



laetus in praesens

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22 April 2019 | Draft

Historical Misrepresentation of a "Union of International Associations"?

Scholastic "demeaning" of global civil society in a period of widespread crisis

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References

Review of *International Organizations and Global Civil Society: histories of the Union of International Associations* (2019)
In its draft form this is subject to further clarification. The lengthy text will be segmented for presentation and indexing in the [Kairos database](#)

Summary of arguments and counter-arguments

In their Acknowledgements, the editors of the study reviewed explicitly indicate with respect to their topic that: *rather than producing a celebratory volume, we were aiming for a scholarly book that gives due attention to various problems and shortcomings*. In that spirit, rather than celebrate the historical achievement of the volume, the intention of this review is similarly to give due attention to various problems and shortcomings of that study -- from a critical perspective. Hopefully this will enable the debate over any controversial issues to move forward.

The focus of the commentary is therefore framed by the emerging sense of urgency in relation to the challenges of global governance for a world in crisis. The founders of the [Union of International Associations](#) (UIA) envisaged it as having a role in that regard. Any failure by a study in that respect -- from the perspective of the untroubled realms of academia -- can be seen as a lost opportunity, as are its insights for the UIA itself.

The question highlighted by the study is whether such a study exemplifies a particular mode of conceptual entrapment -- both for those contributing to it from the social sciences and for those working within the framework of any such "union of international associations". The question is given a particular focus from a policy science perspective by [Geoffrey Vickers](#):

A trap is a function of the nature of the trapped (*Freedom in a Rocking Boat: changing values in an unstable society*, 1972)

Arguments: The book can be understood as making a case that the UIA is at fault:

- for failing to fulfil the coordinative vision of [Paul Otlet](#) and [Henri Lafontaine](#) at the time of its origins in 1907-1910 -- irrespective of evolving understanding as to what that might imply and the inherent resistance of most bodies to any form of "coordination" as conventionally understood
- for failing to ensure a verified degree of data accuracy desired by the social science disciplines, and most notably that of

international relations -- irrespective of the assumptions made by those disciplines regarding the irrelevance of many of the entities profiled, and the challenge of obtaining the resources to do so

- for failing to maintain a greater degree of consistency in its categorization of the entities profiled, especially those meriting recognition as "international" -- irrespective of evolving understanding of the relevance of existing entities and the emergence of new ones
- for failing to take timely account of the emergence of corresponding entities of international significance in the Third World (Global South) and the East (during the Cold War) -- despite being valued for its coverage of the latter in a period in which such capacity was considered highly suspicious
- for failing to be transparent with regard to its sales and operations -- irrespective of the challenge of operating in a competitive environment in which a degree of confidentiality is typically required for survival
- for adopting strategies to fund its efforts which call into question the quality of the data gathered, notably by engaging inappropriately in desperate quests for funding -- readily deprecated as "begging", and suggesting the possibility of compromises undermining its role
- for failing to make information more widely available in a more accessible manner, whether with respect to price or in the light of open source methodologies
- for failing to render its information more relevant to the bodies profiled, as would be considered consistent with any coordinative vision -- and despite the characteristic indifference of most bodies to matters beyond their mandate
- for failing to manifest a greater degree of dissociation from the many possible indications of inequality in an emerging global society -- whilst failing to indicate how any body might do that and remain viable
- for exhibiting a questionable degree of bias in favour of an agenda labelled "internationalist" -- in contrast to agendas labelled "transnationalist" or "global"

Such assessments are notably made by contributors in the light of a critical analysis of UIA operations in 1968, which one contributor labelled the "Judge Report" (*Preliminary Investigation of the Possibility of Using Computer Data Processing Methods by the Union of International Associations*, 1968), most notably referring to a section on *Analysis of Union of International Associations*. This was necessarily prior to progressive implementation over decades of a variety of reforms to remedy those deficiencies within operational constraints.

Counter-arguments: Complementing the above assessment, the book could be considered to be at a fault for:

- failing to indicate in any manner how the UIA, or any other such body, could (or should) better reflect the original vision and declared intention of Paul Otlet and Henri Lafontaine, as reflected in various documents constituting the UIA in 1907-1910.
- failing to consider how a global data gathering initiative could (or should) be funded -- in the real world variously constrained by resources and their unpredictability over historical periods
- failing to detail the inadequacies of the social sciences in considering the data gathered and ordered by the UIA -- over historical periods in which the understandings and priorities of those disciplines have naturally evolved, to some degree as a consequence of the challenge of the data gathered by the UIA
- failing to consider what other disciplines could have complemented the focus on the "historical" perspective in the light of the judgments so confidently formulated -- and how this might have contributed to its assessments
- failing to consider how a data gathering initiative could (or should) adapt its methods over decades to reconcile consistency with the emerging insights into the variety of entities of relevance, whether existing or emergent
- failing to consider the systemic functions, purportedly of global significance to any process of coordination, necessarily implied by a very wide variety of entities and their interconnectivity (as systematically documented by the UIA) -- a failure consistent with the asystemic analysis of datasets by the social science disciplines
- failing to distinguish between editorial commitments of the UIA and the marketing claims (notably by its various publishers) -- irrespective of any questionable distinction which could now be made from "fake news", and the disclaimers included as "warnings" in various editions

It is unclear whether the study has been undertaken in support of some hidden agenda. It is however clear that some contributors have framed their critical review of the data supplied in the *Yearbook of International Organizations* over many decades such to conclude that that process has been faulty -- minimizing the uncritical use of that data by scholars (acknowledged by the study). This emphasis is effectively a case of "shooting the messenger", namely blaming the UIA for the failure of scholars in their consideration of international organization.

Partially funded as the contributors to the study have been by the international research network "[The Transnational Dynamics of Social Reform](#)", the critical approach to data gathering and institutional reform could be considered naive in the light of experience in other domains. Most notable in this respect has been the approach over many decades to [Reform of the United Nations](#) to better reflect the vision embodied in its Charter. This dates from the report by [Robert Jackson](#) (*A Study of the Capacity of the United Nations Development System*, 1969). Long forgotten, it was variously reviewed at the time (Johan Kaufmann, *The Capacity of the United Nations Development Program: The Jackson Report*, *International Organization*, 1971).

Ironically, this reviewer considered its implications for the bodies profiled by the UIA (*Study of the Capacity of the UN Development System*, 1970) as part of a UIA study of *International Organizations and the Generation of the Will to Change* (1970). Given the labelling of the author proposed in the current study, it is somewhat ironic to note the labelling of the "Jackson Report" favoured at that time. Since the report chooses to make that point with respect to the author of the 1968 study of the UIA, Jackson was also an Australian -- as with a key contributor to the volume reviewed here.

Is there a case for recognizing that academics in conceptual glass houses should be careful about throwing stones? Of considerable relevance, the metaphor has been employed by [Shirley Hazzard](#) in a highly controversial summary of insights following a decade of

employment within the United Nations (*People in Glass Houses*, 1967). Being also an Australian, is this a further indication of cultural bias?

Reviewer bias in regard to UIA

There is a strange delight in endeavouring to review a historical study by scholars of an organization in which one has worked for some 46 years. What biases might infect any such review? What posture to adopt in such a review, as someone with questionable historical expertise from the perspective of that profession?

Is it possible however to deny some such expertise, having been responsible for documenting the history of so many international organizations, however questionably, in the *Yearbook of International Organizations* and its many related publications (*Sharing a Documentary Pilgrimage: UIA-Saur Relations 1982-2000*, 2001)? What of a more contextual perspective reflected in a commissioned paper in an academic journal on the challenges of the historical perspective at this time (*Engaging Macrohistory through the Present Moment*, *Journal of Futures Studies*, August 2004).

What of the application of that perspective to future studies, perhaps implying a degree of bias to the future rather than the past (*Towards a History of World Futures Studies: focusing on collective initiatives*, 2010)? What of any reflection on the strange conundrum posed by the UIA -- beyond the framing favoured by more conventional approaches (*Union of International Associations -- Virtual Organization: Paul Otlet's 100-year Hypertext Conundrum?* 2001)? The review is clearly biased towards considering the future potential of any UIA -- towards what might have been, rather than what has been.

Then there is the responsibility assumed by the reviewer for an archival function over some 50 years, through ensuring the online availability and indexing of the internal reports on the information processing operations and challenges of the UIA (*Information / Research Activities for Civil Society*, 1959-2006), since this historical perspective has scarcely been of concern to the UIA itself, given its resource challenges. Documents relevant to aspects of this review have long been presented in the personal web site of the reviewer (*Documents about the Union of International Associations*, 2007).

Given the degree of involvement, what of the internal dynamics of the UIA to which the reviewer was exposed, or for which the reviewer might be held to be responsible -- especially when these may entail problematic matters of contrasting perception? Of particular relevance is the manner in which the reviewer, as Secretary-General *ad-interim*, resigned (or was voted out) as a consequence of a conflict typical of many organizations. In this case it involved loans which the reviewer (as effective guarantor) had negotiated to fund a UIA initiative -- on whose repayment the UIA then reneged. It also included the failure of the statutory authorities to address matters of underpaid staff salaries and pensions. How relevant is an insider perspective to complementing or challenging a historical review by outsiders of externalities, with no experience of the UIA and with little interest in the dynamics of "how it worked" and survived -- in contrast to many other better funded initiatives?

Then there is the question of why bother to review a historical study of interest to the very few in a period of global crisis, variously calling into question the relevance of many so-called international organizations. What is it useful to conclude, and for whom, in a time of poisonous divisions between nations, political parties, classes, ethnic groups, religions, disciplines, cultures, languages and genders? Is the methodology of a self-justifying scholarly perspective now to be considered as part of the problem -- or part of the solution? What is insightfully offered in that regard?

In this respect the reviewer is particularly biased with respect to the relevance of the vast network of organizations -- "international" and otherwise -- in its capacity to engage effectively with the global problematique, namely the vast network of problems with which those bodies are purportedly concerned (John Gerard Ruggie, *On the Problem of 'the Global Problematique': What Roles for International Organizations? Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 5, 1980, 4). Since this bias gave rise to the instigation by the reviewer of the UIA's *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential*, the failure to give due consideration to the very purpose of international organizations, as explored by that initiative, necessarily frames the study (for this reviewer) as lacking balance in its consideration of the UIA. It is in this sense, as an insider, that this review is preoccupied to an undue degree with the purpose and potential of any "union of international associations" and how the study enhances that understanding, if at all.

It is especially strange to recall the extent to which few of the social sciences (if any) attached meaning to the entities profiled by the UIA over extensive historical periods. Civil society has proven to be a late discovery by such disciplines and by many intergovernmental institutions -- now variously "playing catch-up". Ironically, rare have been the academics in the social sciences who would admit to the international significance of an organization of which they were a member -- and the merit of studying such bodies and their efficacy. More symptomatic is the indifference to what might be termed a psychosocial ecosystemic perspective on the vast array of international entities -- variously addressing the world problematique or framed as responsible for it (*The Nature of Organization in Transnational Networks*, 1972).

Should the UIA be compared with an exotic tribe, even a living fossil, with which scholars only now consider it appropriate to discover and engage? In doing so, should the methods they bring to bear merit the criticism recently made of the insensitive and disrespectful approaches of anthropologists having purely academic priorities -- and concerned with what can be acquired from such tribes for the museums which fund them? Given the origins of the UIA, is the "safeguarding" of *Mundaneum* archives by a university a continent away to be considered in that light -- an "Elgin Marbles" problem?.

How should an "insider" reflect on any such study? Clearly there is a danger of defensiveness and self-serving overreaction. Such a review could then itself be subject to the Shakespearean criticism that it "protesteth too much" -- if not as being a form of *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*. It could however be considered a historical narrative in its own right, given the subtitle of the book.

Scholastic bias in consideration of UIA?

Given what might be considered a degree of equivalence between the vision articulated by Paul Otlet and Henri Lafontaine and that of a "secular theology", it is perhaps appropriate to ask whether there is a degree of "scholastic" bias in the preoccupations of historians commenting on the realization of that vision, and its embodiment by the UIA (Tibor Ivan Berend, *History as a Discipline, Scholarly and Scholastic*, Akademiai Kiado, 1980; *Scholastic vs Scholarly - What's the difference?* WikiDiff).

Currently understood as primarily restricted in its meaning to a pre-university school, the number of "schools of international relations" associated with universities suggests that "scholastic" could indeed be interpreted to include a "school of thought". An indicative Google search for: "school of" and university, gave some 440,000 hits, thereby calling into question the potential for "scholastic bias". The argument is reinforced with use of the term "graduate school", with Google offering 108,000 hits.

Neither the editors nor the authors acknowledge any particular biases framing the perspective from which their arguments are developed. This is however with the exception of the clearly stated distinction made by the editors in binary terms, namely that the study was not celebratory of the UIA but a scholarly study of it from a variety of professional perspectives. Whether that variety is adequate to the task at this time is not questioned. There is a relatively implicit assumption that "scholarly" implies "objective" -- in contrast to "celebratory".

No reference is made to the possible biases of such a perspective in contrast to any other perspective of which one academic methodology is [appreciative inquiry](#). Others of relevance might include [action research](#), in which the UIA itself could be assumed to have engaged in exploring the integrative possibilities of its initiative. From the perspective of those involved, [narrative history](#) might be especially relevant given the assumptions implied by the subtitle of the book -- and any understanding of the "[multiple personality disorder](#)" by which the UIA may have suffered, and may continue to suffer.

It is of course not to be expected that any reference would be made to the academic tendency to engage in point-scoring or in the extent to which any such study is primarily an exercise in career advancement. Current controversies regarding the scientific process, the peer review system, and access to research results, are necessarily beyond the scope of a compilation by historians eschewing self-reflexivity, or of this review (*Knowledge Processes Neglected by Science: insights from the crisis of science and belief*, 2012).

Past decades have of course seen extensive criticism of studies serving hidden agendas, and specifically funded to that end -- most notably as an aspect of defence research. Little reference is made to that possibility or to the nature of the funding which enabled the study in the first place. It is however stated that financial support for the initial meeting of contributors was provided by the international research network "The Transnational Dynamics of Social Reform" and funded by both the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) and the research project TIC Collaborative, itself funded by the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office (BELSPO). From the very beginning, Bloomsbury as (publisher) has been noted as exemplary in its support.

What purpose is the study intended to serve, as defined in the applications for that funding? The editors only hint at this: *the UIA's case addresses issues of ongoing relevance* (p. 2). *Cui Bono?* That question can of course be addressed to the writer of any review.

Is there any conflict of interest to be recognized from a more critical perspective? What indeed was the motivation for the study as a whole or of individual contributors -- and how might this have distorted their work, as may be detected by future historians? In the current period in which intergovernmental organizations and their funding is challenged by changing foreign policies of member states, it could be asked to what extent the framing offered by the contributors is part of a pattern more evident in the case of the eroding capacity of the UN and UNESCO, for example.

The most valuable paper in framing the challenge for a historian is not the introduction by the editors but rather the discussion of historiography by [Matthias Middell](#) and [Katja Naumann](#) (*Historians and International Organizations: the International Committee of Historical Sciences*, 2019). They note with respect to the ambitions of the [International Commission for a Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind](#) (SHCM), funded by UNESCO, that many of its goals proved difficult to realize (p. 143), as described by Paul Duedahl (*Selling Mankind: UNESCO and the Invention of Global History, 1945-1976, Journal of World History*, 2011). And furthermore:

The dynamics of an institutionalized debate between agents from all regions of the world shattered consolidated narratives and epistemological certainties... The idea of an unbiased interpretation, free from any political cultural baggage, had proven to be a myth -- indeed a highly problematic and powerful one (pp. 143-144)

How might those considerations be applied to the contributions in the book -- or to the criticisms of how the *Yearbook* has been used by scholars? What frameworks do scholars bring to bear -- or avoid acknowledging? What implications might that perspective have for the relations between authors and their contributions? What is the wider perspective which the book could be said to systematically avoid?

By contrast one contributor dubiously framed Paul Otlet and Henri Lafontaine as "amateurs" ([Thomas Davies](#), *The UIA and the Development of International Relations Theory*, 2019). They were contrasted with the "professional" perspective offered by scholarly historians. Curious also is the remarkable turn of phrase employed in some "professional" contributions in the book, readily to be challenged as judgmental and opinionated (as discussed below). Given the importance ascribed to Otlet with respect to envisioning the internet, and the contributions of autodidacts, such as Bill Gates and Steve Jobs, to its realization, are they also to be framed as "amateurs"?

Especially curious was the choice of venue for discussion by the participating academics, namely the [Mundaneum](#) in Mons (2016) and at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (2017) -- but not at the UIA itself. Does this exemplify detached objectivity or does it suggest cultivation of a hidden agenda -- possibly framed under the [Google Arts and Culture](#) program in which Mundaneum is a "partner"? Historically the Mundaneum and UIA have had a degree of long-standing mutual estrangement -- unmentioned in the study -- deriving from the manner in which the UIA archives were extracted from the Mundaneum in the post-war period. No indication is made of who was invited to

such meetings to assist the contributors in framing their understanding of the UIA. No mention is made of Google in the book. It is unclear that representatives of the UIA, however defined, were invited -- whether or not they participated.

The choice of contributors, and their topics, also evokes questions. To what extent can they be said to be authorities on international organizations and information gathering processes -- the focus of the UIA undertaking? An obvious potential exception is [W. Boyd Rayward](#), given his earlier study of Otlet (*The Universe of Information: the work of Paul Otlet for documentation and international organization*, 1975). This was published by what merits recognition as the UIA's twin, the [International Federation for Documentation](#), which ceased to exist in 2002. More curious is the insight brought to his contribution by Pierre-Yves Saunier (*Transnational History*, 2013; *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History*, 2009). There is little evidence of direct experience by the contributors in the complex evolving world of international organizations -- or is such necessary for an historian, or even to be considered a hindrance?

