

Time and Space in the Study of International Organizations: An Introduction

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Abstract

In the study of international organizations (IOs), time and space have mostly been approached as contextual, even implicit and unrelated, factors. Instead this special issue considers them as co-constitutive of multilateralism and investigates three main questions: (i) How are IOs influenced by time and space? (ii) How are time and space experienced within IOs? (iii) How do IOs influence time and space around them? This introductory article compiles the contributions' findings and points to a cyclical process: IOs are influenced by the spatiotemporal conditions of their enactment, leading to a diversity of practices and experiences within these organizations which in turn impact time and space, both in the way they are conceptualized and in their concrete embodiment. The special issue has proven the merit of taking time and space seriously in the study of IOs. This article concludes with a series of (non-exhaustive) research avenues to continue this promising analytical and empirical endeavor, including discussions on the relationship between IO performance and time and space, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1 | THE PUZZLE OF TIME AND SPACE IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Picture a normal Tuesday morning, during the second day of negotiations at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. A diplomat who recently joined their country's permanent representation looks at the program of the day displayed on the entrance screen. While going through the long list of side events to identify the most useful ones to attend for their government, the young diplomat tries to remember the location of the different rooms inside the maze of the United Nations building. Next to them, a researcher is getting ready for a full day of observation, debating whether to attend side events (and which ones!), stay in the hallway in the hope of finally getting a few minutes to interview

key negotiators or hang out in the cafeteria to stay up-to-date on the UN staff discussions. While both are weighing their options, UN civil servants rapidly check the room for their next meeting, and quickly leave the entrance hall, heading without any doubt to the correct building.

This brief immersion within the everyday of the UN reflects the complex system of interactions which characterizes international organizations (IOs). Conceptualized as both sites of international relations in the making and actors shaping global politics, IOs are made up of a diversified network of individuals. Indeed, IOs are not solely a group of member states: they are inextricably tied to both their bureaucracies and the (non-)state actors revolving around them (Weiss & Thakur, 2010). They constitute actors, fora and resources (Hurd, 2020) which participate and set

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the stage for both intergovernmental and transnational cooperation.

Diplomats, staff and researchers face similar challenges when it comes to experiencing the temporal and geographical perimeters and constraints of these organizations. For the researcher, methodological issues are obvious: researchers always have to reflect on when and where to engage in fieldwork to generate relevant data. Yet we also see another empirical puzzle in this situation: how do we make sense of the specific spatial and temporal enactment of IOs? In other words, how do time and space jointly affect multilateral practices? How do IOs influence the social and political pace and spatial dynamics of their environment? What can we learn about IOs by exploring the way time and space are experienced within these organizations? The special issue builds on this puzzle to explore time and space as relevant concepts in order to unveil multilateral practices. Targeting the broad and diverse audience of *Global Policy*, it addresses both IO scholars and practitioners, encouraging them to reflect on their everyday experience of IOs and daily professional practices. Through the focus on international organizations, it also intends to nourish ongoing discussions on the politics of time and space more broadly.

In the literature, time and space have mostly been approached as contextual, even implicit and unrelated, factors in the study of IOs. The core argument of this special issue is that we must take time and space seriously and consider them as co-constitutive of multilateralism. By exploring them together, we bring an original lens to IO scholarship.

2 | GROWING LITERATURES ON TIME AND SPACE IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION STUDIES

Existing work on IOs has paid attention to temporal and spatial conditions as contextual elements that directly or indirectly affect IOs. Scholars examine the spatiotemporal context in which IOs emerge, approaching IOs as the product of the historical period and of the place in which they are located. More specifically, historians study IOs by navigating between different periods and analyze these institutions over time (Kott, 2011). Relying on the use of institutional and personal archives, they have produced detailed studies of specific organizations and the contexts in which they were set up. Archives also enabled to identify transnational networks of experts that informed the creation of these institutions (Rodogno et al. 2014; Schot & Lagedijk, 2008), as well as to single out mechanisms that explain IOs' construction, survival and sustainability. Often drawing on historical institutionalism (Fioretos et al. 2016; Hanrieder,

