The effect of non-state actors on the autonomy of eurocrats in the Commission between 1986 and 2000

Jouenne-Peyrat, François

Universiteit Leiden
The Netherlands

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Francois Jouenne-Peyrat

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1. Introduction

International organizations have multiplied around the world across the last seventy years (Claude, 1988). Scholars have long debated the reasons that push States to engage in the creation of such institutions, to which they delegate some of their prerogatives and powers. Different theoretical strains such as realism or liberalism have placed states' interests at the core of this idea. Scholars like Mearsheimer (1994) have argued that only states that have a relative gain will engage in IOs' making, while liberals like Moravcsik (1999) have come to see IOs as forums where states can all benefit from absolute gains. The theoretical stance preferred in this paper steps away from these considerations, to view International Organizations as bureaucracies of their own, well able to form their own preferences (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999). The European Commission, as the executive organ of the European Union, has been given prerogatives that are unequalled around the world (Preston, 1997). This institution is responsible for the drafting and implementation of a wide range of laws, often within the perimeter of states' sovereignty. These laws range from economic regulations to migration or trade policy.

If such considerations are merged within our public administration perspective, it is interesting to note that the integration process can also be explained by the preferences of European bureaucrats themselves. In other words, European civil servants are looking to increase the scope of their mandate, and integration is in part the political result of such interests. The objective of this research is to test whether civil servants can advance their interests and become more autonomous via colluding with non-state actors.

Such research is relevant for multiple reasons. First, while public-administration researchers have attempted at reinvigorating the power of bureaucrats (Xu & Weller, 2007; Bauer & Ege, 2016), little research has solely focused on the European Union. It has always been integrated within a larger comparative analysis. However, the unique nature of the union calls for single-case study research. Furthermore, the period studied is notably interesting for two reasons. First, this period includes both the formation and signing of the Maastricht treaty in 1992, followed seven years later by the one of Amsterdam. The Maastricht treaty has been of crucial importance as it designs the bases of the European Union as we know it today (Christiansen et al., 2012). Second, such period englobes the fall of

the Berlin wall and the negotiations of the commission with post-soviet states to access the union. Consequently, these years some of extensive integration that has led to a tremendous increase of the mandate's scope of eurocrats. It is therefore important to understand how autonomous bureaucrats were able to be during these times. It is even more so because studies have shown that bureaucrats develop preferences in a way that usually enlarge their mandate's scope. In the forming of the Maastricht treaty, Denmark voted against in a referendum and France only offered what came to be known as the "petit oui" (little yes). This has clearly marked the end of the permissive consensus, that is the idea that the European Union was bound to integrate, and that the people will simply follow this process. (Van Ingelgom, 2012) Interestingly, this goes against the interests of bureaucrats, and it is therefore interesting to know if and how eurocrats have mobilized non-state actors to keep increasing their autonomy.

Interestingly, the concept of autonomy has been studied in the literature on international civil servants, but unfortunately only through the prism of the principal-agent theoretical model. While this model has shed light on crucial dynamics (Vaubel, 2005; Elsig, 2010a), it has stuck the understanding of autonomy in the dyadic relationship between agents (civil servants) and principals (States). This could be misleading as it could get one to believe that such relationship is insulated form third-party pressure. Therefore, this research aims at filling this gap by understanding how non-state actors can influence the autonomy of European civil servants. Consequently, our research efforts crystalize around the following research question:

What is the impact of non-state actors on the autonomy of Eurocrats in the commission during the year 1986-2000?

In order to answer our research question, the paper will follow the following structure: First, we will look at the literature concerning the formation of international organizations and how the principal-agent framework has been used to understand the concept of delegation. Such section will therefore unveil how bureaucrats are empowered by states and will show that the foundation of such authority could be altered by the presence of non-state actors. Building upon this, we will more precisely look at how bureaucrats are able to create autonomy for themselves vis-à-vis states without yet the implications of non-state actors. This is a very important section as it will give us the first clues towards how eurocrats could

potentially use non-state actors for their own purposes. Subsequently, the second part of the literature review will be more critical and will assess the extent to which the principal-agent model is able to account for third-party implication. Finally, we will try to understand how some scholars have tried to conceptualize the relationship between international civil servants and third-party actors, which will give us a better idea of what our answers to our research question could look like. We find that non-state actors are most likely to empower civil servants through epistemic authority, political leverage, legitimacy, networks, and control over information. Following the literature review, we will present our methodology, including justification regarding data selection and how we systematically analyse interviews of civil servants, based on the hypotheses drawn from the literature. The following section will present the results in a systemic way and is followed by a more precise analysis of such results. Finally, the ultimate and concluding section of this paper will clearly answer our research question based on the analysis of our results, and will set out the limitation for such research, as well as suggested further research endeavours.

2. International organizations and their bureaucrats: from the macro to the micro

2.1 State and IO: a matter of delegation

The European Commission (EC) as an organ of the European Union is a supranational entity that is to be viewed as an international organization. It is comprised of all EU member states and possesses its own bureaucracy regulated through codified norms and procedures. These rules are essential as they provide for consistency and help avoiding political manipulation of civil servants. In turn, they allow for this group of people to express itself as a *bureaucracy* (Carpenter, 2001). This starting point is essential as much of the literature on the autonomy of international organizations is based on viewing international organizations as bureaucracies endowed with different forms of authority. This section is first going to review the main arguments present in the academic debate on international organization and autonomy. Subsequently, we discuss particular characteristics of the European Commission and how they relate to the existing theoretical arguments of bureaucratic autonomy.

