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Title:
International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs): A Different Process of Internationalization?

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Abstract:
The process or phenomenon of internationalization of companies has been studied and researched in the last 50 years. The management of non-profit organizations has been researched in the last decades, as well. However, despite the fact that both fields of study have been relatively well researched, little has been studied about the “crossing” between the fields. Can we apply the concepts, models, visions and theories of internationalization of companies for the case of non-profit organizations (the third sector)? Almost no scientific or academic works that explore the theme "internationalization of non-profit organizations” can be found in whatever the source we try. What is proposed in this essay is the discussion of this theoretical gap. It is presented an overview of the rare literature related to international non-profit organizations as well as of the main theories about internationalization of for-profit companies. After that, it is described a theoretical framework of the internationalization decision process for discussion and analysis along the essay. Finally, it is suggested some propositions related to the adaptation of the internationalization constructs and theories for the non-profit organizations reality. We propose that many constructs and theories applied to multinational enterprises should be adapted carefully to the NGOs’ reality.

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Introduction

The process of internationalization of companies has been studied since de mid of the last century. We could say that this area of research has origins in the Economy field, which was interested in the trade flow between nations. In the business area the focus became the foreign direct investment (FDI), or the so called internationalization process. In the last decades, the topics of research and the methodologies used in the international business area have diversified a lot. The focus has been mainly the multinational enterprise (MNE).

Similarly, the field of study related to the called "third sector" has been exploited in recent decades. The subjects of research are quite diverse: the origin of the third sector, the definition and delimitation of the sector, management of organizations of this sector, strategies for these entities, recruitment of workers and volunteers, budgeting and so on.

However, although both cited field of research have been reasonably explored, little has been studied about the “crossing” between them. That is, there is almost no academic works that explore the theme "Internationalization of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)."

"The globalization of NGO sector is now fast paced and too prominent to be ignored. Yet the growing multinational sector appears to be a seriously understudied topic."
LINDENBERG, M. and BRYANT, C. (2001)

"Despite the ever-increasing number of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) (...) the phenomenon of the internationalization of NGOs is seldom taken into account by theorists of globalization."
SIMÉANT, J. (2005)

"(...) Despite the recent upsurge of interest in international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), this global third sector is poorly understood, and few comprehensive studies of the sector are available."
BOLI, J. (2006)

"(...) Two areas of management (the third sector and internationalization of companies) which so far does not meet in the field of theoretical discussions (...)"
BORINI, F. (2007)

"(…) NGOs have been relatively absent from mainstream scholarly management and broader business studies literatures and thus they remain significantly less well understood than their for-profit counterparts."
LAMBELL et al. (2008)

The reader can then ask: but what is the point of studying this subject? It was probably not studied because it has no theoretical or practical importance. However, the third sector has gained increasing importance for their role in society and the positive impacts that entails:

creation of jobs, awareness for citizens, communication and alliance with governments and companies and son on (BOLI, 2006; SIMÉANT, 2005; KISTRUCK et al., 2008). There are thousands of international non-governmental organizations (BOLI, 2006), clearly demonstrating that the phenomenon exists and in large numbers, even without much study or research. The organizations of the third sector are very different from the companies and need their own management models and, in the specific case, internationalization models and theories. One possible starting point is to try to adapt many of the constructs and theories developed by the international business field (focused mainly in MNEs) to the third sector reality (LAMBELL, 2008). Then, this article aims to identify the main gaps in the study of internationalization of non-governmental organizations, as well as suggests some propositions to be tested or analyzed in the near future.

Methodological Considerations

This article has more characteristics of an essay than an empiric study due to the objective of raising initial questions on a new theoretical field. Beginning a reflective dialogue between theorists in the areas of international management and the called third sector and the fact that some propositions bring an agenda for research on the topic also give a more theoretical and less empirical emphasis for the article. We hope that the future research on the theme can advance further on each raised issue here and empirical studies using the experience of several non-governmental organizations that are already internationalized can be done to bring some more light to the field.