Policy Implications¹

- Scholars and policy makers should consider contrasting conceptions of timescales and spatiality within and between IOs.
- By explicitly acknowledging different temporalities between headquarters and missions, IOs could avoid contradictions and dysfunctionalities when it comes to project and program funding, evaluations, and crisis management.
- Increased collaboration can be fostered by considering different organizational working paces and spatial constraints, as well as organizational calendars which affect how IO entities work individually and together.
- The positive outcomes of geographical and temporal proximity that characterizes IO ecosystems can be enhanced by organizational leadership, to benefit from increased synergies between organizations and access to a qualified labor pool.
- International organizations should involve a greater number of participants in the production of procedures and guidelines to best account for individual and situational practices and experiences.
- Policy makers should assess the impact of the growing use of digital technologies (e.g. online conferencing tools) on global governance. They could identify areas in which these technologies can complement and support existing (onsite) practices without jeopardizing meaningful and inclusive deliberations.

2015; Pierson, 2004), these studies seek to understand the long-term existence of IOs (Eckl, this special issue; Kott & Droux, 2013; Rodogno et al. 2014). Furthermore, at the crossroads between history and sociology, other studies focus on the way IOs evolve over time, either by examining one specific organization (Louis, 2016), by tracing the evolutions around one precise practice (like the use of the veto power at UN Security Council) or by comparing the participation of member states in different fora (Albaret, 2014). In these studies, temporal and spatial arrangements are understood as external dimensions. They show how the historical context influences the conditions of existence of an IO and highlight how IOs evolve over time.

Contextual elements are also discussed to explain IO functioning. Evolutions in international politics led to major changes in the way IOs work and intervene, resulting in a growing number of UN bodies and the

establishment of new organizations (e.g. World Trade Organization, 1995; UN Women, 2010). For instance, scholars have drawn conclusions on the impact of the Cold War on the functioning of the Security Council and on UN peacekeeping missions (Oksamytna & Karlsrud, 2020), of a mega-event such as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami or the 2010 Haitian earthquake on humanitarian organizations (Verlin, 2018) or of a specific national administration on IO governing bodies like in the case of UNESCO (David-Ismayil, 2010; Imber, 1989). Others have increasingly investigated local contexts, be it the institutional contexts in which IOs' personnel operate, navigate and interact daily (Atlani-Duault, 2009; Maertens, 2016) or the local contexts where an organization implements concrete projects in relation to its so-called 'beneficiaries' (Autesserre, 2014; Ferguson, 1990; Mosse, 2005; Pouligny, 2006).

Scholars then assess the influence of time and space on the legitimacy and efficiency of IOs. The significant literature on IO legitimacy often indirectly approaches spatiotemporal elements as attributes contributing or challenging an IOs' authority. For instance, studies on the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) have questioned the influence of the location of its headquarters based in Nairobi (Kenya) on the legitimacy and success of the organization (Andresen & Rosendal, 2009; Ivanova, 2010, 2021). When it comes to time, studies show how IO legitimacy also depends on the organization's ability to act in coherence with the societal and political changes of a given period. For instance, the UN had to adapt to the growing importance of transnational actors: the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) progressively opened to non-state actors in order to revive the UN's legitimacy and be in sync with the new transnational world order (Tallberg et al. 2013).

This literature sheds light on the multiple modes of influence of external spatiotemporal conditions on IOs. It provides contextual elements useful to the understanding of multilateralism (Meyer-Sahling & Goetz, 2009) considering temporal and spatial conditions among the multiple factors explaining the success or failure of an IO. Yet we argue that keeping time and space as merely contextual elements prevents from seeing them as relevant concepts to unveil multilateral practices.

Promisingly, on the one hand, the "temporal turn" in International Relations (Berenskoetter, 2011, p. 664), mostly stemming from critical theory (Hom, 2018a, 2018b; Hutchings, 2008), has informed growing work on time and IOs (Heldt, 2019; Louis & Maertens, 2021), especially in EU studies (Goetz, 2009, 2014; Goetz & Meyer-Sahling, 2009, 2012). On the other hand, a sparse literature explores space and IOs; starting from the locations of interventions, they often try to unravel the specific interactions created by the presence over a same territory of local populations and external interveners (see Dairon & Badache, this special issue). So far this work has mainly explored embodied spaces

where IOs are active and located in the Global South, especially in the study of peacekeeping and peacebuilding (Autesserre, 2014; Pouligny, 2006). Both strands move beyond a linear and objective understanding of time and space yet they approach them separately. Building on this work, we propose to study time and space *together*, questioning the entanglement between temporal and spatial dimensions (Adam, 2008) in the study of contemporary IOs.