The editors frame their introduction, entitled *Reconstructing the Identities of an International Non-Governmental Intelligence Agency*, with an unusual stress on "identity". With respect to emerging challenges to their conventional thinking, this avoids consideration of the perspective of one of the leading scholars of international relations, [Alexander Wendt](#) (*Quantum Mind and Social Science*, 2015; *Social Theory of International Politics*, 1999). The former explores the crossroads between quantum physics and social theory, notably highlighting the extent to which the very nature of the "existence" of nation states, as well as international organizations, can be usefully called into question. The editors and contributors, by contrast, could be said to be locked into frameworks which are eroding fast, if not already outmoded and obsolete, in a world of social media, fake news, and the surreality of global governance at this time.

Whilst "scholastic bias" may indeed be understood as merely a metaphorical allusion to the now-deprecated methods of medieval theologians, the term has been applied in a number of recent critiques, notably in the light of the arguments of Pierre Bourdieu for whom the *homo scholasticus* or *homo academicus* is an observer who is "placed outside the context of urgency of a practical situation" and is able to "produce practices or utterances which are context free" (*The Scholastic Point of View*, *Cultural Anthropology*, 1990):

- [Pierre Bourdieu](#):
 - This scholastic bias has appeared to me very strongly in the framework of ethnology. (*The theory of dispositions and scholastic bias*, In: *Manet: a symbolic revolution*, 2018)
 - I have taken these few examples from ethnology and sociology rather than, as I might, from linguistics or, above all, economics, where the scholastic illusion reigns unchallenged, because of the failure to consider the economic conditions of compliance with the laws of the economic world, which the theory thus constitutes as the universal norm of practices (*Three forms of scholastic fallacy*. In: *Pascalian Meditations*, Stanford University Press, 2000, p. 60)
- [Andrea Bianchi](#):
 - There is no such thing as a neutral "view from nowhere" as traditional legal scholarship would have us believe. The scientific observer's theoretical discourse about international law, or anything else for that matter, comprises what is said, as well as what is not said. The "scholastic bias" or one's assumptions and presuppositions, stands out among the unsaid. (*International Law Theories: An Inquiry into Different Ways of Thinking*, Oxford University Press, 2016)
 - This scholastic bias is not peculiar to the legal theoretical discourse. It characterises other sciences as well and can be explained by a certain reluctance about calling into question the so-called "scientific point of view". (*Reflexive Butterfly Catching: insights from a situated catcher*, In: *Informal International Lawmaking*, OUP Oxford, 2012)

From that perspective it is unclear which contributors are members of any organization which would be profiled in the *Yearbook* -- the focus of many comments -- or be a member of a body that was. How might that influence their assessments of the success or failure of any coordinative process?

For this reviewer, the weakness of this study, as articulated in the comments below, is that it is subject to the "epistemic dogmatism" characteristic of academic prejudice, as framed by Hamlet: *There are more things on heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy*. (*Hamlet*, 1.5.167-8)

Overview of book structure and methodology

To what extent can it be said from a critical perspective that academia in general has appropriately and adequately addressed the conditions of a world in crisis? To what extent does academia consider such practicalities of relevance to the abstractions of the theoretical perspectives so widely preferred? In this sense does the book exemplify the inadequacy of academia and elites in the face of global crises? Are the contributions indicative of a degree of effort to play "catch-up" with a rapidly evolving reality -- rendering obsolete the frameworks and priorities of the past?

Structure of the study:

- Introduction: *Reconstructing the Identities of an International Non-Governmental Intelligence Agency* ([Daniel Laqua](#), [Wouter Van Acker](#) and [Christophe Verbruggen](#))
- Part A: *The Development of the UIA*
 - Creating the UIA: Henri La Fontaine, Cyrille Van Overbergh and Paul Otlet ([W. Boyd Rayward](#))
 - The UIA and the Patronage of Internationalism: From the Belle Époque to the Second World War ([Christophe Verbruggen](#))
 - Educating Internationalists: The Context, Role and Legacies of the UIA's 'International University' ([Daniel Laqua](#))
 - Carving Out a New Role: The UIA after the Second World War ([Nico Randeraad](#) and [Philip Post](#))
- Part B: *The UIA in a World of International Organizations*
 - Building a 'New International Order': International Women's Organizations and the UIA ([Sarah Hellowell](#))
 - Legitimizing the Transnational Associative Expert: The Union Internationale des Villes and the UIA ([Wouter Van Acker](#))
 - Historians and International Organizations: The International Committee of Historical Sciences ([Matthias Middell](#) and [Katja](#))

Naumann)

- Part C: *Exploring the UIA's Publications and Data*
 - The UIA and the Development of International Relations Theory (Thomas Davies)
 - Everything One Wants to Know about International Organizations? A Critical Biography of the Yearbook of International Organizations, 1909-- 2017 (Pierre-Yves Saunier)
 - Looking for Information on International Secretariats: Digging Deeper into the Yearbook of International Organizations (Bob Reinalda)
 - Mapping Internationalism: Congresses and Organizations in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Martin Grandjean and Marco H. D. van Leeuwen)
 - Epilogue: *The UIA in the Twenty-First Century* (Nancy Carfrae)
- Index

Consultation and archival research: As is evident (and discussed below), several contributions are specifically critical of the methodology of the UIA in selecting, gathering and organizing the data on the entities defined and profiled -- given the uncritical dependence of other scholars on that data. In that spirit there is therefore a case for asking how the various contributors selected, gathered and organized their data on the UIA, given the more professional methodology to which they lay claim. Specifically:

- Who was consulted with regard to the operations of the UIA -- who not, and why not?
 - In their Acknowledgements, the editors indicate only that: *Representatives of the organization -- including Jacques de Mévius, Nancy Carfrae, and Leslie Selvais -- have contributed to our discussions and provided valuable access to a range of resources*
 - A form of consultation, involving other members of the Secretariat, appears to have been channelled into the study's Epilogue. How should its objectivity be assessed?
- What archives were consulted, under what conditions, and to what degree, especially in the light of the quantity of information available and the necessary time constraints on such research? How much time can historians spend on reviewing potentially relevant information in order to reach a professional conclusion, and how did that criterion apply in the UIA case?
- To what extent was research restricted, for reasons of convenience, to what was readily available in online academic journals -- especially in the light of their tardy consideration of NGOs (as exemplified by *International Organization*)?
- Why was only minimal communication attempted with this reviewer, despite a number of appreciative references to selected studies of the UIA and its data, and the existence of many other studies by this reviewer of the challenges it faced (*Documents about the Union of International Associations*) -- as indicated to one lead author in response to a request. Especially intriguing is the manner in which this reviewer appears to have been framed as a "hostile witness":
 - partly in the light of critical comments regarding UIA operations, dating back to 1968 to which some contributors referred appreciatively (cf. *whose reflections often involved much greater critique of the limitations of data and the uncivility of many transnational actors than many academic IR authors on global civil society were prepared to acknowledge* (p. 163)
 - potentially in the light of the attitude of the reviewer articulated during internal processes leading up to his retirement and thereafter, typical of many such processes in other bodies (and discussed below)
 - through a curiously framed footnote, following an extensive exchange of emails, as: *Himself being reluctant to answer further questions, Anthony Judge's trajectory is constructed from his publications and his Wikipedia entry* (note 45, p. 198). Did this conclusion derive in part from the failure of another contributor to meet at an agreed time? Or from the refusal to contribute a chapter on UIA use of technology -- despite indication of an [existing historical study](#) by the reviewer to that effect, which the editors were free to use?
- Given the reviewer's suggestion, why the curious refusal to meet two former members of the Secretariat whose roles had been especially significant to the development of UIA programs over an extensive period?
- Would a professional historical study note what had not been explored -- as a guide to future historians -- rather than implying comprehensiveness?

Why the use of curiously judgmental language in some contributions, which the editors and publisher failed to call into question -- language potentially to be described as unprofessionally "snide" -- and intentionally so?

Critical assumptions regarding funding of data gathering: In implying UIA bias with respect to funding its initiative -- without proving such bias -- this raises the question as to how it is expected that resources for any data gathering process should be obtained in order to meet the academic requirement for appropriate datasets. Any initiative must consider the range of possible sources of income and how these might imply "strings" undermining its acclaimed value. Sources can include the following, for different periods, according to changing policies and opportunities:

- from governments -- from which the UIA benefitted for a period only, most notably in the case of the Belgian government
- from government agencies -- as exemplified by the extensive funding of the social sciences by the US Department of Defense
- from intergovernmental organizations -- as exemplified in the UIA case by contracts:
 - typically associated with the work of a particular person, as with the Commonwealth Science Council, United Nations University, UNICEF
 - projects, as with UNESCO, EU, and World Bank
- from international nongovernmental associations -- as exemplified in the UIA case funding
- from foundations -- exemplified in the UIA case with exceptionally funding from the Ford Foundation, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, or the National Science Foundation
- from universities -- possibly, as in the UIA case, framed as purchase of duly formatted datasets
- corporations -- most obviously in contributions to events by conference centres, in the UIA case
- advertising -- as used in the earliest editions of the Yearbook only, and in its journal prior when it was produced

- private funding

From an academic perspective, what is "clean" and unbiased and how can the contributors demonstrate that with respect to the funding of their study of the UIA -- or other studies of international organizations? What percentage are dubiously funded by defence research budgets? The question is especially relevant to the decades over which it is the intelligence services which have been unusually interested in UIA data, especially the connectivity profiled between organizations (notably with Eastern bloc organizations during the Cold War). The question also applies to the conference industry dependent on such data to frame competitive marketing strategies for lucrative international events.

Confusing advertising claims with substantive content: Some contributions have gone to surprising length in expressing irritation at the inconsistency between the marketing claims for comprehensive coverage as made by the publishers of the UIA reference books and the actual editorial achievement -- despite explicit disclaimers in that regard and typically justified in a marketing context by the legally tolerated role of [puffery](#).

To what extent is any reference book to be considered "comprehensive", complete and beyond improvement? Clearly editors struggle to improve coverage through successive editions, in response to detected omissions and changes in the domain of concern. Publishers must necessarily engage in puffery, acclaiming what has been achieved in any one edition that is marketed. There are time factors involved? When is it "worth" producing a new edition? In the case of the book reviewed here, how are the claims made by its publisher to be assessed? When will it be considered appropriate to correct errors and omissions in the light of feedback?

Confusion regarding the entities of relevance to comprehension of global organization: To what extent do the contributions reflect a focus on organizations as they are imagined to be, without recognizing the variety and the conditions under which they function? This consideration is typical of the best of biodiversity and anthropological studies. It also reflects an ecosystemic recognition in contrast with the typical specialization of academic studies.

A concluding section of the book is devoted to a critical review of the *Yearbook of International Organizations* and its data collection and presentation (*Exploring the UIA's Publications and Data*). As noted above, the section suggests the needs for higher standards to meet the requirements of scholars, noting that they have been uncritical in their acceptance of what was offered by the UIA. It is therefore appropriate to consider any corresponding errors or omissions in the study which argues that case.

Errors: Curious examples of errors, which could be readily corrected, include:

- the explicit manner in which it is incorrectly claimed that the criteria for inclusion in the *Yearbook* had been subject to an "arrangement" with the UN (a topic explored in greater detail below)
- the unfortunate confusion of editor with publisher (noted above) has further implications in that the UIA adopted the deliberate policy (in contrast with academic conventions) of not overtly indicating any single editor. That bibliographic convention typically resulted in the integrity of a series over many years being broken up in documentation systems under the name(s) of the people variously responsible. Such conventions also fail to honour any team effort in that respect.
- following from the previous point, it is appropriate to clarify the role of Paul Ghils, stated by one contributor as being the editor of the UIA journal *Transnational Associations*. Since that publication existed (as specifically noted, p. 103) from 1949 through 2005 under various names, this suggests that he undertook that role in his early boyhood. Many others were however variously responsible in different periods (including this reviewer, and Jennifer Otlet, grand-daughter of Paul Otlet).
- the concern expressed at the failure to continue publishing French versions of the *Yearbook* -- omitting reference to the collaboration with the [Agence de la Francophonie](#) and the French Government to produce a CD-ROM version in 1998. This was a project negotiated from 1991 and initiated in May 1995 -- partially enabled by an automatic translation process developed by the Secretariat. Profiles for a limited number of organizations in Spanish (60) and German (28) were also included as a demonstration.
- one contribution, critical of the reduced role of French in the UIA publications, stated that a major financial collaborator of the UIA was "Mankind 2000 / Humanity 2000" [*sic*]. The correct French translation in its Belgian statutes is [Humanité 2000](#)
- one contribution implied that the UIA failed to take account of international bodies of the more distant past (other than those recorded in the earliest UIA records or those of the League of Nations). This fails to recognize the vigilance with which bodies not registered in those convenient sources were sought and added to the *Yearbook* data, in terms of date of foundation and date of demise. That data was not historically frozen but open to new information, especially with respect to new categories of organization
- one contribution raises questions about the UIA's failure to take due account of multinational corporations and other for-profit entities. This point fails to take account of both the very high degree of controversy (within the UN system) surrounding such bodies as they emerged, the manner in which they were deprecated from particular scholarly perspectives as being creatures of a single country, and the fact that the UIA undertook an early survey of such bodies variously included in its publications, or excluded therefrom (*Multinational Business Enterprises: a new category of international organizations*, 1968)
- a degree of confusion is associated with the involvement of this reviewer in the UIA, notably in incorrectly declaring his role to have been that of "secretary" (p. 8) -- whereas, as Director of Communications and Research, via a nominal position as Assistant Secretary-General, he only became "Secretary-General *ad interim*" immediately prior to retirement after some 46 years. This

confusion was exacerbated through the insistence of one contributor in knowing the exact title under which the employment had been originally agreed -- in an organization that made few formal distinctions through staff titles.

UIA context and relevance

The study explores the UIA over a century from its founding, with special emphasis on the post-war development of its information gathering and dissemination.

Period of transition: Neglected to a degree by the study, the work of the UIA has continued through the progressive emergence of previously "unthinkable" conditions, including:

- widespread challenge to the promotion of developmental hopes and visions articulated by the United Nations and other bodies, resulting in a sense of frustrated reality and despair, possibly framed as surreal (*Surreal nature of current global governance as experienced*, 2016)
- intergovernmental bodies (most notably the UN and its agencies), who previously deplored any engagement with "international associations", or "corporations":
 - increasingly subscribing to the facilities of emergent "nongovernmental" bodies of unforeseen form, such as Facebook and Twitter (effectively under the control of a single member state)
 - engaging in previously unforeseen arrangements with multinational corporations, traditionally deprecated as highly controversial, as with the [United Nations Global Compact](#)
- emergence of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc) as facilities of far greater significance and popular appreciation than intergovernmental organizations and their agencies -- despite considerable controversy (*30 Questions that Facebook has yet to Answer: gaps in the testimony of Mark Zuckerberg at a US Senate hearing?* 2018)
- the challenge to male-dominated, traditional organizational hierarchies widely replaced by alternative modes of horizontal "network" organization -- exemplified in the case of the UIA by the diplomatic heritage in its appointment of secretaries-general (through to 2006), and increasing dependence on self-management by its Secretariat in ensuring its funding and viability (despite concerns expressed in its statutory bodies)
- emergence of alternatives to the effectively abandoned categorization offered by the [Universal Decimal Classification](#) (as promoted by Paul Otlet and the Mundaneum) exemplified:
 - in the UIA case by adaptation of the [Information Coding Classification](#), now the responsibility of the [International Society for Knowledge Organization](#) (*Functional Classification in an Integrative Matrix of Human Preoccupations*, 1982)
 - by massive reliance on the "organization" of knowledge by search engines and their algorithms
- shift from the legal formalism of the past to widespread emphasis on informal organization, exemplified by
 - refocusing on civil society and group formation enabled via social media, away from "nongovernmental organization"
 - linguistic challenges to the articulation of international organization, notably exemplified by the negative prefix of NGOs with its implications for the failure of academic insight (*Conceptual Gaps And Confused Distinctions: possible ambiguities in the translation of interrelated concepts between sectors, jargons or languages*, 1974)
 - confusion regarding the distinction between local and global, and the organization associated with such extremes (*Local Reality of Overcrowding -- Global Unreality of Overpopulation: comprehensible reframing of engagement with global issues via metaphors of proximity*, 2019)
- challenges to the selective framing of issues and frozen categories, exemplified by:
 - progressive recognition of the relevance of a systemic perspective ([wicked problems](#), networks, and a "human dimension", in contrast with a rigidly defined legal reality), exemplified in the UIA case by development of the online *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential*
 - recognition of unexpected dependencies
 - progressive erosion of disciplinary distinctions and their credibility, now remarkably exemplified by the [International Science Council](#), formed by the merger in 2018 of the [International Council for Science](#) and the [International Social Science Council](#). [It could of course be suspected that this was primarily encouraged by severe budgetary cuts to the founding bodies following changing policies in their funding sources]
- conceptual and cognitive challenges to the very "existence" of social constructs such as "nations states" and "international organizations" -- as discussed below and exemplified by the above-mentioned studies by Alexander Wendt (*Quantum Mind and Social Science*, 2015; *Social Theory of International Politics*, 1999)
- the ever increasing role of technology and the envisaged emergence of artificial intelligence -- readily to be understood as a surrogate for forms of "international organization", most notably following the much-heralded singularity (*Emerging Memetic Singularity in the Global Knowledge Society*, 2009)
- shift from the problems of data gathering in a Cold War context (with the emphasis on propaganda) to those of data gathering in a global surveillance society (with an emphasis on fake news) -- a shift characterized to a degree by an even greater resistance to being profiled, even if resources can be allocated to responding to questionnaires
- increasingly problematic challenges of coordination at the global level
- major switch from text data (as primarily envisaged by Otlet), to brief messages, imagery and animations (caricatured as a "blip culture", by Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave*, 1980)
- increasing incarceration of knowledge behind security classifications, copyright and paywalls -- with implication for the dissemination of both UIA data and the contributions reviewed here

Taken together in relation to any potentially evolving role of the UIA, these raise the question as to what is implied by the challenge of "international". Through the above transformations, what boundaries are now the challenge of any meaningful union between distinctive organizations? The question is usefully framed by the contrasting struggle of interconnectivity prior to the internet, when postal and face-

to-face interaction constrained the viability of any coordinated relationship -- to say nothing of freedom of movement and transfer of funds. When communication is relatively instantaneous, what are the unforeseen constraints on global organization?

