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Abstract

The Organization for Security and Co-operation (OSCE) is an essential part of Europe's international structure. While the organization itself is well-researched and fairly prominent in the literature, the role and experiences of those who run the organization on a day-to-day basis – and have at least as much opportunity to shape it – is much less known. This Master's Thesis takes as its subject the international civil servants of the OSCE. The study focuses on the microprocesses and lived experiences of these civil servants using so-called pragmatic practice theory, which focuses on how iterated practice constitutes and shapes individuals. The study analyzes official documents and conducts semi-structured interviews. Herein lie the two original contributions of this thesis to the academic literature. First, it applies practice theory to a novel research subject, namely the OSCE. Second, it analyzes job notices to gain insight into both the actual practice and the OSCE's conception of this practice. Neither of these have been done before and bring valuable insights to light.

After careful considerations of both observations and interviews, I unearthed a sprawling landscape, a multitude of ways in which international civil servants define, practice, learn and experience the ideals. In doing so, I addressed the gap in the literature and opened up the topic for further exploration.

The study has showed the essential nature of impartiality both as an organizing principle and as a concrete work value, enabling the international civil servant to serve all participating States equally. The definition of the international civil servant was also amalgamated from both official OSCE documents and the conducted interviews, revealing a disconnect between the official line and the practitioners themselves concerning who gets to be an international civil servant. The study further reveals three ways of learning at the OSCE, namely learning by doing, learning by observation, and learning by past example. Finally, I show what it means to be an international civil servant to the international civil servants themselves – this experience being a feeling that is tightly bound up with the work that is done and the way it is done, i.e. their tasks and responsibilities, and is a source of a great deal of pride and satisfaction. It should also be noted that the thesis lays no claims to representativeness nor to causality, seeing as the theoretical outlook does not support such claims.

In other words, this thesis has brought to light valuable insights into the lived experience of international civil servants at the OSCE – and in doing so increased our knowledge of the practical and inner workings of an international organization so crucial to the European institutional structure. The thesis thus acts as a useful and enlightening first foray in to the complex world of

the OSCE international civil servant and lays down a foundation. A foundation on which, hopefully, others will build their research to not just further improve our understanding of these hard-working practitioners but also to improve the workings of the OSCE itself.

Zusammenfassung

Die Organisation für Sicherheit und Zusammenarbeit in Europa (OSZE) ist ein wichtiger Bestandteil der institutionellen Landschaft Europas. Das Ziel dieser Masterarbeit ist die Rollen und die Identität der internationalen Beamten der OSZE zu analysieren. Zu diesem Zweck ist diese Arbeit in drei Teile gegliedert. Zu Beginn wird das theoretische und methodische Fundament präsentiert. Die ‚*Practice Theory*‘ wird dafür angewandt. Diese Theorie konzentriert sich darauf, den Einfluss, den die wiederkehrenden Prozesse im Arbeitsumfeld auf Individuen haben, zu analysieren. Dies gestattet einen Einblick und das Ziehen von Erkenntnissen aus dem Leben internationaler Beamter. Der Fokus des zweiten Teils dieser Arbeit liegt auf Stellenausschreibungen und Interviews mit OSZE-Beamten. Insbesondere der Fokus auf Stellenausschreibungen stellt einen originären Beitrag dieser zur Forschung in diesem Gebiet dar. Die zentrale Erkenntnis ist, dass die Überparteilichkeit die Kernanforderung an die OSZE-Beamten ist. Abschließend wurden die drei Lernmethoden, praxisbezogenes Lernen, Lernen durch Beobachtung und lernen basierend auf früheren Beispielen identifiziert und diskutiert.

Diese Arbeit verschafft daher wertvolle Einblicke in die gelebte Erfahrung der internationalen Beamten der OSZE. Dadurch wird unser Verständnis der internen Prozesse und Arbeitsweise dieser Organisation, die ein Grundpfeiler der europäischen institutionellen Struktur ist, erhöht. Hiermit legt diese Masterthesis einen Grundstein für weitere Forschungsarbeiten zur Verständnisvertiefung der komplexen Welt des internationalen Beamten der OSZE.

Introduction

Who is the international civil servant? The UN Charter spells out the role of a civil servant at an international organization in no uncertain terms. In Chapter XV on the Secretariat, in article 100(1), it is stated that *“the staff shall not seek or receive instructions from any government or from any other authority external to the Organization. They shall refrain from any action which might reflect on their position as international officials responsible only to the Organization.”* (United Nations 1945) Furthermore, article 100(2) enshrines the *“exclusively international character of the responsibilities”* of the staff. Thus, the civil servant of the UN is above all *international* and responsible only to the UN. Similar provisions are found in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe’s (OSCE) Code of Conduct for Staff/Mission Members, adding that *“OSCE officials shall conduct themselves at all times in a manner befitting the status of an international civil servant.”* (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe 2003)

Yet one thing is what the international law and codes of conduct set out, quite another is how these values are translated into practice. After all, international civil servants are human beings, prone to biases and error like the rest of us. More to the point, they are *nationals*, often having made careers at their foreign ministries, having dedicated their lives to the promotion of the national interest. International civil servants often find themselves in positions to influence policy-making through for example their proximity to elected officials and of course have the primary responsibility of executing the organization’s decisions. Therefore, it is paramount to understand the process by which these civil servants are constituted as *international* and how they contribute to the international organizations’ aspirations to these values. In the words of my research question: How do international civil servants define, practice, learn and experience the ideal of the international civil servant?

The structure of the thesis is as follows. First, I critically review the present literature on microprocesses, i.e. the behavior and decisions of individuals, and set out the details of my choice of theory, practice theory, which focuses on how iterated practice constitutes and shapes individuals. This thesis situates itself in the pragmatic literature within this theory, looking thus not primarily to the social setting stemming from the practice but also to the individual conscious and unconscious consequences. My theoretical outlook draws most strongly from (Bueger and Gadinger 2015) but also from (Pouliot 2016) and (Žižek 2008) Secondly, using this theoretical outlook, I develop my methodology and research design and describe my case and research process. My methodology relies heavily on the recommendations found in (Bueger 2014) but is original in as much as it incorporates arguments from (Žižek 2008) as well. This methodology combines observations and semi-structured interviews to gain a comprehensive understanding

of international civil servants' role and identity. In doing so, two original contributions to the literature are introduced. First, this thesis applies practice theory to a novel research subject, namely the OSCE. The OSCE, being one of the premier European international organizations albeit without formal legal personality, serves as an excellent and underresearched subject. Certain drawbacks to this choice do exist, such as the inability to generalize findings to other international organizations due to its unique status, but do not take away from the overall value of the subject. (Galbreath 2007) Second, it analyzes job notices which provides insight into both the actual practice and the formal conception of practice at the international organization. This methodological setup also brings with it limitations, including an inability to generalize the findings over the entire OSCE body as well as a lack of causal setup to identify and isolate causal mechanisms. Finally, I present these findings, defining the international civil servant, showing how the employees learn and experience this practice, and noting the importance of impartiality.

This thesis is meant as an exploratory study, situated as it is in a still-developing theoretical field with a focus on an underresearched subject using a novel methodological setup. It is my hope that the findings presented herein will inspire others to further research this exciting and worthwhile topic.

Literature Review

The research question stakes out the focus of this thesis: microprocesses. In other words, this thesis seeks to describe and understand the behavior and decisions of individuals, embedded, as they are, in social contexts. Such a focus in turn embeds itself in a very specific context and body of literature, which can be called the logics of action. However, within this wider body of theory is a contentious field of battling logics, each with their distinct research agenda, assumptions and methodology. These four are the logics of consequence, appropriateness, habit and practice – any research interested in microprocesses must chart out its place on this field. In the following, I will engage critically with these logics and argue for my choice of logic of action, namely that of the logic of practice. Following this argumentation, I then chart out the existing literature on the international civil servant before concluding that it is an underresearched field with considerable gaps which this thesis intends to address at least partially.

The theorists of the logic of consequences, also known as rational choice, focus on the distribution of resources and the decision made on the basis of fixed preferences.¹ They take the

¹ See for example (Levi 1997) or (Moravcsik 1997) for the EU specific example

world for granted, often assuming perfect information or at least direct links between what is and what is perceived. Furthermore, they combine this rigid ontology with a logic of action which too readily translates preferences and pressures into action, thus circumventing agency or interpretation. In the process become circular arguments, not so much explaining as dictating behavior. Like the man who finds all acts of kindness selfish because he has decided all acts are selfish, rational choice theorists are forced to find rationality everywhere they look by attributing rationality ad-hoc.² Or they become idealized, almost normative, decision-making models, explaining away empirical discrepancies as failures to follow the logic of the theory, to be *rational*. In short, they are top-down theories which only reveal the outcomes following from theoretical assumptions while failing to track the social structures arising from actual behavior; they are underspecified.

They may explain outcomes in the abstract (and ad-hoc) but they lose their grounding in the practical “ordinary, everyday operation” of their research subjects. (Pouliot 2016) Take, for example, this quote from a senior diplomat: “*The director general, as referee, had quietly informed all parties that only two representatives per country would be allowed in the room, but somehow the US delegation had five.*” (Eagleton-Pierce 2013) The question for a rational choice theorist would be obvious, i.e. why was the US allowed five representatives and others two? The answer would likewise be self-evident; American relative power manifested itself in the number of delegates. Yet, such a question and such an answer, I contend, fails to get at the heart of matter. It fails to urge the research to dig deeper. How did the director general know to let the US keep five? Why did no one else try? What would have happened if others had tried? How did the different representatives react to this unequal treatment? These are not questions that rational choice theory is equipped to answer.