Having in mind that the development of the theme of this article is still in its very initial phase in the scientific community, a careful research was made aiming to identify key and seminal works which have studied INGOs. In order to search for articles, papers and any other scientific source related to the theme of "internationalization of non-governmental organizations", many of the most recognized databases were used: EBSCO, Business Source Premier, CAPES, JSTOR, Science Direct, Social Science Research Network and so on. Many key-words were used in the search process: NGO, INGO, MNGO, transnational NGO, international non-profit organizations etc. The results showed few but relevant articles and papers related to the theme, demonstrating that this academic field is really at its initial phase but growing in recent years. Besides, the collected papers indicated other related literature that were also searched and read, when available.

In the next sessions we will analyze the concept and literature related to INGOs, comment the main issues studied in the international business area (focused on firms and not on NGOs), discuss some of the latter issues, applying to the internationalization of NGOs and make a final discussion and concluding remarks.

International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs)

First it is important to define the term NGOs (non-governmental organizations). The term NGO refers to a large number of organizations that does not fit in the government institutions (called "first sector") concept or in the for-profit business (called "second sector") type of entity. NGOs are included in the group of organizations called the "third sector", although the latter is not confined to NGOs, as social clubs, trade unions and even political parties are also sometimes referred as third sector (LAMBELL, 2008).

In the same way that international governmental entities such as the IMF (International Monetary Fund), the UN (United Nations) and the WTO (World Trade Organizations) - called IGOs, international governmental organizations - and multinational companies (companies that are internationalized) exist, there are also several NGOs that have international operations. These organizations are sometimes called INGOs (international non-governmental organizations) (BOLI, 2006; SIMÉANT, 2005), sometimes MNGOs (multinational non-governmental organizations) (KISTRUCK et al., 2008) and more rarely transnational NGOs (SIMÉANT, 2005) or multinational non-profit organizations (BORINI, 2007). Probably the first definition of an international NGO was made in a resolution (288) of ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council of the United Nations) of February 27th, 1950 (BOLI, 2006):

"*INGO is defined to any international organization that is not founded by an international treaty.*"

The definition above implicitly excludes for-profit companies when the term “organization” is used. The first question that can be done is: What is the approximately number of INGOs in operation in the whole world? The statistics are far from exact. Moreover, there is a great difficulty of collecting data about this sector. Finally, the numbers would depend on the specific adopted definition of INGO. Boli (2006), for example, using the Yearbook of the UIA (Union of International Associations), describes the historical data of growth in the number of international organizations and presents for the year 2000 the number of 25 thousand international NGOs. According to Anheier et al (2001), there were more than 40,000 INGOs in the world in 2001. The document "Human Development Report" of the UNDP (United Nations Development Program) describes that there were 37 thousand NGOs worldwide in 2002, a growth of 19.3% since 1990. Although different, the numbers are relatively close and we could say that probably between 30 and 50 thousand international NGOs are currently in operation in the world, already considering an annual increase based on historical data and the fact that information from official reports tend to be always underestimated by not detecting NGOs already working abroad but not identified during the preparation of reports (BOLI, 2006).

Boli (2006) seeks to describe the historical evolution of these entities. The author suggests that the first half of the nineteenth century was the period of formation of the first international INGOs. He refers to The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (founded in 1839) and the World Evangelical Alliance’s (1846) as two of the first to form and have ongoing international activities. By 1910 fewer than 400 international NGOs have been identified, while in facing the twenty-first century more than 25 thousand INGOs were catalogued. In spite the fact that in the period between wars few INGOs have been founded, just after the Second World War the number of entities has grown dramatically in a sustainable manner, to the current numbers.

About the issue of importance of INGOs to society, many authors (ANHEIER et al., 2001; BOLI, 2006; BORINI, 2007; KISTRUCK et al., 2008, POWELL et al., 2006; SIMEANT, 2005) show features that demonstrate that such entities were and are of paramount importance nowadays:

- Several of these entities act as defining standards and international conventions;

- Many of them work as researchers in their various fields of activity;
- Nearly all seek to create public awareness and guide the population on important topics;
- Several of them have helped and have supported the creation of international inter-governmental organizations (IGOs).

The segment of activity, size, budget, number of volunteers and other characteristics are very different among the INGOs. Some entities are well known: International Committee of Red Cross, Red Crescent, Médecins sans Frontières, Handicap International, Médecins du Monde, Greenpeace, WWF, PLAN International, Habitat Humanity International, CARE International, Oxfam International, World Vision International, Save the Children Alliance, Amnesty International and so on. Some have annual budget of over one billion dollars (e.g. CARE and World Vision). Several of them are present in over 100 countries (e.g. International Chamber of Commerce, in 118 countries; International Hotel and Restaurant, in 155; Caritas, in 151; Amnesty International, in 167). A large number of INGOs have more than 1,000 employees and/or volunteers (e.g. International Air Transport Association, with 1,500; CARE, with 13,000; World Vision, with 4,700) (BOLI, 2006; SIMÉANT, 2005).