When discussing the autonomy of international organizations, one may legitimately question from whom autonomy is achieved in the first place. International Organizations are created by states, that come together to form a legal organization, created to serve their interests. However, as autonomous bureaucracies, IOs have formulated their own preferences which sometimes are not aligned with those of states (Bauer & Ege, 2016). Therefore, when speaking of autonomy, the current literature understands such term as a form of independence of IOs from states. The main theoretical model that has been studied is the principal-agent model. In this mechanism, principals which are states have delegated authority to their agents: international organizations (Waterman & Meier, 1998). However, these agents have extended expertise and a better control over the information needed to pursue their tasks and achieve the objectives as set out by states, the principal. As we know that IOs can formulate their own preferences, under this model, the agent has an incentive to exert control over information in a way that favor its own preferences, instead of those defined by the principal, states (Maggetti & Papadopoulos, 2016). As Vaubel (2005) explains, such theoretical model is particularly relevant in the context of international organizations as they are delegated authority to an unequal extent. Therefore, the core concept that underpins the model is the concept of delegation. It is by no mean natural for states to delegate some of their prerogatives to international institutions. Many voices have risen across the world to criticize international organizations on different basis: some have engaged against the dissemination of the Washington consensus principles around the world during the 1980s (Hawkins, 2008), others have argued European institutions have fostered integration irrespectively of the people's will, resulting in the Dutch and French refusal of the constitutional proposal of 2005 (Startin & Rouwel, 2012), or more recently, prominent western leaders have fired heavy criticism at IOs for misrepresenting the interests of their people (Ehley, 2020). However, despite such scepticism, international organizations have steadily grown in staff annually by 3.20% and in member states by 2.5% since 1950 (Vaubel et al., 2007).

This raises a crucial question as to why states delegate. Concepts of specialization, dispute settlement, and credibility have been put forward to understand international delegation (Hawkins, 2008). Specialization is essential because it enables an organization to focus specifically on one target, devoting to it most of its resources. It is harder for states on

the other hand, involved in almost all matters of international politics to unilaterally engage in one specific area based on its sole resources (Hawkins, 20008). Dispute settlement enables states to solve conflicting issues without resolving to engage in diplomatic conflict. In other words, there is an incredible reduction of transaction costs when most disputes are legitimately settled through the mediation of an international body (Hooghe & Marks, 2014). States also seek to achieve credibility through International Organizations (Dreher & Voigt, 2011). This refers to the idea that national politicians face a time-inconsistency problem in the sense that the short-term benefits are different from long-term ones. Therefore, some policy might be hard to implement on the short term because it might directly hurt national interest groups. However, on the long term, such policies can benefit all citizens. This is best illustrated through the policy of climate change and can help understanding the dynamics undermining implementation. Similarly, Hawkins (2008) explains that most competition policies in Europe are dealt with at the EU-level. We see here an example of why policy-fields can be delegated to this international organization as it can hurt producers across member states while benefiting all EU-citizens. In sum, States do have incentives to delegate their prerogatives to international civil servants. In the case of the European commission, this delegation is quite extensive, while the commission is by nature a non-majoritarian institution. Few attempts by the European Parliament to impose a candidate have failed and only succeeded in 2014. This idea of democratic legitimacy is important as European civil servants are often criticized to lack such empowerment. Considering these circumstances, it is even more important to study the implication of non-state actors on the autonomy of those already suffering from a democratic deficit (Follesdal & Hix, 2006).

This section has explained the reasons that encourage an IO formation, and how power relations between states and international organizations articulate. The need to solve several issues such as credible commitment or transaction costs have led to the emergence of international bureaucracies with their own legal personality, whose preferences are autonomous. The principal-agent model is therefore a theoretical tool to make sense of this relationship. However, the core idea of this paper is not to treat International organizations, especially the EU, as black boxes. This means it is important to look inside the organization, to step away from the literal classic view that treats IOs as unitary actors responsive to state pressure. In other words, it is essential to dive into micro-analysis of international

organization to understand how autonomy is exercised. Such understanding places the role of international civil servants at the heart of this research. More precisely, this research attempts at understanding the importance of non-state actors on the level of autonomy of eurocrats vis-à-vis member states. The previous discussion concerning the principal-agent model and the reasons for delegation can lead us to believe that civil servants can have incentives to use private-actors to increase their autonomy. Indeed, if via non-state actors civil servants can made states commitment more credible, delegation more effective and reduce transaction costs, they might well be of greater interests to states, perhaps more willing to commit to further integration.

2.2 The role of International Civil Servants

The concept of expertise has been central to the study of international organization's autonomy. Described as centers of expertise, they are able to fix meanings and classify knowledge due to the expertise-based selection of staff (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999). Such power has important consequences in terms of framing issues, as it was the case with the definition of a refugee by the UNHCR in the middle of the 20th century (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999). This ability is not naturally endowed within the organization but is the product of the aggregated expertise of its working staff. Therefore, when speaking of IOs autonomy, it is not necessarily about the power relation between the IO itself and the state, but rather about the autonomy of the staff regarding the political sphere. While such distinction may sound insignificant, it has relevant implications in terms of analysis and research. Treating the international organization on a macro-perspective may lead to comparisons that cannot account for the specificities of the staff regarding its ability to use expertise. For example, in the EU-context, particular processes such as bureaucratic socialization create a bias towards supranationalism that can foster an uninhibited expertise use that conflicts with member states' interests (Beyers & Dierrick, 1998; Pierson, 1996). Similarly, the EU has been described by Majone (2002) as a regulatory state, in the sense that the principal mode of governance used by the EU is regulations. These regulations come about in regulatory agencies that are true centers of expertise full of experts on different topics. There is no doubt that the epistemic authority of EU civil servants has different implications from the one of the World

Trade Organization's experts, who play a considerable role but are not always able to impose epistemic knowledge to political actors, especially in committee governance (Steinberg, 2009). Consequently, looking at civil servants rather than IOs as a unit offers the possibility to trace processes that may not be visible at the macro-level.

While international civil servants remain largely under-studied, different attempts at understanding bureaucratic and sociological processes have yielded interesting results Bauer & Ege, 2016; Littoz-Monnet 2017; Xu & Weller, 2007). These studies have stepped away from the argument that the bureaucratic nature of IOs endow them with certain abilities to mostly focus on the people. Littoz-Monnet (2017) has explored how civil servants mobilize expertise, in different ways, to enlarge the scope of their mandate to related and sometimes non-related topics. Interestingly, she finds that not only civil servants mobilize their own epistemic resources, but they also mobilize expertise from third-party. The UNESCO for example has taken the lead on the standardization of bioethics rules, while other organizations seemed better-suited to engage in such process. This has been possible due to the capture of external expertise by the civil servants working at the UNESCO (Littoz-Monnet, 2017). This is yet another justification of the hypothesis that international civil servants do have an interest in deepening the scope of their organization's mandate via external actors.