The logic of appropriateness, as a second logic of action, understands action as the conscious process in which an actor identifies the proper role in a given context and acts accordingly. (March and Olsen 2008) As such, it puts an inordinate amount of focus on a deliberative consciousness of the actor in the confrontation with the world. It is also often criticized for over-emphasizing the spoken word at the expense of the act. (Hopf 2010)

(Pouliot 2016) in his book “International Pecking Orders” charts a way to track social structures in a structured and methodological manner, which he defines as practice theory, a form of logic of action. Doing away with stylized “*outcomes in variations*” thinking, he proposes a “*process-*

² See for example the ‘Madman’ theory of (Roy 1994)

based mode of explanation.” Arguing that behavioral traits do not exist without their instantiation through process, by explaining phenomena through process we become able to theorize more capably on the matter at hand. Instead of seeking abstractions and generalizations, I seek granularity and empirical detail. This method encourages the researcher to be inductive in theorizing about how key processes structure, enable and restrict the social space of its inhabitants, thus avoiding the mistakes of the “*outcomes in variations*” approach. In other words, I propose to research not the outcomes or the effects of international civil servants on, say, negotiations but rather to inductively theorize on the very process of becoming and being an international civil servant – a continuous and ever-repeating process not just the logic of consequences but also the logic of appropriateness is unable to capture. It should be mentioned that there is also a fourth logic of action – that of habit. Unfortunately, the theoretical differences between habits and practice is still underdeveloped and in flux. Without getting into a larger theoretical debate on this point, I do side with the part of the literature, e.g. Pouliot, which privileges practices over habits although it is worth to keep in mind the (Hopf 2010) critique of exactly Pouliot on the limits of agency: “*Pouliot’s reading of Bourdieu (...) privileges Bourdieu’s treatment of agency, while eliding his deep structuralism, thereby expecting much more potential for change and reflection than the logic of habit would permit.*”

Finally, there is some literature on the international civil servants, much in the rationalist camp of research. Proponents of Public Administration research, for example, define these kinds of servants as “International Public Administrations.” (see for example (Bauer, Knill and Eckhard 2017)) In a different field, researchers of “International Bureaucracies” focus on the “*overall influence*” of these bureaucracies. (As an example: (Biermann 2009)) Common to much of this research is a conceptualization of the bureaucracies as such, not the individuals comprising them, and on the effects and effectiveness of these institutions. Thus, literature within practice theory pertaining to my chosen research subject is limited. There are those, including Pouliot, who operate in the same social space, international organizations, as I do. Take (Adler-Nissen 2014) who writes on the stigmatization of Danish and British national representatives in the EU. Operating explicitly in the theory of practice, “*[the research] seeks to contribute to the so-called practice or sociological turn in EU and IR studies,*” she makes significant contributions to the state of practice theory in international relations. Yet, and to repeat, as can be seen from this cursory overview of the current literature, there is a real gap in the research when it comes to international civil servants seen in the light of practice theory. My thesis aims to address this gap, however limited the contribution may be.

As is only natural, this choice is not uncontroversial and has indeed met much criticism in the literature. It is in fact outside the mainstream of International Relations which thoroughly prefers setups pitting variables, outcomes and cases against each other to avoid such pitfalls as false positives. Indeed, this approach has been criticized for wasting its time on the superfluous and losing track of the essential. I do, of course, acknowledge the risk of getting lost in the detail and the unessential but I believe the risk is overstated and is indeed mitigatable through a thoughtful research design. Furthermore, my choice is not without precedence and situates itself firmly within practice theory, albeit with an underresearched subject. I will be addressing exactly where my paper situates itself in the following.

Theory

Practice theory

One must keep in mind that practice theory, rather than being theory as such, is, in fact, more of a research methodology. Rather than specifying logical chains, it aids theory generation by “*specifying the unit of analysis: practice.*” (Pouliot 2016) In doing so, it sidesteps oft-repeated discussions on ontology, instead urging the researcher to follow where the practice leads. As many other terms, practice is a contested term but (Pouliot 2016) defines it as “*socially meaningful and organized patterns of activities.*” More than both behavior and action, they are “*regular forms of action within a given social context.*” They are the everyday things we do in life which are recognized by others as meaningful in a more or less agreed-upon way. Being socially meaningful, they also constitute the social world we interact with. As such, understanding of higher-order structures or macro phenomena relies on a deep understanding of its more foundational elements, the practice. This argument is by no means trivial and can be contested on the grounds of introducing unnecessary detail into research. However, I believe it is necessary to proceed inductively to properly found theory and to harness productively the tension between micro and macro phenomena – and in doing so avoiding ad-hoc solutions to improperly grounded theory.

Practices structure the world, not merely by being, but by being enacted. Since they are not merely repeated actions but repeated *social* actions, we rely on them when engaging with other people. Quite simply put, they facilitate our engagement with the other but in doing so also structures the manner in which we engage with the other in the first place. It is important to note that this engaging with each other in familiar ways forms as (Goffman 1967) puts it “*a substantial domain in its own right,*” enabling its treatment as a subject of research. However, this is not to suggest that the relationship between the structure and the actor is entirely deterministic. In the

social interaction, we are left free to choose but the structure suggests the nature of the choice and hints at the interpretations of said choice. In this way, practices act as signals with which we constantly produce and reproduce ourselves in the interaction with the other. Meanwhile, the very fact that the structure is constantly acted out by a multitude of actors gives it the potential to be simultaneously resilient and malleable. Every actor is thus in a never-ending position of choosing to challenge or affirm the structure, and their place within it. This is not to suggest that the actors are all equal in this structure. Social situations are never isolated; they are always situated in and played over time and history.

In this way, practice theory places itself firmly within the field of what (Bueger and Gadinger 2015) call the culturalist approach. This approach, as they put it, *“understands social order as a product of collectively shared knowledge.”* Unlike other logics, they stress the importance of unconscious knowledge and endeavor to explain *“the emergence and constitution”* of the culture at hand.

But practice theory, as this thesis defines it, is more than the social interaction between two actors. Thus, in the words of (Reckwitz 2002), practice is *“a routinized type of behavior which consists of several elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, ‘things’ and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge.”* As should be clear, this definition, in contrast with (Pouliot 2016)’s definition from above, revolves less around the social interaction and more around the site of the practice and the practice itself. As can be seen in (Bueger and Gadinger 2015)’s six commitments of practice theory, practice theory is not found first in the social interaction but rather in the continued performance of practice, be it *“between actors, objects [or] material artifacts,”* situated in a specific time and space. Cue the schism in practice theory, i.e. *“what a practice is.”* Bueger and Gadinger notes that international relations practice theory has long been connected with the writings of Bourdieu; indeed, Pouliot’s understanding of practice, as laid out above, hearkens close to the Bourdieuan analysis based on power and domination. Bueger and Gadinger calls this approach critical or post-structural theory. Without entering discussion on the specifics of this theory, I find that it does not meaningfully add to the purpose of this thesis which is to unearth the often-unconscious practices underpinning the culture of the international civil servant, and not to engage with power struggles. In opposition to this critical practice theory stands pragmatism. In this approach, practice is seen as *“taking place in multiplicity, in a combination of ‘common worlds’, and in hybrid relations between subjects and objects, and humans and non-humans.”* (Bueger and Gadinger 2015) Pragmatist practice theory thus focuses on the continuous performance in and engaging with the world – practice as situated

process, practice as everyday action, practice as *routines*. Thus, within the framework of this thesis, studying practice is understood as focusing on the everyday interactions, unconscious and otherwise, as they come together in the actor when performing, acting out, working as an international civil servant. In practical terms, this means looking first to the empirical reality of the site and following the objects as “*crucial containers of practice*”. In this way, this thesis places itself squarely within the pragmatist subfield of practice theory. (Bueger 2014)

Methodology

We turn now to the practical design of the research for this thesis, specifically practice tracing and case selection. While I do hearken closely to Bueger’s methodological suggestions in “Pathways to Practice”, in the pragmatist spirit, where relevant and useful I also draw inspiration from Pouliot’s research design in “International Pecking Orders.” I do so fully aware that the theoretical underpinnings for the two are somewhat different but find that these theoretical agreements affect the methodology in the application and use of said methodology rather than the choice of methodology itself. As an example, both Pouliot and Bueger are in favor of the use of interviews but differ in how they approach the findings. Finally, Pouliot, in dealing with a site and actors which are similar to my chosen site and actors, has a series of practical considerations that this thesis would do well to keep in mind.

Research Design

The theory of practice, with its “*pragmatist ontology and epistemology*”, sets out a rather clear aim of the research design. The design should enable the researcher to lay out the landscape of practice in a specific social setting and in so doing attain understanding of the practitioners and the space they inhabit. (Pouliot 2016) This aim is ambitious and requires a multitude of methods to properly grasp it. I have chosen two distinct methods which should allow me to come to a deep understanding of the subject.

First, I seek to follow the “*strategy of zooming in on structure-making sites*”, the international organization, and “*following the object*”, the linguistic construction of the international civil servant, i.e. answering the question what routines does an international civil servant working at an international organization have? Tracing these everyday practices at the site, I will rebuild maps of routines – everyday practices of “*structuring and ordering*” – at the site to gain an understanding of what an international public servant does. Second, I follow the “*strategy of looking down*” and theorize about categories which capture the kinds of practices that are performed and “*through which actors relate*”, i.e. how do the practices come together in the actor when performing the role of an international public servant? (Bueger 2014)

Understanding the Practice

Per practice theory, there is only one way to achieve any deep understanding of a site: immersing yourself in the context, engaging with the practitioners and interpreting the findings. How else could one hope to reconstruct the intersubjective field of meaning that is in constant negotiation? The first task, then, is to gain an understanding of what is going on in the social theater and what it means to the practitioners. Once that knowledge is gained, (Taylor 1993) encourages the researcher to ask the question, what do practitioners need to know in order to understand the practice and thus enable said practice to be substantiated in the world? In other words, the second task is to uncover the tacit know-how within the community which structure the understanding of a given actor and practice.

The problem then arises of finding and getting access to these practices. In similarity with (Pouliot 2016), I study a field which may be hard to gain access to, even while they are easy to find. International public servants work in highly securitized and confidential environments with an often-high lack of transparency.³ Furthermore, I am rather suspicious of the value of simple participant observation which often fails to account for the influence that an observer has on the observed. Yet more problematic for the study of practice, participant observation has a fundamental weakness exactly in what is supposed to be its strength. As the Swedish movie, *Kitchen Stories*, so brilliantly depicts, intersubjective meaning is often impossible to penetrate as an outside observer without the help of a practitioner to initiate the observer into the practice. One simply cannot understand the other without *interacting* with that other. Therefore, with (Pouliot 2016), I choose to base my research design on semi-structured interviews to “*reconstruct the practitioners’ point of view.*” That is not to say that participant observation cannot be of use at all. Since everyday practice is defined by being at least partially unconscious and looks also to the interaction with inanimate objects, observation of routines, if at all possible, should be included to inform the interviews. Thus, I base my research on interviews and in turn base my interviews on observation. In practice, my observations will be entirely on the written output concerned with work from and at the OSCE, specifically job notices and codes of conduct, and will be considered the ‘formal’ aspects of work at the OSCE. In doing so, I argue that this output can also be seen as practice, namely the practice of the employees. It is worth noting that analyzing the job notices for hints to the practice of the international civil servant is an innovation in the field of practice theory research. In all my readings on the subject, I did not encounter any literature researching

³ A google search for “lack of transparency UN” brings up nearly six million hits.

such objects. Thus, I contend that this innovation is an original contribution to the field with great potential for other research objects like the UN or NATO.

Such a choice does of course bring its own set of challenges, both practical and theoretical. The practical challenges will be discussed in the case selection but the theoretical challenge deserves a note here. As (Bourdieu 1990) puts it: *“As soon as he reflects on his practice, adopting a quasi-theoretical posture, the agent loses any chance of expressing the truth of his practice, and especially the truth of the practical relation to the practice.”* What this means is that the ‘truth’ lies not in what is directly said but rather what is implicitly assumed and required for the smooth execution of the practice, the interview. For example, the importance not of knowing what the particular alphabet soups of the UNODC’s or UNICEF’s program stand for but rather the very fact of being able to use them seamlessly in one’s speech. Thus, the interviews can open up for a rich world of understanding and allow the researcher to trace practices in their context.

