

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS (IOs) have emerged as significant actors in global governance, whether they are overseeing monetary policy, setting trade or labor standards, or resolving a humanitarian crisis. They often execute international agreements between states and markedly influence domestic law, which makes it important to analyze how international institutions behave and make policy. Conducting an ethnographic analysis of the internal dynamics of IOs, including their formal and informal norms, incentive systems, and decision-making processes, can usefully aid in understanding the interactions among legal, social, ethical, and political norms and the reasons certain policies and laws are adopted and internalized. Human rights is a particularly challenging policy agenda to institutionalize, given its universalist claims and seemingly nonnegotiable principles. The global yet politically contested nature of human rights makes it a fascinating lens to understand how global institutions operate. This book analyzes the organizational culture of one particularly powerful international institution—the World Bank (the Bank)—and explores why the Bank has not adopted a human rights policy or agenda.

Established on July 1, 1944, the Bank has become the largest lender to developing countries, lending more than \$20 billion per year.¹ The World Bank Group, one of the United Nations' specialized agencies, consists of five closely associated institutions that are governed by member countries. The Bank is probably the most well-known symbol of economic globalization, capitalism, and Western imperialism. Its more than ten thousand employees (including

economists, sociologists, lawyers, and engineers, among others) are engaged in the Bank's official mission of poverty reduction, which it carries out primarily through development lending. Its legitimacy depends on fulfillment of the mission, which is inextricably linked to human rights. The institution may be implicated in human rights in at least three possible activities: the Bank's direct or indirect violation of human rights through its projects (e.g., forcible displacement of indigenous peoples resulting from a Bank-financed dam project), its lending of money to governments that have committed gross and systemic human rights violations, and its reluctance to directly support human rights in its activities. If the Bank finances projects that hinder the rights of vulnerable peoples or channels investments to state governments that do so, it harms its reputation and relevance as a global leader in fighting poverty and compromises the development outcomes of its projects.

Although the institution has adopted various social and environmental policies and works on issues as diverse as judicial reform, health, and infrastructure, it has not instituted any overarching operational policy on human rights. Despite the Bank's rhetoric that protecting human rights is critical for development, its employees do not systematically incorporate human rights concerns into their everyday decision making or consistently take them into consideration in lending; incorporation of human rights is ad hoc and at their discretion. In addition, many employees consider it taboo to discuss human rights in everyday conversation and to include such references in their project documents.² The marginality of human rights in official policy stands in contrast to the Bank's rhetoric in official reports and public speeches given by its leadership, which have supported human rights (see World Bank 1998; Alston and Robinson 2005).

What do I mean by saying that human rights is a marginal issue within the Bank? In general, I mean that the Bank maintains no comprehensive or consistent approach at the policy and operational levels. In more specific terms, the marginality of human rights at the Bank entails resisting adoption of such provisions as (1) a staff policy to mitigate the impact of its projects on human rights; (2) a requirement to consider countries' obligations under international human rights law when Bank employees engage in country dialogues or draft Country Assistance Strategies;³ and (3) guidelines on when it would suspend operations because of human rights violations. In contrast, other multilateral development agencies have instituted

human-rights-based programming; for instance, the United Nations Development Programme has conducted country program reviews based on human rights criteria, and bilateral aid agencies, such as those of Denmark (DANIDA), Sweden (SIDA), and the United Kingdom (DFID), have adopted human rights approaches in their strategies and policies.

Whether and how the Bank should adopt human rights has been discussed at length by academics and civil society advocates (see, e.g., Darrow 2003; Skogly 2001). This literature focuses primarily on legal arguments for binding the Bank and its member countries to international human rights obligations. It does not investigate the internal workings of the bureaucracy so as to understand *why* the Bank has yet to adopt and internalize human rights norms. I argue that legal and political obstacles do not fully explain this phenomenon; what has been missing from existing explanations is an anthropological analysis of the Bank's organizational culture that would uncover internal obstacles to the adoption of human rights norms. This study offers an ethnographic analysis of the Bank's organizational culture that is based on extensive field research at the institution itself, including personal interviews, participant observation, and analysis of Bank documents.

The Dilemma of Human Rights in the World Bank

The World Bank has had a problematic relationship with human rights since its founding in 1944. Because it was created in the aftermath of World War II as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, one would expect that human rights to be part of the Bank's work program from its inception. However, the Bank has interpreted human rights as beyond its mandate under the Articles of Agreement, which prohibit interference in the political affairs of members (Art. IV, Sec. 10) and limit to nonpolitical considerations those factors that the Bank can consider in granting loans (Art. III, Sec. 5(b)). The reason for this interpretation lies in the cultural history of the institution.