Questionable (ir)relevance of the UIA: The study variously calls into question the credibility of the UIA and its information gathering:

- through its purported coordinative function as a "union", conventionally understood
- through the entities profiled in its various information services

With respect to the first, and the challenging meaning of "union", this is discussed in a separate section below. With respect to the second a distinction can usefully be made between those variously investing in those facilities, namely:

- *Yearbook* data alone, of more particular interest to scholars and the intelligence services
- *Yearbook/Calendar* combination, of more particular interest to the conference industry
- *Yearbook* related documentation, of more particular interest to libraries at the service of organizations and the public, notably bibliographical and biographical data
- preoccupation with the purposes of any coordinated action, as exemplified by the problems, strategies and values of international constituencies articulated in the *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential*

That the UIA should be able to continue to generate adequate income from these facilities, separately or in combination (online), is an indication of perceived relevance to particular sectors -- however misled they may be. There is a hunger for data. Of relevance however is the relative lack of interest of the non-profit sector in these facilities, except as a means of reinforcing their claims to existence and relevance in the eyes of others, notably governments and intergovernmental organizations.

Especially interesting with respect to relevance is the treatment by the study of the online *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential* (as discussed below). The capacity to profile entities beyond the conventional scholarly focus on organizations, their meetings and their publications proved to be fundamental to the UIA's successful response to calls for proposals from the World Bank and the EU, leading notably to significant funding by the latter (as discussed below).

Competitive rivalry with regard to organization profiling: Whether or not the UIA has been specifically at fault in its profiling of "international organizations" (however they are to be understood), the viability of that enterprise has at various times been threatened by other initiatives with which it variously engaged where possible (as noted by the study, p. 186):

- the *Encyclopedia of Associations*, with which the UIA collaborated to a degree (especially when marketed via a common publisher). It is now described as a comprehensive directory of more than 20,000 associations, societies, and other non-profit membership organizations in the USA
- the *Europa World Year Book*, with contrasting content, as noted in the study
- the *Global Civil Society Yearbook*, with which the UIA collaborated to a degree with through contracted sale of data
- the *Directory of Non-Governmental Organisations Active in Sustainable Development* (1996)
- the *Handbook of International Organizations* of the League of Nations (1921, 1923, 1925, 1926)

Many other more specialized directories have been produced for a time, readily to be understood as potentially undermining the long-term viability and coherence of the data set maintained by the UIA. Of particular interest in this respect is the listing provided by the [Global Development Research Center](#) of many *NGO Databases and Directories* -- notably failing to include the *Yearbook*. Also of relevance is the listing of *NGO Directories* provided by the Knowledge, Impact and Policy team at the [Institute of Development Studies](#) in the UK -- also failing to mention the *Yearbook*. The contributors fail to make any comparative study of such sources in terms of their value for scholars and for engendering the "union" implied by the UIA title. Nor does such a comparison appear to exist.

The number of these facilities is an indication of the challenge to staff of any organization receiving survey questionnaires from many of them, from scholars, or from those marketing conference facilities to them. Of greater relevance to a concern implied by the study reviewed is the absence of any exploration as to the reasons for the variety of information sources. These reflect multiple approaches to coordination, clearly now proven to be inadequate to the challenges of global governance at this time.

Of related relevance are the challenges faced by the UN Administrative Committee for Coordination, renamed in 2001 as the [United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination](#) -- with the purpose of coordinating the initiatives of the [United Nations System](#), as the name implies (Joseph A. Barry, *Bolstering United Nations Intelligence: Cultural and Structural Solutions*, *American Intelligence Journal*, 30, 2012, 1).

Especially intriguing in the methodology of contributors to the study is the apparent failure to interview Cyril Ritchie (only mentioned as having assisted with others in the production of its Epilogue). As an emblematic figure with respect to the success or failure of any coordinative focus of international organization over many decades, he holds (or has held) the positions of:

- President of the Union of International Associations (following a position on the UIA Executive Council since 1998)
- President of the Conference of Nongovernmental Organizations in Consultative Status with ECOSOC (following an extensive period as its Secretary)
- President of the Council of Europe INGO Grouping "Civil society and democracy in Europe" (from 2000 to 2008)
- President of the Federation of International NGOs in Geneva
- Executive Director of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (for 14 years), a body which produced its own NGO directory in collaboration with OECD
- Chair of the World Civil Society Conference (Montreal, 1999)
- Chair of the Environment Liaison Centre International (Nairobi, from 1975)

More valuable to the study, and the governance challenge of the times, would have been an explicit contribution by Cyril Ritchie

reflecting the insights of an experienced practitioner, especially with respect to the role of any kind of "union", and the coordinative role it may perform, through information facilities or otherwise. Why is such coordination now proving to have been "unfit for purpose" in the face of global crisis? Why did the contributors not clarify how progress towards it is systematically undermined?

It remains completely unclear what the various coordinative initiatives now envisage as being appropriate to the challenges of global governance, other than in their tokenistic promotional communications. Only too evident is the degree of rivalry and suspicion which prevails between them, their widespread loss of credibility, and their denial of that current reality. The pattern is of course echoed in the unfruitful fragmentation of academia and the conceptual impotence in the face of global crises.

Preoccupations of questionable import: It is appropriate to note the principal preoccupations of users of the *Yearbook* data:

- names and addresses, primarily for marketing purposes, as in the case of the conference industry and scholars undertaking surveys to complement any use of the published data
- geographic distribution of membership, primarily as an approach to political assessment of the relative international relevance of organizations -- and their potential bias -- a theme evoking numerous scholarly studies
- relations of NGOs to intergovernmental organizations, primarily with respect to the political challenges of consultative status provisions
- connectivity between organizations through networks, primarily as a preoccupation of intelligence agencies -- and only latterly of the social sciences and to a minimal degree
- critical comparison of *Yearbook* data with other data sets, as emphasized in one contribution, to determine bias -- specifically whether other civil society organizations reflected less bias on specific issues, following the shift from legally defined "international" organizations to the operation of nationally-based organizations with international activities.
- tracing the cultural or geographical biases that are often seen as the embodiments of civil society (as noted by the study, p. 7), typically extended to the political and ideological biases reinforcing international strategies

In the light of these preoccupations, it is unclear what points academic research has endeavoured to make and to what end, although the study notes the early review of Chadwick Alger (*Research on Research: a decade of quantitative and field research on international organizations*, *International Organization*, 24, 1970, 3). The contributions to this study do not help to clarify this matter. This then begs the question as to how they might frame the purpose of any Union of International Associations, or of how "union" and "coordination" are then to be understood -- now or in the future.

In a period of ever increasing global crisis, the relatively trivial focus of such studies could indeed be fruitfully compared to the deprecated preoccupation of medieval scholasticism framed as *How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?*. As noted elsewhere, there has been very little study of the set of bodies profiled by the *Yearbook* as constituting an ecosystemic network engaging with the global problematic. This is equally true of the many more specialized data sets, notably those with an issue focus, however specialized.

From that perspective it is appropriate to ask the provocative question as to **what interesting questions have scholars asked about international organization and any coordinative process over the past decades?**

How are those questions now deemed interesting and of particular relevance to global governance at this time -- or to any "union" of "international associations" or of "global civil society"? What proportion would indeed be deemed trivial -- or simply deprecated as "academic"? Is this a suitably provocative question for the process of the [Edge.org](#) and its [World Question Center](#)? (Alexander Rose, *How to Create an Institution That Lasts 10,000 Years*, *Edge*, 24 April 2019).

A provocative comparison between the UIA initiatives and a scholastic analysis thereof could be usefully explored through the analogy of [putting the cart before the horse](#). With any implication that academia is necessarily the "horse" and that data gathering is the "cart", the UIA is clearly to be understood as failing to wait upon the driving forces of academia as to what data should be gathered and how. For some the UIA approach could however be said to have been that of the "horse", variously attempting to pull the "cart" of academia over decades.

Unrecognized profiling challenge of the "insubstantive": problems, strategies, values

Problematic assessment: The study chose to frame the relevance of the *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential* by singling out (from the [reviews and criticism](#) noted in its [description in Wikipedia](#)) an early negative review by the American Library Association in 1987 (of its first edition, titled the *Yearbook of World Problems and Human Potential*). That review specifically described it as *a problematic monument to idiosyncrasy, confusion, and obfuscation that certainly is not worth purchasing at any price*. Ironically these descriptors could be seen as only too appropriate to the condition of the world at this time, the governance of it, the organization of information appropriate to it, and the disciplines purporting to offer insight into such matters.

In that sense the study effectively echoes that understanding in failing to recognize that the very organization of the data in that Encyclopedia had been a deliberate editorial approach to the category traps of conventional librarianship -- and scholarship (see [Explanatory Comments](#)). Encompassing, as it deliberately did, both highly "negative" and questionably "positive" themes, it was recognized that in splitting its potential market it was endeavouring to create a market which transcended unfruitful binary thinking. Ironically, as noted in an introduction to the *Encyclopedia*, it was Paul Otlet who had articulated the challenge it endeavoured to address in a text on *Le Problème des Problèmes* (*Monde*, Mundaneum, 1935).

Contrasting commentaries: Although ignored by the study (despite being accessible via the UIA website), these include the following:

- Louis Xhignesse: *Une expérience-pilote de développement de contenu à partir de l'utilisation sélective de l'Encyclopédie des problèmes mondiaux et du potentiel humain* (1991)

- A Kannan: *Preliminary Study of the 4th edition of the Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential* (Theosophy Science Centre, 1995)
- Christian de Laet: *Encyclopédie des Problèmes Mondiaux et du Potentiel Humain: informer et s'informer* (Extrait de *Des outils pour un développement durable*, chapitre 5, 1992)

The last was the extract from a doctoral thesis of a long-standing member of the Executive Council of the UIA, which also discussed a second case ([Development Alternatives](#), India), namely the initiative of another UIA member ([Ashok Khosla](#)). An English translation of the full title of the thesis is: *Tools for sustainable development: case for reconfiguration* (see [abstract in English](#)). The relevance of that perspective is perhaps usefully indicated by the former roles of its author as Secretary of the Canadian Council of Resource and Environment Ministers, and as Secretary of the Commonwealth Science Council. Of relevance to the successful UIA application for funding to the World Bank (noted below), the requisite coalition included Development Alternatives as a partner.

The editor of the *Knowledge Base of Futures Studies* emphasized, as described in the *Wikipedia* description of the *Encyclopedia*:

... the significance of the work is not its size or the scope of its references, impressive though these are. It is rather in the nature of what has been attempted. The accompanying notes and commentaries... are good enough to be published separately because they contain highly cogent observations on the "global problematique", commentaries on the work of numerous great thinkers from a wide variety of fields, and an impressive array of insights about the epistemology, symbolism, metaphysics, metaphors and linguistic representations of the subject ([Richard A. Slaughter](#), *A meta-linguistic resource*, *Futures*, 1992)

In that light, it is curious that the editors of the study suggest that the UIA "field of action" was much broader in its early period (p. 5), a potentially misleading framing of the subsequent ambition to encompass the totality of the global problematique -- including those earlier preoccupations -- in the light of information from the multiplicity of emerging international entities. It was the scope of the initiative that enabled it to benefit from EU funding, as noted below, as well as evaluation to that end by the World Bank.

Exemplifying the value attached in practice to the initiative, a degree of collaboration was subsequently explored with the [Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability](#) with respect to its [Global Problem Solving](#) program ([Visualisation tools resource list](#)).

Unrecognized challenges: The *Encyclopedia* initiative emerged in reaction to the recognition of the relevance of the handful of world problems highlighted by *The Limits to Growth* study of the Club of Rome in 1972. The reaction derived from the appreciation that the many international bodies were preoccupied with a far wider range of problems to which they were endeavouring to devote resources -- despite the manner in which these concerns were variously deprecated, notably by scholars and the media. Scholars and specialists in international documentation have yet to articulate an approach more appropriate to data of the type profiled in the *Encyclopedia* in order to enable more fruitful approaches to global governance. In dismissing the UIA's efforts with respect to this challenge, the study renders itself symptomatic of that challenge.

Since the conclusion by the epitome of library science in 1987 with respect to the first edition of the *Encyclopedia*, there has been a major shift in the policy sciences to the complex multiplicity of problems variously recognized by a multitude of organizations -- but with little capacity to engender a coordinated response to them, however enabled by the information sciences. Later editions of the *Encyclopedia* endeavoured to profile and interrelate the strategies advocated by international constituencies in response to those problems, together with the values by which they were inspired. The misleading critiques of the past were recently reviewed from that perspective (*Flatulence is a Problem Aired: resmelling the stench of past undertakings*, 2013) -- exploiting the metaphor in a disparaging review by *The Guardian* -- now framing itself as a champion of environmental issues. Academia has notably demonstrated its limited competence in this regard.

Most curiously, from the opposite ideological extreme, an appreciative front-page review of the *Encyclopedia* initiative was given by *The Wall Street Journal* (Daniel Michaels, *Encyclopedia of World Problems Has a Big One of Its Own*, 11 December 2012), specifically recalling the role of Paul Otlet.

Institutional focus of data gathering: The dubious appreciation of the *Encyclopedia* by the world of academia and library science could be understood as indicative of limited understanding of the potential function of any "union of international associations" at this time. The following table is helpful in that regard.

Indication of a "schizophrenic" approach to any "union of associations"	
Quantitative "organization" (static identities)	Qualitative "change" (dynamic potential)
organizations meetings / events publications (bibliography) people (biography) statistics	problems strategies knowledge organization values communication and comprehension human development

The column on the left is what UIA preoccupations are typically held to imply, on which its data gathering has focused, and what the social sciences have long preferred to study. That on the right is indicative of the challenges to that conventional world view -- which international relations theory has long endeavoured to avoid, but has since become obliged to take into consideration, as framed by the challenges to governance, policy sciences, considerations of complex systems dynamics, widespread appeal to "human values", and a surprising degree of reference to "evil" by world leadership (as noted below).

Curiously, in the historical focus on the tangible entities in the left-hand column, data gathering and related studies have all but forgotten the functional purpose of those entities -- with which organizations, their membership and their meetings are primarily concerned. That is

better reflected in the unsatisfactorily nebulous nature of the right-hand column. It would seem inappropriate for the study to reinforce such avoidance, rather than considering the challenges it poses for the social sciences and for any "union of international associations".

If the UIA profiling methodology for tangible entities is to be criticized (as discussed below), of potentially far greater interest is the challenge of "profiling" the intangible entities, as undertaken by the UIA for the *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential* and [extensively discussed](#) therein. Few organizations have a clear articulation of the problems with which they are preoccupied, the strategies they deploy, or the values empowering them to do so -- as the social sciences would consider desirable.

Challenged UIA data collection methodology

Profiling process: Contributors to the study are very explicit in calling into question the manner in which the UIA gathers information from the bodies it profiles. The focus of the criticism is on self-reporting, irrespective of how the information is then reviewed and amended in the light of other sources, whether or not those amendments are approved by the body at some later date. The core of the complaint lies in the failure to verify the accuracy of the information finally presented. No mention is made of how scholars verify the veracity of survey questionnaires on which they may otherwise depend -- especially the challenge of census data. Other sciences are explicit in their use of statistical confidence levels.

The study fails to accord significance to two valuable aspects of self-reporting, irrespective of any subsequent editorial enhancement of such profiling:

- it defines organizations as they wish to be perceived in terms of the image they wish to project -- their "story" -- in contrast to the desire of the social sciences to "cut through" such illusion to the reality for those disciplines to which they choose to attribute meaning
- it respects the methodology of any lawyer in presenting a client in language that can be appreciated as meaningful -- termed "own words". This approach has been fundamental to the editorial treatment of the problems and strategies that an (international) constituency perceives and may claim to address

Missing from this critique is how any relevant information is to be located in a situation in which bodies may have every reason to be less than enthusiastic about being profiled, or may only wish to be minimally profiled, or may indeed choose to misrepresent themselves in some way. These are issues common to any social science survey, including census data. Only a degree of verification is typically possible, whatever the resources available -- including information from third parties. Missing information may however be considered confidential -- including the manner in which the body is funded. The approach of the UIA was to consider every possible source available, but not to engage in verification research -- preferring instead to improve the profile over successive editions if possible. Warnings in that regard were explicitly indicated. Professional social science studies could clearly choose to estimate a percentage of errors or confidence level -- as may be done with census data.

The criticism articulated by the contributors could therefore be considered as unrealistic, if not naive. Survey data is only adequate to a degree. In the real world, it is neither as perfect as scholars might wish it to be, nor as reliable. It is somewhat ironic to note that when scholars initiate their own surveys, they are typically obliged to note a "response rate". The contributors say nothing about how survey data should be rendered as perfect as they would wish -- and validated by some unquestionable authority.

In questioning the validity of the *Yearbook* data, one contributor argues that:

More recently, the *Yearbook* has presented, for the first time, an evaluation of its data collection process: the 2014-5 edition includes a (discreet) mention that the annual questionnaire to INGOs has had a response rate of 35 to 40 per cent - as such, it hardly amounts to an annual comprehensive census. (p. 194)

This comment seemingly obscures other aspects of the *Yearbook* profiling process through which profiles are progressively enhanced over the years. It also avoids any mention of how scholars launching their own surveys enhance the quality of the results or derive reliable conclusions from relatively low response rates. To be clear, options by which information has been derived (separately or in combination over successive periods) include:

- empty questionnaires (as an opportunity presented to new organizations, and as a checklist of types of information sought)
- partially filled questionnaires (in light of information already received, inviting completion/correction)
- computer proofs of previous profile (inviting completion/correction)
- requests for any document containing profile information (especially if more convenient than the above)
- use of details from website of the organization
- indications in documents of other organizations (notably those with which the body collaborates, or of which it is a member)
- indications in other directories (notably those of intergovernmental organizations)
- indications from announcements of international conferences (wherever they may appear)
- indications in historical reviews (as and when they become available)

Another approach to the matter is through a form of open source profiling. The UIA has experimented to a degree with this. It suffers from the same inadequacy as being a form of self-reporting. Where a profile can be amended by any authorized informant, difficulties may well be compounded. The [editorial wars](#) of *Wikipedia* have been extensively documented in this regard. The fate of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, with its authoritative profiles, has also been noted by comparison.