Other authors such as Xu and Weller have tried to understand the influence of civil servants in four ways: structure, competence, legitimacy, and culture (2008). Structure relates to the bureaucratic setup of the organization and the extent to which it allows for harmonization of standards and procedures (ibid., p.38). The argument here is that certain structural conditions of international organizations can lead to higher cohesion within the staff. This provides a stronger ability to advance one's own interests as the staff acts more homogeneously in terms of preferences. While competence concerns the matter of expertise (ibid., p.39), legitimacy is a separate category as it refers to the consistency in the way the staff carries out business (ibid., p.41). In other terms, old and consistent procedures gain in legitimacy over time as it is gradually seen as a neutral way to carry the mandate of the organization, which offers the staff certain legitimacy in taking decisions that can be insulated from political pressure. The idea of culture echoes our recent discussion of European socialization as a central process that shapes international civil servants' behavior (ibid., p.48). Each organization possesses its own culture that does influence the conduct of business. For

example, The World Trade Organization and World Bank's experts have been powerful advocates of the neo-liberal Washington consensus in the 1980s (Xu & Weller, 2008).

Even attempts at creating a quantitative indicator of bureaucratic autonomy vis-à-vis states have been more or less successful. Bauer and Ege (2016) for example have created a rather inclusive measurement tool that capture aspects ranging from the bureaucratic setting to the epistemic role. Interestingly, they make a relevant distinction between autonomy of will and autonomy of actions (Bauer & Ege, 2016). While autonomy of will is about the capacity to formulate own preferences different from the principal (state), autonomy of actions refers to the capacity to act on them. This is a very relevant distinction when discussing the European Commission because this institution possesses unequal capacity not only to formulate policy proposals aimed at deepening integration and its mandate, but also to act on them through the Ordinary Legislative Process (OLP) in which only the commission can introduce policy proposal. We see here that such attempt at understanding the role of international civil servants under the principal-agent framework is of even greater importance in the European context.

This section of the paper has attempted at unveiling the dynamics that govern the relationship between international civil servants, eager to advance the interests of their organization, as opposed to states whose preferences might not always be the same. It has also sought to understand the importance of international civil servants as agents and individuals, able to shape their autonomous preferences. However, it remains clear that the theoretical framework based on the principal-agent model is not flawless. By nature, it focuses on the relation between states and IOs, ignoring different actors than can mediate or moderate the autonomy of civil servants. Indeed, civil servants are able to create autonomy for themselves through expertise, structure, legitimacy, and procedures, but it is very likely that they also pursue the deepening of their mandate's scope via other non-state actors. The previously mentioned example of UNESCO mobilizing external expertise to get involved in the field of bioethics subscribes to such idea (Littoz-Monnet, 2017). Consequently, the next part of this thesis will offer further insights on why principal-agent models have failed capturing the full dynamic underpinning bureaucratic autonomy and how other actors than states have influenced this autonomy in the European commission.

3. Principal-agent theoretical and framework and non-state actors

3.1 The principal-agent model: remarks and limitations

This paper does not intent to depict the principal-agent framework as an entirely flawed theoretical model. Indeed, many researchers working under such model have engaged in understanding the organizational autonomy of IOs, often leading to relevant and interesting conclusions (Vaubel 2005; Maggetti & Papadopoulos, 2016; Elsig, 2010a). Neither does this paper seek to offer an entirely new approach, outside the principal-agent theory. It rather tries to include in such framework actors that have so far largely been ignored. These actors, referred as non-state actors, can emanate from the private sector, international civil society or anything that is not directly related to member-states. This section will first focus on the current theories around the principal-agent framework and analyze the extent they are able to account for non-state actors. Subsequently will be discussed the relationship of non-state actors and European Commission's bureaucrats in today's literature.

As a theoretical model, principal-agent theory relies on the assumption that working individuals in the organization develop their own interests due to their bureaucratic setting and preferences (Dunleavy, 1991). Not only they develop their own preferences, but they also try to act on it by deviating from the original mandate and strategically use some of their prerogatives such as expertise or bureaucratic control (Elsig, 2010b). Interestingly, this theoretical framework has been used to understand the relationship governing IOs and member states in multiple directions.

While this essay pays particular attention to the role of international civil servants as agents, many scientists have tried to understand such relation by looking at the principal, that is states. Nielson and Tierney have tried to understand why the World Bank came to change in practices of lending in the 80s, while it was known to be quite resilient and autonomous in its policy (Nielson & Tierney, 2003). They found that the World Bank could hardly resist coordinated pressure from member states. This echoes Elsig's work (2010) on the context under which the principal agent relationship articulates. Indeed, it is by nature impossible to have an international organization composed of one member state, it should at least be two.

The reality is that almost all international organizations are composed of multiple member states, who actually engage in cooperative organizations to reduce issues of commitment credibility, reduce transaction costs (Keohane, 1984). Elsig argues that an IO is subject to multiple principals that must coordinate to get the IO to fit its mandate. Collective principals that cannot agree leave more rules for the international civil servants to develop and act on their preferences (Elsig, 2010a). Beside the issue of collective principality, states also possess means to influence the direction an IO might take. Through selecting staff that better fit principal's interests, closely monitoring the IOs work through procedural check such as the creation of an oversight department directly in touch with member-states and implementing contract between member-states and the IO (Nielson & Tierney, 2003).

One challenge that principals face however is the chain of delegation. In some instances, the chain of delegation is so extensive that the message that reaches down to the agent may be substantively different from the original one intended by the principal. While it is tough to universally describe chains of delegation, as each IO has a different one, a basic distinction can be drawn between sovereign principals and proximate principals. The former refers to member-states while the latter can refer to different ministries or ambassadors that carry the task of representation (Elsig, 2010b). If we apply such idea to a European context, the council of ministers would be the place to find proximate principals. However, as a collegial institution, compromise is the rule and proximate principals are already drifting away from the sovereign principals. Taken one level further down, working committees and COREPER committees are comprised of bureaucrats that pull their directions from respective ministers, stretching one more time the initial principal's will.