The Bank's apolitical, technical image was historically shaped by the need to attract clients (who did not want the Bank to encroach upon their fragile sovereignty) and by the agendas of donor countries (who wanted to pursue their foreign policy goals through a seemingly neutral organization; Weaver 2008). Hiding behind the Articles of Agreement, it has attempted to mask the true political intents and ideological practices, including main-

taining relations of domination (Mosse 2004a) and entrenching donor interests and goals (specifically, creation of ideal conditions for international finance and investment). Yet its interventionist techniques, under the guise of poverty alleviation and “development,” have become a form of neo-colonialism and cultural imperialism, where “local ownership” of development strategies is merely a myth that conceals donor-recipient inequalities.

Subject to pressure to increase lending so as to legitimate its purpose and existence, in the 1960s and 1970s the Bank shifted the focus from postwar reconstruction to poverty alleviation and expanded the sectoral portfolio to include health, education, rural development, and agriculture. The shift to a mission of poverty reduction enabled the Bank to assert a new justification for existence, further strengthen its power, and expand its reach into new domains of social intervention. As Balakrishnan Rajagopal argues, “The development apparatus is not a machine for the elimination of poverty, which incidentally leads to increasing international bureaucracy; rather development is principally a machine for expanding the bureaucratization of the international sphere, which takes ‘poverty’ as its incidental point of entry” (Rajagopal 2003, 112).

Since the 1970s, the Bank has reinterpreted its mandate to gradually incorporate issues previously regarded as “political” into the work program, albeit in a supposedly depoliticized form by connecting them to economic growth. For instance, former President James Wolfensohn justified the Bank’s new foray into anticorruption matters by declaring that “corruption is . . . not political but it is social and it is economic and, therefore, I am allowed to talk about it. And if . . . politicians think that it is political, that is not my problem. I think it is social and economic. Therefore, I can talk about it” (2000). The Bank’s embrace of such issues as good governance and anticorruption in the early 1990s could be attributed to such factors as the failure of structural adjustment programs, the end of the Cold War (which relaxed donor countries’ concerns about the Bank encroaching on their sovereignty), and the rise of neoliberalism (which hailed the importance of institutions and dictated that the role of government is to secure the conditions for market integration). External pressure from civil society advocates and grassroots movements has also played an important role in the Bank’s expansion of its agenda. Given the institution’s recent embrace of more political issues, why has it still not adopted a human rights framework?

Before addressing this question, I will first describe the components that would form part of a potential human rights framework at the Bank. Given the varying meanings that employees attach to human rights, there is a plurality of possible agendas. One could classify them into a *consequentialist* approach (meaning the Bank would promote the realization of human rights) and a *deontological* approach (where the Bank would respect human rights, whether or not honoring this value promotes realization overall; Pettit 1989).

A human rights agenda under a consequentialist approach may entail creating a specialized department (like the Bank's current Social Development or Environment Departments) that would design projects directly targeting human rights and providing technical assistance for other projects to adopt a "rights-based approach to development." This typically requires institutional change and creation of accountability mechanisms so that human rights are treated as constitutive of the goal of development. As part of this approach, "agency mandates are redefined in human rights terms, seeking to create a more structural and holistic approach to development and social change. Here we face a fundamental rethinking of the entire development practice: its ideology, its partners, its aims, its processes, its systems and procedures" (Uvin 2004, 50). Country directors from the Bank may engage in policy dialogues over human rights with government representatives as part of their formulation of Country Assistance Strategies, which are written every two or three years. In addition, Bank staff may provide assistance to countries toward adapting their national laws according to international human rights standards.

A deontological approach may mean constraining loans on the basis of nonviolation of human rights by, for instance, applying a human rights impact assessment to all projects (which is similar to how environmental impact assessments are conducted for all projects). Such an assessment would likely be mandated by a human rights operational policy that would have to be approved by the Bank's Board of Executive Directors. A policy may include references to international human rights treaties as benchmarks, just as the Bank's environmental assessment policy cites international environmental conventions. In this way, a human rights agenda would be a systematic, institutionwide commitment to ensuring that Bank projects in all sectors do not directly or indirectly violate human rights. To build capac-

ity among staff to carry out this type of human rights agenda, the Bank may have to institute training programs or hire specialized staff to carry out the assessments.

The Bank has fallen well short of adopting a human rights agenda under either definition. According to a book devoted to this issue, human rights have “(i) arisen only very selectively—and usually marginally—in a practical programmatic context; (ii) been of little practical relevance in the discharge of the Bank’s social safeguard functions and assessment procedures; and (iii) been of at least marginal or ‘inspirational’ relevance to the Bank’s research agenda and substantive policy development” (Darrow 2003, 25). My interviews have confirmed this observation. Given evidence of Bank projects that have indirectly or directly led to large-scale human rights violations (see Darrow 2003), the question remains as to why human rights have remained marginal for so many years.