UN approval of organization criteria? The contributors endeavour to stress the manner in which the criteria for inclusion have been subject to an "arrangement with the United Nations". In 1950 the UIA retook responsibility for registering international organizations in its

Yearbook of International Organizations. Its capacity in this respect was acknowledged in a special UN/ECOSOC Resolution 334B (XI) of 20 July 1950, and subsequently figured in successive Annual Reports of the UN Secretary General. The UIA has had consultative relationship with UN/ECOSOC since 1951 for that reason. On this basis the study asserts:

- This entailed constraints that have shaped the content of the *Yearbook* until today: the definition of criteria for inclusion in consultation with ECOSOC officials; the obligation to include in the *Yearbook*, regardless of other criteria, every INGO that received consultative status with the UN (a heavily politicized process during the Cold War); and the coverage of both IGOs and INGOs alongside one another. (p. 178)
- The *Yearbook's* content was thus defined by specific criteria, established in accordance with UN staff -- likely in the mid-1950s. (p. 190)

Such assertions are mistaken in confusing that early resolution of ECOSOC, specifically approving the publication of the *Yearbook*, with a non-existent formal arrangement as to what should be included. The only implication in the latter regard was a requirement to profile NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC, and by further implication, in consultative status with other UN agencies -- on the assumption that these had been formally perceived to be of significance to the process of international organization. This has always been assiduously done -- notably for the benefit of scholars of international relations -- even benefitting from profiles provided to those agencies by the NGOs (as has been formally required by those agencies). There have been periods in which the constrained resources of those agencies had resulted in the reverse process, namely provision by the UIA of NGO profiles to them.

Is the study endeavouring to make a case that this introduced a form of bias in contrast to an unspecified approach to profiling organizations of some other kind -- a process in which the UIA was heavily engaged over decades? Is there any evidence of scholarly suggestions as to other categories of organization that could be feasibly profiled or distinguished from those actually profiled?

The assumption that *Yearbook* profiling was controlled in some way by the UN is usefully challenged in the light of those NGOs accepted into consultative status as a consequence of political lobbying even though (for the editors) they were essentially national organizations and merited appropriate treatment as such. This notably applied to "diaspora" organizations from particular Asian countries. This illustrates how the political bias of the UN was respected -- as of significance internationally -- but was not allowed to bias the editorial treatment of such exceptions, duly categorized otherwise.

The UIA has always been free to consider categories of international body, including intergovernmental agencies, which were not in any way a feature of this consultative status process. Of particular interest in this regard has been the profiling of intergovernmental "agencies" of the United Nations and their subunits -- for whom establishing any such profile of themselves could well be considered politically delicate and heavily constrained by bureaucratic processes. This did not prevent the UIA maintaining such profiles to the extent possible.

Of particular relevance to this argument is a conversation with regard to criteria with Alexander Szalai, at that time Director of Research of the [UN Institute for Training and Research \(UNITAR\)](#). He suggested to this reviewer that the UN might indeed formulate such criteria to constrain the range of bodies in the *Yearbook*. My response was that the UIA would be happy to give it due consideration, provided the UN would in some way formally approve such criteria. The matter went no further.

The value of the *Yearbook* to the UN system can however be recognized otherwise with respect to the process of approving NGOs formally for consultative status. A preliminary step in this process for the NGO was to ensure that it was appropriately profiled in the *Yearbook* -- where the entry might be subject to preliminary perusal by the responsible officials.

"Genuinely international organizations"? Contributors have also focused misleadingly on the potential bias in the efforts of editors to distinguish bodies to be understood as having the quality of being "genuinely international". Reference is made to "seven rules" on which other scholars are alleged to have commented critically:

These criteria were only made explicit in the 1968-9 edition: seven major characteristics decided whether non-governmental organizations were 'genuinely international' and could be included in the *Yearbook*. (p. 190)

It is curious that the study should focus on this reference dating from 1968, possibly written by this reviewer (*What Kind of Organizations Are Included, Yearbook of International Organizations 1968- 1969*, p. 11-12), when the types of organization included were constantly under review, and extended in response to recognition of entities which were of potential interest as "international organization" in some way. That checklist, discussed below, indeed predates the extensive commentary on the further challenges detected (*Types of International Organization: classification categories*, 1978; *Types of International Organization: detailed overview*, 1978).

As indeed noted by the study (p. 190), **this extension was organized such as to maintain the coherence of the types having the greater claim to be called international**, whilst adding other types which lent themselves to challenge in this respect -- notably by politically sensitive intergovernmental organizations and scholars of international relations. As noted by the study, however:

In almost every article I have found where *Yearbook* data has been used, authors have conflated the number of existing INGOs with the content of the *Yearbook*, and even more narrowly with the *Yearbook's* category of 'genuinely international bodies'. This suggests how far the categorization of the *Yearbook's*, and its content, have been framing the perimeter of most studies. Only a handful of the identified 172 articles which have used figures or lists from the *Yearbook* include any acknowledgement of the 'seven aspects' used for inclusion and exclusion as 'genuine international bodies' and the consequences of such criteria for the research parameters, questions and conclusions. While it seems likely that most scholars are aware of the *Yearbook's* limitations, they did not articulate their concerns: their choice to work with what they had seems to have muted the critical appraisal of their

The appropriateness of this comment obscures the manner in which it is effectively a case of "shooting the messenger", namely blaming the UIA for the failure of scholars in their consideration of international organization. That failure recalls the distinction made in taxonomical studies of biological species, caricatured as that between the "lumpers" and the "splitters". The contribution reinforces the criticism by citing the apparent bias in the *Yearbook* regarding human rights and religious bodies in that the activities of national bodies were considered far less significant internationally than those identified as international. The bias is obvious in the case of the numerous "church planting" initiatives emanating from the USA. It is surely for scholars to distinguish these appropriately from those which endeavour to coordinate their strategies internationally.

The issue can be clarified by indicating the categories of organization distinguished, however extended between editions in the face of the emergence of new types of entity -- or the perception by the editors of the relevance of entities previously omitted. Examples include:

- meeting series (Type S) which may imply an evanescent, ad hoc, coordinating body for each event
- multilateral treaties (Type T) which may imply a form of international organization not requiring a conventional secretariat (other than a repository)
- religious orders (Type R) which may have a degree of dependence on the Vatican, which challenges notions of international organization

This followed from early assessment of the variety of such bodies meriting consideration (*Types of International Organization: classification categories*, 1978; *Types of International Organization: detailed overview*, 1978). Both documents, variously reproduced in the *Yearbook*, discuss the variety of bodies with which the editors have been confronted -- in the real world. The solution was to group organization by category, as noted in the latter (*Types of organization in the Yearbook*), briefly described as follows (of which a version is reproduced in the study from the 1988 *Yearbook* as Table 11.1 (p. 235).

Types of organization in the Yearbook of International Organizations (abbreviated summary)		
Conventional international organizations	Type A	International organizations whether governmental or non-governmental, which group together at least three other autonomous non-regional international bodies as full members.
	Type B	Non-profit international organizations, whether governmental or non-governmental, that have a widespread, geographically-balanced membership, management and policy-control.
	Type C	Non-profit organizations, whether governmental or non-governmental, whose membership and preoccupations exceed that of a particular continental region, although not to a degree justifying its inclusion in Type B
	Type D	Non-profit organizations, whether governmental or non-governmental, whose membership or preoccupations are restricted to a particular continent or subcontinental region.
Other "international organizations"	Type E	Any international non-profit bodies, whether governmental or non-governmental, which may be considered an "emanation" of a particular organization, place, person or proprietary product
	Type F	International organizations, whether governmental or non-governmental, whose formal characteristics raise fundamental questions if they are allocated to any of the preceding types.
	Type G	National organizations with various forms of international activity or concern such as research, peace, development or relief. It may also include national bodies which have relations with international organizations and which are listed by them in conjunction with truly international bodies or which appear from their titles to be international themselves.
Special types	Type H	International non-profit organizations, whether governmental or non-governmental, which have been dissolved, are currently inactive, or are otherwise dormant
	Type M	Developed to include multinational enterprises, whether governmental or non-governmental (subsequently incorporated in Type F).
	Type N	Bodies known to hold meetings with extensive international participation. The type is also used for national bodies which have names that create the impression they should be in any of the preceding types.
	Type R	Religious, military and fraternal orders or congregations, together with similar bodies based on charismatic leadership or commitment to a set of religious practices
	Type S	Continuing conference series
	Type T	Multilateral treaties, conventions, pacts, protocols or covenants signed by 3 or more parties.
Index-only types	Type J	Used to indicate names of apparently international organizations whose creation has recently been reported but for which no further information has been obtained
	Type K	Used for names of units concerned with substantive matters within the selected complex international agencies
	Type U	Used for names of apparently international organizations whose existence has not been confirmed as well as for inactive bodies which would have appeared in Type E or F.

Over many editions of the *Yearbook*, these distinctions have been used to separate out those bodies on which greater emphasis should be placed. The statistics generated followed that pattern. Whether or not the legalistic distinction is appropriate is naturally a question -- as with the distinction of profit from non-profit (especially when profit can be explored in non-financial terms). When is a cartel a non-profit organization? Is the acquisition of merit a nonprofit objective? Scholars have been less than helpful in clarifying and reformulating such distinctions over the years. Scholars have naturally been free to "lump" categories together or to benefit from the UIA "splitting" of them into types.

With respect to any assumption regarding "seven rules", it could be that the Types A through G have been seen as establishing such

distinctions. The failure to conform to the "rule" defining any type could then result in its allocation to a "less international" type -- hence the challenge to distinguishing "genuinely international organizations".

An analogous distinction of types has been used in the response to information on world problems and global strategies, as profiled in the *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential*.

Types of organization vs "Seven rules" of inclusion: Given the importance seemingly attached by scholars to "seven rules" articulated in 1968-1969, in contrast to the set of Types articulated in 1978, clarification is appropriate. Firstly it should be noted that the label "seven rules" does not feature in the document. With respect to the seven items there, in each case their "exclusion" (as indicated), relates primarily to exclusion from Types A through D. Bodies which did not correspond to those criteria would typically have been considered for Types F through U. The seven headings in that document are:

Aims	Officers	Relations with other organizations
Members	Finance	Activities
Structure		

Presumptions of facticity: The detection and profiling of entities in the *Yearbook* and other UIA publications has always been an exercise in the art of the possible under circumstances in which the collection of that information could be variously challenged. The constraints were typically clarified in cautionary explanations introducing the profiles (as noted by the study). Various contributors call into question the value of UIA data without indicating how the information could be gathered otherwise. By comparison, reference could be made to the maze of cautionary footnotes in the various statistical studies produced by United Nations agencies on the basis of data supplied by member states.

It is too readily assumed that the UIA data purported to provide completely verified answers to the questions of scholars. **It would be more appropriate to assume that the data raises questions which should call for critical inquiry by researchers** (which might be assumed to be one purpose of the study). Through much of the development of the *Yearbook* effort was made to introduce previously unforeseen categories of relevance to comprehension of international association, most notably unusual entities whose relationship to the conventional categories merits commentary. Rather than challenging the credibility of data, ideally the evolution of **the Yearbook could be said to have been designed to challenge the credibility of any given research framework and the oversimplistic categories favoured**.

Some contributors would appear to have sought ways to use the efforts of the UIA to gather data to discredit that process as a consequence of the dissatisfaction of some scholars. No effort has apparently been made to indicate how data gathering could be improved and verified to a higher degree. This is particularly unrealistic and naive in the emerging context (*Zen of Facticity: Bull, Ox or Otherwise? Herding facts and their alternatives in a post-truth-era*, 2017). Especially striking with respect to criticism of *Yearbook* data by scholars claiming to establish more rigorous data sets (pp. 192-193), has been the complete lack of feedback from such scholars over decades regarding errors they had detected in the data.

Presumptions regarding criteria: Where do the contributors draw attention to the **criteria which ought to have been applied by the UIA** and to the methods which ought to have been applied in data gathering and verification? How can any such perspective be reconciled with the categories favoured or deprecated academically at different periods ?

How might such questions be compared with widely known recognition of the manner in which biologists have carefully reported on biodiversity along the [Stuart Highway](#) in Northern Australia -- generalizing their results as applicable to the desert environment far from that lonely road? Can international relations be considered similarly myopic in its focus on "big game" -- "carnivores" (IGOs) and "herbivores" (NGOs) -- to the exclusion of the multitude of smaller entities constituting the "biomass" of global civil society as profiled to a degree by the UIA? Is IR to be explored as "roadside research"?

For example, as cited in an early discussion of the variety of international bodies and their inclusion in the *Yearbook of International organizations* (*Types of International Organization: detailed overview*, 1978), Michael Wallace and [J. David Singer](#) were quite explicit about exclusion of NGOs from their analysis:

...our interests (and, we suspect, those of most of our colleagues) are more concerned with IGOs than with non-governmental organizations... as an independent variable, one can hardly urge that the amount of NGOs is likely to be important in accounting for many of the theoretically interesting phenomena, which occurred in the system of the past century or so. (*Inter-governmental organization in the global system, 1815-1964; a quantitative description*. *International Organization*, 24, 2, Spring 1970, p. 239-287).

Responsible as Singer was for the [Correlates of War](#) project (cited in the study), and depending on the meaning of NGOs, this conclusion could be seen as referring to all revolutionary and liberation movements, religious organizations, terrorist organizations, and secret societies, as exemplified by the [history of Freemasonry](#) (Joachim Berger, *European Freemasonries, 1850--1935: networks and transnational movements*, *European History Online*, 2012).

Is it any surprise that academics have had difficulty in engaging effectively with the challenge of religious conflict, civil unrest and terrorism? What of the nebulous groups facilitated by social media, held to have been so instrumental in the so-called [Arab Spring](#) uprisings, in the Occupy Movement -- and currently in the [Yellow Vests movement](#)? Such **conceptual gerrymandering** presumably renders any "correlates of war" irrelevant to the [Global War on Terrorism](#), and many other "virtual wars" (*Review of the Range of Virtual Wars: strategic comparison with the global war against terrorism*, 2005). Potentially even more relevant are the elusive networks

which are the preoccupation of conspiracy theorists, such as cartels, crime rings, and those which enable global financial crises (Diana Crane, *Invisible Colleges: diffusion of knowledge in scientific communities*, 1972).

Especially challenging to the academic bias with regard to international organization has been the increasingly explicit recognition of "evil" by world leaders, notably framing the Global War on Terrorism as the requisite response to an **Axis of Evil**. It is unclear how "evil" is related to any correlates of war from a scholarly perspective. The recognition is somewhat consistent with recognition of "**wicked problems**" by the policy sciences. The challenge featured in consideration of a role for the UIA *Encyclopedia* (*Encyclopedia of Evil Claims, Claimants, Counter-claims, and Sigils: proposed facility in support of current global strategic priorities*, 2016). This could be seen as complementary to the "angelic" role with which international organization may naively claimed to be associated (*Engaging with Hyperreality through Demonique and Angelique?* 2016).

Further insight with respect to the potential scholastic bias suggested by Hamlet's admonishment of Horatio's "epistemic dogmatism" (as cited above), is offered by **John Ryder**:

Ryder's approach to pragmatic naturalism is not an unspecified appeal to methodological plurality. On the contrary, he shows that different disciplinary approaches to any subject-matter produce "virtuous circularities". According to Ryder, these circularities have the merit of allowing for a sound critique of many of the habitual, academic prejudices. Many times these academic prejudices unnaturally force students to choose between apparently opposing teams. (*The Things on Heaven and Earth*, Fordham University Press, 2013).

Presumptions of historical significance?

Presumptions regarding "international associations": The comments and judgments on the UIA data gathering methodology by contributors would have been more pertinent if they had been more precisely related to an understanding of "international associations" and to "union", given that that is the purported focus of the book.

Missing from an historical perspective is a time-line over the decades from the founding of the UIA of the "recognition" of the "existence" of different categories of international entity (including those of "global civil society") by distinct authorities, whether (inter)governmental organizations or distinct social science disciplines. As one of the contributors notes, it was only in 1971 that a themed issue covering "non-state actors" featured in the leading international relations journal the iconic journal (Robert O. Keohane and Joseph Nye, Eds, *Transnational Relations and World Politics, International Organization*, 25, 1971, 3). That journal, for example, could not be considered renowned for its coverage of NGOs prior to that date -- nor subsequent to it.

Presumptions regarding "union": Similarly, with respect to "union", what has been understood (or could be) by that term? This is especially pertinent to any more general reference to "united" (as in United Nations), "unity", or "unifying" -- notably given the manner in which such terms figure so prominently in political discourse (with little sense offered as to what they may imply).

More relevant to this review and any commentary on the "identity" of a UIA, what are the processes of unification which could be envisaged (or have been)? Why indeed, from a historical perspective, have they been seen as unrealistic -- even naive?

Alternatively, can the many efforts to unify or coordinate collective initiatives be seen to fail significantly to some degree -- how and why? The contribution of Matthias Middell and Katja Naumann is especially significant in this respect (*Historians and International Organizations: the International Committee of Historical Sciences*, 2019). Is conventional reference to "union" and its variants then to be considered inherently unrealistic -- if not a dangerous avoidance (especially when deliberate) of the organizational and conceptual challenges involved, including those of the comprehension of what is implied?

Provocatively this can be explored in terms of consensus, widely upheld as vital to global governance (*The Consensus Delusion: mysterious attractor undermining global civilization as currently imagined*, 2011). The latter draws on the highly provocative study by **Richard Dawkins** (*The God Delusion*, 2006).