An important critical approach of our research is to consider that current literature on principal-agent models have not paid enough (if at all) attention to non-state actors. This is essential because the P-A literature has locked the principle of autonomy in a dyadic relation between states and organizations' agents. It acts as if such relationship could be insulated from third-party's involvement. In the EU context for example, it is legitimate to question what the influence of non-state actors could be on the democratic accountability of EU bureaucrats. Global issues such as climate change or data protection can only be tackled through collective actions of public forces around the globe, but also with the cooperation between public bureaucrats and private-sector representatives (Seitz & Martens, 2017). For

example, climate policies to be effective will necessarily cause a reshaping of private sector practices, that might come at several costs. It is essential for EU bureaucrats to initiate policies that are able to balance the cost and benefits of change. This can only be done via having an acute knowledge of the private sector by directly being in touch. It can also be that European bureaucrats could mobilize private sectors' entities, or other non-state actors to exert pressure on a certain principal (member-state) therefore increasing the bureaucrat's authority. In sum, these are implications that current theories of principal-agent models are not able to account for.

Of course, there is no intent to say that no research was carried out on the influence of non-state actors on the commission. Much research has been done on the field of lobbying at the European level and non-state actors have often had a say in policymaking (Sargent, 1985). However, it is generally agreed that such practices are carried out by external entities to obtain something from the commission and its bureaucrats. What is of particular relevance to this paper, is how European bureaucrats can strategically use these connections with non-state actors to increase their own autonomy. The following section will look at the literature on the relationship between non-state actors and European bureaucrats to unveil preliminary answers to our research endeavor: the strategic use of non-state actors by European bureaucrats to increase their autonomy.

3.2 Relationship between non-state actors and eurocrats

Non-state actors have had a special place in the European Union as the commission has sought to establish a social partnership between private actors and commission's policy makers (Sargent, 1985). The European Union has set and sometimes institutionalized practices that welcome the private sector in the discussion of policies. It is interesting to start this section with such concern as it shows us that European bureaucrats have long-established connections with non-state actors. It invigorates even more our motive to include non-state actors in the principal-agent model used to understand autonomy. Several authors have argued that it is somehow misleading to talk of corporatism because the European Union does not exhibit significant features of corporatism (Sargent, 1985). For example, the EU lacks a European sectorial organization of interest groups in peak organizations, instead it

is made of a merely connected disparate set of lobbying organizations (Streeck & Schmttter, 1991). However, whether them be institutionalized or not, private actors remain at the heart of the policymaking of the European Union and have been praised for the acceleration they brought to the policy-initiating process (Héritier, 2003). Even more interestingly, EU bureaucrats such as former commissioner for social policy and employment Diamantopoulos have criticized the classical way of policy legislation to advocate self-regulation (Héritier, 2003). The concept of self-regulation is even more interesting as private actors voluntary come at the table of negotiations with the commission's civil servants to willingly sign an agreement on the regulation of their sector. This has tremendous implication on the autonomy of bureaucrats as it seems possible for them to simply bypass the authority of member-states.

As largely discussed already, the idea of expertise is crucial for bureaucrats to develop their own preferences (Bauer & Ege, 2016). It has been an important factor to assess the bureaucratic autonomy of international bureaucrats. In a study on fifteen different IOs' secretariats, Bauer and Ege designs a measure of bureaucratic autonomy whose some indicators clearly relate to expertise. However, expertise is only conceptualized endogenously in the sense that it ignores external expertise. This is in sharp contrast with the findings of Littoz-Monnet on external expertise (2017). In the specific context of the EU, the commission itself counts over 1112 expert groups, each of an advisory nature (European Commission, 2021). These expert groups can be composed of academics, private sector experts or national experts (Robert, 2012). They are of crucial importance to European bureaucrats as they provide very detailed reports on very specific field. Reckoning the concept of delegation discussed earlier, the specialization offered by these expert groups offer European bureaucrats the ability to delegate expertise to make it more robust. In turn, such move can enhance the epistemic authority of Eurocrats. The growing use of external expertise is also due to the legal requirements for bureaucrats to engage in impact studies before initiating each policy (Robert, 2012). This also raised question as whether these experts present in expert groups are neutral or whether they represent corporate interests. In turn, it seems unreasonable to talk of increased autonomy if external expertise is a way to be manipulated for private groups' interests. Again, the qualitative analysis of the interviews with staff of the European commission in the next section will shed light on such questions.

Discussing expertise at the European level necessarily calls for a discussion of the different regulatory bodies set up by the commission over time. What has come to be known as the Meroni doctrine means that the EU is allowed to delegate expertise and monitoring to regulatory agencies, as long as these agencies are subject to accrued political scrutiny by the European commission (Majone, 2002). In the context of the European regulatory state, where the EU mostly govern through regulations (Majone, 1994), the work of regulatory agencies is often mobilized by European bureaucrats to design public policy. Beside expertise, there are two other ways these networks can impact the autonomy of eurocrats. Indeed, these networks are comprised of agencies reputed for their output and throughput quality (Magetti, 2011). In other words, the consistency of their procedures and quality of expert reports over time has endowed them with high legitimacy. Alongside, working through networks has increased the scrutiny agencies have on each other, making them even more legitimate and decisive tools available to European bureaucrats for policymaking (Magetti, 2010). Such legitimacy is best described as horizontal due to its networking form, and it is yet to be understood how European civil servants perceive these agencies. The qualitative analysis of the subsequent interviews will unveil whether network of governance empower European bureaucrats.

Consequently, the literature has so far conceived the relationship between eurocrats and private actors as a win-win relation. Indeed, while private actors or non-state actors gain access to the policy drafting of the European commission, they also provide essential information regarding their specific industry or issue. The regulatory nature of European governance also offers great support to regulatory agencies which in turn offer European bureaucrats an accrued legitimacy and autonomy. Consequently, it does not seem unsafe to foresee that probably, the more connections European bureaucrats have with non-state actors, the more autonomous they can act from their principals: states. However, such statement can only be confirmed or disproved through a thorough qualitative analysis of what former Eurocrats have to say about this. Consequently, the next part of this thesis will be dedicated to the analysis of fourteen interviews carried out with former European Commission bureaucrats. It will introduce our methodological approach and present the results of our analysis.