The literature is seeking to classify the various NGOs according to many aspects. The following classifications illustrate some of the forms presented in the literature (POWELL and WSTEINBERG, 2006; LAMBELL, 2008; HUDSON, 2002):

- Location: local or domestic NGO, regional NGO and international NGO (INGO);
- Type of activity: operational and advocacy;
- Origin of resources: private, public and mixed;
- Focus: education, relief, health, environment, security and many others;
- Main “customer”: children, black people, women, sick people and other minorities.

Internationalization Theories

The internationalization is just one among several possible strategies adopted by enterprises. An internationalized firm is one that not only has assets abroad, but also controls these assets. That is, it is not a simple investment in portfolio abroad, but the controlling of the operation of the activities abroad. Although very old, dating probably from the time of the colonies, in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, the process of internationalization achieved great momentum only after the Second World War. Only a few years or decades after this period is that the academic community has given more attention to this phenomenon of internationalization of enterprises. Despite the fact that the focus of this literature has been the for-profit companies, Kistruck et al. (2008) emphasize that the NGOs experience similar challenges to those faced by for-profit organizations in their efforts to internationalize. Besides, Lambell (2008) points the fact that many constructs and theories developed by the international business field should be used and adapted to non-profit organizations.

The first to study the movement of internationalization of companies were the economists. However, the focus of the researches was the foreign trade (since the eighteenth century, with works of Adam Smith) and application of funds in portfolios abroad. However, such movements, as described above, do not characterize what is called the "internationalization" of a company. It was then that a PHD student (Canadian) from MIT, said in his argument that the previous economic theories did not adequately explain the phenomenon of internationalization of companies. If it is not the first among all, certainly the work of Hymer is the first to have a great impact in the field of international business and one of the pioneers that have been devoted to studying the multinational enterprise. The following non-exhaustive list presents the main theories emerged in the field in recent decades, since the first work of Stephen Hymer, already cited.

- Theory of market power (HYMER, 1976 – originally, 1960);
- Theory of "opportunism" (AHARONI, 1966);
- Theory of the product life cycle - PLC (VERNON, 1966 - based on studies of Posner, Hufbauer, Kutznets and Hirsch);
- Theory of the difference in money and legislation – arbitrage (ALIBER, 1970);
- Theory of oligopolies (KNICKERBOCKER, 1973);
- Theory of internalization (BUCKLEY and CASSON (1976), TEECE (1977), RUGMAN (1981), HENNART (1982) and CAVES (1982), based on Coase, Penrose and Williamson);
- Theory of Uppsala (JOHANSON and VAHLNE, 1977);
- Eclectic theory or paradigm (DUNNING, 1980 e 88);
- Theory of networks (authors of the Nordic School, in the 80s, 90s);
- Theory of international entrepreneurship (authors of the Nordic School, in the 90s and recent years).

It should be noted that among those theories, despite the fact that all have studied the multinational firm, there were many different questions and objectives.

The first theoretical question that was studied by the researchers of the area was "why do the companies internationalize?". The first scholars were not satisfied with the economic theories that explained that this movement was due to the differences in interest rates between the countries which the company operates (domestic and host). That could not explain the foreign direct investment (FDI) made by companies. Hymer (1960) proposed that firms invest abroad not because of the difference (in favor) of interest rates, but because the operation abroad would bring higher profits than the economic value invested in such country. He describes in his thesis that the disadvantages of being a foreign company (liability of foreignness, term created by Hymer himself) would be compensated by advantages related to market power owned by the firm. Aharoni (1966), in a less economic and more behavioral perspective, proposed that companies will go abroad as opportunities arise, even if such opportunities were not planned or imagined before. That is, in fact the process of internationalization would not be extremely studied in detail for subsequent decision-making, but it would be a much more emergent and improvised process. Aliber (1970), returning to an economic lens, suggests that a difference in currency and financial legislation would lead to an investment abroad. Knickerbocker (1973), consistent with the arguments of Hymer, suggests that forces linked to the power of monopolies or oligopolies would explain the decision to internationalize the business, mainly due to the desire to conquer markets before the competitors.