Following in this thesis’ dedication to pragmatism, (Rathbun 2008) also proposes a slew of advice on conducting useful interviews while being pragmatic about the criticism leveled at the method from relativist and rationalist sides. He argues for the important, even essential, contributions of interviews to research such as the inability, often, of *“establishing motivations and preferences”* through any other means. Among his proposals to avoid falling in to pitfalls such as getting *“phony testimony”* is to devote interviews to enable interviewees to *“reflect on their experience”* and encourage the interviewee to be as frank as possible through indirect and concrete questions. I will be following most of his advice, including allowing interviewees to both speak off the record or in a non-attributable manner if they should feel it necessary. Where I do break with Rathbun is in not recording the interview but rather taking down notes and salient quotations during the interview. I make this choice fully aware of the tradeoff in both validity and credibility of the interviews, finding that recording brings more drawbacks than advantages.

Critics here might mention problems such as bias or the inability to ever get a full grasp of the context. What, they might ask, happens if you only get disgruntled former international public servants to open up to you? Surely they will have a particular bias that skews the understanding of the position. To this I answer that in that very bias may lie clues exactly to understand the social theater. Remember, practices are rarely stable and kept so by some authority. The very fact that some practitioners are disgruntled, for example, would later give valuable hints towards the current state of the practice, revealing the ongoing negotiations around the very meaning of the practice. Interestingly, in my interviews, I found very positive attitudes – alongside critical rather than negative attitudes – towards especially the interviewees’ colleagues across the board thus obviating, in practice, this criticism. As to the second criticism, that is an inevitable consequence

of the chosen method. Just like the French naturalist writers of the 19th century, like Émile Zola, ultimately had to give up their attempt to capture reality fully simply because there is so much of it, my contribution to the literature is inevitably limited, and thereby flawed. Furthermore, (Rathbun 2008) gives a spirited defense of semi-structured interviews, finding them useful for answering research questions pertaining to “*attitudes or perspectives*” even when one assumes a position of treating interviewee data as “*inherently subjective*.” Since I am exactly interested in this subjective experience I find these consequences to be a worthy tradeoff for deep understanding.

Conceptualizing the Origins of Practice

Yet, simply understanding the practice from the view of the practitioners themselves is clearly inadequate. (Pouliot 2016) points to the problem, not just of ‘going native’ but also of missing the forest for the trees. Or, as (Žižek 2008) puts it, inspecting the worker’s wheelbarrow for stolen goods, only to realize later that the worker is stealing the wheelbarrows themselves.⁴ The above has hinted at the solution to this problem a few times and is explicated in Žižek’s treatise on violence as well as Bueger’s strategy of looking down. The key is to cast “sideways glances” at the matter at hand. One must work towards a “*conceptual development of the typology of*” the practice by keeping the individual variances at a distance. In so doing, one becomes able to create simultaneously “*a decontextualized appearance, an appearance which fully coincides with real being*.” (Žižek 2008) After all, as has been argued before, there is no stable essence to any conception of practice; it is constantly in flux. Thus, the challenge is to extract an “inner form” of the matter yet without losing its connection to that which it arose from – a productive tension indeed. In the terms of this thesis, I will take a step back from and look away at the deep understanding achieved by the practice tracing and thus inductively categorize and conceptualize key findings to come up with a generalized description of what comes together to make an international public servant. A concrete example is my interest not just in the permanent staff but also in the interns. Simply put, how the people on the fringes act, are perceived and perceive themselves often reveals more about the other, i.e. permanent staff, than themselves.

With this generalized description in hand, I then proceed to the second part of the empirics. Searching not for a definitive account but for a way to incorporate diverse narratives, I will map the different paths that are taken to acquire these practices. In doing so, I will also take a critical look at the successes and failures of the different paths in conferring the practices.

⁴ This is also where I make my break with (Pouliot 2016)’s research design.

It should be noted that one could take a more structured, or methodical, approach to this conceptualization. Pouliot, for example, uses field analysis and statistics to map out the relations between practitioners. I choose to refrain from such an approach for two reasons. First, I am skeptical of the attempt to use numerical values to describe the complexity of the social situation. I believe this kind of abstracting amounts rather to an arbitrary reductionism which does not aid in understanding. Second and more generally, I intend, so to speak, to keep the productive tension alive by keeping the link between “inner form” and that which it arises from as unmediated and inductive as possible.

Research Design “in Practice”

In practical terms, I incorporate the limitations and realizations following from this theoretical outlook into my work in a number of ways. Most importantly, when conducting interviews, I always inquire specifically to the tasks of the profession and ask my interview subjects to elaborate and explicate exactly how they did these tasks, assuring them along the way that I really am interested in these ‘boring’ details. In another way, when reporting on my findings, I adhere as closely as possible to the words of my interview subjects, quoting them often, to represent them as faithfully as possible and especially make sure to present their statements when they contradict the consensus of the rest of the interviewees, so as to prevent any impression of a false unanimity. In a third way, I aim to observe the organization at work and talking about work, rather than the final output. Thus, I look to job notices, not final declarations and the like, for my observations when aiming to conceptualize how the work is practiced. In a fourth way, I do not attempt to make any causal connections to the overall workings or efficiency of the OSCE based upon my interviews and observations, reflecting the inability, and indeed unwillingness, to support such claims convincingly with the evidence at hand. Overall, it means empathizing, thinking, for example, of what I myself might want to ask and know if I were to start working at the international organization in question.

Case Selection

The chosen methodology with its focus on “social theaters” leans heavily towards case studies as its source of empirical data. (Pouliot 2016) As case, I have chosen the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). There are a number of reasons for and advantages from this choice. First, the OSCE’s secretariat is in Vienna thus minimizing the costs in terms of resources while maximizing convenience. Second, while institutions such as the UN or the EU usually receive a majority of research attention, the OSCE is comparatively under-researched. In fact, beyond (Galbreath 2007) there is not much academic writing with the OSCE as an institution

as its main focus. Not to mention, Galbreath's book is far from a practice study of the international civil servants at the OSCE, meaning this thesis' second original contribution to the field is taking this approach, which normally concerns itself with the UN, NATO and the EU, to the OSCE. Third, the OSCE, billing itself as a "non-career organization" presents a particularly apt case to study the production of international civil servants out of national material.⁵ More specifically, as international staff is only allowed to serve with the OSCE for a maximum of ten years, there is good potential to find fitting interview subjects.⁶ Fourth, the OSCE has programs set in place to internalize "the OSCE's structure and activities" which provides an extra source of data besides the interviews. Finally, the OSCE represents a particularly interesting choice since, as (Galbreath 2007) puts it, *"the OSCE has been an innovative organization without the customary bureaucratic 'baggage' of other organizations."*

There are of course also disadvantages to making this choice. Chief among them, the OSCE is a rather unique international organization, in legal as well as other terms. While heavily institutionalized, as any international lawyer worth their salt will tell you, the OSCE does not have a founding charter or treaty as such, nor does it have formal legal personality. (Galbreath 2007) and (OSCE Secretariat Legal Services 2015)) It is also not an exclusive and close-working alliance, like NATO, nor a global organization with near-universal membership, like the UN. Without going into the thornier issues of geopolitics, it also presides over areas and issues which are fiercely contested amongst its members. Given the institutional peculiarities, the potential for generalization to the whole body of international organizations is low. Meanwhile, the geopolitical aspects did make it somewhat difficult to gain access to OSCE staff. This difficulty may necessitate offers of confidentiality or even to seek interviews from outside the system, such as retired staff. While these disadvantages no doubt have the potential to negatively impact my research, taken together with the benefits, I find that the OSCE offers a good case with excellent potential.

Interview Process

In practical terms, the interview process was straightforward and can be split up into three fundamental steps – preparing, conducting and reviewing the interview.

In preparing for the interview, I first reached out through official channels to the Human Resources department at the OSCE, hoping to set up an official collaboration. Unfortunately, they

⁵ See for example the main employment webpage of the OSCE: <http://www.osce.org/employment/108869>

⁶ See Regulation 3.11(b) in (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe 2014)

were not interested in such an arrangement so I had to shift gears and contact individual OSCE employees. Knowing the nature of the OSCE, I made use of my network to establish the first touch points after which I would ask the interviewees for recommendations on other people to interview. Knowing that using my network could expose me to selection bias, I continued conducting interviews until a saturation point was reached and no novel data was unearthed. Even so, my interview subjects do tend towards the junior end of the spectrum, although still with a few seniors. The detailed breakdown of the interviews will follow in a later chapter. I would then schedule the interviews for any time of their convenience. Interestingly, after conducting the first interview outdoors, I realized that the current employees were loath to schedule the interviews for the simple reason that bringing me into OSCE premises would present a considerable extra burden because of the need for me to pass through security. For this reason, I always stressed my availability on Skype and indeed conducted the vast majority of my interviews in this manner. While this did impinge on my ability to observe the interviewees in their ‘natural habitat,’ so to speak, the interviewees were clearly used to conducting meetings in this manner – a significant finding in and of itself.

In conducting the interviews, I always made sure to ask how they would like to be identified, e.g. as ‘senior OSCE employee.’ All interviewees accepted being quoted but preferred anonymity for various reasons. Those currently working at the OSCE were required to ask their superior for permission who were generally happy to give it. I began with a list of pre-prepared questions inspired by my theoretical foundation and observations.⁷ After the first few interviews, I prioritized the questions to maximize the value of my time with the interviewees. As such, examples of the main questions are: What were your tasks and responsibilities? How would you define an international civil servant? I would then ask follow-up questions, asking them to e.g. specify how they carried out those tasks, how they had learned how to do those tasks, and if and why they considered themselves international civil servants. I would also look up their career history on LinkedIn and use that knowledge to ask into the differences between being for example a national and international civil servant or an intern and a Junior Professional Officer. The full findings will be presented and discussed in a later chapter. During all of the above, I would be taking notes while following the conversation to guide it in the most fruitful direction.

Finally, in reviewing the interview, I would go over the notes I had taken, rounding out the records and putting down general observations. I would also critically assess my own interview

⁷ The pre-prepared questions can be found in their entirety in annex 1.

technique and questions, adjusting where necessary as witnessed earlier by the shift to Skype calls. I also would be on the lookout for various pitfalls in the interview process, such as duplicitous or less-than-forthright participants, but on the whole found that the interviewees were very informative and forthright, and considering some were still working at the OSCE, often remarkably so, with little agenda beyond informing me of their experiences.

The Formal Setting at the OSCE

In this chapter, I will analyze key documents to pin down the terms used to describe an international civil servant and thus point to the understanding the OSCE has of the staff it employs. This analysis serves as the observational part of this thesis. It should be noted that the intent of this chapter is not to conduct a legal analysis of the conditions under which OSCE staff are working.