4. Methodology and results

4.1 Methodological presentation

To make precise sense of the impact of non-state actors over the autonomy of European bureaucrats, we are using qualitative content analysis. Such method is preferred because it enables to systematically investigate each interview (Toshkov, 2020). The system used is designed based on the discussion of the literature carried out in the earlier section. This deductive approach also enables us to ground our findings within existing theoretical frames (Thiel, 2014). we are going to look at a set of fourteen interviews of European bureaucrats who were working for the commission during the years 1986-2000 (The European University Institute, 2021). This method is preferred as it will enable us to unveil precise effect and give room to top officials to express themselves in detail. Such set of interviews is made available by the European University Institute, for research purposes. This work has been undertaken by researchers from more than dozens of countries and universities. During the 1986-2000 period, they are over hundreds of data available. For the purpose of this research, we have selected the interviews that combined both the relevance of the topics discussed and the strategic position of the interviewee back in the commission. The selected interviews include DG directors, commissioners, and other high-profile servants. It is relevant to select these interviews because they can best reflect how practices between top civil servants and non-state actors play out. Indeed, each of the position occupied by the interviewees was of strategic importance in establishing connections among and with non-state actors. They usually were the point of contact of these actors to enter into discussion with the European commission. Furthermore, the period studied contains the formulation of the Maastricht treaty, followed by the making of the Amsterdam one. This period has been marked by intense integration and it is relevant to historically understand the roles of non-state actors on impacting the autonomy of Eurocrats in such times.

These interviews are each analyzed through the prism of the coding frame available as the first annex of this paper. The design of the coding frame is based upon hypotheses drawn from the earlier literature discussion. Following from this discussion, this paper has established that it is likely that non-state actors positively increase the autonomy of eurocrats. Therefore, our main hypothesis is:

H1: Interactions of the EU Commission's civil servant with non-state actors increase their autonomy vis-à-vis states.

This hypothesis can be broken down within five sub-hypotheses drawn from the literature discussion, which will serve as the categories used to design the coding frame.

H1a: Interactions of Eurocrats with non-state actors increase their legitimacy

H1b: Interactions of Eurocrats with non-state actors increase their epistemic authority

H2c: Interactions of Eurocrats with non-state actors increase their political leverage

H1d: Interactions of Eurocrats with non-state actors increase their control of information

H1e: Networks of organizations increase the autonomy of bureaucrats

The coding frame is designed as follows. The first column is the entry number, which will be used for the analysis. The second column is the exact quote from the interview. The third column called "intermediate" describes the type of actors, ranging from private sectors, NGOs, civil society and others. The fourth and fifth column are coded with yes or no, being respectively "increase autonomy" and "decrease autonomy". They are coded separately as some entries can have both a positive and negative effect. The following column briefly describes the nature of the effect, while the last column is the categories used based on our hypotheses: legitimacy, epistemic authority, political leverage, control of information, and networks.

4.2 Results

After analyzing the twelve interviews, twenty-five entries were added to the coding frame. Each of them concerns a particular mechanism through which non-state actors influence civil servants' independence. Making use of the five categories outlined in the methodological part offers the possibility to deliver a concise summary of the results before a critical reflection. Each category presents the following results.

There are nine entries in the coding frame concerning legitimacy. This is the highest number of entries among all categories. Therefore, it is possible that non-state actors influence the autonomy of civil servants by affecting their legitimacy. Interestingly, among these nine entries, only two depict a decrease of autonomy while eight show an increase (one entry shows both decrease and increase).

Political leverage, the second most entered category with 8 entries is interesting. Indeed, it offers the highest number of entries per category that leads to a decrease, that is 3. Therefore, it does not sound unreasonable to believe that Eurocrats' autonomy can negatively be affected by non-state actors through political leverage. Nonetheless, five of these entries showed increased autonomy.

Epistemic authority, that is expertise, was referred to seven times, among which only one leads to a decrease of autonomy. This could show strong support for our hypothesis about the epistemic power of civil servants and how it can be altered by non-state actors.

Control over information was mentioned five times always leading to an increase of autonomy and only once to a decrease (one entry showed both an increase and a decrease). Interestingly this could show that control over information is the most efficient mechanism offered by non-state actors upon which civil servants can rely on to increase their autonomy.

Similarly, while mentioned only three times, network always shows an increase of autonomy. Therefore, the presence in networks of the commission's civil servants consistently lead to them having an accrued autonomy. However, out of 25 entries, it was referred to only three times, making it overall somehow less relevant.

Conclusively, the main trend in these categories is that autonomy increases more often than it decreases. It increases twenty-seven times and decreases only seven times. This is important to keep in mind for the subsequent section which will analyze such results. An overview of the results is provided in table 1 below. The table must be read as such: each number represents the number of entries in the coding frame. It offers a view per category for increase, decrease and totals. Furthermore, the different non-state actors involved are also summed up per category.

Table 1: Number of entries and actors per category according to autonomy variation

	Legitimacy	Epistemic authority	Network	Political leverage	Information control	Total
Increase autonomy	8	6	3	5	5	27
Decrease autonomy	2	1	0	3	1	7
Total	9*	7	3	8	5*	
Actors	Private sector, Non-member states, National experts, Audit, Reflection groups,	Non-member states, National experts, Trade association, Academics, Consultancy	NGOs, Private sector, National experts	Private sector, Non-member states, politicians	Private sector, Politicians, Others**	

* One of the entries in the category presents both increase and decrease of autonomy
** contracting multiple non-state actors to counterbalance each view

5. Analysis

It seems wise to start this discussion by looking at the epistemic authority of eurocrats and how non-state actors influence it. Indeed, expertise is broadly mentioned in the interviews, and even if not coded in this category, it sometimes acts as a mediator variable. This paper expected international civil servants to mobilize external knowledge to enlarge its mandate. Indeed, Littoz-Monnet (2017) showed that UNESCO was able to seize external expertise to take the lead on the regulation of bioethics. This echoes how European civil servants are able to mobilize national experts to achieve some of its objectives. Entry 3 shows how the Commission did such thing in training neighboring countries to set borders' control