The analogy frames the provocative question as to whether "union" lends itself to "intelligent design". Union in the imagined sense may be far more elusive than most assume (*Engaging with Elusive Connectivity and Coherence: global comprehension as a mistaken quest for closure*, 2018). The many insightful quotations about how the universe is to be understood as an integrated whole -- with or without any reference to deity -- suggest this may be the case.

Reference in the study to the outmoded "internationalism" with which the UIA's founders are associated, needs to be seen historically as enabling the "transnational" and then "global" organization -- of some remarkably unarticulated kind. How to think about such evolution in the comprehension of organization when "global" is more than likely to be understood as inappropriate in the future -- whether or not it can be collectively comprehended in the present, other than as a convenient buzz word.

What comes after "global"? This will necessarily lend itself to a variety of conflicting assertions, as indicated by the profiling of some 600 in the *Encyclopedia* (*Integrative Knowledge Project: Explanatory Comments*)

Presumptions regarding civil society: Given the diffidence with which the social sciences, and especially international relations, have considered non-state actors in the past, it is strange to note the dramatic scholarly swing away from formally constituted non-state actors transcending national borders -- in favour of a "civil society" somehow rendered genuine and global by its grassroots foundations and purportedly recent emergence (James Walker and Andrew Thompson, *Critical Mass: the emergence of global civil society*, 2008). The lack of such grounding is now readily held to mark the irrelevance of international associations in any traditional sense -- and a mark of their failure.

This uncritical switch seemingly fails to reconcile the nature of the "grounding" associated with social media with the assumptions

relating to the nature of the "global civil society" which features so prominently in the title of the book -- but about which scholars have noted that there is no agreed definition. The problematic relationship between local and global is explored separately (*Local Reality of Overcrowding -- Global Unreality of Overpopulation: comprehensible reframing of engagement with global issues via metaphors of proximity*, 2019). The latter could be usefully adapted to conceptual models in the light of identity politics.

Many international academic associations fall victim to this switch in perspective, although it has always been ironic to note the assumed irrelevance of such bodies according to the scholarly preoccupations of their members. What scholar of international relations would attribute significance to the International Political Science Association or the International Studies Association, for example -- a question implied for historians by the contribution of Matthias Middell and Katja Naumann (*Historians and International Organizations: the International Committee of Historical Sciences*, 2019)?

What historical significance is to be attached to the demise of the *Global Civil Society Yearbook* (2001-2012) in relation to the continuing publication of the *Yearbook of International Organizations* by the UIA, or the late emergence of the *International Encyclopedia of Civil Society* (2010)? The UIA periodically supplied *Yearbook* data to the first under contract.

What "methodological failings", by comparison, might be understood to have resulted in the cessation of the one and the emergence of the *Encyclopedia*, as might be gleaned from concluding texts of the first and the claims variously made (Helmut Anheier, Mary Kaldor and Marlies Glasius, *The Global Civil Society Yearbook: Lessons and Insights 2001--2011*, 2012; Mary Kaldor, et al (Eds), *Global Civil Society 2012: Ten Years of Critical Reflection*, 2012). The editors of the study reviewed refer only briefly in passing to the former publication in a section on *The UIA and Global Civil Society*. The *Civil Society Index* produced by CIVICUS is referenced, but without discussion.

The *Global Civil Society Yearbook* was a product of the Conflict and Civil Society Research Unit within the Department of International Development of the famed [London School of Economics and Political Science](#) (LSE). The series is acclaimed as having allowed "academics, civil society practitioners, policymakers and journalists across the globe to quickly access a wealth of information on an influential source of power and influence in today's interconnected world". LSE is however far from renowned for any studies of international association, or the challenges of any global "union" -- whether of civil society or otherwise. As with other schools of economic studies, it was caught remarkably unawares by the global financial crisis of 2008. "Scholastic bias"?

With CIVICUS described as an international non-profit organization, claiming to be "a global alliance dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society around the world", and with members in more than 145 countries, why has no effort been made to compare that function to the founding vision of the UIA? How does such an alliance differ from a union?

Omissions of historical significance to the operation of a UIA?

Given the claims of the study, and the reference to multiple "histories" in the subtitle, of particular interest in any review is what is left unsaid, implicit or avoided.

External relations of the UIA with other bodies (other than via the *Yearbook* data gathering process):

- **Intergovernmental organizations:**

- **United Nations system:** The study considers these only to the extent that they relate to the case made with regard to constraints purportedly imposed on *Yearbook* criteria by the United Nations. In fact the Secretariat had a complex process of engagement with the UN Secretariat and the Specialized Agencies in order to be able to register correctly the NGOs in consultative status. The study oversimplifies that complexity, typical of the political dynamics of the UN and its concerns at various times with NGOs. The study could have benefitted from consideration of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations appointed by the UN Secretary-General in February 2003 which produced the so-called "Cardoso Report", as discussed separately (*Future of United Nations - Civil Society Relations: 257 questions in assessing the Report of the Panel of Eminent Persons in relation to the challenges of the 21st Century*, 2004). Only a passing reference is made to that report and consideration of that matter by the UIA (p. 218, 224).
- **UNESCO:** Interaction with this agency has been more complex, leading in some cases to provision to UNESCO of data to complement its own profiling of NGOs -- and in another case to an evaluation of them under contract. Negotiations with the Director General for a process of significant collaboration regarding the *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential* were agreed, although the UNESCO Secretariat failed to respect that agreement.
- **United Nations University:** On behalf of the UIA, this reviewer participated from 1975-1981 in the [Goals, Processes and Indicators of Development project](#) of the Human and Social Development Programme of the University -- resulting in a number of studies variously published by the UIA. The project was directed by a member of the UIA, [Johan Galtung](#). The study refers only to the process of creation of the [UNU](#), but not to the relation of the UIA to it.
- **United Nations Environment Programme:** The UIA engaged variously with activities of UNEP from its origins (*UN - NGO Relations : a New Departure?* 1973). This culminated in active participation at the Earth Summit (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), as discussed separately (*Configuring Globally and Contending Locally: shaping the global network of local bargains by decoding and mapping Earth Summit inter-sectoral issues*, 1992).
- **Council of Europe:** The study only mentions in passing the role of the UIA in relation to achieving legal status for NGOs through this body (p. 213), and the clarification of the legal possibilities in this regard (*Legal status of international NGOs: overview and options*, 1996).
- **European Commission:** It is surprising to note the failure of the study to mention the contract under the EU Information Society programme approved for funding from 1997 to 2000 (*Ecolynx: Information Context for Biodiversity Conservation*). This involved a major development of online databases with a multimedia emphasis, linking *Yearbook* profiles on organizations to profiles of problems and strategies from the *Encyclopedia* databases.

- **World Bank:** An analogous project was approved for funding in 1999 through the World Bank's InfoDev program (*Interactive Conceptual Environmental Planning Tool for Developing Countries*)
- **Commonwealth Science Council:** At the request of the Science Adviser to the Commonwealth Secretary General, and as a follow-up to the first edition of the Encyclopedia, a report was prepared on *Mapping Possibilities in Response to Information Needs of Science Policy-making for Development: outline proposal for a data collection project on "world problems"* (1978). A later proposal was made to UNESCO, in relation to the Decade on Cultural Development, for an *Encyclopedia of Conceptual Insights from the World's Cultures* (1988).
- **International NGOs:** Of particular historical relevance, has been the relationship to certain NGOs whose key officers tended to become associated with the UIA, notably as members of its Executive Council. Members of the UIA Secretariat variously participated in their conferences:
 - **Information science and documentation:** Namely the development of the theme formulated by the UIA founders:
 - FID: International Federation for Documentation: Namely the transformation of the early IIB, could usefully be recognized as fundamental to the vision of Otlet -- and therefore as the UIA's twin (given the common "parental" role of the founders). Relations with the UIA were maintained to a degree through many decades. The non-viability of that body merits consideration in relation to challenges to the viability of the UIA.
 - COCTA: Committee on Conceptual and Terminological Analysis for which a study was provided (*Toward a Concept Inventory: suggestions for a computerised procedure*, 1973)
 - ISKO: International Society for Knowledge Organization, a contact enabling development of the UIA subject matrix (*Functional Classification in an Integrative Matrix of Human Preoccupations*, 1982)
 - International ISBN Agency: As a consequence of its bibliographical activity, the UIA was invited to act as the agency of international IISBN book numbering.
 - ICANN: Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, to which a proposal was made (as noted below)
 - CIRET: International Center for Transdisciplinary Research, occasioning participation in the 1st World Congress on Transdisciplinarity (*Transdisciplinarity through Structured Dialogue*, 1994).
 - Center Leo Apostel for Interdisciplinary Studies, as organizer of the 1st Global Brain Workshop (*Simulating a Global Brain -- using networks of international organizations, world problems, strategies, and values*, 2001)
 - **Futures studies:** This theme became central to reflection on the global problematique and the UIA profiling in that regard, and participation in the conferences of the following bodies:
 - Mankind 2000: A key contractual partner initiating production of the *Yearbook of World Problems and Human Potential* from 1972-1976, and in its succeeding variants as *Encyclopedia*
 - WFSF: World Futures Studies Federation
 - WFS: World Future Society
 - **Complex systems and networks:**
 - SGSR: Society for General Systems Research
 - INSA: International Network for Social Network Analysis
 - Netmap Analytics
 - **Sociology and policy sciences:**
 - IPRA: International Peace Research Association
 - ARNOVA: Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action
 - WAAS: World Academy of Art and Science
 - Club of Rome: most significantly as a challenge to the UIA profiling strategy (*Significant bifurcations triggered by the history of the Club of Rome*, 2018)
 - **NGO coordination conferences:**
 - Conference of NGOs in Consultative Status with ECOSOC (CONGO)
 - Conference of NGOs in Consultative Status with UNESCO
 - Conferences of international organizations for the joint study of programme and activities in the field of agriculture in Europe
 - Federation of European and International Associations established in Belgium (FAIB)
 - **Conference industry:**
 - IAPCO: International Association of Professional Congress Organisers
 - IACC: International Association of Conference Centres
 - ICCA: International Congress and Convention Association
 - EFCT: European Federation of Conference Towns
 - ESAE: European Society of Association Executives
 - **Conference dialogue:** This theme resulted in active development of participant messaging systems (*History of Participant Interaction Messaging 1979 to 1995*) and its application in several major international conferences, as well as its exploration in meetings of the UIA Associate Members
 - **Development:**
 - Development Alternatives, with which UIA successfully partnered in a proposal to the World Bank
 - GAP: Global Action Plan, for whom the UIA provided secretariat facilities for a period
 - ICAI: Institute of Cultural Affairs International, especially significant with respect to:
 - implementation of the UIA internal computer system, using software which remained unusually viable from 1986 through to 2007 and beyond
 - provision of documentation to amend the *Encyclopedia* database

- contractual contribution to the UIA International Associations Statutes Series
 - enabling production of 3 reference volumes of the International Exposition of Rural Development (IERD)
- **Universities:** typically with respect to selective data contracts
- **Intelligence agencies?** The editors title their introduction to the study as *Reconstructing the Identities of an International Non-Governmental Intelligence Agency*. As variously noted by the study, the UIA continued to perform its data gathering throughout the Cold War. Belgium provided a neutral context in which a degree of postal contact with Eastern bloc countries was not prohibited in any way, in contrast to many other countries. As such the UIA operations could be seen as a convenience for those agencies in profiling Eastern bloc organizations -- perhaps exemplified by large bulk orders for the *Yearbook* from the US Embassy in Paris. The editors note that *our research presents no evidence for cooperation with secret services or security forces* (p. 3).
 - **Front organizations in the Cold War?** However from an academic perspective, given the degree of overt control on "NGOs" established in the East bloc, it is a matter of question how such bodies were to be considered independent of government control -- or merely front-organizations. Could the UIA be seen as having been a front for the CIA? There is indeed anecdotal evidence of efforts by the CIA to influence NGOs, and the UIA -- as well as similar efforts by the KGB, but to a far lesser degree.
 - **Post-Cold War?** The post-Cold War preoccupations of the intelligence agencies have necessarily shifted. It could be argued that research undertaken and funded by them focuses ever-increasingly on the relationships between the bodies profiled by the UIA, especially given the high degree of documentation of networks (which lends itself to new possibilities of network analysis in the detection of threat). What is said for an invitation to the UIA to brief the US National Intelligence Council in 2000? Is there evidence that any staff or statutory officers of the UIA are effectively "plants"? More problematic is whether academic research on UIA data has been specifically funded to elicit information of interest to such agencies.
- **For-profit corporations:** Academic research has seen recent periods in which the source of its funding has been understood as crucial to the credibility of the conclusions. This continues to be a factor, especially in the light of the political sympathies and geographical of the research unit -- notably as in the case of many "think tanks", including LSE ("*Tank-thoughts*" from "*Think-tanks*": *metaphors constraining development of global governance*, 2003). How then to evaluate the influence of a publisher who pre-funds research, or derives profits from its publication? In one way or another, this is the case for a high percentage of published data and academic research, including that of the study reviewed here, acknowledged as having been "supported" in this way by Bloomsbury Academic. The question has been framed more generally (Lettie Y. Conrad, *Editorial Independence and Journal Ownership in the Age of Open Science*, 12 February 2019; Aileen Fyfe, *Ownership and control of scientific journals: the view from 1963*, 19 September 2018; Fiona Macdonald, *These Five Companies Control More Than Half of Academic Publishing*, 12 June 2015; Eli M. Noam, *Who Owns the World's Media?: Media Concentration and Ownership Around the World*, 2016). Characteristic of the oddities which feature in the ecosystem of international bodies -- as a challenge to the preferred clarity of academia -- is that many multinational corporations established in Belgium are legally defined as non-profit-making. They receive funding for the administrative cost of their operations from elsewhere, but engage in no profit-making activity in Belgium. This process is facilitated by a coordinating centre for such bodies.

As noted in the study, the UIA shifted from a frustrated effort at self-publishing the *Yearbook*, through publication by the International Chamber of Commerce (1981) to K. G. Saur Verlag from 1982 (*Sharing a Documentary Pilgrimage: UIA -- Saur Relations 1982-2000*, 2001). The *Yearbook* continued to be published by a succession of owners of the imprint -- Reed International (from 1987), sold to the Gale Group by the then Reed-Elsevier (in 2000), and again to De Gruyter (in 2006), and Brill-Nijhoff (2011). Clearly the editors have been variously under some pressure to include or exclude categories of information, where they exceed the commercially viable dimensions of hardcopy. Other pressures are evident with respect to online dissemination of information under contractual relationship with such publishers. Such pressures are equally evident in other instances, of which the case of the *Global Civil Society Yearbook* and the *International Encyclopedia of Civil Society* merit comment. Of related concern is the extent to which any such research is made widely accessible or restricted by paywalls and copyright -- most controversially when it has been significantly funded by public resources, as is a feature of the current [Open Access](#) controversy

- **Other authorities:** As a self-acclaimed authority, variously recognized through international treaties and special observer status in intergovernmental organizations, a particular issue is associated with considering as an "international organization the Vatican, as representing the Catholic Church (in contrast with the conventional institutionalization of other religious bodies). The UIA editors were specifically resistant to the argument of the Vatican that it constituted some form of transcendental organization. On the other hand, at a particular stage, great effort was made to profile some 600 international Catholic institutes -- held in a special section of the *Yearbook* -- despite the bias implied in the criticism articulated by one contributor in the study reviewed.

Of a somewhat similar nature, giving rise to considerable controversy in the interaction with international bodies of which China and Taiwan, were members, was the treatment to be accorded to Taiwan by the editors under indirect pressure from China via intergovernmental agencies. The editors took the attitude that if an organization recognized as members a country (of whatever kind), the information was processed from the perspective of that organization and not from the perspective of any authority offended by that treatment. The issue is obvious in the case of Palestine/Israel. Scholars have accorded little attention to such

dilemmas and their resolution.

- **Mundaneum:** Whilst the study is assiduous in discussing the earliest years, it treads lightly in describing the post-war separation of the UIA from the Mundaneum. This was associated with what could be described as a fair degree of mutual hostility. For an extensive period the UIA was progressively more successful in ensuring its data processing viability. The failure of the UIA to continue to use the UDC in its documentation, following initial use in its bibliographical series in the 1960s, was naturally felt by the Mundaneum to have been a betrayal of the vision of Otlet.

Presumption of UIA significance: Given its title, lengthy history, connection with the United Nations system, and authoritative productions, the UIA has benefitted from an image variously amplified in the eyes of the beholder -- unduly in some cases. Whilst its promotional literature could be understood as transparent in this respect, to the point of disabusing some, any superficial regard could sustain whatever illusion the beholder sought to project onto the UIA -- possibly in support of fruitful negotiations with other parties.

Adapting the adage of Abraham Lincoln, of the UIA it might be said that that "it" could fool everyone some of the time and some people all of the time. In a complex context, this could be understood as a public relations process from which the UIA benefitted relatively innocently.

Some contributors to the study are critical of the *Yearbook* contents without distinguishing that criticism from how the UIA could (or should) have cultivated and promoted its image according to the principles and practices of public relations -- variously characterized of all international non-profit bodies..