Rights and Obligations

The OSCE, as any other institution, sets out its expectations to and understanding of the proper conduct of an international civil servant in its “Staff Regulations and Staff Rules.” (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe 2003). Therein, the OSCE never clearly defines what an international civil servant is, instead taking it for granted that this is known. Rather, the focus is on what can be expected from a person having such a distinction. This focus can be seen most clearly in the second chapter titled “Duties, Obligations and Privileges,” where, in Regulation 2.01 “Conduct of OSCE Officials” several key values are set out, namely *integrity*, *independence* and *impartiality*. Interestingly, in the Code of Conduct found in the same document, impartiality is linked closely to the international civil servant, as, under the point titled “*Impartiality*”, the first sentence runs as follows: “*OSCE officials shall conduct themselves at all times in a manner befitting the status of an international civil servant. They shall refrain from any action that might cast doubt on their ability to act impartially.*” This impartiality is further emphasized in point 2 and 7 where the “OSCE official” is expected to refrain from taking instructions from “*any authority external to the OSCE*” and to refrain from accepting gifts or using their “*position for private advantage*.” Even in its hiring practices, this dedication shines through, as seen in Regulation 3.01(c): “*Under no circumstances shall specific posts come to be identified with any one participating State, region or group of States.*” (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe 2003). Furthermore, in terms of work, the OSCE stresses the obligation of its staff to follow its “*policy on professional working environment*” and to “*observe maximum discretion with regard to all matters of official business.*” The former refers to a document which sets out detailed instructions on how to deal with cases involving e.g. discrimination. (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe 2010). Furthermore, the OSCE promises that all its staff is treated equally, regardless of a number of statuses, including gender and race. On the topic of working hours, a distinction is made between the OSCE officials and the so-called local staff. While local staff are to be compensated for overtime, OSCE officials “*shall work beyond the normal working hours if required.*”

Specifically on their conduct outside of the working place, OSCE officials are expected to comply with “*accepted human rights standards*”, respect the “*laws and regulations*” in the country they are stationed, and to not have any conflicting business or financial interests.

Meanwhile, what we may call the conditions and rights of OSCE staff is very clearly set out and varies by position. The OSCE makes very clear that it is a non-career organization, which in practical terms means that everyone is appointed for fixed terms of either two or three years, with only directors and heads of missions enjoying the latter privilege. In contrast, more junior staff – those under P5 grade level – can stay in the same post for no longer than seven years while the more senior may only serve for a maximum of four. In addition, no staff, whether members of missions abroad or so-called international staff may serve for longer than ten years. Concerning rights, reflecting perhaps the international character of both organization and staff, there are a number of remunerations and subsidies designed to ease for the employees and their families the transition in and out of a new country in connection with their duties at the OSCE – this support extends as far as providing for the expenses of “*tuition in the mother tongue*” for children of staff members. Finally, the subject of salary is handled in great detail with distinctions between General Service (G), Professional (P) and Director (D) staff, in line with other international institutions such as the UN. These distinctions, as they important to the staff themselves as we shall see later on, are worth dwelling on.

There are three distinctions to be made regarding the salary and hiring structure of the OSCE. The first distinction is between Staff Members and Mission Members, defined as being assigned to the Secretariat and the Institutions or to a field operation. (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe n.d.) The second distinction is between being so-called international contracted, international seconded and general service. The first refers to the situation where the incoming P or D staffer is paid by his or her national government while in the second the staffer is paid by the OSCE itself. Finally, the G staff, like international contracted, are contracted by the OSCE and have lower requirements in terms of education and experience prior to hiring. (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe n.d.) (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe n.d.) (Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe n.d.). The third distinction within the international contracted and seconded is then the P and D positions. There are also a number of other types of employment such as consultants and short-term positions which will not be dealt with in detail. What will be dealt with in detail are two types of employment which are conspicuously absent from the Staff Regulations, namely internships and JPOs – thereby putting them somewhat on the fringes in formal terms. Interns, by virtue of being unpaid, are not part of this wage structure while JPOs are considered P1. (Organization for Security and

Co-operation in Europe n.d.) (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe n.d.). The interviews also reveal that there are a few extra distinctions made in practice based on this system, including between the different cities one can be assigned to, with Vienna and Belgrade being much easier to staff than others.

Overall, the above would suggest, in line with the theoretical outlook of this thesis, that international civil servants at the OSCE, in the eyes of the OSCE, very much are defined by their conduct but also that there is a clear hierarchy with markers such as pay grade and contract length setting out the boundaries. Furthermore, it should be noted that while rights, including of course pay, is very much dependent on your position within the organization, everyone, including interns, are covered by the Code of Conduct, i.e. rights may differ but obligations do not. Some of the key terms identified are thus impartiality, hierarchy, integrity, independence, conditions, rights and conduct.

Describing Work at the OSCE

Such terms may sound good on paper but to our theoretical outlook it begs the question of how they are acted out in practice. An answer to this question can be found in the numerous job vacancies posted by the OSCE on its online job application portal. Here the OSCE most openly and detailed describes the tasks, responsibilities, core values and competencies – in other words, practice – that the organization expects from its employees – from interns over Gs to Ps. Analyzing and comparing – looking at practice from askance – these job notices enables us to build a picture of what exactly these terms mean to not just the organization itself but also the staff who wrote these job notices in the first place. The job postings sample was gathered from March to May with a few of them issued earlier and located on two different websites. The first is the official employment website, www.osce.org/employment, where the seconded positions are posted, while the second is the online job applications platform known as OSCE iRecruitment, located at www.employment.osce.org, where all other positions are to be found. All positions are either P, G, or internship positions but with the focus on the P and internship positions as the G positions more often than not are administrative positions with few international dimensions, thus ill-fitting with the focus on international civil servants. While the postings look slightly different between the two websites, in the whole they are consistent with one major exception. The job notices found on the iRecruitment platform have an additional part called “required competencies,” referring to explicit values and competencies expected by the OSCE with definitions. This part enumerates the same values and competencies regardless of the particular job notice; it will be described in more detail when appropriate at a later stage.

The first thing that leaps to the eye when looking at these job notices is their uniform look. There seems to be two templates, one used exclusively for international missions and one for everything else, especially the Secretariat and the institutions. While they are alike in many ways, they differ in some details. As such, the specific requirements, tasks, and responsibilities do differ from position to position and department to department. For example, a security officer in Ukraine is expected to have “*excellent knowledge of security management, combined with solid background in military, police or security specialization*” while an associate public information officer at the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna should have “*knowledge of and experience with social media applications.*” But notwithstanding those differences, patterns do emerge. These likenesses in characteristics can be categorized into three groups: International Missions (IM), Secretariat and Institutions (SI), and Uniform (U). Within these three groups, the characteristics are again grouped in two: requirements and tasks and responsibilities. We first take a look at the Us after which IM, and SI will follow.

Uniform

The job notices, being standardized into templates, had a large number of characteristics in common. I present the most important ones here, based on the extent to which the interviews could reveal how they play out in practice. Overall, these characteristics reflect the international nature of work at the OSCE, both in terms of working with colleagues and material, as well as the OSCE’s dedication to being a non-career organization.

Requirements

The uniform requirements, as might be expected, can be considered as the minimum standard to be reached in order to be employed at the OSCE. In other words, these are the basic and fundamental characteristics of an international civil servant at the OSCE.

As befitting a non-career organization, all the positions required either a university degree or several years of experience in a relevant field to be considered, and most often both. The only position not requiring years of experience was the JPO position while the next-lowest P position in the sample, a P-1 position, required a minimum of two years. Furthermore, everyone without exception was required to be computer literate, especially with the Microsoft Office package, as well as having professional fluency in English. Soft skills were also considered important. They would range from “demonstrated gender awareness” to “*ability [...] to work as a member of a team, with people of different cultural and religious backgrounds [...] while maintaining impartiality*” and all employees were expected to possess the skills necessary to work in an

international setting with international colleagues. This requirement reflects particularly well the OSCE's dedication to the values discussed above. Finally, there was a set of required competencies, separated in three groups: Core values, core competencies, and managerial competencies. The **core values** were closely aligned with the Code of Conduct, mentioning diversity, "*respects others and values their diverse perspectives and contributions*," and integrity, "*acts in a manner consistent with the Organization's core values and organizational principles*,". They also mentioned exclusively work-related values, namely commitment and accountability. The **core competencies** referred exclusively to work-related values and explicates the OSCE's work philosophy. They were focused on teamwork, such as communication and collaboration, as well as structured, flexible, rational and pro-active work habits, which we see echoed both in the specific tasks and responsibilities as well as the experiences relayed by the interviewees. Finally, **managerial competencies** were reserved for those with managerial responsibilities: Leadership, strategic thinking, and managing performance.

Tasks and Responsibilities

It should be noted that many of the tasks and responsibilities vary in the intensity of expectations depending on the seniority of the position as well as the specific position in question. Even so, some universal tasks may be identified. Most notably, from the most junior to the most senior, they are all expected to 'provide support' or 'assist' in some shape or other. Obviously, for the more junior, their assistance is to their immediate superior while the more senior are supporting e.g. the Chairmanship-in-Office. In this we see again both the hierarchical nature of the OSCE as well as the international civil servant's service role.

International Mission

Looking to the job notices solely for positions at international mission, there are a number of unique characteristics, mainly linked to the special nature of working in the hotspots of Europe and with the overall mission, namely monitoring and guidance.

Requirements

Quite a number of the requirements referred to the physicality of a job abroad, mentioning the need to be in "excellent physical condition" as well as the "ability to cope with physical hardship." Tellingly, it also requires all employees, without exception, to be in possession of a driver's license and to be able to drive manual transmission. Meanwhile, all positions, with few exceptions, at the OSCE require citizenship of a Participating State, nationals of the country of residence of international missions are prohibited from applying to P positions. The job notices

for international missions also all call highly specialized and extensive knowledge of the field in which they work, such as policing.

There is also some variation across the countries. Thus, all the notices regarding Ukraine require the “proven resilience to high stress environments” while less volatile regions such as Kosovo ‘only’ require the ability to work under “pressure” while a position in Albania is entirely free of such a requirement.

Tasks and Responsibilities

Most of the job notices list monitoring and guidance as important tasks. Yet not all the different positions had exactly the same responsibilities within over all tasks. Instead there seemed to be a division of labor with the different jobs hinging on each other. For example, a senior advisor on a topic would be required to “review and analyze” legislation and identify “capacity building and awareness raising needs.” Concurrently, a reporting officer’s primary task was to serve as the “focal point for all reporting issues” and in so doing prepare the Mission reports – a primary output of the international missions. These guidance tasks could also be more hands-on with for example a development officer being tasked to “develop, implement and assist” on projects and initiatives in the host country. Finally, it should be noted that the Institutions often mentioned tasks which were reminiscent of the IMs tasks, namely monitoring. This, then, would a place where the present thesis’ categorization fails to adequately capture the described reality. This feature was most prominent for the job notices at the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, reflecting its self-described task as being to “monitor.” (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe - Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights 2009) .