systems to regulate immigration, a competence which is not within its mandate scope. Interestingly, our findings build on this as we see not only European bureaucrats mobilize external knowledge, but they also export their own. Some of our results (entry 2, 7, 8) show how the export of expertise brings civil servants in a position to influence national bureaucracies. Such practice is even more true during EU-accession negotiations. Our results can demonstrate that civil servants have exported their expertise to negotiating post-soviet countries, shaping the making of their new administrative systems. This clearly results in increased autonomy because civil servants are shaping the bureaucratic standards of those supposed to become their principals upon accession, according to the principal-agent framework. Discussing such model is also interesting because the mobilization of external expertise can turn the European civil servants into the position of the principal, requiring actions from external experts, new agents. Further study is required on the mobilization of outside knowledge to better understand the interests of contracted experts. Many constructivists have argued a large share of international organizations' legitimacy is acquired through epistemic authority (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999; Bauer & Ege, 2016). Our results complete this idea by showing that the commission seems to also have the capacity to exercise some sort of brain-drain at the European level, bringing in contracted or employed experts from many fields (entry 12). Such experts then are not available resources to states, increasing EU bureaucrat's autonomy. While in nature expertise is information, this paper has made a difference between epistemic authority and control over information. Indeed, the latter refers to the extent to which bureaucrats are willing to reveal the information they receive. Such information can also be of a non-epistemic nature such as connections with politicians or privilege links with the industry (entry 5). This puts civil servants in a position where they can strategically disseminate information to their principals, states, or negotiators like trade associations. Furthermore, it seems that European civil servants have an incentive to control more and more information. Such idea could be coined as an information spiral. Indeed, as these eurocrats are aware that external information can be biased (entry 14, 16), the more they acquire means they are better able to balance all information and produce a judgement closer to reality (entry 20, 23).

Questions of legitimacy are also crucial concerns. Indeed, we see that in the nine entries for this category, six of them overlap with other categories. This is an indicator that

legitimacy also acts as a mediator that influence autonomy. In other words, several epistemic actions or political move may increase legitimacy which in turn increase autonomy (Johnson, Dowd & Ridgeway, 2006). This quite echoes the discussion of the literature earlier. For example, epistemic authority is externally mobilized through independent auditing (entry 17), or easy access is made to civil society to reduce the democratic deficit the EU is said to suffer from (entry 22). The question of legitimacy is also intimately linked to network. Or rather, networks have been described as tools to create horizontal legitimacy (Magetti, 2011). Interestingly, eurocrats have used the power of networks to pressurize national governments on several issues. For example, entry 14 shows how EU bureaucrats have mobilized networks of NGOs collectively pressurizing states. Similarly, EU bureaucrats have even come to create networks of consumer association to be able to pull out further information (entry 19). While this echoes the information spiral we mentioned, it also shows how networks are becoming an increasingly popular way to exert influence in the public sector.

Questioning the impact of non-state actors also require asking questions concerning political or economic leverage. Indeed, civil servants and particularly eurocrats who design regulations are subject to several pressures and incentives. As entry 1 shows, they are offered gifts and travels and so on, which can easily have a negative effect on their autonomy. But our data does not show enough support for such statement, being found only once in our interview set. However, what the data shows is that European civil servants themselves use non-state actors to exert direct influence on national governments. For example, we see that top officials of the DG responsible for education have used universities to intensively lobby national education ministries (entry 21). Interestingly, the commission is also the victim of such process, in which industry representatives would lobby national governments for them to vehemently oppose the commission, as this was the case for the tobacco industry in Germany (entry 16).

Second part of this section: remettre dans le context europeen de 1986 a 2000, enlargement to post-soviet states plus Maastricht treaty.

6. Concluding remarks

Conclusively, this research tried to find out how non-state actors can influence the autonomy of bureaucrats. We have drawn on the literature to draw expectations which were useful in designing our methodological approach. Conceptualizing autonomy vis-à-vis states through legitimacy, epistemic authority, network, political leverage, and control of information has enabled us to ground our research method in solid theoretical foundations. Indeed, these five categories represent the several ways bureaucrats achieve autonomy endogenously. What we tried to unveil were the mechanisms via which such autonomy could be created exogenously. Interestingly, the results were pretty decisive in the sense that autonomy was largely fostered. Legitimacy and epistemic authority seems to be the driver of such relationship. This quite echoes the central role occupied by the expertise in the study of international civil servants (Barnett & Finnemore 1999; Bauer & Ege 2016; Xu & Weller, 2007; Littoz-Monnet, 2017). The mobilization of external resources to foster legitimacy and credibility are the main ways by which civil servants employ non-state actors to increase their autonomy. Interestingly, political leverage is also offered but can also cause damage to their autonomy. Indeed, it can be used by non-state actors lobbying national governments, or directly exerting pressure through rewards and punishments. Civil servants are also likely to strategically use the information they receive, only sharing the information they want to. This is particularly relevant as they are the primary point of contact for industries to advocate their interests. Their information over the market is larger than any national governements. We saw that nonetheless they get such information, but they also encourage it through the creation of networks of consumers' associations. In turn, it is interesting to recall the "information spiral" we coined earlier in this paper. More information leads to the need for more to counter-balance each new information and obtain an precise vision of reality.

It should be contended that this is an historical study, intended to look at a very particular time in European history, that is of refoundation and enlargement. The conclusions drawn in this research might not be transposable to more recent situations that exhibit different contexts. For example, the impact of the 2008 economic crisis has had

impact on the regulation of banking sector, and the tradition of social partnership maybe seems more compromised (Sargent, 1985).

It is important to note that this paper has only focused on one side of the equation. In other terms, it takes two to build a relationship and therefore, it seems wise to also carry out research focusing on non-state actors. Understanding how non-state actors see themselves towards European bureaucrats and their interactions' point of view is a promising venue to further engage with this topic.

Nonetheless, including the mediation of other actors than bureaucrats and states in the principal-agent model seems to reinvigorate constructivist perspectives on the building of preferences and the place of international organizations in the international system. At the European level, it is important to understand how European socio-economic interests represented by non-state actors impact the builders of what, after all, is our "ever closer union" (European Council, 1983).