Taking stock of the multiple ways scholars have approached time and space in IO studies, this special issue gathers contributions which explore the rich potential of these notions as specific lenses to understand multilateralism and IOs. The articles feed the debate over the role of spatiotemporal conditions to explain IO actions while also considering time and space as internal, constructed and negotiated elements; they focus on different locations and policy areas to supplement the existing literature on IOs and they consider the interlinkages between time and space as relevant entry points to study IOs.

3 | OVERVIEW OF THE SPECIAL ISSUE

This introduction summarizes the contributions of these articles in how they explore three main questions: (1) How are IOs influenced by time and space? (2) How are time and space experienced within IOs? (3) How do IOs influence time and space around them? Each paper sheds light on different aspects of the complex interrelations between multilateralism and the spatiotemporal dimensions of its enactment. Some might focus more on time and others on space, but they all consider the relevance of both dimensions in the study of IOs. Overall, they show that IOs are, very localized actors and fora that need to be understood in the temporal and spatial contexts of their enactment, and, *at the same time*, also sites 'in the making', where similar practices are performed in highly heterogeneous locations and timing. By grasping this paradox, the special issue goes deeper into the understanding of IOs and of multilateralism *in the making* while contributing to the process of unravelling the role of time and space in international politics at large.

To do this, the contributions to the special issue conceptualize time and space as key dimensions of IOs' functioning and provide concrete examples of how they affect multilateral practices (such as geographical constraints, practical issues of coordination and communication, relations to deadlines, rhetorical uses of spatial and temporal restrictions). Kimber and Maertens (this special issue) unpack the experience of time and space within the UN system, exploring the paradoxes of an organization disconnected from considerations related to time and space, *yet* very localized and time-sensitive, and pointing to the consequences in terms of UN

practices and power relations within the organization. Dairon and Badache (this special issue) propose to consider the cities where IOs' headquarters are located as IO ecosystems characterized by a unit of time *and* a unit of space; the concept is illustrated by an exploration of the example of Geneva, showing that the unique combination between a city and "its" IOs can result in mutual influences. Eckl (this special issue) investigates how time and space influence global health governance and how the World Health Organization (WHO) acts along a cyclical dynamic of permanent re-enactment during its annual meetings in Geneva, showing how the WHO's internal governance cycles and the location of its headquarters impact other organizations, the work schedule of delegates, and global health governance more broadly. Worrall (this special issue) explores the influences of temporal and spatial practices upon the functioning of IOs in the Middle East, questioning the roles of time and space as contextual elements, their impact on the internal structures and bureaucrats, as well as on their surroundings. Campos (this special issue) compares UN country teams (UNCT) in Mozambique and Vietnam shedding light on institutional change across time and space: the analysis unpacks the sequencing of IO reform implementations while assessing diverging localized outcomes across UN spaces. Verlin (this special issue) captures internal spatiotemporal dimensions of IOs' actions by exploring humanitarian planning techniques and how its temporalities are renegotiated "on the ground" through the specific case of humanitarian action in Haiti. Based on the case of the Intergovernmental Panel of experts on Climate Change (IPCC), De Pryck (this special issue) questions the historicity of IO practices and analyzes the impact of controversies in the making of expertise across time and space. Together these papers present a broad overview of different types of IOs working in multiple fields of international relations (health, humanitarian action, development, environment and climate, political and regional collaboration). They supplement each other by providing different pieces to understand the larger puzzle around the issue of time and space in the study of IOs. They are also complementary to each other as they draw on different methods – including participant observations, interviews, artefact and discourse analyses, and surveys. Based on their findings, this introductory article draws a series of (temporary) conclusions to the questions we raised above.

