

Overall Conclusion and Research Questions

Part I of the dissertation starts with a brief overview of the historical and current discussion about the need to protect labor standards through international measures. After an overview of the different initiatives that have developed to protect the “core” labor standards, I show that the strategy of the ILO is currently espoused as one of the most promising.

Part II and III then examine the success the ILO has had historically with ending the core labor standard violation “child labor”. Part II focuses on three problems (1) What makes countries ratify the Minimum Age convention of the ILO? The strongest predicting factor for the ratification likelihood was the number of organizational linkages a country had to the world society as the World Society Theory suggested. (2) Does the ratification of the first ILO-Child Labor Convention lead to a significantly faster reduction of child labor? There was no significant correlation between ratifying the child labor convention and child labor rates dropping, thus confirming the prediction of the World Society Theory that there is a decoupling between what is established as a rule and what is done. (3) If ratification proves insignificant, what are the determining factors causing the empirically observable drop in the child labor rate? Different currents in World Society Theory suggest differing mechanisms of isomorphism. Surprisingly, a vulnerability to coercion of the country breaking the convention proved irrelevant as mechanisms of isomorphism while (normative) organizational linkages significantly accelerated how fast child labor dropped thereby validating the claims of the original, core World Society literature. Economic linkages were only significant once the theme child labor had been integrated into global private sector initiatives in the 80s.

Part III attacks a fourth question. (4) Among organizational linkages, do governmental or non-governmental organizational linkages have the greater impact on the likelihood of nations ratifying the child labor convention and of child labor rates decreasing? Only non-governmental organizational

linkages have a significant, positive impact on the child labor reduction rates. Thus, for achieving actual change, the degree to which nation *states* are tied to the world society (memberships in IGOs) are less decisive than the extent to which national *societies* are linked to world society (memberships in INGOs). Furthermore, taking a large number of (I)NGOs as an indicator of a social movement, I examine, and confirm, the Political Process Model that unruly actors who stand outside the state interest system have greater success in implementing change.

More research is needed to examine how (I)NGO linkages implement world societal models. Further, the local "variation and recombination" (Elwert 2000: 11, 1997) of global norms should be fleshed out through qualitative case studies. More specifically, two questions should be addressed in case studies examining the implementation of child labor conventions:

First, how are world norms, i.e. the convention on child labor, implemented or "adopted" to a national context? Although Meyer et al (1997: 148) and Berkovitch (1999) identify the "complexity of the interplay among various world models and local traditions", they do not attend to them. Especially concerning labor provisions, countries acquired increased leeway with how to implement them. ILO-conventions have become less detailed over the years; today they only provide rough goals and leave it up to the countries when and how to implement them (Liemt 1989).

Different scholars studying the effects of globalization have pointed out that globalization does not mean homogenization (Robertson 1998, Pieterse 1998, and Hannerz 1991), but that rather processes of "creolization", "variation and recombination" (Elwert 2000: 11) and "syncretism" (Elwert 1997) occur. People create their own synthesis or melange. The observation of "syncretism" (Elwert 1997) can already be found in the older ethnological literature (see Mühlmann's description of chiliastic, nativist movements 1964) but has not been systematically studied concerning the adoption of world cultural models, e.g. ILO-conventions.

Also the forms that these implementation alliances take should be analyzed. Today, many states are pressured by donor organizations to advance social standards through cooperating with (I)NGOs and the private sector, for which the trendy term “Private-Public-Partnership” has been invented (see also Abu Sharkh 2000). The main argument is that connecting both levels becomes increasingly relevant because globalization undermines macrolevel organizations. Further arguments for such a cooperation reach from cost cutting to democracy enhancing. Thus, in order to analyze the broader movement against child labor one must take the interplay of IGOs, (I)NGO and corporate initiatives into account.

Second, what are the discursive processes around the social standard regime concerning child labor? World Society scholars have explained the rise of different regimes, such as the rise of the environmental regime (Meyer et al. 1997). But they focus on the organizational side of this development, not the discursive for which they lack the data (Meyer et al. 1997: 625). Now is a good time to examine the discursive processes around the social standard regime concerning child labor because this regime has just very recently been modified (1999) and has gained new importance by means of the third ILO-declaration in 1998. Also Finnemore (1996: 343-4) calls for “a research design that attends to agency and the processes whereby isomorphic effects are produced”, e.g. because institutionalists have a “tendency to overlook power and coercion in explaining organizational outcomes” (ibid: 343). Since the emergence of a concerted social standard regime is new and currently hotly debated, the observation of the discursive and recursive processes among parts of world society is a focus needed to “complete the figure” of the World Society Theory.