To understand how agendas circulate and become embedded within a global institution like the Bank, we need to analyze two layers of politics: among member states as well as within the bureaucracy itself. My study looks beyond member state politics and focuses on the underemphasized bureaucratic obstacles arising from the Bank’s organizational culture. I look inside the institution and analyze it as a set of discursive power relations that are inscribed in everyday practices.

The first layer of politics is within member states. The Bank is after all an instrument of global powers and reflects the struggles between the global North and South. The institution is influenced by the political interests of certain member countries, particularly the United States; this undermines its multilateral character and legitimacy abroad (Goldman 2005). Although member state politics was not the central subject of my research, the politics continuously operated in the background and shaped the perceptions and actions of the bureaucrats and activists I interviewed. As I explain in Chapter 2, the Bank’s Board of Executive Directors is internally divided over the issue of human rights. Since the board operates by consensus, it will not approve a human rights agenda if there is opposition by member countries such as Saudi Arabia and China. Opposition by states is largely due to their fear that a human rights agenda would infringe on their sovereignty and may become a conditionality on lending for borrower countries, while not imposing similar restrictions on donor countries. They maintain

that human rights is a “political” consideration that is restricted under the Bank’s Articles of Agreement.

Although the Bank and the debate over human rights within it are structured by member state politics, there are openings for introducing human rights without board approval. The member states cast a shadow over the institution, but what has been underemphasized is the amount of decision-making autonomy held by employees and senior management in pushing issues forward under the board’s radar. This is particularly true when member states hold competing preferences and do not reach consensus over issues. Employees then have discretion and the potential to significantly influence how the institution behaves. This was the case for the issue of anticorruption, which was eventually mainstreamed under the leadership of former President James Wolfensohn despite opposition from various member states. A critical factor in the mainstreaming process was the framing of anticorruption as an economic issue. The Bank presented its fight against corruption as “just another necessary technical instrument employed in the bundle of other technical measures, such as accounting and budgeting systems, to transform the state into an efficient machine that creates the enabling environment needed by private enterprise to boost economic growth” (Anders 2005, 52; internal quotations removed). Issues such as anticorruption and rule of law that were once controversial have been depoliticized in order to appeal to the dominant economic way of thinking.

Despite its neoliberal agenda of privatization, capital market liberalization, and deregulation, the Bank’s interventions have the unintended “instrument-effects” of expanding the extent and reach of state power (Ferguson 1990). As a development institution, the Bank serves as an “anti-politics machine,’ depoliticizing everything it touches, everywhere whisking political realities out of sight, all the while performing, almost unnoticed, its own pre-eminently political operation of expanding bureaucratic state power” (1990, xv). It overcomes political challenges from outside “not only by enhancing the powers of administration and repression, but by insistently reposing political questions of land, resources, jobs, or wages as technical ‘problems’ responsive to the technical ‘development’ intervention” (270).

This effort to depoliticize issues using the metrics of economics is itself a political act and indicates why the Bank is in fact such a political institution. The process of commensuration (where information is reduced into num-

bers that can be compared) “changes the terms of what can be talked about, how we value, and how we treat what we value” (Espeland and Stevens 1998, 315). It rejects any notion of intrinsic value and fails to acknowledge that abstracting particular values into numbers may alter their meaning significantly. As we see clearly with regard to the Bank, commensuration is a means of managing uncertainty, depersonalizing relations, imposing control, securing legitimacy, and enforcing discipline (*ibid.*).

This brings us to the second layer of politics: politics within the bureaucracy, including a clash of expertise among staff. By studying the Bank as a bureaucracy, including its formal and informal norms, the incentive system, and decision-making processes, this book contributes to anthropological literature on development. I aim to expand upon James Ferguson’s image of the development institution as an “anti-politics machine” (Ferguson 1990). Although he effectively examined the “instrument-effects” that stray from the institution’s stated intentions for development projects, he did not address the internal operations within the institution that have led to this disjuncture. Both Ferguson and Arturo Escobar studied the discourse of development by looking at how institutional power is exercised in the daily social and economic life of communities and on how people think and act in local settings. What is missing is an ethnographic account of how development discourse produces “domains of objects and rituals of truth” in the daily life of the institution—i.e., the bureaucratic and textual mechanisms that structure the relations between client and agent (Foucault 1977, 194). Discourse is central to how institutions function. Borrowing from Foucault’s notion of discourse as both an instrument and an effect of power, I concentrate on the latter in order to understand the former (Foucault 1978). My study focuses on human rights discourse and the politics of its circulation within the institution.