4 | TIME, SPACE AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: CYCLICAL DYNAMICS

Through their different case studies, the contributions compile findings which complement each other to answer our three initial questions. They show the

differentiated influence of time and space on IOs, unpack the multilayered experience of time and space within IOs and reveal the material and symbolic influence of IOs on time and space. The following sections delve into each of these answers. Taken together the findings point to a cyclical process: IOs are influenced by the spatiotemporal conditions of their enactment, leading to a diversity of experiences and practices within these organizations, which in turn impact time and space both in the way they are conceptualized and in their concrete embodiment. This cyclical dynamic is summarized in Figure 1.

4.1 | The differentiated influence of time and space on international organizations

First, the papers revisit questions around spatiotemporal dynamics in international governance, by directly tackling an overlooked issue in the literature: the influence of a location and its tempo on the work of IOs, and the other way around. While scholars have for a long time acknowledged that IOs are not "islands" working in isolation (Nay & Petiteville, 2011), there is also a recognition that IOs' interactions are understudied (Downie, 2021). This special issue contends that both inter-organizational relationships and the complex linkages between IOs and their direct environment are overlooked. Articles here argue that taking these into account can help better understand the origins, the performance and the future of IOs (Dairon & Badache, this special issue). Such an attention to IOs' spatiotemporal environment also displays a broader methodological

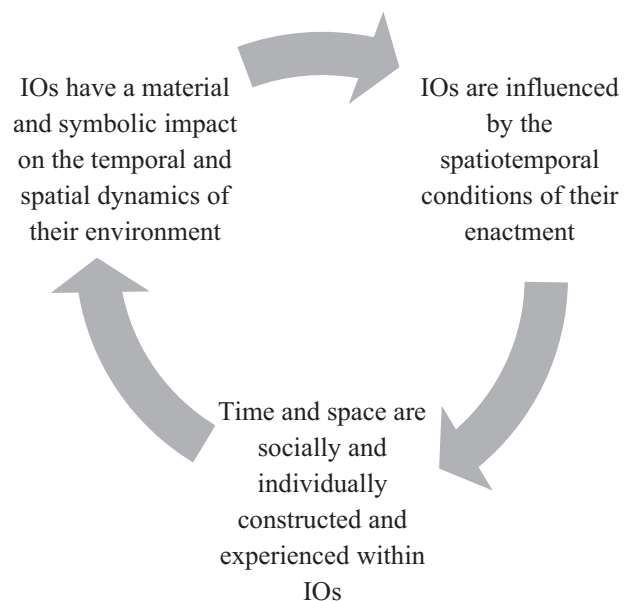


FIGURE 1 Time, space and international organizations: A cyclical process. *Source:* Authors

function, such as facilitating the work of the researcher in accessing relevant fieldwork (Dairon & Badache, this special issue; Eckl, this special issue; Kimber & Maertens, this special issue). The contributions to this issue do so in an original way, applying a qualitative lens to IO studies with new and complementary case studies at different scales of IO presence – the local (Geneva), national (Haiti, Vietnam/Mozambique) and regional levels (Middle East) – and at various moments of an IO's life – exceptional events (emergency relief interventions, international summits), annually-organized conferences, regular coordination meetings. Drawing on different disciplines (anthropology, history, political science and sociology), they pay attention to the specific contexts in which IOs function and intervene. By doing so, they empirically demonstrate that time and space affect IOs in different ways, leading to differentiated consequences.

Unsurprisingly, the articles show that spatiotemporal conditions are likely to impact IO work in two ways: they affect day-to-day routine and shape IO temporary settings (short-term, during a conference or a general assembly; medium-term, e.g. throughout a humanitarian crisis or the process of writing a report or resolution). What is more striking however is the difference in terms of consequences: the specific combination of a location and its temporal routine or a particular political schedule can result in very contrasting impacts. This disparity appears particularly strongly when it comes to individuals' participation: time and space have a significant impact on *who* is participating in IO undertakings, *de facto* leaving aside some actors who cannot afford long-haul travels or expensive rents (Dairon & Badache, this special issue; Kimber & Maertens, this special issue), or on the contrary allowing others to join (Eckl, this special issue). A less expected repercussion lies with the success of local actors in trying to capitalize on the role of time and space: while they may sometimes gain political power and concrete influence on IOs (Campos, this special issue; Dairon & Badache, this special issue), they can also be marginalized compared to distant stakeholders, such as donors and IOs' headquarters, which succeed in imposing their rules *at a distance* (Verlin, this special issue). At the level of institutions, the spatiotemporal ecosystems can affect the performance and legitimacy of IOs, potentially bringing benefits and economies of scale, or being translated into cumbersome procedures or tensions between different departments, divisions or working groups over how to perform certain tasks (Dairon & Badache, this special issue; De Pryck, this special issue; Worrall, this special issue). Yet the influence of time and space may also be neutralized in short- and medium-term settings (Kimber & Maertens, this special issue; Verlin, this special issue), resulting in situations where the IO context

