universities were beginning to feel the squeeze of accelerating inflation and started having difficulties raising funds for long-term research (Friedman 1985c). Kamarck also tried to establish closer research collaborations with other international organizations and development banks, yet the World Bank sometimes found itself ahead of time since some of these institutions had not built up their research capacities. The IMF’s economists were invited to participate in the meetings of the Economic Committee and cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization, UNESCO, and other UN bodies intensified. Outside academics were invited to give lectures and participate in Bank seminars and the Bank’s economists started to be approached by economists from universities and research centers around the world with requests to support and participate in their research or to give lectures and write articles on topics of their interest. Even some member states governments asked the Bank’s economists to help them with the consultation and preparation of their development plans (Kamarck 1970).

By the time Robert McNamara became the World Bank’s president in April 1968, the Bank had already built itself a reputation as the intellectual leader in economic analysis of the development world. Friedman recalled that “from then on, there was no intellectual controversy in development in which we were not deeply involved” (1985a, 36). An interesting reputational dynamic followed. The bigger the outside attention that the Bank’s research enjoyed, the more academic this research became, adapting to the needs and preferences of its main audience, which began to form in the Bank’s organizational ecosystem. While at the beginning it was important to connect the economic analysis to the Bank’s operational activities, it was not the primary objective by the late 1960s, when the Bank’s economists were already protected by their reputation embedded in the organizational ecosystem. The operational relevance of the Bank’s economic research could thus be weakened.

This development was paralleled by the increased role of the quantitative analysis at the Economics Department. Although quantitative analysis had always

been present in the economic work at the Bank, most of the economists were not econometricians and Friedman and Kamarck did not want to give the mathematical approaches to economic analysis the leading role at the department (Kamarck 1983; Friedman 1985a). However, the weakening of the link between economic analysis and the Bank's operations, together with the arrival of McNamara and his economic advisor Hollis Chenery, reinforced the quantitative work. The long-term research division was established within the Economics Department which further enervated the operational relevance of the economic work as, in Kamarck's words, the division "got colonized by the model builders ... Nothing useful has come out of it" (1985b, 22).

The Bank's economic research expanded enormously under McNamara, up to the point where the Bank arguably found itself facing the "capabilities trap", a situation where the presence of capabilities drives the desire to do more (Douglas 1986). Even some economists who originally contributed to the re-establishment of the Economics Department became skeptical of its new direction (Demuth 1985). Yet, the original bureaucratic culture centered around infrastructure projects was irrevocably dismantled. The voice of economists could no longer be ignored at the World Bank.

#### 4 Concluding Remarks: International Organizations Staff as Agents of Change

The World Bank's Economics Department underwent an extraordinary reconstruction in the mid-1960s. From being regarded primarily as "a training ground for recruits to other departments and as a storehouse of personnel to be made available for ad hoc assignments" (Mason 1964, 8), it became one of the central administrative units at the Bank with significant influence on the Bank's behavior and operations. A variety of factors contributed to the reconstruction, such as a combination of formal and informal structures that facilitated the interactions among economists in the Bank, the unified professional profile of the department derived from the recruitment process, which helped to generate a specific economic subculture in the organization, reforms in the routinized patterns of interactions and in the Bank's operating procedures that were supposed to fruitfully exploit the tensions between economists and other professional groups in the Bank, the astute leadership and agency of norm entrepreneurs promoting the reconstruction, as well as the general support from the president. The reestablishment of the Economics Department also highlighted the constraints and limits of cultural changes in complex bureaucracies like the World Bank, especially when these changes begin to question the principal objectives of these organizations.

Several points follow from the analysis. Firstly, it shows how focusing on internal debates and struggles leads to new understandings of the functioning and

development of IOs, which are largely missing in the mainstream theoretical and empirical work in the IOs field. Such endeavor enriches the scholarship on IOs, but also offers an exciting and comparatively underexplored research area to organizational sociologists. As pointed out by Brechin and Ness almost a decade ago, sociologists have largely failed to fully develop a sociology of IOs, arguably due to their view of “organizations as simply organizations regardless of their placement in specific typologies” (2013, 16). Yet IOs provide sociologists with the opportunity of applying their theories and analytical tools to complex bureaucratic environments compounded by fragmented social worlds, competing ideas, and people with different professional, cultural, and political background. By exploiting sociological insights for the improvements of our understanding of IOs, scholars can also sharpen and rethink these insights themselves.

Secondly, the article joins the calls for a more dynamic sociologically-inspired approach to IOs (Chwieroth 2008; Badache and Kimber, this issue). The refined perspective should elaborate on the entrepreneurial behavior of IOs’ insiders and deepen our understanding of when and how IO staff act as agents of change, under which conditions they succeed and which obstacles and limits they face. Although external factors and senior management remain crucial in analyses of IOs, women and men working in these organizations also have their say, which has been and continues to be rather overlooked. Connecting a better sociological understanding of the lives and works of international bureaucrats in IOs with established perspectives on the influence of leaders and external factors would provide a fuller and more complete view of IOs and allow us to analyze them in all their complexity.

Thirdly, strictly focusing on the dynamics within the organization may result in a too-narrow analytical grasp. The strategies and choices of IO insiders are linked to the organizational ecosystem and IOs scholars, regardless of their professional background, should therefore accommodate the immediate organizational environment to their analyses. Finally, more empirical work showing the novel insight and otherwise unattainable understandings that come with the refined constructivist approach is needed. Larger historical studies based on archival documents would be especially helpful in analyzing the combination of the external factors with the endogenous developments throughout episodes of substantial organizational transformations as well as throughout the periods of stability and consolidation.

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