Overall, with missions in places like Kosovo and Ukraine, such requirements may hardly seem surprising, but does hint at some of the obstacles facing international missions and their nature as advising, developing and/or monitoring bodies. The prohibition based on citizenship also makes sense in order to ensure the impartiality of the employee – a very important part of the conduct of international civil servants – although such a stipulation may be argued as outdated in our time, as will be witnessed by the interviewees later on. The impact on work from the relative volatility of the region is also reflected in the job notices. We shall see later on in the interview with a currently employed international civil servant at an international mission how the setup with persons in charge of certain tasks and hands-on experience works out in practice.

Secretariat and Institutions

The characteristics specific to the Secretariat and the Institutions overall reflected a more political environment in contrast to the more hands-on characteristics of the IM. The tasks and responsibilities were also even more hierarchical and divided.

Requirements: In different ways, ranging from presentation over drafting to “political tact”, employees at the Secretariat and the institutions were expected to possess excellent communications skills as well as general skills and knowledge. Thus, very few, and only the most senior, posts required deep and specialized knowledge of the department’s field. Rather, they tended to stress experience in areas such as project management, government work, and methods of mass communications. Whether considered general or specialized knowledge, it should be mentioned that, of course, education and experience in the general area of the department such as law, international and human rights in particular, and international relations were also required.

Tasks and Responsibilities

The specific tasks mentioned in the job notices at the Secretariat and Institutions broke down quite clearly based on the seniority of the position. While there were overlaps, certain tasks were reserved entirely for certain levels. For interns, this meant logistical support, such as “assisting in the preparation of meetings,” and gathering data, whether it be from “following developments in other [IOs],” taking notes at meetings of the organs, or “researching and compiling factual information.” For junior staff (P1-2), this meant either supporting or having sole responsibility for specific projects, including their logistics, and drafting, analyzing and in other ways creating material intended for official publication or internal information. For senior staff (P3-4), this meant project management of large portfolios, work of more political and strategic nature, and representing the OSCE at various functions. Examples of the first included “providing guidance to staff” and “overseeing the implementation of projects.” The second was slightly more sensitive and included “identifying strategic opportunities” but also “developing and maintain relations with the OSCE participating States,” something my interviews showed is not always easy and requires a lot of work in different ways to accomplish. We thus see, on paper, a fairly hierarchical setup at the Secretariat and the Institutions as well with each level’s work supposed to feed in to the next one higher up, in a neat chain of tasks. The interns and professional staff interviewed for the thesis have much to say on how this looks in practice.

Overall, especially the Secretariat’s role as a supporting body for the Chairmanship-in-Office and the participating States is very visibly apparent in the kind of employees they are seeking –

communicative, generalist, and assisting. Furthermore, the slightly more independently political nature of the Institutions is also reflected in the job notices – both of which the interviews will shed more light on.

Jack of All Trades

The Junior Professional Officer sits, so to speak, in between two chairs. Intended as a “thorough introduction to the OSCE,” the JPOs are formally P1 – the lowest entry-level rung of the Professional ladder. (See Appendix X for the job notice) In line with that position, they have tasks and responsibilities similar to those described of P2s and P3s above, e.g. drafting and researching. However, many of their tasks sound more like those of an intern than a professional, with tasks such as “supporting the organization of events” and “attending various OSCE meetings.” This duality is multifold, not just between Professional and intern. It can also be seen in the numerous learning tasks with the JPO gaining “insights,” “overviews,” and “understandings” of the various facets of the OSCE – tasks not even mentioned for interns or other P positions but very much in line with what interviewees report as “learning on the job.” Furthermore, the “necessary qualifications” section is a mixture of IM and SI qualifications, reflecting the fact that JPOs spend six months at the Secretariat and six months at an international mission. In this way, the JPO sits not just between two chairs; she sits between a multitude of chairs and is truly given the opportunity to become a jack of all trades.

Exhausting the Observation - Comparing the groups

After the above observation, description and analysis of all relevant documents from the OSCE on international civil servants at the OSCE, a few conclusions can be made at this point in time.⁸

Firstly, the observations show some formal differences, in rights as well as in requirements, tasks, and responsibilities. The main difference in rights are in the sub-group best termed as benefits: pay grade and contract lengths but also in other benefits such as repatriation grants. However, it should, of course, be noted that these differences do not, formally, extend to rights in the workplace such as the right to not be discriminated against. The differences in requirements, tasks and responsibilities stem from two sources: the place of employment, i.e. Secretariat,

⁸ There are, of course, other documents which it could be argued need consideration, including for example the “Pre-arrival Information Package for new OSCE mission members” (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe 2015) and the documents used at the General Orientation Programme for all incoming employees. However, upon being confronted with questions about these other documents, interviewees were generally skeptical of their value and for this reason I have decided to exclude them from this paper.

Institution, or International Mission and the seniority of the position. These differences are seen in requirements on physical shape for IMs, while the Secretariat stresses communication skills. They are also seen in tasks at the IMs and the Institutions focused on monitoring using specialized knowledge while the Secretariat is more focused on assisting participating States using general knowledge. Secondly, there are also many requirements which are uniform across the organization. These are mainly in establishing a certain high overall level of competence of the staff as well as setting out the core values and work philosophy. Thirdly, there is a remarkable level of consistency and connection between – and even reiteration of – the formalities set out in the Staff Regulations and the requirements, tasks and responsibilities found in the job notices with the latter to a large extent being an explication of the former. Fourth, there is a remarkable lack of reference to learning with all P positions taking for granted, and in fact requiring, experience in the field and the capabilities necessary to succeed in the position. Only the JPOs and, to a much lesser extent, the interns are expected to learn on the job when seen purely in terms of mentions in job notices.⁹ In other words, the implicit assumption from the OSCE would seem to be that incoming employees come to the OSCE as fully-fledged international civil servants. Overall, there is a remarkable consistency between the values set out in the Code of Conduct and the values found in the job notices. More remarkably, these job notice values are also quite concrete and explicated, making it a particularly rich source of data for practice research.

Some criticism of the analysis may also be in order. The above analysis relies on a very specific sample collected at a distinct point in time. As such, the sample may very well be biased in any number of ways. For example, there may be an underlying reason for exactly these openings to be observed which could mean that they do not adequately represent the overall nature of work at the OSCE. Indeed, this criticism is supported by the fact that some job notices had been re-posted a number of times, most notably the security officer position in Ukraine, open since 2015. Therefore, it is worth reiterating that I do not harbor any intentions of painting an overall representative picture of the OSCE. Instead, these are valuable observations as to the numerous ways in which the OSCE has put its Staff Regulations and Code of Conduct into practice. Furthermore, these observations serve as data points which have been proven useful in guiding the interviews – and have thus been tested themselves in return. In short, these observations do

⁹ The OSCE does, of course, make it clear on other occasions that internships, being students or recent graduates, are meant to teach and develop the intern. See for example (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe n.d.)

serve a valuable, although by no means full or holistic, purpose in understanding practice at the OSCE.

However, as we all know, what exists on paper may easily be different from what exists in reality. As our theoretical outlook points out, we must look to the actual practice itself to see if and how these formal structures are acted out and how the idea of the international civil servant exists in practice. In other words, having exhausted all observational avenues of gaining knowledge and having no other practical way of gaining said knowledge, I proceed now to the interviews to peer behind the formal rights and responsibilities and see if and to what extent these distinctions and likenesses exist in the practice.

The International Civil Servant in the Natural Habitat

Sample Description

I conducted 9 interviews with OSCE employees, ranging from the senior to newly hired long-term staff, JPOs and interns, both former and current. Furthermore, while most were either interns or P staff, one had also worked in General Service (G). A majority were younger and with shorter work periods, up to three years, although a few had worked at the OSCE for half a decade, while one had just retired due to hitting the 10-year mandatory retirement ceiling. While the relative youth and inexperience of the group may stem from the selection bias of using my own network, it should also be noted that employees by the very setup of the OSCE as a 'non-career organization' also tends towards the youth. Many had also held several different positions at the OSCE, going the route of intern over JPO to permanent staff while others had made careers first with their national governments prior to joining the organization. Meanwhile most worked or had worked at the Secretary in Vienna while one was permanently at a mission abroad – several had also had temporary stints abroad as well, in particular the JPOs. Nationalities were also diverse, including interviewees from the UK over Spain and Italy and going east to Georgia. There was a roughly equal distribution of male and female although not by design.

While fairly diverse, it should be underlined that I lay no claims to representativeness. I cannot say, in fact I am not interested in being able to say, if and to what extent these observations, opinions and experiences are shared by the body of OSCE employees. Within my theoretical framework this is both impossible and, frankly, unnecessary. Rather, I am describing and analyzing a set of experiences which by the very nature of existing are worthwhile in and of themselves. Having said that, the interviewees themselves were also very careful to circumscribe their own experiences and opinions, stating very often that they could not speak on behalf of their colleagues and pointing out several reasons for why their experiences were perhaps unique to them. Even so, having the benefit of interviewing several people in like circumstances – more than half of the sample had done an internship at the OSCE, for example – some of these supposedly unique experiences were much more common than reported. As an example, which will be handled in detail where appropriate, several interns reported making drafting and research inputs while insisting this was not common to internships at all. On the other hand, there were also plenty of contradicting narratives with for example one just-graduated JPO insisting in no uncertain terms that JPOs were clearly superior to interns in the hierarchy; meanwhile, a senior P gamely put interns and JPOs in the same group when describing his most junior colleagues.

Overall, the interviews have been very helpful not only in shedding light on work and especially learning practices, but also on social and structural patterns – especially how the OSCE bureaucracy has reacted to the constrictions put in place by the Participating States. In the following, I will be comparing the observations from above to the findings of the interviews to see just how the practice holds up to the theory.

Working as an International Civil Servant

Uniform

While some of the uniform characteristics may have seemed painfully obvious, the interviews showed clearly why they were necessary to include. They were simply instrumental to the success of an international organization such as the OSCE.

Requirement

The interviewees had a variety of different paths to the OSCE, all falling under the aegis of experience. One senior employee had worked his way up in his national police force and interior ministry with occasional stints on international projects at other international organizations. Several junior employees had managed to make what could amount to a career at the OSCE, for example cobbling together first an internship, then a JPO position and finally a contract as a P. Common to many were also a remarkable range of prior experience at not just the OSCE but also other IOs such as the EU and the UN with one interviewee even remarking that she had never known a different job market than the international one.

The backgrounds that people brought to the OSCE could also be seen between professions as with the former journalists, academics and lawyers at the office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. Journalists brought valuable ties and sources and the ability to see narratives but were often frustrated by the political nature of the job. Meanwhile, academics were more interested in writing books and big reports than participating in the nuts-and-bolts of the place. Finally, the lawyers were more 'precise and structured' in their approach to the work.

While going without saying, all the interviewees were also fluent in English and remarkably adept at OSCE jargon. They were also often aware of this inside jargon, as they would often stop to ask if I knew what, for example, P stood for. Most remarkably, one interviewee with English as the mother tongue reported sensing a palpable sense of relief in the office when he began working there; a native English speaker was sorely needed to ensure the quality of the department's output and they had not had one for a while. Meanwhile, an intern reported a major part of her work tasks being related to her status as a Russian native speaker, something people with other languages such as Polish or Italian did not report at all.