Ideological influences: Belgian society is known for the long-standing academic interplay between Freemasonry (Université Libre de Bruxelles) and Catholicism (Université Catholique de Louvain), and the effects on its institutions. Missing however is a sense in which multiple influences and pressures interweave -- as might be held to be characteristic of any ecosystem. These naturally had implications for the UIA, as explored to a limited degree only in the study:

- **Freemasonry?** In its introductory chapters, the study variously notes in passing (or by allusion) a masonic influence through the founders (p. 17, 29, 39, 44, 47). To what extent is their vision to be considered one inspired by Freemasonry or consistent with it? Were the initial congresses of the UIA enabled by masonic networks? However the three Secretaries-General who succeeded were all former ambassadors, with the first closely associated with Freemasonry, to the point of being able to solicit a critical financial rescue operation for the UIA via that network. And the others?
- **Catholicism?** The collaboration with the Catholic milieu, notably through the Belgian Catholic politician Cyrille Van Overbergh is however discussed more extensively. In its re-establishment in the post-war period, the primary influence over a long period could be said to have been Catholicism -- both through the person of its Secretary-General (Georges-Patrick Speeckaert) and its Assistant Secretary-General (Geneviève Devillé) and through one significant enabler of funding and one-time President of the UIA (August Vanistendael, Ministre d'Etat de la Belgique) who encouraged a second (Paul Caron). One long-term *Yearbook* editor was of Catholic Orthodox persuasion (Romuald Covaescu). Initially funding for the *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential* could be said to have derived from a similar influence via Mankind 2000.
- **Secularism?** Neither of the above influences can be said to have influenced the documentary commitments over many decades other than through a commitment to neutrality and ensuring that all perspectives were adequately represented -- however "unfair" this might be held to be from any preferred perspective. This is partly reflected in a degree of association with world peace movements, noted in passing in the study. One highly influential *Yearbook* editor with that commitment was of the Quaker tradition (Eyvind Tew).
- **Nazism?** The study notes in passing the Nazi occupation of the UIA (but not of the Mundaneum, with which its Secretariat was integrated at the time?). No attention was however given by the study to the historically curious consequence of Nazism on production by the UIA of its *Yearbook* and other publications. As an influential reaction to all that Nazism has implied, it is exceptionally curious to note the role of Klaus Saur (through his company K. G. Saur Verlag) in publishing a wide range of UIA reference books over an extensive period (*Sharing a Documentary Pilgrimage: UIA-Saur Relations 1982-2000*, 2001). K. G. Saur Verlag became renowned for enabling publication initiatives which could now be considered supportive of the vision of the founders of the UIA and the IIB -- and much valued for the information and documentation world (and its representative bodies) for that reason.

Klaus Saur is however specifically cited as having undertaken marginal initiatives in that respect to compensate for his origins, and most notably the role of his father, Karl Saur. The latter was a committed Nazi, chief of the crucial technical department in [Albert Speer's](#) armaments ministry, and a trusted friend of Hitler, to the point of being named in his will. Of his son, Klaus Saur, it is noted with respect to his company K. G. Saur Verlag:

His current catalogue shows a broad selection of serious works, including titles on European emigrés, Jewish immigrants, a Hebrew text from Harvard University, and a selection of anti-Nazi books. *I have published dozens of these books and made a profit on only two or three*, he says. *But the decisions for these books are made completely independent of the decisions for other titles. Profit is not the motivation. These books are difficult and complicated, but it is one way of doing something because my family had a Nazi past. It is my personal tribute to compensate for what my father did.* (Gerald Posner, *Hitler's Children: Sons and Daughters of Third Reich Leaders*, 2017, chapter 4; an earlier edition dates from 1991).

Aside from the *Yearbook* and its by-products, it is in this sense that it could be argued that Saur's funding of the second and later editions of the commercially risky *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential* derived as **a reaction from that influence** -- personally justified as a tribute to [Robert Jungk](#) (*Tomorrow Is Already Here*, 1954; *Brighter than a Thousand Suns: a personal history of the atomic scientists*, 1958). Jungk was a founding member of Mankind 2000 and an instigator of the futures movement.

The delicate methodological issue is how any influence on data gathering or research is to be noted with due weight or called into question. Potentially relevant cases with respect to Nazism include that of [Wernher Von Braun](#) ([Operation Paperclip](#)). [Kurt Waldheim](#), [Pope Benedict XVI](#), and [Pope Pius XII](#) -- with the latter now in process of canonization, despite controversial association with Nazism ([John Cornwell](#), *Hitler's Pope*, 1999). More immediately relevant is the manner in which some of those formally labelled as terrorists by due legal process are subsequently "transmogrified" into a leadership role in their countries (notably including Nelson Mandela, Jomo Kenyatta, Menachem Begin)

Internal UIA dynamics: The study is fundamentally misleading in claiming a historical perspective whilst neglecting the dynamics within the UIA and its Secretariat over the years. The carefully crafted Epilogue to the study is misleading in omitting this dimension. The matter is treated separately below.

Presumption of UIA lack of self-reflexivity: Consistent with the previous point is the failure of contributors to explore any trace of consideration by the UIA itself of evolution of its role in a rapidly changing society -- after 1968. In a world shifting away from reliance on the articulation of insight in peer-reviewed printed journals, concerns within the UIA about its operation would be expected to be found in administrative reports to its statutory bodies.

As historians, the contributors seemed to have considered such indications to be irrelevant to their commentary on the development of the UIA and a *Yearbook* increasingly dependent on online operations. Essentially any considerations which had not been articulated in printed journals lending themselves to such citation have been avoided in the study -- exemplifying the superficiality of the methodology. Consistent with an increasingly outmoded academic perspective, information not available from such sources, or cited by them (as with the *Yearbook*) can be appropriately assumed not to exist.

This is all the more astonishing in a world in which the highest authorities now rely on Twitter for their articulations of international relations and foreign policy -- consistent with the acclaimed foresight of Paul Otlet. Indications of such reflection are presented in a subsequent section.

Beyond the "superficial": historical relevance of UIA internal dynamics?

It is remarkable the degree to which the study managed to avoid any discussion of the internal dynamics of the UIA, namely what enabled it to "work" and survive over a century, when many other international bodies have long disappeared. The focus of the contributions is primarily on how the UIA appeared to others, and primarily in terms of the data disseminated through its *Yearbook* and its failure to function as a coordinating body. The sales of the *Yearbook* are misleadingly presented as offering the key to understanding its internal dynamics.

The failure to do so is consistent with commentary on the critique of the United Nations Secretariat by Shirley Hazzard (*People in Glass Houses*, 1967; *Countenance of Truth: the United Nations and the Waldheim Case*, 1992). The point made is that fruitful criticism of internal operations is typically avoided or suppressed, even by historians.

Significant omissions: Missing from the account are dimensions of the following type:

- why the UIA has attracted:
 - Secretaries-General and Presidents from the world of diplomacy and academia, and why they undertook these roles on a voluntary basis (as did the Assistant Secretary General Geneviève Devillé from 1952-***)
 - the members it did, given a degree of difficulty in doing so, most notably those elected to statutory functions in its Executive Council and Bureau. A significant number derived from the leadership of NGOs and from scholars with whom the UIA had variously collaborated, or had had historical connections
 - the staff it did, employed for decades in many instances, although alienating some under circumstances which merit study
- the underlying motivation of members, even when elected to statutory roles:
 - given the minimal benefits they derived from the UIA (offering only a degree of benefit in terms of visibility)
 - understood primarily as benevolent and well-meaning (whether or not this is common to many non-profit organizations, vulnerable to "letterhead" and "figurehead" critiques)
 - associated with a degree of relative apathy, indifference, or minimal strategic awareness
 - with implications for the functioning of UIA statutory bodies called upon to approve its activities (whether or not this is typical of international non-profit bodies)
 - in enabling and ensuring their funding
 - in their capacity to envisage and promote integrative functions, as featured in their constitutions
- the relative success of the key leaders of the UIA in ensuring or sustaining the viability of its operations, despite a challenging context and the judicious "placement" of members in its statutory bodies. Especially noteworthy was the establishment of the [International Associations Centre](#) in Brussels on the initiative of Robert Fenaux, and in continuing support for the [Federation of European and International Associations Established in Belgium](#).
- the significant failure in attracting those NGOs statutorily defined as Associate Members:
 - as a token substitute for any obligation to "coordinate" international associations

- in contrast to the attraction achieved by several conferences of consultative NGOs associated with the principle agencies of United Nations, most notably the CONGO, on which the study focuses only on its origins and predecessors
- the ability of the UIA to survive, despite:
 - marginal salaries, if not exploitative over extensive periods
 - highly questionable social security provisions, notably with respect to pensions
 - an austerity modality, only too obvious in the furnishing of offices
 - constrained ability to attract appropriately qualified personnel
 - conflicting biases and values, (notably religious and political beliefs), potentially capable of undermining the profiling of controversial organizations
 - conflicting language issues, notably in a bilingual country (French, Flemish) in which publication production had necessarily to be in English
- the degree to which the UIA could be recognized as a "sick organization", as framed by the following (notably suggested by the terminal illnesses engendered in a percentage of staff):
 - Rachel Weston Rowell: *A Sick Organization is a Leadership Problem* (*Collaboration Explored*, May 2017)
 - Paul S Markle: *Do You Work For a Sick Organization?* (11 November 2017)
 - Anne Wilson Schaefer: *The Addictive Organization: why we overwork, cover up, pick up the pieces, please the boss and perpetuate sick organizations* (1988)
- why computer technology became so significant to UIA operations, as evidenced by:
 - its very early success in the transition from manual publishing processes to computer publishing (with minimal investment), before many others facing similar challenges (and most notably other international non-profit organizations)
 - reframing many potentially problematic aspects of inter-functional and inter-personal relationships such as to avoid a percentage of issues undermining the viability of other bodies
 - enabling all editorial staff, to work via an internal computer network, prior to the widespread implementation of such facilities elsewhere
 - the early Printing World Award of Her Majesty's Stationery Office (1986) to the *Yearbook* series for the most innovative application of computers in typesetting.
 - early experimentation and uptake of CD-ROM, visualization technology, and online data presentation -- exemplifying the art of the possible as technologies became available
 - the credibility of these achievements, both for its publishers and in enabling approval for funding by the World Bank and funding by the EU through its [INFO2000 program](#)

Funding: In considering the mystery of how it managed to work, greater insight could have been obtained from its finances, which were typically in a condition readily defined over decades as deplorable (as is the case with many international non-profit bodies), aggravated in the case of the UIA by the need to respect data production deadlines. A distinction could be made between:

- the absence of funding from members, especially given that the UIA had never sought funding from its members (notably because it would have been even less attractive to them)
- the manner in which significant funding was enabled by individual members in crisis situations, a process which has notably been forgotten in the UIA's own history -- to the point that those members could no longer be named
- the self-funding (relatively unique to international non-profit organizations) achieved by staff negotiation, often beyond formal roles:
 - with publishers, in the form of advances
 - by sale of data under contract, typically to universities
 - with conference locations, on the occasion of international events organized by UIA
 - by advertising, in the relatively few periods when this was considered acceptable in the *Yearbook* and more typically in its journal
 - with intergovernmental organizations, most notably in response to calls for proposals by the EU and the World Bank

Significant with respect to UIA finances was both the marginal salaries of staff and the manner in which the UIA reneged on friendly long-term loans from members of the UIA -- having failed to reflect them in the financial records. The pattern was consistent with a well-developed capacity for institutional amnesia, notably affecting the mismanagement of archives and other records, and a failure to alert members of statutory authorities appropriately. [Of some potential historical relevance was the massive transfer of UIA documentary archives on international organizations to the [Archives de l'Etat en Belgique](#) in 1985 (where they do not appear to have been catalogued)]

Human dynamics: As in many organizations, and extensively studied in relation to the potential failure of mergers of multinational corporations, of considerable significance to the operation of the UIA were the various cliques transcending functional divisions and the sympathies and antipathies between individuals engendering various forms of resentment and "ill-will":

- as is characteristic of a multicultural environment, variously constrained by linguistic barriers
- given the constraint on salaries in an austerity culture, and those responsible for them
- consequent on tensions between staff and statutory authorities regarding operational priorities.
- initiatives by staff undertaken without the authorization deemed appropriate (of which the [expressed criticism](#) of the UN [Global Compact](#) is a prime example, arousing the ire of the current UIA President)
- tensions between men and women, as is now widely highlighted by feminists
- tensions between information technology philosophies (contrasting strangely with the absence of ideological tensions)

Having always avoided staff meetings, relying on an early form of coordination via a computer network, the UIA Secretariat evolved to

become increasingly non-hierarchical. Of potential concern to any history of its survival is the dynamics between people given that the challenges of power, control and ambition remain (*UIA Survival: Separating Siamese Twins? a challenge of conflicting cultures*, 2005). How did people get appointed to any role, or evolve into any new role?

Conflicts of interest: Related factors contributing to tensions of significance arose from involvement of key staff members in other international initiatives with which it had been argued the UIA shared some degree of common interest. In practice this took the form of staff devoting some time to non-UIA projects using facilities which were then effectively shared with those initiatives (especially significant in the case of engendering the multi-group consortia required in the fulfillment of EU contracts). Such bodies notably included those noted above with respect to external relations with project in which members of the Secretariat participated, but especially FAIB, IAPCO, GAP, and Mankind 2000

Renewal and outreach? For-profit corporations place great emphasis on creative response to emerging challenges as being essential to their survival and development -- a theme on which there is a very extensive literature. This is far less obvious in the case of non-profit organizations, whether governmental or non-governmental -- international or otherwise. There is a sense in which the benevolent implications of their statutes implies that they already embody regenerative processes appropriately enough.

This suggests a way of exploring the internal dynamics of the UIA with respect to renewal. With respect to outreach to NGOs, relationships of relevance are indicated above as part of the pattern of external relations.

The UIA was faced in the millennium period with opportunities to respond to challenges articulated through new themes, most obviously reinforced by the UN following the [Earth Summit](#) (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) and the formulation of the [Millennium Development Goals](#) in relation to sustainability. In practical terms, these offered a means of responding to calls for project proposals associated with generous funding far beyond that to which the UIA was accustomed. With its Secretariat in the European Union, the UIA was well-profiled to respond to those of the European Commission which notably required formulation of proposals as a collaborative arrangement with bodies in several other EU countries. In the case of the World Bank, projects acquired greater credibility if they involved bodies in both "North" and "South".

The UIA Secretariat was able to benefit from the skills of [Nadia McLaren](#) (with a minimum of formal support), and her contacts with other bodies, in detecting opportunities and articulating collaborative proposals beyond the comfort zone of the UIA's normal operations -- and typically as lead agency in the partnership with those other bodies. The proposals it was possible to formulate benefitted greatly from both the ambiguous image of the UIA, its long-demonstrated production capacity, and the information skills which had enabled various forms of innovation -- beyond that with which the EU or World Bank were familiar.

The UIA was successful in the case of the [Ecolynx Project](#) enabling an unusual level funding from the European Commission over the period 1997-2000 (*Final Report of Definition Phase: Information Context for Biodiversity Conservation*, 1997). As required, this was applied to the considerable enhancement of some of its information facilities, notably with respect to visualization technology. The INTERCEPT Project (*Interactive Contextual Environmental Planning Tool for Developing Countries*, 1997-1999) was also successfully evaluated through the stringent processes of the World Bank, although funds did not become available due to a late change of policy priorities. The case typically made by the UIA in soliciting such proposals is visually summarized in a presentation: [East-West Collaboration in the Development of Interactive Media Products](#) (1999).

This approach resulted (from 1997) in the free online dissemination of the *Encyclopedia* databases, whilst other proposals were less successful.

- 1997: [Ecolynx: Information Context for Biodiversity Conservation](#) (major development of online databases with a multimedia emphasis through the EU Information Society programme, approved for funding through to 2000)
- 1999: [Interactive Conceptual Environmental Planning Tool for Developing Countries](#) (approved for funding through the World Bank's InfoDev program)
- 1999: [Interactive Health Ecology Access Links](#) (IHEAL), initiated by UNED-UK, with International Campaign for Responsible Technology (I-CRT), UIA, Right to Know Network, and Environmental Partnership of Central and Eastern Europe (EPCE).
- 2000: [Cultivating Knowledge Ecosystems: adapting visual arts and music to sustain new patterns of knowledge work in community](#)
- 2003: [Local Action Dynamics: Knowledge patterns for local, participatory implementation of the Lisbon Strategy](#)
- 2004: [Global Knowledge Grid: a new infrastructure for understanding globalization](#), following an invitation by Princeton University, and in collaboration with Sydney University of Technology, and proposed to the US National Science Foundation
- 2004: [CiviLynx: Gateway to Civil Society Organization Information](#)
- 2006: Enabling an international multimedia library project, "[Dropping Knowledge](#)", in collaboration with the [German Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence](#) (DFKI), effectively to complete and supersede the early ambitions at the origin of UIA within the Mundaneum ([Exploring Intelligible Associations: ontological issues, integrative metaphors and knowledge organization](#), 2005; [Enabling a Living Library: reconciling "free voices" and "intellectual propriety"](#), 2006)

This complex of initiatives is seemingly considered to be as irrelevant to the historical focus of the study in the post-war period as it has been in practice to UIA statutory authorities.

Other than the obvious financial advantages to the UIA, these initiatives (and the people directly involved with them) met with a lack of enthusiasm from the UIA's statutory bodies and other members of the Secretariat. In part this was due to the change of perspective they required (notably with respect to the rapid development of information technology), in part to resentment at initiatives which had effectively been framed and authorized by external authorities -- exacerbating concerns regarding emergence of an internal power nexus.

Of particular significance in this regard was the unforeseen invitation to participate in a bid submitted to ICANN -- the [Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers](#) -- to benefit from UIA expertise and authority with regard to registering international

organizations, extending that role to the registration of Internet domains (*.org Reassignment: Application from Union of International Associations*, 19 June 2002). The proposal effectively adapted the role of the *Yearbook* as a standard of reference to that of the information-based society in which international organizations would in future function.

In part, due to reluctance by the UIA's statutory bodies to be nominally associated with such an initiative via its own web site, a separate web domain was created (diversitas.org), by which the proposal was known ([Diversitas.org Project](http://Diversitas.org)). Whilst beyond any role previously imagined within the UIA, and involving a much higher degree of technological expertise, this was curiously consistent with the vision of Paul Otlet, as recognized by historians in relation to the Internet. The UIA Secretariat participated in the formal presentation of that proposal -- by Nadia McLaren, Tomas Fülöpp and this reviewer -- much assisted by the negotiating expertise of one UIA member Paul Caron. The bid was not successful, partly due to the dynamics of ICANN policies which favoured allocation of that function to the Internet Society as being a more natural fit.