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Annex 1 – Coding frame

Entry	Quote	Intermediate	Increase autonomy	Decrease autonomy	Effect	Category
1	"IBM did not want as they wanted to make it payable. They did a fantastic lobbying, they had here in Brussels a small lobbying office of 10 persons and offered travels or organized events"* (INT1131, p.33)	Private sector	No	Yes	Corruptive effect, taking bureaucrats away from the preferences of the organization	Legitimacy, Political leverage
2	"Potential of exporting technocratic expertise? […] using what we'd achieved inside Europe to go a do some good somewhere else." INT1170, p.27	Non-member states	Yes	No	Legitimacy through the export of technocratic expertise.	Legitimacy
3	We were then able to mobilize people in Member States, to go and solve particular problems. So, you go to Kazakhstan, for example, and they have a problem with building a customs laboratory; you can find one of our Member States that has customs laboratory expertise, who were willing to send a couple of blokes to Kazakhstan for a couple of months to say: "This is how you set it up." INT1170, p.26-27	Local expertise from member-states	Yes	No	Mobilizing local expertise in member-states. Act as a legitimate mediator to export expertise	Epistemic authority, Legitimacy
4	"they would come [trade association] and lobby. But, at the same time, you	Trade association	Yes	No	Increase expertise by offering the	Epistemic authority,

	could identify some that were useful in the opposite direction. In that, if you needed to understand something, you could ask them if they could explain the industry's views on issues or the way they did certain things or whatever it might be. So, those sorts of relationships were really quite helpful." INT1170, p.38				view of the industry as a whole in the Union. More autonomy from MS because member states can only get national picture from national trade union	Control over information
5	"the informal network of the customs heads became useful, in that I created a group of heads of fiscal administrations, and we would meet once or twice a year.[…] It was a sounding board that enabled you to plug into the national network of connections between civil servants and politicians, as a way of trying to defuse anything that might otherwise come up and explode in Ecofin"	National civil servants	Yes	No	Informal networks among fiscal commissioner and fiscal national civil servants, used to better prepare negotiations. Can also lead to member states' accrued oversight of the commission	Network,
6	"The Foundation was going through a difficult time[…]The Foundation had also created a network of national research organisations and individual experts in the relevant fields across	IOs Member states Other EU institution	Yes	No	EU agency used networking to preserve its budget	Network

	Member States, established contacts with EU Institutions and with a number of International Organisations and was building an increasingly comprehensive information base. The Head of Administration was experienced in international relations, astute and politically aware. The new 4-year Programme was clearly richer in content" INT1112, p.9					
7	" This was an instrument designed by a specific decision of the Commission that let made it possible to welcome national experts for two to three years. […] This has been, I believe, a\n extrmeley positive experience that went well and was acceptes by all member-states"* INT288	National bureaucrats	Yes	No	Training and development of national civil servants, influencing member-states bureaucracies themselves	Legitimacy, Epistemic authority
8	"We naturally look towards external expertise by collaborating with outsiders or even external entities becoming intermediate for specific fields."* INT288, p.24	Consultancy Academics	No	Yes	Extension of the chain of delegation. Loose of control on expertise?	Epistemic authority
9	*"Interviewer*: Was the Commission and your DG in touch with private groups? *Interviewee*: Yes, of course, every day!	Private groups	Yes	No	The Civil servants are mediators between the interests of	Control over information

	Because we defend the interests of the European industry and of European consumers! The European industry comes to see us. Of course we cannot accept every silly idea. If they come with a certain problem, we have to examine that problem, we have to examine what is behind this problem; whether this problem is important for the finances of the industry, whether this is important for the workforce… We have to know how many people this firm employs, and so on. We have to examine this and also the consumer interest and other more general policy factors" INT960 p.9				industries and therefore control over information.	
10	"And never forget that in certain areas we, the Commission people, we are civil servants; we try to be as well informed as possible, but we don't know everything. What do we know, for instance in the beginning of the negotiations on telecom services, what does a Commission civil servant know exactly about the telecom market? How important is mobile telephone and how important is fixed telephony? How important is Internet… We need this information from the industry, that's absolutely clear. What certain papers, the press, tell and	Private groups	Yes	Yes	Autonomy can be affected both ways: while securing control on information flow, bureaucrats are therefore subject to the expertise private groups are willing to offer, whether their preferences are similar or not	Control over information (Increase), Epistemic authority (Decrease)

	write about lobbies and their pressure… It's all nonsense, in most cases… We need private groups' expertise we have to be in contact with them, and that's it." INT960 p.9-10					
11	*"Interviewer:* If we make a comparison with the Tokyo Round, would you say that there was an increase of activities and an increase of relations between you and the private sectors? *Interviewee*: Yes, of course, because the Uruguay Round was much more extended. We had the service sector and many other things in the Uruguay Round which we had not in the Tokyo Round. So, of course contacts would be broader with the industry, than in the GATT negotiations before, sure." INT960 p.10	Private sector	Maybe	No	Interestingly, the expansion of free word trade through the GATT also expanded the competences of EU civil servants in negotiations.	Political leverage
12	"You see now, for the Brexit, May is desperately trying to put a bunch of experts together, because they have nobody left in London. They've all gone over to Brussels! The expertise was in Brussels; Abbot was in Brussels. Initially he was in	National experts	Yes	No	Clearly sets out the prominence of the commission in trade policy. Does the EU act as a catalyser that also drains expertise to itself?	Political leverage, Epistemic authority, Legitimacy

	London, and responsible for WTO matters in London. They went all to Brussels! The same applies to France, Germany and other Member States. The Community competence in the area of trade policy is exclusive. Consequently, the think-tank was Brussels, and the Member States tried to follow and tried to influence us, but the Commission's leading role was absolutely clear" INT960 p.7					
13	"So, in my time, as I said earlier, we used the environmental organizations very much as a pressure group, in a sense as allies" INT968 p.33	NGOs	Yes	No	External non-governmental bodies used to put pressures and advance preferences	Political leverage
14	"I think the use of the NGOs was very important for signalling and sometimes contradicting statements by industry or by organisations which were polluters. But I think I would have been uncomfortable to give them a	NGOs	Yes	No	Used to pressure other actors than member-states. In the meantime, also aware of a potential bias of expertise	Political leverage

	contract to do a study from something which was directly in the area, where they had criticism." INT968 p.35					
15	"The other thing I would like to say on this was something that I did do before Rio. As I said, my husband was in development and he worked with the development NGOs and I made a joint conference before Rio, between the environment and the development NGOs to advise us on what they thought we ought to do. At that point there was little understanding between the environmental NGOs and the development NGOs." INT969 p.34	NGOs Network	Yes	No	Creating NGOs network. If coupled with previous entry, it coincides	Network
16	"One of my colleagues, a German Commissioner, told me that I was going to have an open battle in Germany. He pointed out that the tobacco industry fully or partially funded	Private sector	No	Yes	Private sectors lobby at the national level which leads states to oppose the commission	Political leverage