can seem disconnected from the local one, thus revealing the control of certain stakeholders over temporal and spatial constraints (Kimber & Maertens, this special issue). These findings generate a number of methodological and epistemological implications, and suggest that researchers should: include the consequences of time and space in their research design and field selection (Eckl, this special issue), discuss and potentially depart from linear and objective definitions of time and space, while also urging them to consider each IO in its own situational and temporal context (Worrall, this special issue).

The diversified overview outlined by these case studies reveals the differentiated ways through which time and space can (jointly) influence IOs, advocating for more scrutiny of these dimensions as indispensable elements to understand IOs in their micro and macro levels of enactment.

4.2 | Time and space within international organizations: a multilayered experience

The second question we raise relates to how time and space are experienced from within IOs. In this way, we shift our theoretical understanding of time and space from a contextual dimension to an *internal* one, shedding light on the daily work of IOs. Recent work has proposed innovative venues to pursue the analysis of IOs by considering either the dimension of time or that of space. In regard to *time*, scholars have shown how time is institutionalized, even instrumentalized, within IOs – unpacking for example how deadlines are set up and postponed – enabling further understanding of how the multilateral system works (Goetz & Meyer-Sahling, 2009; Louis & Maertens, 2021; Meyer-Sahling & Goetz, 2009). In regard to *space*, scholars, and geographers in particular, have started looking at how space impacts IO functioning, delving into the spatiality of diplomacy and the subjectivity and experiences of actors involved in IO processes (McConnell, 2017). Building on the literature on IO practices and the organizational culture of IOs, the articles in this special issue provide new ways of approaching IOs, namely through the conjunction of time and space, by looking closely at individual, social and institutional experiences of delegates, staff and IO partners. Their findings show that the experience of time and space from within is inherently multilayered and this, in two ways.

On the one hand, the contributions show a high degree of variation when it comes to the experience of IOs which depends on the moment in the organization's life *and* on the spatial enactment through which individuals get to experience IOs. In terms of temporal experiences, individuals may live moments of both acceleration and deceleration. As an illustration,

international negotiations accommodate initial sessions where participants slowly set up the agenda and moments where time seems to accelerate especially toward the deadline for the adoption of a multilateral decision (Kimber & Maertens, this special issue). Conversely IOs often face moments of deep slowness when no agreement can be found on an urgent matter for months or years. In terms of spatial experiences, the material reproduction of IOs across multiple sites does not fully erase local specificities (Campos, this special issue) and individuals may experience both the spread of IOs' actions or a shrinking IO space (Kimber & Maertens, this special issue). Indeed, while the deployment of a common policy agenda and similar development programs spreads IOs' actions around the world (Campos, this special issue), IOs' presence can be confined to a couple of blocks with restricted movements containing the UN experience to a limited space. Cities like Geneva and New York point to such a spatiotemporal paradox (Kimber & Maertens, this special issue): they play the role of intense spatial hubs where multilateralism materializes on a daily basis over decades like "ecosystems" (Dairon & Badache, this special issue), with moments of slowness/shrinking as well as acceleration/spreading. Conforming to a cyclical, yearly calendar, the World Health Assembly, for example, gathers in Geneva for a few intense days while its preparatory discussions extend the process over time (Eckl, this special issue).

On the other hand, the individual, social and institutional construction of time and space shapes multilayered experiences within IOs. Papers investigate how time and space are defined, with different conceptions over time and across (organizational) space(s) affecting *inter alia* IO functioning, decision outcomes, political momentum. Some authors highlight how the experience of time and space shape IO practices including mundane professional habits with the possible effect of generating misunderstanding between IOs with dissimilar working paces (Kimber & Maertens, this special issue). Others argue that IO actors instrumentally use time and space as resources to gain room for maneuver (De Pryck, this special issue; Worrall, this special issue) such as imposing a distinct timeline for policy interventions (Verlin, this special issue) or (arbitrarily) designating the location of an international summit. In other words, IO actors can construct time and space as constraints or opportunities in their own favor. For instance, they may gain time by decreasing political momentum and upstreaming or postponing decision-making, and may harmonize timeframes or even neutralize contextual specificities (Eckl, this special issue; Kimber & Maertens, this special issue; Louis & Maertens, 2021; Verlin, this special issue; Worrall, this special issue).