Competing Rationalities

The battle over human rights at the Bank has corresponded not only to a clash over the prevailing professional ethos within the organization, but also to a clash of normative rationalities: economics versus human rights, or more broadly, the market versus social democratic liberalism into which human rights nestles. Economic knowledge has become dominant within the world of bureaucracies as well as in domestic and international public

policy making. The Bank is both a producer and an effect of this phenomenon. It has facilitated the global expansion of capital through the mission of poverty reduction but has also mirrored the effects of economic globalization in its bureaucratic practices, for instance through the quantification of many issues that are value-laden and politically contested. This study uncovers the tensions within the organization between forms of rationality as they are institutionalized. In particular, I analyze the clash between experts over whether human rights is an incommensurable value that precludes trade-offs and should not be translated into an instrumental logic, or whether economic rationality trumps all other concerns. By observing the conditions under which these rationalities are contested within the Bank, we can understand the competing values that underlie global governance and how they are being negotiated.

In this study, I analyze the process by which economic rationality is produced, circulated, and reproduced within the institution, and how it intersects with the competing rationality of human rights. The encounter between the knowledge regimes of economics and human rights has led to two results: (1) infusing human rights discourse with an instrumental logic and (2) uncovering the political dimensions of the economics and development discourses.

The story of human rights in the World Bank represents a broader depiction of how these two knowledge regimes meet, clash, and intersect within the context of an international institution. Interestingly, these regimes share a common history in that the same neoliberal ideology that has fueled economic globalization has also mainstreamed the human rights discourse. Both the international human rights system and the global economic regime ultimately reinforce state power. Although human rights discourse has critiqued the unfulfilled promises of global governance institutions and served as an instrument of resistance against state sovereignty, the international human rights system itself actually reifies state power. Despite being based on a cosmopolitan foundation of common humanity without regard to national origin or citizenship, human rights is embedded in an international legal regime predicated on the cooperation of states. It is ultimately the state's responsibility to guarantee human rights. Similarly, the global economic regime is centered around the Bretton Woods institutions (the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) and the World Trade Organization,

all of which are intergovernmental organizations that are largely governed by donor countries and conduct their operations by way of states.

They both claim universality and share a commitment to individual autonomy, but the knowledge regimes of economics and human rights operate through distinctive logics. Mainstream economics is a discipline based on the value of efficiency, perfect markets, rational actors, and resource constraints. It is presented as a positive science founded on a consequentialist rationale that is concerned with outcomes. Its goals include the maximization of an individual's utility, including her monetary income and social welfare. Human rights theory, by contrast, adopts a deontological approach, concerned with principles that are important regardless of their consequences. It is premised on the inherent dignity of persons and a system of universal, inalienable truths from which are derived absolute freedoms and basic duties. Human rights theory consists of an ethical dimension, which is predicated on moral norms based on natural or prelegal rights, and a legal dimension where rights are prescribed by law.

Putting aside these distinctive logics, we can posit that both economics and human rights are normative theories (in that they offer judgments as to which policies are best for society) that *can* be wielded in an instrumental fashion (whether or not they do so in practice). In theory, there is a human rights dimension to economics and an economic dimension to human rights; "asserting human rights demands economic means, . . . and efficacy and efficiency of the agent's economic decisions presupposes a significant degree of liberty" (Branco 2009, 8). Even though the two discourses share a common objective of promoting human welfare, they rarely intersect in practice. Economics and human rights have trouble communicating, with the former speaking the language of wants and the latter the language of rights. Under economics, goods and services can be unequally distributed, which does not comply with a human rights approach. Most economists struggle to accommodate human rights within an orthodox econometric calculus: "As 'externalities' economists are prone to rendering them, at best, as peculiarities that often challenge rational (that is to say, welfare-maximising) economic analysis, or at worst as efficiency-distorting irrelevancies" (Kinley 2006, 367–68). They treat human rights as a competing rather than a complementing discourse. Given the divergence between the two discourses and those who subscribe to them, the question then becomes whether and

how human rights can become institutionalized in an organization like the Bank where the prevailing ethos is economic rationality.

Yet this is a story of more than just human rights. It is more generally about the entrance of normative discourses with universal claims into the Bank, and how they are transformed in the process. This transformation uncovers contradictions within the discourse of development and the spurious distinction between economics and politics. The struggle to bring human rights into the Bank yields a valuable observation. Though Bank officials have continuously tried to present the institution as apolitical, their attempt to avoid the political sphere by appealing to economics is futile.