Leaving the "why" of internationalization, the next question turned to be "how do the companies internationalize?". Then the academics started in the 70s to study the way in which companies internationalize. Johanson and Vahlne (1977), belonging to the so called "Uppsala School”, as later academics from Scandinavia became known, described that the process undertaken by most Swedish companies was gradual. That is, the companies would go abroad in a step by step process, but more deeply according to the commitment and the information they gather abroad. This process became to be known as "gradualism". Connected to this process, the authors began to describe a construct that they called "psychic distance". This construct would measure, according to them, how easy (or difficult) was the flow of information between the company and its correspondents in another nation. This “distance” would depend not only on the physical distance (geographical), but also the cultural, the linguistic, social, economic and so on so forth. Thus, firms tend to internationalize to countries more "psychically close". Other researchers in the Uppsala School (or Nordic School) went further to study the phenomenon of networks (or relationships) among companies and how this influences the internationalization process.

Another important issue for the theoretical body that was being developed was "by which means or mode of entry do the companies internationalize?". The same works that studied the "how" firms internationalize eventually described the stages of internationalization: direct exporting, commercial or distribution offices abroad, licensing, alliances or partnerships abroad, acquisitions or even full involvement abroad through the deployment of manufacturing plant (greenfield) and research centers under major control by the company. But the work of Buckley and Casson (1976) was probably the first and most elusive to explain why the use of one or other form of entry was the most adequate depending on the situation. The theoretical base used by such authors was the transaction cost economics, a set of theories and ideas proposed by economists (Coase, 1937, as the first representative) to explain the very existence of companies or “hierarchies” (instead of “market”). This theory applied to the internationalization of business has become known as “theories of internalization”.

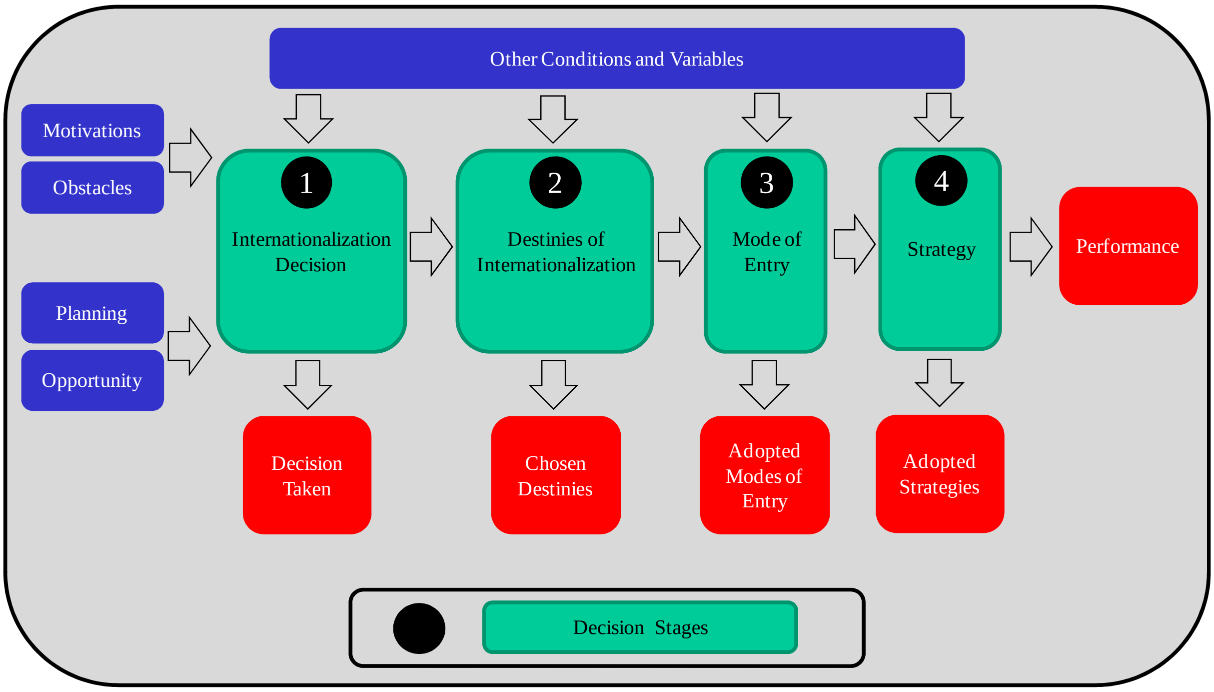
Sometimes simultaneously, sometimes not, some other relevant questions emerged in recent decades. Another example that has generated many studies was: “which destinations and how do the companies choose the countries that will be the focus in the internationalization?”. Dunning (1980) is certainly one of the most recognized names not only related to this issue but to the field of international business as a whole. The author proposes that the choice of location would depend on certain advantages of some countries in comparison with others. This analysis is embedded in a larger and more comprehensive model (called eclectic paradigm) proposed by the author. This model has become known as the OLI (ownership, location, internalization) and is claimed by Dunning that many of the questions raised by the field of international business (why, where and how the companies internationalize) could be answered by his eclectic paradigm.