Alienation of key individuals: Such efforts to reframe the innovative capacity of the UIA, became symptomatic of reasons for UIA statutory authorities to reduce support for any such outreach -- and for those formulating them. This contributed to the withdrawal of Nadia McLaren whose skills were thereby lost to the UIA, as was ultimately the case with Tomas FÜIÖpp. The dynamics are in many ways typical of unresolved strategic conflicts with conventional organizations -- about which the study has nothing to say.

Of continuing historical relevance is the comparison which might be made between: to the alienation and disappointment of those heavily involved as instigators of international initiatives. Possibilities of relevance in the case of the UIA include:

- the case of [Aake Ording](#) in the early post-war period of the UIA (as indicated by the study)
- the case of [Eyvind Tew](#) (noted in the study) of major post-war significance to the viability of the UIA, as a dedicated editor of a variety of publications, most notably the *Yearbook* -- who died under questionable circumstances, having rendered inaccessible a massive archive of digitised personal notes covering his period at the UIA
- the case of this reviewer -- with implications for the bias of this review (as noted above). A major factor in this case being the manner in which the UIA reneged on loans received via [Mankind 2000](#) (from a UIA member) for the production of the *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential* (and its predecessor) -- without any protest from its statutory authorities and membership. The matter was rendered more complex in that the copyright of that *Encyclopedia* had been contractually shared between UIA and Mankind 2000.
- the case of [Tomas Fülöpp](#) in abandoning his key role at the UIA in developing its information system -- subsequently to collaborate outside the formal framework of the UIA with the further development of a [EWHP Editing Platform: crowdsourced backend of the Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential](#). This has an emphasis on the analysis and visualization of complex networks previously enabled under a EU contract with the UIA, but then set aside (*Loop Mining in the Encyclopedia of World Problems*, 2015). This initiative is partially linked to the UIA databases and is partly supported by funding from a member of the UIA.

For comparative purposes, other examples might include:

- the apparent dissociation of [Helmut Anheier](#) from the *Global Civil Society Yearbook* (and its demise) and his new focus on the *International Encyclopedia of Civil Society*.
- the decline in the *Wikipedia* community as a quite distinct approach to a "union" of "international associations" which could be construed as corresponding to the vision of Paul Otlet (Tom Simonite, *The Decline of Wikipedia*, *MIT Technology Review*, 22 October 2013)

For this reviewer, indicative of his own alienation as a primary supporter of such outreach within the Secretariat, and of relevance to this study, a checklist was produced at that time (*How Operation of the UIA has been Systematically Undermined*, 2006). This alienation resulted in the incorporation of documents written by the reviewer in various capacities for various purposes (conferences, projects, proposals, UIA journal, etc) into a separate web site, the [Union of Intelligible Associations](#). As writer of the reports on the UIA information processing program over decades, these were also transformed into a separate database as an archival record (*Information / Research Activities for Civil Society -- Index: Reports on initiatives within the Union of International Associations*, 1959-2006). This shift in focus of the reviewer was extensively described (*Emergence of a Union of Imaginable Associations engendered by a Union of Intelligible Associations from a Union of International Associations*, 2007; *Reclaiming the Heritage of Misappropriated Collective Endeavour the case of the Union of Intelligible Associations*, 2007).

The subsequent shift in innovation priorities of the UIA could be understood as having been creatively reframed within the Secretariat by a greater focus on self-management and greater interaction with one of its traditional markets, namely the conference industry. The challenging opportunities presented by intergovernmental funding and cross-sectoral programmes were accepted only to the degree that they were consistent with its conventional profiling program, as in its contractual relations with UNESCO with respect to consultative status bodies.

Questioning in vain for "the" UIA?

As variously noted with respect to the "identity" of the UIA, the editors frame the study as *Reconstructing the Identities of an International Non-Governmental Intelligence Agency*. The variety of such identities detected or reconstructed does not however clearly emerge from the study -- except through the subtle implications of the contributors.

The study makes no reference to reflection within the UIA on the significance of its own name *Varieties of Union of International Associations* (2006), a document otherwise accessible as (*About UIA's name*, 2006).

References is made by one contributor to an earlier study of the *Information Culture of the Union of International Associations* (2005),

but not to the associated studies at that time, nor to their implications:

- *Union of Intelligible Associations: remembering the dynamic identity of a dodecameral mind* (2005)
- *ULA Survival: Separating Siamese Twins? a challenge of conflicting cultures* (2005)
- *'Goodwill' and its Presumption: key to understanding the current challenges and opportunities of ULA* (2004)

Together these gave rise to the following articulation in 2006, anticipating a subsequent development (*Dynamic Reframing of "Union"; implications for the coherence of knowledge, social organization and personal identity*, 2007).

Facets and varieties of Union of International Associations (reproduced from <i>Varieties of Union of International Associations</i> , 2006)									
UIA	Activity	Periodicity	Focus	Funding	Function	Origin	'Associations' meaning	'International' meaning	'Union' meaning
A-1	Representat. Legal status Services Symposia Statutory exist.	Ad hoc	UN/IGOs INGOs Full Members	Investment	Representation IGO Relations Services	1910	Legal bodies Consult. relat.	Treaties Conventions Representation	Ratification
A-2	Revue TA	Regular	INGOs Libraries	Investment	Presentation	<i>Vie Inter.</i> (1910)	NGOs	Cross-border membership/ activity	INGO readership opinion
B-1	Yearbook / CD Whos Who Bibliography Ann. Français Logos Statistics	Regular Semi-regular	Libraries Academics	Sales Contracts Services	Information NGO promo. Researchers	<i>Ann. Vie Intern.</i> (1910)	Organizations NGOs/IGOs Relations	Cross-border membership/ activity	Collation of information
B-2	Calendar Statistics Data services	Regular	Conf. industry Ass. Members	Sales Membership Services	Information NGO promo.	1952 (1910)	Meeting participation	Cross-border travel	Collation of information
C-1	Encyclopedia Info2000 IHEAL InfoDev Research Meetings	Exceptional (strategic opportunities)	IGO-calls Saur Strategic partners	Contracts Investment Partnership	Information NGO promo. Problematique Resolutive Knowledge mgt.	UDC (1910) <i>Code des Voeux</i> (1921) <i>Monde</i> (1936)	Logical Functional Systemic Feedback Mnemonic	Cross-sectoral knowledge Inter-disciplin.	Conceptual order Integrative knowledge Coherence
C-2	Intranet Websites * Static * Dynamic	Continuous	Internal support External web users	Investment	Information NGO promo. Problematique Resolutive Participation Knowledge mgt. Marketing	LAN (1985) Web (1996)	Virtual assns. Hyperlinks Tele-collaboration	Cross-site	Virtual union Navigability Overview Memorability Facility

Of some relevance, such reflections could be seen as a consequence of an earlier invitation to present the UIA data to the first [Global Brain Workshop: From Intelligent Networks to the Global Brain](#) at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (*Simulating a Global Brain: using networks of international organizations, world problems, strategies, and values*, 2001). This could be understood as consistent with both the editors reference to the UIA as an *International Non-Governmental Intelligence Agency* and to reflection at that time on the UIA as a "virtual organization" (*Union of International Associations -- Virtual Organization: Paul Otlet's 100-year hypertext conundrum?* 2001).

Restrictive definition of "the" UIA: The contributors focus on "the" Union of International Associations, as indicated in the subtitle of the study. This use of the definite article is symptomatic of the manner in which "a" UIA is vulnerable to the conceptual fallacy of reification or **misplaced concreteness** (H. Edward Thompson, *The Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness: its importance for critical and creative inquiry*, *Interchange*, 28, 1997).

The assumption is variously made by the contributors that "a" UIA is defined by its statutes or its products over the years -- a pattern unfortunately reinforced by the Epilogue. This is consistent with academic and institutional preoccupation with reporting on the "state" of the world and researching the condition of "nations states". There is virtually no critical recognition of the "dynamics" of the world of global civil society, as argued separately (*Dynamic Transformation of Static Reporting of Global Processes: suggestions for process-oriented titles of global issue reports*, 2013).

The UIA, as conventionally understood, could be said to have substituted the process of definition, characteristic of entity profiling, as a surrogate for its articulated purpose of coordination -- however that might have come to be understood. The challenge to such comprehension can be compared with:

- the quest for unifying models in physics -- exemplified by a so-called [Theory of Everything](#). In the case of global governance coordination, formulations of a "Theory of Everything" can be said to be dangerously oversimplified (as with [full-spectrum dominance](#)), and notably by the framing of contributors to the study. There is a degree of irony to reference to "global" (with all the coherence this implies) at a time when physics is obliged to think otherwise with regard to the form descriptive of the [shape of the universe](#), notably in relation to the [ultimate fate of the universe](#). What form might a "*Universe of International Associations*" take?
- the quest for insightful models of interdisciplinarity or transdisciplinarity, are rarely of great concern to either the natural or the social sciences, despite the extent to which it is a feature of the challenge of classification, notably as promoted by the UDC of Paul Otlet. Where is the interdisciplinary relations theory to complement the international relations theory on which the contributors have focused? What form might a "Union of Interdisciplinary Associations" take -- or a "*Union of Integrative Associations*"?
- the quest for unifying models of belief and values, exemplified by the articulation of a [Global Ethic](#), promoted at the Parliament of the World's Religions (*Towards a Global Ethic: An Initial Declaration*, 1993). More challenging is clearly how this relates to the variety of religions and their highly conflictual understandings of the unitary function of deity. What form might a "*Union of*

Interfaith Associations" take?

The bias in favour of "state" is consistent with the academic focus on statistical studies of data sets regarding singular entities, rather than the networks of such entities -- documented so assiduously by the UIA. Curiously it is also consistent with the assumption that the human values, to which so many refer, are best understood as definitive nouns rather than as verbs, or otherwise (*Freedom, Democracy, Justice: Isolated Nouns or Interwoven Verbs? Illusory quest for qualities and principles dynamically disguised*, 2011).

As suggested above, in a world of instantaneous communication across the conventional boundaries implied by "international", what are the unforeseen boundaries which are the more fundamental constraint on any global union, however that is to be understood? **In contrast with "international", the challenge of "interfaith", "interdisciplinary" and "intercultural" frame the challenges of communication and coherent organization otherwise.**

Identifying "union": requisite use of an indefinite article or verb?

Academic research is not renowned for "imagination", a quality typically only recognized and valued after the death of those exhibiting this capacity -- as in the case of Paul Otlet and Henri Lafontaine (non-academic "amateurs"). Despite the imagination of the latter, extolled in the study, the contributors make no effort to be imaginative in enabling the future of that vision as it might relate to the UIA. The point has been succinctly made by physicist [Max Planck](#):

A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it.

Identity of "a" UIA: As noted above, the editors frame their introduction, entitled *Reconstructing the Identities of an International Non-Governmental Intelligence Agency*, with an unusual degree of stress on "identity". How might the identity of "a" UIA be understood in contrast with that of "the" UIA, as variously implied by the subtitle of the study with respect to the "histories of the Union of International Associations"? And, rather than such histories, what might be the "futures of a Union of International Associations" -- or of its interdisciplinary and interfaith analogues?

Unfortunately, as with academic consideration of the variety of (inadequate) attempts at any coordinative "union", little has emerged from academia regarding how that future might be understood and imagined. The discipline of [futures studies](#) is much stronger in this respect but has continued to indulge in misplaced concreteness, focusing on "the" definite article rather than deriving inspiration from other disciplines which offer more imaginative possibilities. This could be said to reinforce the crisis of global governance at this time -- and the current irrelevance of academia in that regard.

Why do the various initiatives towards some form of global coordination (each defined by a definite article) find each other to be so irrelevant, or to indulge so systematically in protective "turf wars" -- exemplified by the relations between the various schools of thought which may recognize their existence? Examples, might include:

- World government initiatives (as [listed by Wikipedia](#))
- World parliament initiatives ([World Parliament](#), [World Constitution and Parliament Association](#), [United Nations Parliamentary Assembly](#))
- Federations of international NGOs (noted above as NGOs of Type A in the *UIA Yearbook*, [International NGO Groupings](#), 1971)
- [Parliament of the World's Religions](#) (and other inter-faith initiatives)
- Peoples assemblies, Civil society assemblies, Citizens assemblies (currently a focus of populist movements)
- Various peace and environmental initiatives, each claiming unique global relevance

How might the insights of [process logic](#), [social constructivism](#), or [enactivism](#) be applied to this matter? Why are these typically considered irrelevant by those reflecting on international relations? If indeed "a" "union" of "international associations" is to be viable, what could be considered to be missing in the preoccupation with extant coordinative initiatives defined by "the"? How indeed is any elusive "union" to be comprehended, as questioned separately (*Comprehension of Unity as a Paradoxical Dynamic: metaphors reframing problematic engagement with otherness*, 2019; *Engaging with Elusive Connectivity and Coherence: global comprehension as a mistaken quest for closure*, 2018)?

Should any understanding of "identity", as promoted by the editors of the study, be explored as a noun or as some form of evolving dynamic -- even a cognitive puzzle for the future to solve, as speculatively explored (*Union of International Associations -- Virtual Organization: Paul Otlet's 100-year Hypertext Conundrum?* 2001)? As a form of riddle, how might it "work" (*Global Governance as a Riddle: but is a solution the answer to the question?* 2018).

Imagining "union" and "united" otherwise? Ironically, without suggesting they be compared, the challenge of imagining "union" in the case of any "UIA" is only too evident in the case of "united" -- as in the case of "United Nations". It is similarly evident in any use of "global" and "world" where they are used unthinkingly to imply a comprehensive and all-inclusive integration. This argument applies to "global civil society" as used in the title of the study. It is also implicit in the understanding of "organization" which use of "union" subsumes.

A fruitful approach to this matter have been the much-cited studies of [Gareth Morgan](#) (*Images of Organization*, 1986; *Imaginization: new mindsets for seeing, organizing and managing*, 1993). As *Root metaphors and social organization*, this perspective featured in a discussion of the Metaphor Project of the *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential*. It also featured in UIA contributions to future studies (*Developing a Metaphorical Language for the Future*, 1994). More recently, proposals have been made for extension of that framework (Anders Örtengren, Linda L Putnam, Kiran Trehan, *Beyond Morgan's eight metaphors: adding to and developing*

organization theory, *Human Relations*, 69, 2016, 4).

As noted there, Morgan has himself elaborated on the original eight metaphors:

organizations as machines	organizations as organisms
organizations as brains	organizations as cultures
organizations as political systems	organizations as psychic prisons
organization as flux and transformation	organizations as instruments of domination

In that special issue of *Human Relations*, contributors offer new metaphors and provide ways of extending existing ones. They also make suggestions for reinterpreting Morgan's eight metaphors. The issue includes a contribution by Gareth Morgan (*Commentary: Beyond Morgan's eight metaphors*, 2016). Practical applications are considered by Harold Itkin and Miklos Nagy, *Theoretical and Proactical use of Metaphors in Organizational Development and Beyond*, *Pannon Management Review*, 3, 2014, 4).

This approach helps to frame the fundamental question for any coordinative comprehension of "global" as potentially implied by "union" and "united". Did the study reviewed here lose a major opportunity in failing to consider that perspective -- and the extent to which it might have been evident in Otle's vision in the case of a "UIA"? The argument, notably with respect to the UIA, has been developed elsewhere (*Dynamic Reframing of "Union": implications for the coherence of knowledge, social organization and personal identity*, 2007).

Does a fruitfully realistic sense of "union" call for some form of [process thinking](#) -- as a "work in progress"?

Relevance of insights into quantum reality: It is in this sense that the above-mentioned work of [Alexander Wendt](#) (*Quantum Mind and Social Science: unifying physical and social ontology*, 2015) can be presented as a challenge to the conventional historical methodology variously deployed by the contributors to the study. Wendt, as an esteemed scholar of international relations, specifically challenges the sense in which legally constituted organizations are appropriately to be recognized as existing, rather than as a legal fiction to which people variously subscribe. Such an argument is currently of particular relevance, given the surreal nature of global governance (*Surreal nature of current global governance as experienced*, 2016). Wendt notably questions the reality and very "existence" of nation states, in the light of any survey by hypothetical extraterrestrials with a universal perspective:

In contrast, social structures are mind-dependent, and so no as yet un-invented technology will enable ETs to see them. Indeed, even if ETs could scan our brains they would not see them, since social structures are not "in" our brains either, but in our minds. This is not to say that, through careful study of our behavior and perhaps extrapolation from their own experience, ETs could not infer the presence of states. But that would mean coming to see them as we do, by learning to read our minds. Short of that, the ETs would have to report back home that while Earth was teeming with life, perhaps even intelligent life, nowhere were there any states. (pp. 24-25)

There is a degree of irony to the fact that it has been over a century since [Albert Einstein](#) adopted Minkowski's formalism in his 1915 [general theory of relativity](#). If such references to physics can be usefully understood as a sophisticated means of thinking about the reality of experience, rather than deprecated as a surreptitious exercise in reductionism, then what implications does such thinking have for the social sciences, and especially history? Other examples can be cited, notably the [Heisenberg Principle](#) regarding the uncertainty relating to determinism between perceptions of particle and wave ([Garrison Sposito](#), *Does a generalized Heisenberg principle operate in the social sciences?* *Inquiry*, 1969).

Comprehending "a" union otherwise -- including "a" United Nations: Despite the insights of fundamental physics, so dependent on new modes of thinking, could the continuing focus of the social sciences on "states" rather than "dynamics" be understood as a desperate effort to perpetuate the kind of thinking associated with [Newtonian mechanics](#) -- without appreciating the limited contexts in which this is appropriate? Does the challenge of comprehending "a" Union of International Associations call for post-Newtonian insight? How indeed would "a" United Nations be understood from that perspective?

How is "union" to be explored in such terms -- or "international", or "association"? One early response to this was in terms of "potential association" (*Wanted: New Types of Social Entity: the role of the "potential association"*, 1971) in the light of the argument of [Alvin Toffler](#) (*Future Shock*, 1970) for "transient organizations" (p. 133) and "situational groups" (pp. 340-3). The deprecated collaboration of "the" UIA with Mankind 2000 to produce an *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential* could be seen as one experiment in exploring "potential".