Economics, the reigning discipline behind development, is a normative worldview fraught with assumptions and political motivations. Underlying economic ideology is an abstract representation of the Economy that can be replicated around the world regardless of national context and historical variations. The universalistic rhetoric of economics has facilitated its diffusion across countries regardless of local context. But economics “is always and everywhere a political endeavor” in that its choices for the appropriate structures for society have political implications (Fourcade 2009, 125). Some scholars have even argued that cost-benefit analysis is simply “an *ex post* justification for decisions that have long since been made on political grounds” (Payer 1982, 80).

To avoid political underpinnings, economics relies on numbers to achieve objectivity. It features a formalist language that is supposedly produced under a process of rationalization, thus granting a “symbolic effectiveness” that creates “an effect of consecration and permission” (Bourdieu 1987; 1990, 85). It presumes a scientific authority through a rhetoric of quantification and a technical language of truth, using such expressions as “it is obvious that,” “it is evident,” “doubtless,” “easily seen,” and “we may expect” (McCloskey 1985, 17). Quantification acts as a “technology of distance” by appealing to objectivity and universality without reliance on local knowledge (Porter 1995, ix). Objectivity through numbers thus becomes a proxy for truth and fairness. In her study of human rights indicators, Sally Engle Merry contends that

numbers convey an aura of objective truth and facilitate comparisons. [They] conceal their political and theoretical origins and underlying theories

of social change and activism. . . . A key dimension of the power of indicators [and other technologies of audit] is their capacity to convert complicated, contextually variable phenomena into unambiguous, clear, and impersonal measures. They represent a technology of producing readily accessible and standardized forms of knowledge [2011, 5].

As I demonstrate in this study, human rights are being accommodated within the economic calculus of the Bank as a normative technology of audit (see Strathern 2000).

By conflating “development” with *economic* development, the Bank has strived to confer upon the enterprise the same objective, rational properties seemingly held by economics. A guise of scientific authority masks the fallacies of development enterprises—e.g., that it promotes internal equality and enables poor countries to “catch up” with “developed” ones (Parajuli 1991, 181). In fact, development discourse is “generated by very different and diverse administrative, political [and] socio-relational logics which are concealed by rationalizing policy” (Mosse 2005, 22). It serves as a form of imperialism in representation and a mechanism of truth production that reflects institutionalized power relations (Escobar 1995). As the ideology of development has become naturalized and uncontested, it has become hegemonic. Its power operates below the surface and beyond the consciousness of actors (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991). These actors include not only the subjects of development but also many of the so-called development experts who are designing and implementing development projects and policies.

I argue that we need to look inside the bureaucracy in order to understand competing forms of knowledge that inform development institutions such as the Bank. My analysis of Bank bureaucrats borrows from recent work on expertise, including the socialization practices through which a bureaucratic self is made (Brenneis 1994). Influenced by Michel Foucault, it examines how expertise reproduces power relations by asserting who controls valued knowledge. Using human rights as a lens through which to analyze the politics of expertise within the institution, I contend that the interpretive frameworks of Bank lawyers and economists correspond to Weber’s distinction between instrumental rationality and value rationality (two forms of subjective rational action; see Espeland 1998; Weber 1978). Even though many lawyers conceive of human rights as legal imperatives,

having an intrinsic value and derived from the international human rights regime, most economists emphasize its instrumental value, as a means towards achieving other objectives such as economic development. The interaction between these competing frameworks raises the important question of whether human rights can be translated and if so, at what cost.

The Translation of Human Rights

My work extends the anthropological study of human rights as a social practice (see, e.g., Goodale and Merry 2007) and analyzes its translation within a bureaucracy of experts. In this study, I demonstrate how the convergence of human rights with economic globalization imbues rights with a technocratic rationality through a process of delegitimation and depoliticization. This process uncovers the multiple logics that encompass human rights, including the regulatory and sovereignty dimensions. The sovereignty dimension invokes the universal character, symbolic valence, and emancipatory power of human rights, while the regulatory dimension emphasizes the instrumental, rule-oriented, and administrative qualities that are more susceptible to a market logic.

I argue that the regulatory and sovereignty dimensions are critical to the concept of human rights. They are necessarily linked even though their intersection is fraught with tensions and contradictions. Goals of justice and fairness can conflict with those of economic efficiency. Yet if the political potential of human rights is negated, the rights lose their teeth and are rendered not just impotent but transformed into a form one can no longer call “human rights.”