In the last several decades there have been many other researches in the field and new questions arose. The field has grown and has developed a lot, not only in quantity of studied issues, but in the number of researchers linked to this academic community, in the number of journals and sources of publication, in the methodologies used by articles and researches, in types of firms studied in the field and so on.

Several of these theories showed and still show very consistency with the reality of company internationalization, especially for-profit companies. However, turning to the reality of non-profit organizations, it would be, at minimum, irresponsibility or non-sense to apply all the internationalization theories proposed during the last fifty years directly to so different organizations. Then it can be asked: to what extent the traditional theories of internationalization of companies fit the reality of non-profit organizations?

A Theoretical Framework and Some Propositions

As we described earlier, we can think about many questions related to the internationalization process of organizations. We will focus here on the why to internationalize, where to, how (entry mode) and with which strategy. In order to do so, we designed a framework of analysis. It is important to say that the suggested framework does not aim to be a model of the internationalization decision process. The objective is to try to organize the important decisions taken during the internationalization process in order to better study and understand the phenomenon. This framework, presented as follows, has four decision stages regarding the initial internationalization process of any entity. The first is the decision (or not) to internationalize. In the second stage, having decided to internationalize, the organization must define which countries will be the destinies of the process. In the third stage comes the decision related to the mode of entry (export, licensing, alliance, joint-venture, acquisition, greenfield and so on). In the fourth and final stage of the framework, the organization must define the strategy that will be executed for the operations abroad.



The process has some initial conditions and many variables that can impact the outcome of each decision stage. Furthermore, the whole process of internationalization has an important outcome: the performance of the organization with its operations abroad. The entire process has certainly many feedbacks not represented here. Moreover, the stages can be inverted depending on the case and some other important decisions can be presented during the internationalization process. Having all these limitations and considerations in mind, we think that this framework can be successfully used to study the important phenomenon of internationalization of non-governmental organizations. Furthermore, we think that this framework could represent the majority of internationalization processes of organizations.

<u>Proposition 0:</u> The internationalization decision process of a non-governmental organization (NGO) can be represented by a framework possessing 4 main decision stages, many input variables and some output variables.

In relation to the performance of the international operations of NGOs, arguably the main outcome, it should be noted that it is not a direct and easily defined construct. If profit, return on assets or any indicator of this nature is commonly used for the second sector (companies), the performance indicator for the third sector has to be well defined and discussed. Kistruck et al. (2008), as many other researchers, for example, propose the total amount spent on charitable activities by the total disbursements of the organization as a measure of performance. As this issue deserves an entire article, we leave the discussion of the construct "performance" of NGOs for future researches.

Having studied some theories of internationalization, some specific characteristics of NGOs and using the theoretical framework proposed, we can make some propositions in relation to the process of non-governmental organizations going abroad.

<u>Stage 1</u>

One of the first concerns of researchers of the international business field was the motivation to go abroad. However, the focus has been the for-profit company. Mariotto (2007) try to summarize the motivations presented by the previous literature: market potential of other countries, favorable currency exchange, crisis in the domestic market, profit potential detected abroad and unexpected opportunity coming from foreign countries. Ferdows (1997) cited others like cost-of-capital reduction, optimization in logistic cost, search for alternative raw material sources and learning with competitors and other entities abroad. Ruiz (2005), also revising the previous literature, adds others like overall risk maximization, tax reduction, search for great human talents and networking increase. All of those aspects seem reasonable motivations to companies` decision of internationalize. But would the motivations be the same for non-governmental organizations deciding to go abroad?