Computer literacy was important for the obvious reasons inherent to working in an office, producing written material, but one interviewee stressed the importance of the ‘track changes’ function in Microsoft Word, not just for editing purposes (all official output was always reviewed by at least one person) but also for learning. Furthermore, the Google News search function was highly used to monitor events within the specific department’s field while Excel spreadsheets were used to track, report and analyze such events. Social media skills were also much demanded within certain departments. It is also worth noting that there were very few standardized procedures with these tasks tending to be done in an ad hoc fashion.

Meanwhile, the experiences vis-à-vis soft skills differed quite a bit. One interviewee reported repeated conflicts stemming from national differences in work habit. She recounted a specific incident where two Swiss employees, who always arrived early in the morning and did not leave until work was done, confronted their Eastern colleagues head-on over a more lackadaisical attitude towards the workplace – with little success. On the other hand, another interviewee was very satisfied with the degree of tolerance and openness at the OSCE, illustrated in a very telling fashion. In his experience, colleagues always spoke together in what I would term the lowest common denominator. In other words, the Italians, for example, would be speaking Italian together until a non-Italian speaker joined the conversation whereupon they would immediately speak English. In like manner, the Slavic-speaking colleagues spoke together in their common tongues but invariably switched to the *lingua franca* when necessary. A different kind of tolerance was on display in the interpersonal relationships based on humor. Here, one interviewer reported a running joke between an American and a Norwegian on the relative unimportance of Iceland, playing gamely to stereotypes. In purely work-related terms, interviewees across the board were very positive about the quality of teamwork as well as the willingness to teach and delegate responsibility with questions readily answered and opinions often and openly solicited. In total, the interviews reported a very high level of soft skills on display at the OSCE.

Regarding the required competencies, I would ask the interviewees to define certain terms, impartiality and international civil servant in particular, and record their reactions. More revealing than their definitions, which were remarkably alike, was their struggle to immediately come up with such a definition unlike when they talked about, for example, their tasks and responsibilities. However, hints and references to these values were identifiable almost regardless of the immediate topic. In other words, these values were to a very large degree both internalized and unconscious. Examples have already been mentioned, especially communication and teamwork, but one related to strategic thinking as well as impartiality may also be relevant. This example concerns events, an activity the OSCE is very active in. A senior employee related the importance

of inviting every single participating State, even to regional workshops with an obvious in-built audience, in order to avoid being seen as playing favors – a situation where impartiality and strategic thinking go hand-in-hand.

Tasks and Responsibilities

When asked specifically to the value of interns, one senior employee answered promptly that without them his department could not have been successful. This is just one example in which one can see the importance of assistance, teamwork as the interviewees would name it, in the working of the OSCE. It is no coincidence that the OSCE puts such weight on this factor uniformly across all its employees; it is a defining feature of work there with many other positive examples thereof. In line with this teamwork aspect and the observations above, the senior employee abroad described a very elaborate procedure when creating a new document: the task is first divided up and sent to the various departments responsible for the different parts. The person responsible in the department writes the piece and sends it to the top where the different parts are collected and put together. However, this process would often produce sub-optimal outcomes because of a general lack of knowledge of what colleagues were doing in other departments. Furthermore, the senior employee abroad saw an ingrained tendency to not share this information about work tasks with the rest of the department, sometimes necessary for confidentiality reasons but more often to the detriment of the entire department, leading to double-tasking. He had been working on breaking down these silos with initiatives like promoting common and department-wide email chains. In addition, it should be noted that some interns reported stories of fellow interns quitting after a few weeks upon discovering that their main assistance contribution was in the shape of making coffee and photocopying documents – tasks manifestly not explicitly mentioned in the job notices. In contrast, other interns reported great cooperation and responsibility between people. As such, the intern-aspect seems to depend more on the specific people and leaders rather than an organization-wide policy.

International Mission

The interviews showcased some of the reasons and consequences of the special characteristics of work at the IMs, especially how much less attractive it was to work at the headquarters in Vienna.

Requirements

One former JPO related how very different his experiences in Vienna were from his stint abroad. Relevant here was how he would be traveling all over the country to meet stakeholders, thus explaining the need for the driver's license. The particular conditions of the host country and city

also exerted their influence on the workplace in a variety of ways. Most notably, the senior employee abroad related how much easier it was for him to staff his office compared to most other missions for one simple reason: his host city was much more attractive to work in than any other mission's host city.

Regarding citizenship, those employees seconded by their national governments were very clear: they did not feel beholden in any way, shape or form to them and had never been called on or pressured to give special treatment. Interestingly, the senior employee abroad had never worked for his national government unlike what was reported to be true of the majority of employees at the Secretariat. One interviewee even remarked on the high numbers of former diplomats who, after finishing their stint at their national embassies, would go to the OSCE in order to stay in Vienna for a few more years, for example to allow their sons and daughters to finish school. In this way, this interviewee pointed to an important issue at the OSCE, namely how to make national civil servants into international dittos. We shall see later how, quite organically and without much formal interference, this change comes about. At the same time, the nationality could also be a direct disadvantage, as one interviewee reported since they would not second and thus fund the position he was already working in.

Furthermore, and unfortunately for the international missions, the need for specialized knowledge made those positions rather difficult to fill. It was simply much harder to find specialized employees than general knowledge ones. For example, the senior employee abroad recounted how a generalist policy analyst position in Vienna got around 500 applications; in contrast specialist positions in his mission, even with its attractive host city, got far fewer applications, down to the single digits, which, he asserted, reduced the efficiency of the operation.

Tasks and responsibilities

The employees stationed abroad were very active and hands-on in their responsibilities with one former JPO describing how he travelled all over the country to implement the mission's projects. On the other hand, and somewhat contradictory to the observations, the senior employee abroad reported one of his major tasks being to prepare talking points and speeches for trainings and conferences rather than monitoring and guidance. This fact, however, may be explained rather by his position as being the immediate assistant to the Head of Mission, a position that was not posted online.

Secretariat and Institutions

The interviews with employees from the Secretariat and the Institutions truly underscored just how political work there is. All of the below hints at the ad hoc and structurally ill-defined purpose

of interns with the difficulty of giving them satisfactory work tasks to do which can further their development while not cannibalizing the work of the professional staff. It also shows the rather deft tactics employed by the employees to work within and around the constraints of the OSCE. Finally, we see how the strict hierarchy set out in the Staff Regulations breaks down under the various pressures encountered in the workplace.

Requirements

Communication skills were hugely important to the work of all employees at the OSCE. From drafting speeches, press releases, and reports to liaising with participating States and other stakeholders, communication was an, if not the, essential component to the job of the international civil servant. The interviewees were also very aware of the potential impact of their words. One junior employee recounted how he would sit anxiously during speeches he had prepared for his superiors, worried that a participating State would take offense at something and take steps to discipline the department for it. This disciplining could take many forms but most often would be by grinding the proceedings to a halt. A guiding principle here was impartiality which we shall return to at a later point. But just as important as knowing how to communicate was knowing when not to communicate. One senior employee put it rather bluntly in a story: once he was sitting in a council meeting when a Participating State was making a comment he disagreed with. As the police officer he used to be, he wanted to answer immediately but was reeled back by a colleague with a diplomatic background with the sentence: “Don’t bullshit a bullshitter.” As the same senior employee put it, work at the OSCE is highly political, even for the impartial Secretariat, who have to make sure to serve all participating States equally at all times.

Meanwhile, the grand majority of my interviewees at the Secretariat and Institutions were generalists. This fact was not just a quirk of my sample but representative of the Secretariat in general; In the words of the senior employee with a background in policing, he described himself as a “strange animal” at the OSCE because of the dearth of technicians – people like him with specialized knowledge of their field of employment – compared to the glut of diplomats

Tasks and responsibilities

The hierarchy set up to handle the tasks and responsibilities, its structure, and its value were highly contested subjects among the interviewees. On one hand, it was obvious that hierarchy did matter and had clear markers. For example, two interviewees mentioned their P level in the same breath as their titles when asked to describe their jobs, clearly investing it with great weight. On the other hand, the hierarchical chain of command would very often be eviscerated in the actual context and become more about the tasks and getting them done in whichever way possible. It should also be noted that the breakdown often was more about necessity than choice

– ad hoc rather than systematic. There are a number of ways this fact came to fruition but could primarily be seen in the way interns were given tasks which, in one senior OSCE ex-employee's words, "should really be done by professionals." Another example is the considerable overlap between the reported job responsibilities of a P1 employee and an intern in two different departments. They both had to do media monitoring, proof-reading in their native tongues, and contribute to talking points and speeches. When pushed on the specifics of their tasks, they also described their work in much the same terms and conducted them in very like manners. The maneuvers would also often be rather elaborate. One former high-ranking employee reported that interns were critical to the success of his department – they were "amazing!" He would use interns to circumvent bureaucratic hurdles and give them work, like drafting council paper, ostensibly to learn, even though this was work "only professionals should do." The leveling of the hierarchy would go even further and often be unconscious, as when, while enumerating the kinds of intern-like groups at the OSCE, the same interviewee mentioned JPOs on par with interns, something the JPOs themselves strenuously denied. Another example was reported by a former intern, who witnessed the transformation of an originally Professional IT and media position into an internship position, due to a lack of funds to pay for a qualified candidate. Less concretely, most former interns interviewed also reported feeling very equal with their colleagues in terms of being heard in meetings and working alongside them, often with the same tasks and being very proud of doing so. However, at the same time, as mentioned before all interns and one senior employee reported many interns getting basic and menial tasks to conduct, such as preparing coffee and photocopying, with stories told of people quitting after few weeks once they discovered the nature of the internship. As a consequence, this senior employee was now insisting on making sure incoming interns would have well-defined tasks prior to arrival to avoid them exclusively being giving tasks no one else wanted to do. Something he wanted to ensure since he himself had been an intern once. This final example is from an international mission showing that this breakdown of hierarchies would also happen there.

Yet it did not always mean that a more junior person would do the job. For example, a junior employee reported that a seconded P2 position to assist the director of the department had been left unfilled for 2-3 years for lack of a seconding country, meaning the director had to also take on those tasks – on top of an already over-stacked portfolio. In like manner, another interviewee reported noticing P-level staff doing administrative work which really should have been handled by G staff.

Jack of All Trades

The tension that JPOs experience from sitting in between two chairs is very much reflected in the interviews. The tension would take different shapes but was most clearly seen in a fierce defense of their formal status. One of the JPOs showcased this tension best when speaking on interns: JPOs are not interns and interns are not JPOs for the simple fact that JPOs are staff members and interns are not. That is to say, formally and in her opinion, JPOs get paid by and represent the OSCE while being responsible for their work and projects while interns do not and are not. She brought up the example that many interns would complain about their lack of recognition and wage since, as they contended, they did the same work as JPOs and other staff. To this contention, she answered flatly that they simply did not and that the formalities enshrined that fact. Importantly, unlike with the interns, the JPOs had all gone on to jobs at the OSCE immediately following. Finally, as has been mentioned before, this disputation of their status did not just come from below but also from above with one former senior employee seeing them as being not much different from interns.