In light of prohibitions against political activities in its Articles of Agreement, the Bank has embraced what it interprets as the economic-related aspects of rights, which make up their regulatory dimension, and is attempting to vacate their sovereignty dimension. For instance, although the Bank has adopted a policy on indigenous rights (largely as a result of external pressure), it has largely limited the focus to economic-related issues such as land rights and the commercial development of cultural resources. It has refused to engage in sovereignty-related aspects such as indigenous rights to self-determination. Yet my account reveals that a lively debate has continued to thrive within the institution over which human rights are actionable.

In exploring the regulatory dimension of human rights as revealed in a bureaucratic setting, my project examines the process of norm translation in a new context. Most anthropologists address the adoption and translation of norms by social movements, NGOs, and local communities; I focus instead on the actors that govern, work within, and lobby an international institution. Taking into account the knowledge practices and power dynamics among these actors, I found that the “vernacularization” process in the Bank (whereby norms are adapted to local meanings) is a continuous struggle among actors over whether and how much to translate human rights (see Merry 2006b). For example, even though some lawyers and NGO activists feared that translating human rights into an economic framework would dilute the substance, others recognized the practical demand to appeal to economists and adapt the human rights framework accordingly.

The conversion of human rights into an instrumental framework has been called “human rights mainstreaming” (Koskenniemi 2010), which is a bureaucratized logic adopted by institutions like the Bank as they transform human rights into a depoliticized technology. But this act of depoliticization is profoundly political since it conceals the ideological practices behind the development industry—including the expansion of bureaucratic power, the reproduction of hierarchies of society (the “developed” world over the “developing”), and the objectification of the poor. The translation of human rights into a technical discourse emasculates what would be an emancipatory framework and strips the subjects of development of their capacity to make universal claims for justice. In other words, depoliticizing human rights subordinates them to the imperative of economic growth and “extends that subordination through the formation of the developmental subject, a subject whose very humanity is now delimited according to the demands of market logic” (Pahuja 2007, 70).

The political struggle over translating human rights at the Bank is part of a larger debate occurring in a variety of settings. For instance, in the “war” against terrorism, there is a lively discussion over how to balance the right to freedom from torture against risks to national security. Those who view human rights as trumps argue that “there must be some limit to the weighing of costs and benefits—that some requirements are so self-evidently ‘good’ (or some forms of behavior so intrinsically ‘evil’) that they should leave no room to instrumental calculations” (Koskenniemi 2010, 48). In other

words, human rights should serve as trump cards that override concerns about economic efficiency (2010) and should not be subject to trade-offs (see Dworkin 1977; Sarat and Kearns 2001). In contrast to this position, those who support a human rights mainstreaming approach argue that human rights is one policy among others and so administrators should balance their concern for human rights along with other policies when making decisions. Yet this approach also brings with it additional challenges, such as how one compares qualitative concerns with quantitative ones, and whether certain rights should be prioritized just because they are easier to articulate in an instrumental language.

The translation of human rights raises a number of additional questions and dilemmas. Is there a point where human rights norms are translated so far that they lose their essential core, particularly the sovereignty dimension that is critical to the concept? A related issue is the difficulty of determining whether actors consider a translation meaningful or simply strategic, “where local political actors overlay other distinctive political projects with the legitimating mantle of rights, but to which they may have only a fleeting and expedient commitment” (Wilson 2007, 359). Such a determination could suggest whether the invocation of human rights is mere window dressing or part of a larger neoliberal project of social justice.

Methods

My ethnography of the Bank traces the role of human rights within the organization by studying its everyday workings.⁴ I examine the Bank from the top down as well as the bottom up, focusing not only on leadership and administrative structure but also on the tasks and incentives of employees. I attempt to uncover the underlying organizational culture and the contradictions and tensions within it, including competing subcultures that divide along disciplinary and geographic lines, among others. Internal contestations array economists against lawyers, for example, and lower-level staff in operations units against managers in advisory units. My anthropological analysis of the Bank’s organizational culture allowed me to in a sense “live with” the employees I studied by engaging in direct, firsthand observation of their daily behavior at work and participating in their activities. By doing so, I was able to uncover the internal dynamics that shape how human rights norms are framed and implemented. I also studied the informal practices and un-

spoken assumptions held by employees that may be misinterpreted by or hidden from external observers, as well as from the employees themselves.

Prior studies of the Bank have failed to account for the internal divisions between departments and individuals, instead treating it as a monolithic institution (see, e.g., Danaher 1994; Payer 1982; Price 1989; Shihata 1991b, 1995, 2000a). More recent studies undertaken by sociologists, economists, and political scientists have focused on the Bank as a network of social relations, an apparatus of financial hegemony and global capital, or a neoliberal policy-making institution. Yet such studies do not account for the internal pressures felt by some Bank employees, for instance, who are torn between hopes for internal reform of social policies and the need to comply with operational procedures. Particular forms of social consciousness are embedded within the Bank that only participant observation can uncover.