<u>Proposition 1:</u> The motivations to internationalize a non-governmental organization (NGO) are different from the bulk of motivations to internationalize a for-profit company.

In relation to the obstacles to internationalize, the focus of the literature has also been the for-profit companies. Geographic factors as great size of the home country, short borders with neighbour countries, great availability of raw materials and so on (DA ROCHA, 2002; TRIMICHE, 2002; BELLO and GOMES, 2002); cultural barriers as psychic distance, product rejection, different habits, languages etc (JOHANSON and VAHLNE, 1977; ORTEGA, 2003; BODUR, 1986; HOFSTEDE, 1980); market aspects as great demand in the domestic country, low demand abroad, threats of foreign markets etc (CAVUSGIL and ZOU, 1994; TRIMECHE, 2002); industry aspects as product life cycle trends, competitive pressures and industry concentration (VERNON, 1966; SOLVELL, 1987; CAVUSGIL and ZOU, 1994); firm-related barriers as management mentality, small firm size, little knowledge of foreign markets, little experience abroad and so on so forth (KATSIKEAS, 1994; DA ROCHA, 1997; REID, 1983; BODUR, 1986; NAIDU and RAO, 1993; BAUERSCHMIDT et al., 1985; LEONIDOU, 1995); environmental obstacles as credit and financial difficulties, high interest rates, corruption, political instability, difficulties related to get a distributor and warehouses abroad etc (KAYNAK and KOTHARI, 1984; BROOKS and ROSSON, 1982; KATSIKEAS,

1994; DA ROCHA, 1997; REID, 1983; BODUR, 1986; NAIDU and RAO, 1993); and finally contingency and hazard obstacles or barriers (TRIMECHE, 2002; REID, 1983; CAVUSGIL and ZOU, 1994; DA ROCHA, 2002). Again, all of those aspects seem appropriated for companies. NGOs have different legislation in most countries, the type of competition and "market" dynamic is distinct and the governmental support is quite different from that provided for companies. Due to this different reality, we propose:

Proposition 2: The obstacles or barriers to internationalize a non-governmental organization (NGO) are different from those faced in the internationalization of a for-profit company.

The strategic planning process has been studied, detailed and used for large companies for many decades (ANSOFF, 1965; ALMEIDA, 2001; OLIVEIRA, 1993; CHIAVENATO e SAPIRO, 2004). That tool is also used for many enterprises in their process of internationalization. A great amount of companies use a detailed planning process in order to go abroad. Is it the same case for NGOs? We do not think so. Any strategy, including the internationalization, can be an emergent opportunity (MINTZBERG, 1994) that an organization "grab" and take advantage in order to grow, develop, improve performance and so on.

Proposition 3: In most of cases, for a non-governmental organization (NGO), the internationalization decision is due to an emergent opportunity and not related to a detailed planning process.

Stage 2

According to our framework, in the second stage the organization must decide which country or countries will be the destiny of the internationalization movement. Dunning (1998) proposes that some countries have some characteristics and advantages, mainly economic aspects, which make each of them a better option to the company. The author, recognizing the importance of these factors, includes it in his eclectic paradigm (OLI – ownership, location and internalization) as the "L" factor. This factor also became known by the literature as "location specific advantage" (LSA). However, our hypothesis is that an NGO does not choose countries to internationalize based on their economic advantages. Coherently with the last proposition, we think that NGOs choose countries based on the emergent opportunities and not based on an economic analysis of advantages and disadvantages of the countries.

Proposition 4: The location specific advantage (LSA) construct is not relevant to the decision of which countries to internationalize, in the case of NGOs.

A for-profit company usually searches for economic returns in order to choose which country to internationalize. In the case of NGOs, our hypothesis is that, when planning the internationalization process, the organizations search for places that need the services or the help of the entity. Alternatively, sometimes the decision can be driven by the capital raising need.

Proposition 5: The NGOs internationalize to nations which have some special need linked to the NGO main operation or if the nation has a great potential for capital raising.