For others, being a JPO was very much a learning experience with one JPO even describing his assignment abroad as the “place where I grew up.” One also reported that the six months in Vienna was an evolution of the program; they had only had three months which he considered too short to learn properly, especially since it meant he had had no specific portfolio and would only be able to make sporadic contributions.

Overall, the peculiar nature of the JPO has some interesting consequences for the practice of said JPOs and brings into relief the peculiar and contended nature of the international civil servant, one that has been hinted at for a while – namely that the international civil servant is defined by the rights and responsibilities, privileges and tasks but that the exact balance, the make-up of these values, is different depending on who you ask. We shall be further investigating this peculiar nature and how it comes about in the particular individuals in the following chapters.

Becoming an International Civil Servant

There do exist official initiatives to introduce incoming employees to the OSCE as an institution, most notably with an introduction week at the beginning of the tenure of the employee and courses throughout the year. However, the official introduction week and the rest of the official initiatives were found to be pretty irrelevant for the international civil servants for two primary reasons. Firstly, no one mentioned these efforts spontaneously, comments were only made after I specifically asked into them, and most of the interviewees gave them little import, saying variously that there was a lot of information to take in very quickly and that it was simply too general to be

relevant for their particular situations. In other words, once they got out into their jobs, they had very little benefit from having attended the introduction week. Secondly, while all new incoming employees are supposed to do the introduction week, one of the interviewees freely admitted to not having attended, with no one around her much minding the omission. It should be noted that one interviewee quite appreciated the introduction week and the courses on offer, but liked the former rather for the opportunity to meet other newcomers while the former did help him to develop his work capabilities. The supervisors were also often good at finding out what particular qualifications and talents the new employees brought to the table and to come up with tasks that took advantage of those. On the whole, though, work procedures and culture were learned in three main ways, learning by doing, learning by past examples, and learning by observation.

Learning by doing

New employees would be “thrown into deep water,” as one interviewee put it, without much introduction or explanation and would be expected to at least try their hand at the task. They would then await criticism, positive or negative often in the form of comments and tracked changes in Word documents, and ask questions along the way of this steep learning curve. Some interviewees reported experiencing anxiety during this process but also pride when they pulled off the task given to them. Furthermore, they all reported feeling very well-treated and met with patience when asking questions and making mistakes. Two examples may be worth noting here. First, a junior employee made the mistake in an official email to address a person in the wrong way, something, she said, that was particularly hard to avoid on a Blackberry smartphone. To the uninitiated, such a mistake may not sound like much but it was evidently important enough for her to bring up. In another case, the same interviewee attached the wrong pledge to an email thereby creating financial disarray as money would be drawn from the wrong account. In both cases, she advised colleagues immediately and they all worked together to fix the problems. She learned from that to reread (twice) all emails and to clear them with supervisors before sending out the most important ones. However, this patience also varied with the position as those rising through the ranks from intern to P position could attest to. They reported being expected to do more and more tasks on their own without the need for questions. When asked how this change in expectations was communicated to them, they said it was not really communicated explicitly but rather in the way they were treated and the tasks they were given. Many were also surprised by the nature of the learning curve, with several being surprised by just how political rather than operational the job was. For example, one junior employee reported thinking that the job would be more hands-on but realizing that it was more about “holding the hand of” the participating

States. The former senior employee was just as surprised by the political nature of the Secretariat and reported being learning how to be more sensitive about these matters while working on a “close-to-operational” topic before being shifted over to a fully political assignment.

Learning by past examples

When asked to do a new task, the interviewees quickly learned to ask how they were supposed to carry it out. More often than not, the answer would be to look to past examples of the same practice. This practice can also serve as the only form of introduction in the department. Thus, one junior employee was sat at his desk and asked to read past work. Furthermore, when being asked to write a speech or press release for his superior he was guided towards old speeches and news releases on the same topic and essentially copied them. This task, it seemed, was particularly easy for those annually recurring events such as the annual press release on the department’s cooperation with the Council of Europe. For this particular task, he typed out a near-copy of the previous one since his supervisor could not think of any concrete examples of cooperation in the last year.

Learning by observation

Work culture was also acquired on the job and mainly through observation. One interviewee who had worked both as intern, on short-term assignments and as P1 put it clearly; once she became P1 she “just jumped into what I saw others do.” It had never been communicated to her how to act, instead she observed her colleagues and mimicked their behavior once she had climbed to their level in the hierarchy. One former senior employee employed the same tool when he went to meetings at the Council and every level below and simply observed both sides until he had both understood the political landscape – so important for his daily work – and had learned how to behave as an international civil servant – with the occasional intervention from his diplomat colleagues to speed up the process, as the anecdote mentioned before so pithily showed. On work culture, the institution itself did play a role in propagating certain values. I happened to interview one current employee at the time of the tragic death of one of her colleagues in Ukraine. She spoke very movingly on how the OSCE felt like one big family to her. This feeling had newly been brought out more strongly when a condolence book had been set out at the Secretariat and the senior management had made several communications to the employees.

All these three procedures, however, rely heavily on institutional memory and person-to-person interaction to function and are therefore, as many commented, negatively impacted by the regular and institutionalized loss of experienced personnel. Finally, it should be noted that it all happens in iterative steps with constant reinforcement from both within and without.

We now know how the new employees internalize the peculiar nature of the international civil servants, in short how they become one. But what is an international civil servant, actually? With the above knowledge on the practice of the international servant in hand, we can now proceed to answer this first part of the research question to the fullest extent.

Defining an International Civil Servant

“An international civil servant is employed by and representing an international organization, sharing the vision, values and principles of the IO, and serving all the Member States equally.”

The quote above was not uttered by any one person but is instead an amalgam of all the interviewees’ answers when asked “what is an international civil servant?” Interestingly, as suggested by the theoretical outlook of this thesis, the practice, what the international civil servant does, is very much present in this definition. In other words, the definition centers around the tasks, responsibilities and values, but not the rights, of the employee. Which is very much in contrast to the formal position of the OSCE as reflected in the staff regulations.

We have already seen above what it means to be employed by and representing as well as sharing the values of an IO but what exactly does it mean to “serve all the Member States equally?” It all comes down to that one prominent value, impartiality.

Impartiality

Impartiality sits at the center at all that the international civil servant does. This fact was evident throughout all the interviews. Put simply, as one senior OSCE ex-employee said, the main task is to “avoid political tensions and be a tool.” Numerous examples show just how central the value is; I will go in depth with two, which once again are amalgams of the interviewees descriptions.

There existed a very elaborate process to ensure the impartiality of the end product when drafting speeches and other documents. First, the writers would sit down individually with various participating States to go over the language of the document. There would be a continuous dialogue with all interested parties with the aim to conciliate all viewpoints and craft a consensus document. The international civil servants would also insure themselves against possible protests by using language from past documents and then “sprinkle different agendas in” which corresponded to the particular points they wanted to make. Another way of preempting trouble would be slowly built over time. The ability, through for example learning from others and listening at council meetings, to see the factions and how they relate enabled especially senior civil servants to know in advance what different participating States would object to, keeping it from being included in the text in the first place and thus avoiding the problem entirely. Another, particularly “anxiety-producing” way of testing this ability and getting feedback on the text was to

listen carefully to responses to speeches by participating States. One notable exception was found to exist. At the office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, the participating State would only be given a short notice of the upcoming release as they saw themselves in part as a monitoring body. Yet impartiality was still central to the conduct of the office. It was instead insured by making sure to refrain from focusing excessively on any one state, even when some countries naturally would stand out more.

While slightly less elaborate, the process for organizing events was still centered around impartiality. First, when inviting participants, it was important to make sure to invite everyone, every single participating State, even for ‘regional workshops’ which have an obvious in-built audience. This was explicitly said to be done to avoid being seen as playing favors. Then, it was important to use proper and accepted words and terminology, since Participating States have the power to grind proceedings to a halt and would do so if an international civil servant were to state something disagreeable to them. It could also be seen in their dedicated attention to detail and formality when corresponding and liaising with representatives of participating States and other stakeholders.

While the international civil servants, on the whole, were very proud of their ability to be impartial, they did also report frustrations with different aspects of the effort required to carry it out. For example, they would mention being frustrated with having to settle for watered-down statements after much work had gone into it or finding it difficult or even disquieting to stifle their own opinions when it differed from a participating State. Yet in general, the value was internalized through the work that was done. It was simply impossible to work at the OSCE without being impartial, as one would get disciplined for it quickly by participating States or supervisors – as with the previously mentioned example of a dissatisfied participating State blocking the proceedings to show its displeasure. In this way, we see how not just colleagues but also stakeholders on the outside worked to keep the international civil servants disciplined and in their proper place.

Being an International Civil Servant

Regarding the lived experience of the international civil servant, most of the interviewees reported feeling like one such, from the most junior intern to the most senior Professional. When asked why, the primary topic was having tasks and responsibilities commensurate to that of an international civil servant. We can see this aspect most revealingly with the one person who did not report feeling like an international civil servant. This former intern did not feel like one for the simple fact that she did not feel her tasks and responsibilities were important enough for her to be an international civil servant. The interns, who did feel like one, exactly reported feeling so because they had done the work of professionals, e.g. conducting analysis. These same interns

were also then frustrated by the lack of formal recognition for that work, e.g. in the form of getting paid. Notably, one intern argued that she was also an international civil servant because she had never worked for her own nation's government. Meanwhile, working for the EU was considered by her to be more akin to working as a national civil servant since there you looked out for the interests of the EU rather than, as at the OSCE, was working for the values of the institution. One other interviewee even went as far as stating that cleaning ladies at the OSCE were considered international civil servants in her view since they worked for an international organization. As expected, all the Professionals interviewed identified as international civil servants, with notable details. One interviewee, when contacted for the interview, was not aware of the term being used at the OSCE at all and only noticed it after I pointed it out to him while another international civil servant said that he had only gradually come to feel like one through the work and learning he had been doing.

At the same time, considering oneself an international civil servant was often connected with a great amount of pride and satisfaction. Even while acknowledging the lack of pay and formal status, one former intern believed she was doing important, worthwhile and good work at the OSCE and this sentiment was shared across most of the interviews.

But being and feeling like an international civil servant at the OSCE was not always easy and was often undercut in a variety of ways. For example, interviewees often reported frustrations with the formal setup of the OSCE vis a vis the limited contracts and the secondment system, making them dependent on their home government's willingness to pay for them to work internationally. Furthermore, the limited contracts meant it was very hard for some of the interviewees to identify with the institution. One interviewee compared it with when he started out at the UN. At the UN, he said, he was proud to be a part of the institution. At the OSCE, that feeling was much harder to come by since after only five years of service at the OSCE, he was already forced to look for other things to continue his career. A more practical problem with the principle of the limited contract was the sheer loss of institutional memory, with one interviewee even reporting that a P4 position, after being vacated due to the time limit, was split up into two more junior positions, a P1 and P3. In like manner, the people at the top of the bureaucratic pyramid always came seconded from outside. To this particular employee, this situation meant that even while they came with a lot of motivation and commitment, employees could not look up to them as knowing the employee and his or her position as they often had rather little institutional knowledge and experience of the OSCE.