Curiously some recognition of potential organization is evident in the literature on the possible "variable geometry" of the European Union. This notion can be applied to the United Nations (*Alternation between Variable Geometries: a brokership style for the United Nations as a guarantee of its requisite variety*, 1985).

With the rise of social media, and the transient groupings thereby enabled, the indeterminism between "wave" and "particle" is usefully exemplified. The social sciences could be said to be relatively schizophrenic in their "particular" approach to international organizations and their membership -- in a period in which it is the "wave-like" nature of movements of opinion on social media which have proven to be so influential.

How might "a" "Union of International Associations" exist in a context of such inherent ambiguity? (*Encountering Otherness as a Waveform -- in the light of a wave theory of being*, 2013)? More challenging from a quantum perspective is the role of conscious choice in determining momentarily how "the" UIA is determined (*Being a Waveform of Potential as an Experiential Choice: emergent dynamic qualities of identity and integrity*, 2013). Any union then merits comprehension as being many things to many people -- as the subtitle of

the study could otherwise imply.

Complementarity: As in the consideration of physical reality, far greater consideration could have been given to the fundamental [complementarity](#) between formal and informal organization. A relatively late contribution with respect to the challenge of coordination by "a" UIA is that of [Alan Page Fiske](#) (*Complementarity Theory: why human social capacities evolved to require cultural complements*, *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 4, 2000, 1, pp. 76-94):

Complementarity theory posits that human social coordination is the product of structured psychological proclivities linked to corresponding cultural paradigms.

Rather than one metaphorical framework of Gareth Morgan or another, is the essence of the challenge the complementarity between a set of metaphors, enabling multi-faceted comprehension of "a" globally integrative process? The challenge may then be how to design a complementary set of metaphors, as discussed in relation to the Metaphor Project of the Encyclopedia and elsewhere (*Designing metaphors and sets of metaphors*; *Selection of complementary metaphors*, 2018; *The Identity of the United Nations: experimental articulation through a dynamic system of metaphors*, 1991).

Clearly many coordinative initiatives can be seen as reactions to the definitive modality purportedly pioneered by "the" UIA modality -- as perceived. As noted above, one reaction to that preoccupation has been the articulation of a [Union of Intelligible Associations](#) and a [Union of Imaginative Associations](#) -- seen as subtly implied by, and effectively co-existing, with the UIA as conventionally understood (*Emergence of a Union of Imaginable Associations engendered by a Union of Intelligible Associations from a Union of International Associations*, 2007). This notably contrasts the [organizing principles: international, intelligible, imaginative](#).

Challenging the conventional: In the discussion within the latter of the *Nature of an emergent Union of Imaginable Associations?*, conventional understandings of the terms defining a "union of international associations" are called into question as indicated by the following:

- **Associations:** In "getting it together" various "associations" might be fruitfully considered as potentially relevant to the requisite emergent "union", including: people, aesthetic, creative insight, intuition, appropriateness, correspondence / complementarities, symbol / myth, humour, action
- **Imaginative:** Further to recognition of "international" as a legal fiction, and given such "associations", the "imaginative" processes (or "inspirational" processes) through which "union" could acquire credibility, might then include some of those characteristics implied by models and metaphors such as the following: verbal interaction, interpersonal relationships, kinetic thrills, creativity, visual perception, narrative drama, multimedia experience:
- **Union:** This could be understood otherwise through: configuration, tensegrity, sacralization, complexity, cognitive fusion, and suggested by the prefixes "trans-" and "meta-" (rather than "inter-"). Its recognition is dependent upon other attributes, including: dynamics, intimacy, existential challenge, synchronicity / serendipity, and the confluence of externalities

Especially important to such explorations is the challenge of how any "union" is to be comprehended in order to render it credible and (re)memorable (*Union of Intelligible Associations: remembering dynamic identity through a dodecameral mind*, 2005). As the struggles of physics with fundamental reality have indicated, unitary models of adequate complexity are a challenge to comprehension which the social sciences neglect in the reliance on oversimplistic models.

As stated with respect to quantum reality, and sometimes sometimes attributed to [Richard Feynman](#): *If you think you understand quantum mechanics, you don't understand quantum mechanics*. Is the elusive "union" appropriate to global governance to be approached from that perspective? (*Potential of Feynman Diagrams for Challenging Psychosocial Relationships? Comprehending the neglect of an unexplored possibility*, 2013). This curiously echoes the so-called [Belgian Compromise](#) in political decision-making, as profiled in the *Principia Cybernetica*.

Premature closure? More generally it could be argued that the degree to which formal organizations (including the United Nations) are now fading into relative insignificance is matched by the degree to which informal organization (exemplified by the social media) has risen into prominence. It is in that sense that the title and subtitle of the study imply the very ambiguity with which the social sciences are confronted (in the absence of a "Heisenberg principle"). How indeed to reconcile a preoccupation with "the" (exemplified by the UIA and the bodies it profiles) with consideration of "a" (exemplified by the nebulously global nature of civil society)? How is the latter in particular to be comprehended as integrated in any manner meaningful to the processes of governance?

Especially with the emergence of the tweeting metaphor, trending, and the sense of [swarm intelligence](#), the dynamics of [flocking behaviour](#) offer one suggestive approach (*Flocking behaviour and the dynamics of gated conceptual communities*, 2004). Especially intriguing from such a perspective is the sense in which organizations, whether formal or informal, merit consideration as so-called "[filter bubbles](#)" ([Eli Pariser](#), *The Filter Bubble: what the Internet is hiding from you*, 2011). What indeed has the Internet hidden from the contributors to this study? The metaphor merits comparison with that of "glass houses", as mentioned above, as with other senses of bubble (*Pricking the Bubble of Global Complacent Complicity*, 2017).

Curiously, from a historical perspective, of relevance is the emergence of a restrictive approach to [corporate personhood](#) -- potentially to be extended to the international organizations profiled by the UIA. This follows from the challenge of [Wendt](#) to the existence of organizations as legal fictions, as well the emerging possibility of the personhood to be attributed to humanoid robots in the light of their envisaged role. How might organizational personhood then come to be understood within the "[Internet of Things](#)"?

It is remarkable to note that personhood and identity may be variously understood in different cultures, as described from an anthropological perspective by [Sarah Jackson](#), who notes:

For the Maya of the Classic period, who lived in southern Mexico and Central America between 250 and 900 CE, the category of 'persons' was not coincident with human beings, as it is for us. That is, human beings were persons - but other, nonhuman entities could be persons, too... While the social category of 'persons' is found in multiple cultural contexts, who or what is recognised as a person can differ.... Nonhuman persons were not tethered to specific humans, and they did not derive their personhood from a connection with a human... It's a profoundly democratising way of understanding the world. Humans are not more important persons - we are just one of many kinds of persons who inhabit this world...

We must also recognise that personhood is a *dynamic state*. An entity isn't always or inherently a person. This is kind of wild -- not only do we have to keep our eye out for the various persons who might surround us on a daily basis, but we have to be aware that things might be entering or exiting this state. (*A rock, a human, a tree: all were persons to the Classic Maya*, Aeon, April 2019)

Given such possibilities, and the surreal nature of the current context, to what extent is the historical preoccupation of the contributions reviewed to be considered appropriate? Is it entirely appropriate to look at the past through the eyes of the past? How might future historians view the challenge to historians of "the" UIA at this time -- as a lost opportunity? The difficulty of course is that there are considerable constraints on historical science as a discipline. Imagination and speculation are naturally excluded as inappropriate -- especially in terms of the conventions of the peer review system. Is it only for future historians to re-evaluate the relevance of any current perspective on the past?

This constraint severely inhibits the value of history as a source of learning -- in a period in which there is a desperate quest for "new thinking" and "imagination", even articulated by the highest authorities, or in critiques of their ill-adapted recommendations (*Imagining the Real Challenge and Realizing the Imaginal Pathway of Sustainable Transformation*, 2007; *Imagining the initiative: reframing conventional labels*, 2011). In a critique of a *global strategic report towards 2052 by the Club of Rome*, the understanding of time can itself be called into question (*Engendering 2052 through Re-imagining the Present*, 2012).

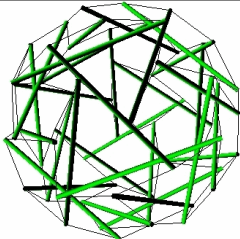
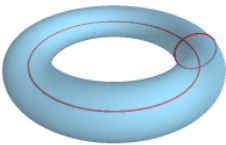
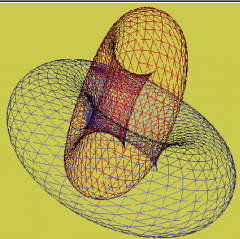
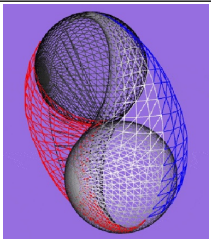
How is it that the Paul Otlet of a century ago is acclaimed for his imaginative vision of the future, but those who study his initiatives significantly fail in this respect? To what extent could the same be said of the leadership of "the" UIA, and of many international bodies with a coordinative mandate, as implied by the contribution of Matthias Middell and Katja Naumann (*Historians and International Organizations: the International Committee of Historical Sciences*) ?

Envisaging the future -- beyond "global" and "civil"?

Intimating an evolution beyond the "internationalism" of Otlet, through "transnational" to "global" and "civil", as the study does, suggests the need for a perspective of further evolution -- if only in perpetuating the fashionable use of poorly articulated terms in the promotion of various agendas. Geometry and topology, and the formal articulation of their possible transformations, are especially valuable in this respect. They have already been exploited in science fiction with respect to extraterrestrial civilizations.

In the focus on the early preoccupations of the UIA with organization, the study appropriately notes the conflation of concern with knowledge (documentation), institutions (associations) and architecture (city design). Figures illustrative of this are reproduced. No figures are presented with regard to subsequent evolution of insight or the future -- as might be considered appropriate.

The following animations are suggestive of possibilities with regard to the future, whether with respect to the relationships between organized initiatives, [knowledge architecture](#), or more tangible structures reflective of such insights..

Animations indicative of contrasting understandings of an integrative union of associations			
Multipolar configuration (Spherical tensegrity)	Dynamically alternating world (between "global" and "ring")	Dynamically intertwined worlds (interlocking tori)	"Tao world" 3D Tao configuration
			
	Reproduced from <i>Wikipedia</i>	VRML animation produced by Bob Burkhardt. X3D and VRML variants produced by Sergey Bederov of Cortona3D	Videos mp4 (solid, wire). Interactive (x3d, wrf)

- **Multipolar world:** Little consideration is typically given to a higher degree of organization of a [multipolar world](#), despite frequent reference to that condition as well as increasing concern about reversion to [bilateral relations](#). As shown, tensegrity organization offers one suggestive possibility, variously described (*Stafford Beer, Beyond Dispute: the invention of team syntegrity*, 1994; *From Networking to Tensegrity Organization*, 1984)
- **Alternating world:** With democracy implying an alternation between distinctive styles of organization, and the preferences for centralization and decentralization, there is a case for envisaging an alternation between a spherical form and that of a toroidal form (*Policy Alternation for Development*, 1984). Curiously the toroidal form has long-figured in science fiction (Larry Niven,

Ringworld, 1970).

- **Intertwined worlds**: The toroidal form of a ringworld can be taken further as a means of reconciling inner-directed and outer-directed comprehension of organization (*Cognitive osmosis through topological eversion and interlocking tori -- framing outside-inside otherwise*, 2017). The animation is suggestive of how these might be understood as driving each other.
- **"Tao world"**: As purportedly the epitome of reconciliation of binary division, reflecting the Tao in more comprehensible forms of organization merits continuing consideration (*Exploring Representation of the Tao in 3D: virtual reality clues to reconciling radical differences, global and otherwise?* 2019).

The range of such alternatives can be seen of reflective of the consideration by astrophysicists of the so-called **shape of the universe**. Of related interest is the extent to which such forms can be understood as ideal "knowledge containers", potentially reminiscent of the quest of alchemists for a container for **alkahest**, namely that which can dissolve any container (*Questing for an imaginal epistemic container: embodying self-reflexivity?* 2014; *Paradoxical container for the uncontainable: prescriptive constraints on creativity*, 2016; *Further Constraints on Conceptual Container Design*, 1983). A **"union" can in that sense be understood as a container for the uncontainable**.

The torus is especially interesting in this regard, notably in the light of insights from the design constraints for the containment of plasma in nuclear fusion reactors (under construction as **ITER**). Any contact of the plasma with the walls of the container would destroy it. As such the analogue merits exploration for new operational insights into "union" (*Enactivating a Cognitive Fusion Reactor: Imaginal Transformation of Energy Resourcing (ITER-8)*, 2006).

Given the manner in which the quest for an ultimate form of desirable organization can be compared to that for the Holy Grail, there is a case for speculative consideration of how that form might be related in topological terms to the seven **elementary catastrophes** which global governance may be called upon to address (Robert T. Holt, et al, *Catastrophe Theory and the Study of War, Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 22, 1978, 2). Forms of organizations are suggested by the following:

- *Interrelating Cognitive Catastrophes in a Grail-chalice Proto-model* (2006)
- *Conformality of 7 WH-questions to 7 Elementary Catastrophes: an exploration of potential psychosocial implications* (2006)
- *In-forming the Chalice as an Integrative Cognitive Dynamic: sustaining the Holy Grail of global governance* (2011)
- *In Quest of Sustainability as Holy Grail of Global Governance* (2011)

Tragically perhaps, given some current foreign policy initiatives, there is of course the possibility of reverting to a "flat earth" mode of "global organization", as discussed separately (*Irresponsible Dependence on a Flat Earth Mentality -- in response to global governance challenges*, 2008). At the other extreme is the possibility of a hypothetical megastructure which completely encompasses the creative inspiration of a culture -- a psychosocial analogue to a **Dyson sphere**, extensively **explored in popular fiction**. Ironically this recalls the current dubious strategy of **full-spectrum dominance**.

Epilogue: an aesthetic reminder of integrative associations?

As cited with respect to any engagement with "a" potential union -- in the *Imaginative engagement with multiverse through poetry* (2012) -- the biologist/anthropologist **Gregory Bateson** offered an aesthetic reminder to a conference on the effects of conscious purpose on human adaptation, explaining that:

One reason why poetry is important for finding out about the world is because in poetry a set of relationships get mapped onto a level of diversity in us that we don't ordinarily have access to. We bring it out in poetry. We can give to each other in poetry the access to a set of relationships in the other person and in the world that we are not usually conscious of in ourselves. So we need poetry as knowledge about the world and about ourselves, because of this mapping from complexity to complexity. (Cited by Mary Catherine Bateson, 1972, pp. 288-9)

The appropriately incomprehensible integrative perspective of quantum reality, as suggested by Alexander Wendt, can itself be fruitfully complemented by such an aesthetic reminder in the light of the central thesis of Bateson:

The pattern which connects is a metapattern. It is a pattern of patterns. It is that metapattern which defines the vast generalization that, indeed, it is patterns which connect. (*Mind and Nature*, 1979, p.11) .

The difficulty is that any form of "wholth" -- as the focus of the desperate quest for such a meta-pattern -- is a fundamental challenge to comprehension (*Wholth as Sustaining Dynamic of Health and Wealth: cognitive dynamics sustaining the meta-pattern that connects*, 2013).

This review is written just prior to the **Eurovision Song Contest 2019**. Whilst implying some relevance to a vision of a currently crisis-torn Europe, it is questionable how it will enhance and enrich that vision in the light of the argument of Bateson. However it will indeed provide a popular integrative focus far greater than that of any other form of union, including the United Nations, and any **UIA**.

Given the integrative function of music in society, it could be seen as strange that no attempt is made to enable comprehension of global governance through poetry and song. The essence of any **union** in such terms is enabled by the **integrative poetic associations**, resonances and harmonies so widely explored in music -- and so absent from sterile appeals for global harmony and unity, however skillfully they may be articulated in statutory legal language. The argument has been developed separately (*A Singable Earth Charter, EU Constitution or Global Ethic?* 2006; *Participative Development Process for Singable Declarations: Applying the Wikipedia-Wikimedia-WikiMusic concept to constitutions*, 2006).

A contrast has however to be recognized with the symbolic use of anthems, notably the [Anthem of Europe](#), which could be understood as unfruitful celebrations of the static and the past -- speculatively meriting its reversal at this time (*Reversing the Anthem of Europe to Signal Distress*, 2016). The challenge for comprehension of "a" UIA would appear to lie in improvisation engendering futures variously imagined (*Multivocal Poetic Discourse Emphasizing Improvisation: clarification of possibilities for the future*, 2016).

The tragedy of global governance at this time, despite the vision of Paul Otlet, could be compared with the tragedy of the social sciences in failing to enable collective comprehension of that tragedy otherwise. It is in this sense that, a century later, it is appropriate to note the poetic articulation by the Irish poet [W. B Yeats](#) in his seminal poem *The Second Coming* (1919).

<i>The Second Coming (1919) by W. B. Yeats</i> (first verse)
Turning and turning in the widening gyre The falcon cannot hear the falconer; Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world, The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere The ceremony of innocence is drowned; The best lack all conviction, while the worst Are full of passionate intensity.

The poem featured in exploration of mutually challenging understandings of identity (*Framing Cyclic Revolutionary Emergence of Opposing Symbols of Identity*, 2017). If inspiration is to be sought for an understanding of "union" from the multiverse of fundamental physics, its relation to poetry merits consideration (*Enactivating Multiversal Community: hearing a pattern of voices in the global wilderness*, 2012; Daniel Albright, *Quantum Poetics: Yeats, Pound, Eliot, and the Science of Modernism*, 2006).

In that mode there is a case for noting the many reflections on the tragedy of the loss of the ancient [Library of Alexandria](#) and its associated [Musaeum](#) -- variously to be understood as inspired by an integrative union of knowledge. (Mostafa El-Abbadi, *Life and Fate of the Ancient Library of Alexandria*, 1992; .Monica Berti and Virgilio Costa. *La Biblioteca di Alessandria: storia di un paradiso perduto*, 2010)

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