<u>Stage 3</u>

After the decision to internationalize and having chosen the countries where to go, the next step would be to choose how to do it. In order to explain this "how", some authors from the Uppsala School (later named) proposed a model in which the companies, step-by-step, improved their commitment with the foreigner operations. It means that the investments and entry modes were made in a gradual way. Our hypotheses here are that the NGOs do not follow the usual typical steps of internationalization of companies and that NGOs depend much more on networks and alliances in the process (BORINI, 2007).

<u>Proposition 6:</u> The process of internationalization of NGOs does not follow the usual steps of internationalization of companies (proposed by the Uppsala School): direct export, commercial office, licensing and production (greenfield).

<u>Proposition 7:</u> A behavioral theory of internationalization (as proposed by the Uppsala School) does not fully explain the process of internationalization of non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

<u>Proposition 8:</u> The alliances and networks of an organization is a fundamental driver in the process of internationalization of NGOs.

<u>Stage 4</u>

Having taken the decision, decided the country and the entry mode, there are still many strategic alternatives for the internationalized NGO. Porter (1986) suggests that even an international firm must decide in favor of one among three types of strategy: differentiation, cost-leadership or focus. The main argument for the author to suggest that is that a firm should maximize the value to cost rational. For non-profit organizations, the maximization of value or minimization of cost is not a mandatory goal. However, the fulfillment of a service (or product) gap in the society most of times is the great objective of many NGOs. The focus strategy can make sense for many NGOs in the process of internationalization.

<u>Proposition 9:</u> The cost-reduction or differentiation strategies are not important aspects for the internationalization of NGOs. The focus is, in most cases, the major adopted strategy for NGOs.

NGOs, due to their role in the society and the different legislation, tend to have much more relationships with other entities and host governments than their correspondent for-profit companies (LAMBELL, 2008). Consequently, non-governmental organizations, when internationalizing, suffer probably much more influence by the institutions of host countries.

<u>Proposition 10:</u> The internationalization strategy is much more dependent on the institutional context of domestic and host countries in the case of NGOs than in the case of companies.

Final Discussion and Future Research

The framework and the propositions have both research and practical implications. Beginning with the research implications, it can serve as a basis for subsequent empirical research. Most of the constructs included in the framework and in the propositions are established constructs with valid and reliable measurement instruments – for example, motivation to internationalize, obstacles in the process, internationalization strategies, location specific advantages etc. In addition to providing a good foundation for future empirical testing, the framework can be used for theory development as well. For example, drawing on a variety of international business research and theoretical perspectives, additional stages and variables could be detected and added. As mentioned, the stages and variables included in our framework are the ones most typically described by the literature. Nothing precludes including additional variables. Indeed, additional in-depth qualitative work is needed to explore the potential methods and strategies that organizations might have developed. We hope our framework helps to throw some light on this gap of the literature, the internationalization of non-governmental organizations.

As to the practical implications, the model can be used as a source of initial discussion about the potential difficulties and obstacles faced on the internationalization process of NGOs. Some of the entities could reflect also about the different motivations that drive their process and the differences in relation to for-profit companies. We propose also that NGO managers must pay attention and be careful in relation to apply directly internationalization models developed mainly to MNEs.

Given the wide range of issues yet to be studied and developed for the process of internationalization of non-profit organizations, it is important that future academic efforts are structured and conscious. It is essential that the academic community and researchers involved in studies of internationalization have awareness about the importance of a deeper study about the theme. Some initiatives that can be helpful for the development of the field: that both the academic community that study the internationalization of business and the one that study management of the third sector to join in the pursuit of development of the subject; that forums for debate on the issue of international organizations can be created; that NGOs which have internationalized realize the importance of their practical knowledge for the academic development of the theme; that the handbooks and reference books of international business and the ones of the third sector start to devote a portion (or chapters) of their works to the theme.

Without the objective of presenting empirical data about international non-governmental organizations, the present essay aimed to draw attention to the theoretical gap that exists in relation to the theme. Let is hope that both research communities, international business and management of the third sector, can join forces and efforts in the near future in order to develop a common theoretical body of knowledge. Finally, we quote here an appropriated claim:

> *"(…) more NGO-inclusive frameworks are needed to account better for the emergence of "third sector" or civil society actors."*
> (LAMBELL et al., 2008)

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