Approaching time and space as individually and socially experienced within IOs sheds additional and new light on how these organizations function and how multilateralism works in practice.

4.3 | Material and symbolic influence of international organizations on time and space

Finally, the contributions to this special issue look at the effects of the presence and action of IOs on their surroundings. These effects can be material and/or symbolic, and of various types, that is, political, social, and economic. This focus is embedded in a rich literature that studies the spatial and material embodiments of IOs' interventions and the way they are perceived by local people. Scholars use concepts such as "enclaves" or "auxiliary space" (Smirl, 2015) to show how the buildings, cars and artefacts used during international interventions lead to the stigmatization and segregation of spaces (Duffield, 2010; Higate & Henry, 2009; Lemay-Hébert, 2018).

The articles in this special issue contribute to this literature in two ways. On the one hand, they show that the material consequences and dynamics of spatial segregation not only happen in the context of interventions, but also in headquarters cities where IOs have their seats (see Laurens et al. 2012 for the case of Brussels). They identify the material impact of IOs in very different contexts like Geneva and Middle Eastern cities such as Cairo and Riyadh. Indeed, Dairon and Badache (this special issue) and Worrall (this special issue) address the consequences of the presence of IO headquarters on these cities in terms of architecture and concentration of international institutions.

On the other hand, the articles show that these consequences are not only spatial, but also temporal. For instance, Verlin (this special issue) explains how the delocalized system of time management applied in the humanitarian intervention in Haiti collided with on-the-ground temporalities and new emergencies, which had detrimental effects on relief management. Likewise, IOs may impose a specific tempo on other IOs as much as national and local actors by creating frameworks for events such as a 'world day' or a decade for a specific issue, or by setting scheduled objectives (Campos, this special issue; Kimber & Maertens, this special issue). Finally, the contributions show how the intersection of annual cycles and global hubs creates focal times and spaces (Eckl, this special issue) in which IOs repeatedly reinvest and shape their environment.

Overall, papers invite us to jointly analyze the material and symbolic impact of IOs on the social and political pace and the spatial dynamics of their environment.

5 | CONCLUSION: TAKING TIME AND SPACE SERIOUSLY IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION STUDIES

The inception of this special issue took place during a workshop on the theme *Researching the United Nations and Other International Organizations: Rethinking Methods of Investigation* (RUN2018) organized by the guest editors.² This workshop gathered over 70 researchers from various countries and academic communities during two days at the University of Geneva to discuss the methods used to study IOs. Based on the 110 received abstracts, we decided to organize a panel dedicated to the impact of time and space on research on IOs through a methodological lens. The starting point of our discussion on time and space was essentially methodological as we wondered how time and space influence the research question, the fieldwork and investigation, as well as the results. The papers in this special issue have hence (indirectly) addressed a fourth question: How is research on IOs influenced by time and space? Contributors have provided various answers. For instance, Eckl (this special issue) shows how ethnographic methods can be mobilized to reveal the spatiotemporal nature of global health governance. Kimber and Maertens (this special issue) suggest a number of methodological tips to include spatiotemporal concerns when conducting fieldwork, like paying attention to the reproduction of a common materiality of IOs across time and space. Dairon & Badache (this special issue) explain how the concept of ecosystem can be used for the selection of interviewees for instance. Based on extensive research experience on regional organizations in the Middle East, Worrall (this special issue) gives an illustration of the crucial importance of studying IOs in their own situational and temporal contexts. Finally, De Pryck (this special issue) shows how the study of controversies can be used to investigate IO practices in time and space. In conclusion, beyond the fundamental acknowledgment of time and space which helps contextualize data production and collection, this special issue shows that spatiotemporal dimensions affect not only IOs, but also the researchers studying them.