This study is based on ethnographic fieldwork that I conducted at the Bank headquarters in Washington, D.C., for a total of approximately two years over the period 2002–2006. During the summers of 2002 and 2004, I engaged in preliminary fieldwork as a consultant and intern in the Social Development and Environment Departments for Latin America and the Caribbean Region, and in the Legal Department. During 2002, I observed how employees implement and apply, or choose not to apply, the Bank's indigenous peoples policy in development projects. This experience uncovered the complications that often arise in the Bank when social goals compete with economic incentives within the institution. My work at the Bank during 2004 included researching an Inspection Panel case on resettlement resulting from a dam project in Argentina⁵ and writing a report on land conflict and indigenous peoples in Colombia. While interning in the Legal Department, I became familiar with the Bank's safeguard policies as I established relationships with employees in the Environmental and International Law Unit. These employees later introduced me to a variety of their colleagues in the Legal Department when I returned in September 2005 to conduct full-time fieldwork.

During 2003–04, I had the opportunity to consult with the Bank as a designated "human rights focal point" for the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region. The human rights focal points were created in late 2003 to assess each geographic region's contribution to and impact on human rights. I was hired for this position by a lawyer in the ECA region whom I had met

during the summer of 2002. After conducting archival research and semistructured interviews, I coauthored a report with her on the Bank's contribution to human rights in Europe and Central Asia. The report was part of a Bank-wide stock-taking exercise of the institution's activities and evolving position on human rights. After writing the report, I witnessed the politics around its circulation within the institution, which gave me firsthand experience with the difficulties of internalizing human rights at the Bank.

My position as a consultant and intern for two summers afforded me the trust to obtain access as a researcher for a full year of fieldwork, from September 2005 until July 2006. During this time, I also served as a part-time consultant with the Agriculture and Rural Development Unit for Latin America and the Caribbean Region, for which I wrote a report on indigenous peoples and land reform projects in the region. My employment was necessary for me to gain *entrée* to the institution (including a World Bank email account and ID card, and access to the intranet site). Moreover, serving as a consultant gave me legitimacy when I requested interviews from employees, even though I was always careful to note that I was concurrently conducting research on the institution.

My fieldwork during 2005–06 included interviews with more than seventy former and current employees (from project managers to a former president), executive directors on the Bank's board, U.S. Treasury officials, and NGO representatives; analysis of Bank projects and reports; observations at Bank training sessions and seminars; and observations at NGO meetings and conferences. I restricted my research to the Bank's Washington, D.C., headquarters, as opposed to field offices, and had the most contact with the employees in the three departments where I worked (although I tried to interview a cross-section of employees across departments and ranking). My primary method of obtaining interviews with high-level officials was through referrals from my previous interviewees. When I observed meetings or interviewed employees, I described the purpose of my research and obtained their informed consent. Almost all interviews were recorded and transcribed, and they were conducted under the condition that I not use the employees' names. Unless I was given consent to disclose their identity, I list only their current (or former) position and department.

My contacts with various civil society organizations stemmed from my summer 2001 internship at the Indian Law Resource Center in Washington,

D.C., a small indigenous-rights NGO that served as a key participant in the consultation process over the revision of the Bank's indigenous peoples policy. As an intern, I had had the opportunity to observe consultation meetings with the Bank and to participate in strategy sessions with fellow human rights NGOs, including the Bank Information Center, Forest Peoples Program, Center for International Environmental Law, and Amazon Alliance, organizations that I later contacted when conducting my fieldwork.

In the context of my ethnography of the Bank, being a participant observer meant taking on at least three roles and concurrently serving as both an insider and an outsider. One role was that of an external researcher, analyzing the institution from an outsider's point of view. A second role was as intern and consultant, participating firsthand in the work of the institution and interacting with other employees in the context of their day-to-day work. Finally, I briefly took on the role of an advocate, while serving as a human rights focal point for the ECA region in 2004. My background in human rights legal advocacy and my previous work on indigenous rights gave me a preconception that the Bank should become more involved in promoting and protecting human rights. This attitude colored my framing of questions to interviewees and the analysis of my data, thus confirming that there is a "slippage between the role of activist and scholar and [an] impossibility of separating them" (Merry 2005, 243). After all, "academic and activist endeavors are never autonomous, despite our analytical assumptions of separateness" (243). My personal engagement with the subject of my research clearly shaped my study in various ways, but it also gave me access I might not have had otherwise.