	the annual conferences of certainly two of the political parties in Germany. […]O. I arranged for a Commission official to be sent to the WHO in Geneva to provide assistance in the drafting of the proposed Convention. I supported the new Convention and wanted to see it become law. However, I was opposed by Germany and found that the government there was not in favour of the Commission supporting the WHO on this issue." INT974 p.35					
17	"As a result, we were actively involved in setting up the board and we succeeded in getting good people. EFSA's performance has been independently audited every five years. It has never been subjected to any significant criticism. It has been a great success and its decisions are	Auditing agencies	Yes	No	Used of third-party's expertise to legitimate the work of civil servants. Achieve recognition beyond the EU-borders, fostering external legitimacy.	legitimacy

	widely respected throughout the world." INT974, p.44					
18	On negotiating access to EU for post-soviet states: "You had to be tough. And say "Look, you have to do this. You have to change the law. You said last time that you would, why haven't you?" But you also could see why they just couldn't, and then you'd have to provide them with technical expertise. So it was that very practical, hands-on knowledge that gave us a very good understanding of where the strengths and weaknesses were in each country. PL: The people you're dealing with were civil service level rather than politicians. CD: Yes, mainly from the Foreign Ministry." INT992 p.23	Prospective member-states	Yes	No	Export of the technocratic expertise. Training newcomers and setting standards in a way that fit civil servants' preferences.	Legitimacy, Epistemic authority
19	"For example, in air transport field, it is not easy to find organizations that represent the passengers. […] They are not organized so often the chambers of commerce represent them. We engaged them to form an air-transport consumer association. Things like that. We tried	Interest groups	Yes	No	We see here that European civil servants even encourage the formation of interest associations. They do so in the search for extra-information to counterbalance the high presence of information	Control over information

	to force this a bit, because it is essential to us to have a counterbalance between industry lobby and companies'"* INT1018 p.32-33				from the industry.	
20	"Our method was to inform ourselves through several sources obviously. The first source was experts from national bureaucracies. […] The second method was to look at for independenct expert in research. Of course, thre were universities, engineers and all research institution. But there were also the industry for technological questions. […] We had contacts with unions, with the employers of different organizations and also civil society.: INT1018 p.9	Many different (see effect)	Yes	No	Mobilization of many external resources to balance the potential of lobbying effect	Control over information
21	"they supported us strongly behind the scenes in lobbying the Prime Ministers before the European Council meeting in London, which	Universities	Yes	No	Use of universities not as experts, but as lobbyist to directly pressure national governments	Political leverage

	was going to be very difficult with the reluctant Mrs Thatcher. Delors was well briefed. We had a crucial meeting in Leuven University with Roger Dillemans, the Rector at that point, and rectors from different European universities and they all pledged to contact their Prime Ministers to back the HistCom3: History of the European Commission, 1986-2000 Interview with Hywel Ceri Jones, on 6 May 2016 Page 10 of 41 decision to launch Erasmus." INT050 p.9					
22	*"Interviewee:* We wanted people to know what was in our thinking in the Commission and we were open to try to get them to influence our thinking. Interviewer: Was it a way to fill the gap of democracy? Interviewee: Yes" INT050 p.29	Think tank	Yes	Yes	European civil servants welcome external ideas that may not be in line with their own preferences to fill the democratic gap that the EU is often criticized for	Legitimacy
23	"It was a period when there was equal concern	Interest groups	Yes	Yes	Such statement could	Control over information

	with opening up the range of social policy questions to civil society and not just involving the social partners. This was delicate, because the trade unions always felt a kind of exclusive right on these issues." INT050 p.28				potentially indicate that opening up the sources of influence to more groups also allows the commission to reduce the influence each of this group has.	
24	"Pharmaceutical companies and their associations were very active at my time. They would operate mostly directly with the services and in parallel with the cabinet of the commissioner" INT055 p.31	Private actors	No	Yes	Private sector can use bureaucratic fragmentation of different DGs and commissioners to reduce cohesiveness (Bauer & Ege, 2016)	Political leverage
25	"the Airbus agreement was a very good example how the Commission can be useful even without having… I would say, a lot of competence and even without being directly involved. Airbus was an agreement between the EU and the US on subsidies in the sector, which is now coming up again. But they asked us – the Commission – to negotiate with the Americans; and it was a consortium not only of companies. It was composed of four	Private companies	Yes	No	EU civil servants can negotiate on behalf of companies or consortium. This time, they do not mobilize external epistemic authority, but they are themselves mobilized. In turn, this dramatically increase their credibility and competences, even in fields outside of the commission's competence	Legitimacy, Epistemic authority

	Member States: France, Germany, British and Spain. And they asked us to do the negotiations although there was no HistCom3: History of the European Commission, 1986-2000 Interview with Hugo Paemen, on 26 September 2016 Page 9 of 19 Community competence, there was no Community money involved: nothing. But they thought that negotiating under the European flag with the Americans would be helpful." INT1097 p.8					

*Translated from foreign language to English. Record in Annex 2 is in original language.

Annex 2 - Interviews

Each interview is accessible through the link *https://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/[INTXXX]*.

Hyperlinks are provided for each interview below. Depending on which interview, audio recordings are also accessible. Reproduction consent is also made available for each interview.

All interviews are part of the project Oral History, The European Commission 1986-2000, memories of an Institution run by the Historical Archives of the European Union: Oral History (eui.eu)

INT288: Valsesia, Gianluigi (eui.eu)

INT960: Beseler, Hans-Friedrich (eui.eu)

INT968: Brinkhorst, Laurens Jan (eui.eu)

INT969: Brusasco-Mackenzie, Margaret (eui.eu)

INT974: Byrne, David (eui.eu)

INT992: Day, Catherine (eui.eu)

INT1018: Erdmenger, Jürgen (eui.eu)

INT1050: Jones, Hywel Ceri (eui.eu)

INT1055: Keck, Jörn (eui.eu)

INT1112: Purkiss, Clive (eui.eu)

INT1130: Sellal, Pierre (eui.eu)

INT1131: Servantie, Alain (eui.eu)

INT1170: Wilmott, Peter (eui.eu)