In addition to the methodological dimension, this special issue develops a three-fold analytical roadmap which by itself constitutes a contribution to accompany researchers interested in studying time and space in IOs further. Indeed, this introductory article formulated a series of questions to structure the analysis: (1) How are IOs influenced by time and space? (2) How are time and space experienced within IOs? (3) How do IOs influence time and space around them? By answering these questions, the contributors provide elements that substantially complement the literature mentioned previously: by taking time and space into account, they pay attention to overlooked effects and mechanisms in the study of IOs.

They highlight IOs' (multi)sitedness (Marcus, 1995), as both spatial and temporal sites: they show how IO practices reappear in very different contexts and how standard principles and protocols are applied in highly diverse ways depending on the context of intervention (Campos, this special issue; Eckl, this special issue; Kimber & Maertens, this special issue). They also stress mutual influences between IOs and the environment in which they are enacted (Dairon & Badache, this special issue). In sum, they demonstrate that IOs are affected by time and space, create their own conception of time and space, and subsequently affect time and space around them.

The different case studies also address the transversal question of power within IOs. They empirically demonstrate the moving hierarchical lines created, sustained, and reproduced through specific spatiotemporal settings which favor some actors at the expense of others. They also capture processes of construction of IO temporalities and spaces which reflect power relationships, IO autonomy and potential impacts beyond the organization itself. While participating in the theoretical debates foregrounded in previous studies, the papers prove the analytical merit of taking time and space seriously in IO studies and encourage scholars to integrate them in a more systematic way, even when it is not at the core of one's research project.

This special issue applies an original lens to an overlooked aspect of IO research, bringing (temporary) findings, but also suggesting multiple avenues for research. First, there is certainly more to learn about IOs in their spatiotemporal context. The location or temporality of IOs could, for instance, be considered as relevant variables to study the performance and legitimacy of such organizations. While this has been shown for specific IOs in other spaces (Ivanova, 2010, 2021), the special issue contributes to this reflection (Dairon & Badache, this special issue; De Pryck, this special issue), but additional research could also systematically investigate how time and space affect IO efficiency. Second, the ways in which power relations (among IOs or between IOs and their stakeholders) are shaped by time and space could also be further researched (e.g. distant actors versus close partners, time difference versus same time zones). These distinctions most likely also affect the positioning and influence of actors, as shown in several contributions (Kimber & Maertens, this special issue; Worrall, this special issue). Likewise, scholars could explore these power dynamics through comparative approaches between different ecosystems in order to identify differentiated practices. Last but not least, this research agenda cannot ignore the impact of COVID-19 on the ways time and space are experienced within IOs. While recent and vibrant study trends look at the impact of COVID-19 on research, including about IOs (Bourrier, 2020), this topic was still in its infancy when the contributions to this special issue were written. One of the contributions draws attention to the potential effects of COVID-19 induced transformations on deliberative

practices due to the “mainstreaming of digital technologies” (Eckl, this special issue). By the same token, numerous debates have emerged among policy makers, diplomats, IO management, as well as IO staff and without a doubt deserve scholarly attention. For instance, while practitioners may question the reasons used to justify maintaining big offices in costly places such as Geneva – even though IO staff and partners can more or less work from home anywhere in the world with a comparable level of productivity – IO scholars may investigate how home office has deeply transformed IO practices. Indeed, the emergence of new practices has drastically changed the experience of time (extension of office hours) and space (online meetings instead of travel) of practitioners potentially impacting larger issues like IO legitimacy: these new practices not only affect the way IO staff approach the spatiotemporal frame of their professional life, but they also create further distance between headquarters and field offices. While the crisis has revealed the inherent fragility of IO ecosystems which have based their growth strategy on connecting people at the same time(s), in the same place(s) (Dairon & Badache, this special issue), the adaptation – or non-adaptation – of mechanisms to a specific location, like in humanitarian emergencies (Verlin, this special issue), seem to remain unquestioned. We trust that this special issue opens a dynamic and rich debate on the roles of time and space in the study of IOs, in both their daily and exceptional forms.

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ENDNOTES

1. The policy implications opening this article have been inspired by the recommendations suggested in the contributions to this special issue.
2. For the detailed program, see the event website: <http://www.unige.ch/run2018/>

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