Structure of the Book

In Chapter 1, I explain why the Bank's approach to human rights (or lack thereof) appears counterintuitive. I first elaborate on the external pressure on the Bank to adopt a human rights agenda. Compared to other international institutions and aid agencies, the Bank stands as an outlier in terms of its approach to human rights. In addition, commercial banks and the Bank's own private sector arm—the International Finance Corporation—have more openly embraced human rights out of concern for their public image and reputation. Their activities, as well as lobbying by the United Nations and NGOs, have pressured the Bank to more explicitly incorporate

human rights into its work. Yet NGO efforts have been stymied by the lack of consensus among advocates and their unwillingness to reach out to Bank staff to forge an internal-external alliance. In the second part of Chapter 1, I describe internal campaigns since the early 1990s to pressure Bank management to adopt a human rights agenda. I argue that past attempts have failed for a number of reasons, including a clash of expertise, turf wars between departments, insufficient resources, and a failure to mobilize external support to bolster internal campaigns.

In the remainder of the book, I tell the story of *why* human rights has remained marginal despite the internal and external pressure that would suggest otherwise. In Chapter 2, I describe the political and legal obstacles that scholars and advocates commonly cite as reasons for the marginality of human rights at the Bank. The political obstacles stem from opposition by some member countries on the Bank's Board of Executive Directors, while the legal obstacles arise from the its Articles of Agreement. My research suggests that these obstacles are not as significant as one would expect and that internal factors are playing an underemphasized but nonetheless important role.

The end of Chapter 2 describes the implications of an important event in 2006: the issuing of the Legal Opinion on Human Rights by the departing general counsel. The opinion addressed the central legal obstacle—particular restrictions in the Articles of Agreement—that had long served as a primary reason the Bank could not directly engage in human rights. It also gave the Legal Department, which had played a minimal role in earlier initiatives within the Bank, an opportunity to shape discussion of a possible human rights strategy. After conducting a textual analysis of the opinion, I contend that its failure to generate organizational change was due to ambiguity over its legal status and resulting uncertainty about whether the Legal Department should circulate it as the Bank's "official" interpretation of the Articles. Another reason, which I discuss in Chapter 3, is internal conflict within the department over value-laden issues such as human rights.

Chapter 3 analyzes the practices and status of Bank lawyers within the larger bureaucracy as well as the aforementioned clash of expertise among staff. I first analyze the Bank's organizational culture, including internal decision-making process and formal and informal processes of norm socialization. I also examine the incentives and operational policies that influ-

ence what employees value and how they reconcile competing goals. I then describe the production and circulation of knowledge within the organization and how that relates to the Bank's management structure. Finally, I analyze power dynamics between professional subcultures, whose members speak distinct languages and exhibit particular norms arising from their disciplinary training. I focus on the prestige of economists and the lower status of lawyers in the Legal Department, which exhibits internal conflict and a culture of secrecy. I argue that the clash of expertise in the Bank has served as a critical bureaucratic obstacle in achieving human rights norm internalization.

Chapter 4 demonstrates how the clash of expertise among staff has played out over the issue of human rights. I first analyze the evolution of human rights as a taboo in the institution and describe how the type and extent of the taboo has changed over time and in different contexts. I then examine interpretive battles between Bank employees subscribing to an intrinsic framework for valuing human rights and those who adopt an instrumental framework. To demonstrate the operational implications of these competing interpretive frameworks, I compare two projects, in Russia and St. Lucia, that applied divergent approaches to the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS. I suggest that reconciliation between the frameworks requires "translators" who move between disciplinary communities and can bridge interpretive gaps (Merry 2006b).

Finally, I discuss the most recent attempt to introduce human rights into the Bank, led by members of the Legal Department. After repeated failures to mobilize staff behind an intrinsic framework for human rights, Bank lawyers have conceded to the dominant economic ethos within the institution. They have recently pursued an incremental strategy of framing human rights for economists, or what I call economizing human rights. I argue that this strategy has met with early success because its leaders are learning from the failures of prior attempts as they adapt their approach to the Bank's organizational culture. Yet internal struggles persist in the Legal Department and among the lawyers themselves over whether to define human rights in an economic framework. These internal struggles reveal a tension between principles and pragmatism—i.e., between pursuing normative, intangible values and goals, and finding a practical approach for solving problems (which may make it necessary to reconcile competing principles).

The concluding chapter analyzes the implications of economizing human rights in light of a growing trend among corporations to adopt a risk-management approach to the issue. I also review the history of the anti-corruption agenda at the Bank and highlight possible similarities to the mainstreaming of human rights. Finally, I suggest areas for future research and highlight contributions of this study to scholarship in anthropology, international law, and international relations.