Status

While working as an international civil servant was rewarding in and of itself, there was another side to the coin, namely status. As might be expected, no one explicitly stated that status was important to them but it could be seen indirectly in the way, as mentioned before, a former JPO would come to the defense of the program or the interns would clamor for the recognition and appreciation they felt they deserved. In other words, status was not only connected to matters like prestige but also to rights like pay, something everyone knew was closely associated with getting that JPO or Professional position. But this was not just interns complaining. The senior employees were also at pains to point out that they were very focused not just on making sure the interns spent their time at the OSCE on valuable and meaningful tasks but that they were also very proud when these interns were able to move into Professional positions. However, the interviews also made it clear that the formal structural setup of the OSCE simply incentivized using interns and being stingy with giving status and rights, for example by making it so much easier to hire interns than Professionals.

In short, while the work requirements and colleagues were instrumental in creating an environment where the vast majority of the interviewees felt like international civil servants, they were very much undercut by the formal setup of the OSCE, especially the limited employment time and the institutional setup. It is also remarkable that even those not formally given many of the rights pertaining to an international civil servant still feel and work like one – and often are treated by their colleagues as one too.

Conclusion

I began this thesis by asking the following research question to address a significant research gap: How do international civil servants define, practice, learn and experience the ideal of the international civil servant? From the beginning, I stressed the fact that my research would be exploratory and thus lead to new and refined questions and hypotheses rather than deliver any final and immutable answer.

After dismissing other forms of logic, I take my cue mainly from pragmatic practice theory, as represented by (Bueger and Gadinger 2015) and with inspiration from (Pouliot 2016) and (Žižek 2008), to put the focus squarely where it belongs, namely the lived experience of the international civil servant. In short, studying practice is understood as focusing on the everyday interactions, unconscious and otherwise, as they come together in the actor when practicing the tasks and responsibilities of an international civil servant. In practical terms, this means looking first to the empirical reality of the site and following the objects as “*crucial containers of practice*”. (Bueger 2014)

After careful considerations of both observations and interviews, I unearthed a sprawling landscape, a multitude of ways in which international civil servants define, practice, learn and experience the ideals. In doing so, I have addressed the gap in the literature and opened up the topic for further exploration.

First, I sought and found the definition of the international civil servant both in official OSCE documents, such as the Code of Conduct, and amongst the interviews. The official documents mentioned several values defining the servant, amongst them integrity and independence and emphasized impartiality. Yet the descriptions found in the official documents differed from the interviewees’ own experiences. This difference can be seen in the amalgamated definition that I made on the basis of the interviewees’ answers: “*An international civil servant is employed by and representing an international organization, sharing the vision, values and principles of the IO, and serving all the Member States equally.*” In other words, this difference reveals a disconnect between the official line and the practitioners themselves concerning who gets to be an international civil servant. This disconnect explains the loud dissatisfaction of the interns with their status as unpaid non-professionals. It also explains the inability of the interviewed supervisors to give interns that formal status even while they often treat them, through work tasks and everyday interactions, as equal colleagues.

Second, the practice of the OSCE international civil servant was found in their everyday work, their tasks and responsibilities. Thus, the work of an OSCE international civil servant was discovered, after analyzing job notices and interviews, to have certain uniform characteristics and

requirements, ranging from soft skills like gender awareness over prior experience to the ability to cooperate and think strategically. Meanwhile, there were also differences, most notably between working at an international mission and at the Secretariat and the Institutions. Work at the international missions were characterized among others by physical and mental hardship as well as the need for and use of specialized knowledge for monitoring and guidance. Meanwhile, at the Secretariat and the Institutions, the job called for good communication skills and general knowledge to forge consensus and agreement among the different participating States. These differences were explained by the interviewees themselves as stemming partially from the more political nature of the Secretariat versus the more hands-on work at the international missions. Meanwhile, the similarities stemmed mostly from the very coherent set of values set out by the organization itself.

Third, I mapped out the three primary ways in which fledgling employees learn the ways and ideals of the international civil servant at the OSCE. These are learning by doing, learning by past examples, and learning by observation. In the first, international civil servants learn by trial and error with constant feedback both from within and without. In the second, the servants would learn how to for example write a speech on a specific topic by going through past examples of the same practice. In the third, work culture was acquired by immersing oneself in the workplace and mimicking those the behavior of their peers. It should be noted that there is a complete lack of formal or institutional involvement in this process, which may be explained partially by the OSCE's implicit assumption that by bringing in experienced employees, the organization can avoid having to train them. While formal strappings do exist, such as the introduction week, these were almost unanimously agreed to not be worthwhile. In other words, learning at the OSCE is ad-hoc, often anxiety-provoking, and definitely underappreciated by the organization itself.

Finally, I show what it means to be an international civil servant to the international civil servants themselves, in other words how being an international civil servant is experienced by the international civil servants themselves. This experience is a feeling that is tightly bound up with the work that is done and the way it is done, i.e. their tasks and responsibilities, and is a source of a great deal of pride and satisfaction. At the same time, this feeling was undercut by the institutional setup of the OSCE, in particular the limited contracts and the secondment system creating loss of institutional memory and a limited sense of identification with the OSCE. Furthermore, the official status of an OSCE international civil servant was often not formally applicable to people who identified themselves as one such. Thus, interns at the OSCE, and not just in the words of the interviewed interns themselves but also former senior employees, would often do the work of Professionals while not getting the status, especially in the form of pay,

connected with said work. In the end, almost unanimously, the interviewees were proud of their work at the OSCE, even despite the frustrations, and found their contributions to be both meaningful and important.

This methodological setup and these findings naturally bring their own set of limitations with them, especially when it comes to matters of causality and representativeness. In short, it should be reiterated that I lay no claims to representativeness nor to causality. I cannot say if and to what extent these observations, opinions and experiences are shared by the whole body of OSCE employees. Nor can I say to which extent, say, the above-mentioned ways of learning contribute or hinder the success and efficiency of the OSCE. Within my theoretical framework with its skepticism of causality, this is simply impossible – also partially due to the limited sample. Instead, I am describing and analyzing a set of experiences which by the very nature of existing and being experienced are worthwhile in and of themselves. In a word, this thesis is exploratory, looking to find and define, categorize and bring to light. In addition, this thesis points to some very important experiences, values and thoughts shared by a number of OSCE international civil servants. As such, it can serve as the springboard, providing for example the specific questions to ask, for a wider study into the experiences of the entirety of the OSCE body which can then be used to draw conclusions about the overall efficiency of the organizational setup. In another way, this study does create the foundation for several hypotheses to both be set up and tested. For example, with the knowledge that there are currently three different ways to learn at the OSCE, one can test which one is the best on different criteria and find ways to improve and institutionalize them. Furthermore, these findings can be used if one were to for example set up an international organization of one's own. To such a person, it may be worthwhile to know that loyalty and pride in the organization, for some, is diminished by the inability to make a career at the OSCE or that the formal introduction is considered overwhelming and not worthwhile – but whether these things make for a more or less efficient organization, that I manifestly cannot say with certainty.

In answering the research question, I brought two original and unique contributions to the field of practice theory from which my original findings herald – one in methodology and one in research subject. For the methodology contribution, I looked to the job notices of the OSCE to gather information on the practice of international civil servants and found it to be a rich source of very explicated values and practices, forming the perfect springboard for my interviews. For example, the interviews and the job notices together showed the essential nature of impartiality both as an organizing principle and as a concrete work value, enabling the international civil servant to serve all participating States equally. For the latter, I took the OSCE as my social theater, something which has not been done in a field dominated by a focus on the UN and the EU. In doing so, I

found remarkable differences vis-à-vis these institutions with for example the OSCE lagging behind in its ability to engender loyalty and pride in its international civil servants, mainly due to its policy of being a non-career institution.

This thesis has brought to light valuable insights in the lived experience of international civil servants at the OSCE – and in doing so increased our knowledge of the practical and inner workings of an organization so crucial to the European institutional structure. The thesis thus acts as a useful and enlightening first foray in to the complex world of the OSCE international civil servant and lays down a foundation. A foundation on which, hopefully, others will build their research to not just further improve our understanding of these hard-working practitioners but also to improve the workings of the OSCE itself.

Annex 1 – Prioritized List of Questions

Highest priority questions

1. What is the OSCE in your opinion?
2. What is your job and how would you describe it?
 - a. How often would you change between departments? What would be different?
 - b. How long have you worked there?
3. Why is your work important and what do you hope to accomplish with it?
4. How would you define the following terms?
 - a. International civil servant
 - b. Impartiality
5. Please describe your average daily work routine
 - a. What do you do at different times of the day?
6. Please rank the top three activities of your day in terms of:
 - a. Time spent
 - b. Importance most/least
 - c. Exciting/interesting most/least
7. What surprised you about working at the OSCE? What didn't surprise you?
8. Was there a learning curve at the OSCE? What did you need to learn?
9. How did work change at the OSCE over the years? What remained the same?
10. Did you work with interns? What do you think of them in comparison to the newly-employed permanent staff? Are they different? Are they treated differently?

Medium priority questions

11. What do you do when you are in doubt about a work procedure? Who do you talk to? How do you go about it? What kind of formal introduction were you given before or when you started?
 - a. What did you think of the introduction? What was good? Bad? What was important? What was less important?
 - b. How did they introduce these things to you? Did they use different methods to teach you different things?
1. What do you think about your colleagues in general?
2. Have you felt welcomed by them? What did they do to welcome you?
3. How do you communicate with your colleagues? Do you communicate in different ways with them depending on things like urgency?

4. Is there a hierarchy? How does that look? Do you communicate/interact differently with people depending on that hierarchy?
5. What do you do for lunch and breaks?
6. Do you socialize with your colleagues? If so, with whom and how?
7. Are there any noticeable cliques or factions? For example, do the HR guys keep together?
8. What languages are spoken? Is there a default language?
9. Is there any organized socializing? Do you attend? Why/ why not?
10. Please describe a social situation that you found awkward. Why was it awkward?
11. Do you celebrate anything? How do you celebrate?

Low priority questions

1. How does the working at the OSCE compare to other places you have worked at? What's different, what's the same?
2. What did you learn at these places that you have used at the OSCE? What could the OSCE learn from them?
3. Are you colleagues different, in general, from colleagues you've had in other places?
4. What in your studies prepared you for the job? What have you found useful/less useful?
5. What would you have liked to have learnt in your studies that would have prepared you better for working at the OSCE?

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Pledge of Honesty

On my honour as a student of the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, I, Casper Niels Tolstrup, submit this work in good faith and pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on it.

16/7/2017

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. Niels Tolstrup', written in a cursive style.