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**EXPLORING THE POPULATION
OF INTERNATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY INSTITUTIONS**

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is twofold. Firstly, I will explore how the literature has so far dealt with international parliamentary institutions (IPIs) in empirical and comparative terms. In this domain, two aspects have been traditionally considered: the historical evolution of IPIs as well as their definition and categorisation. Consequently, section 1 describes the origin and subsequent development (over time and space) of these institutions, trying to identify possible “waves” in their historical evolution and the way how each of these waves is determined by different processes and demands arising in the context of international relations. Section 2 critically analyses IPIs definitions and categorisations proposed by four authors: Klebes (1989), Cutler (2001), Sabic (2008) and Kissling (2011). Some of the considered concepts, however, risk to be too broad and to encompass several different types under the same label, thus hindering standardised comparisons. In order to overcome this unresolved aspects in the literature, in section 3 I will propose a different categorisation of IPIs, to detect, *prima facie*, how different categories are coupled by distinct functions and powers. This analysis is a necessary preliminary step to move forward the research on IPIs. Indeed, it paves the way for a more in depth analysis in the future, by identifying a rather homogeneous group of institutions that, at least in potential terms, might be able to exert the set of functions that mirror the traditional core competences exercised by legislatures at the national level (namely representation, control over the executive and policy-making).

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1. International parliamentary institutions: a historical overview - 2. The puzzle of definition and categorisation – 3. Institutional and functional categories of IPIs – 4. Conclusion

1. International parliamentary institutions: a historical overview

The emergence and growth of international parliamentary institutions (IPIs) is a phenomenon that developed mainly in the second half of the XX century. Nonetheless, the history of IPIs is even longer: their origins, indeed, date back to the creation of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in 1889. It began as an association of parliamentarians, led by Sir William R. Cremer and the French parliamentarian Frederic Passy, whose goal was to promote the creation of a permanent institutional structure for the peaceful settlement of disputes¹. Thus, the IPIs origins are closely linked with conflict resolution, peace and international security (hence, an IR concern from the start: see Cofelice and Stavridis 2014). With two exceptions, the IPU remained the only functioning IPI until 1945. One exception was the Nordic Interparliamentary Union, created in 1907 as a forum for co-operation between members of Scandinavian parliaments, which now takes place in the Nordic Council created in 1952. The other was the Empire Parliamentary Association, created in 1911 to connect parliaments from British dominions and self-governing colonies and renamed, in 1948, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

The proliferation of IPIs started after the Second World War, when “the public demand for a better transparency of decision-making in international politics came to the forefront of political debates, especially in Europe” (Sabic 2008, p. 260). This was particularly evident in 1948, when the Hague Congress of the European Movement launched a campaign for a unification of Europe and paved the way for the establishment, the following year, of the Council of Europe, equipped with an Assembly that originally had only a consultative role². In spite of these initial limitations, the Consultative Assembly, which in 1974 was renamed “Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe”, represents a milestone in the development of IPIs, since it was the first time that a parliamentary dimension was introduced in an international inter-governmental organisation (IGO)³.

The Council of Europe’s structure also served as a model for the IGOs established during the Cold War period. Indeed, all key Western European IGOs got an inter-parliamentary component during that period: in 1951, the Consultative Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community was created; the Western European Union introduced a parliamentary assembly as one of its main organs in 1954; in 1956, parliamentarians from NATO member states decided to form the North Atlantic Assembly, which in 1999 was renamed the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. Moreover,

¹ In the Cremer and Passy’s plans, the IPU should have served mainly as an arbitrator in disputes among states. For a historical overview of IPU, see Zarjevski (1989).

² The result of the negotiations did not quite meet the expectations of the supporters of unification, who had hoped for a parliamentary institution with legislative powers.

³ According to the Union of International Association, an “International Inter-governmental Organisation” (IGO) is defined as “an organisation composed primarily of sovereign states, or of other intergovernmental organizations. IGOs are established by treaty or other agreement that acts as a charter creating the group”. Source: Union of International Organizations website (www.uia.org/faq/yb3).

starting from the mid-60s, the notion of IPIs as a forum for facilitating dialogue and contacts among parliamentarians was increasingly pursued across other continents. Thus, the Latin American Parliament was created in 1964, the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union in 1974, the Central American Parliament in 1975, the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organisation in 1977 and the Andean Parliament in 1979.

The peak in the formation of IPIs was reached in the late 1980s and 1990s, when, on the one side, fading ideological walls no longer represented an obstacle for inter-parliamentary cooperation (Sabic 2008); on the other, the processes of globalisation and international regional cooperation arrived at a new stage, creating the need for stronger parliamentary backing (Marschall 2007). This new stage is often referred to as “new regionalism”, defined by Hettne as a multidimensional form of integration which includes economic, political, social and cultural aspects and thus goes far beyond the goal of creating region-based free trade regimes or security alliances (first-generation or old regionalism); rather, the political ambition of establishing regional coherence and identity seems to be of primary importance (Hettne et al. 1999, p. xvi). Involvement of non-state actors at national and regional level, multi-level governance, strong international legal framework, cooperation along many dimensions (including some global public goods, such as security, human rights, development, ecological sustainability) are additional important characteristics that mark the difference between first and second-generation regionalism⁴ (Van Langenhove and Costea 2007, p. 66). Telò claims that the main systemic causes that led to this renewed form of regionalism can be found in the complex impact of financial, technological and market globalisation on the traditional territorial state power: “new regionalism can be seen as an attempt by states to react by strengthening regional control when traditional centralised national sovereignty no longer functions and to bargain collectively with extraregional partners” (Telò 2001, p. 7).

Since the 1990s, new regionalism has spread worldwide through the creation of new organisations or the “upgrading” of previously existing ones: examples are the European Union (that is considered as the most developed case of second generation integration), the African Union, the Association of South Eastern Asian Nations, the Mercosur. These new regionalism initiatives have been accompanied by a parallel wave of parliamentarisation efforts, whose agenda contains many elements of the new approach to regionalism. Examples are the expansion of the scope of the European Parliament’s activities and powers, or the creation of brand new IPIs, such as the East African Legislative Assembly, the Parlasur, and others.

A final attribute of new regionalism is its “open” character. Second generation regions, indeed, are more inclined to act (1) within global international regimes and organisations; (2) towards other regional stakeholders; and (3) towards nations outside their own geographic area. In order to distinguish it from the previous generation, Van Langenhove and Costea emphasise three peculiar characteristics: first, the institutional environment for dealing with “out of area” consequences of regional policies is more present; second, regions become more proactive

⁴ It is important to point out that the two generations of integration should not be seen neither as chronologically distinct phenomena, nor as a necessary evolutionary process from the first to second generation, but rather as two coexisting and sometimes overlapping phenomena, since states may belong to different types of agreement at the same time.

engaging in inter-regional arrangements and agreements which can affect more relations at global level; third, regions become more actively engaged at the UN (Van Langenhove and Costea 2007, p. 78-79). A good example in point is the EU's attitude to promote inter-regional agreements and partnerships, for instance with its Mediterranean neighbours, ACP countries, Asian countries, etc.

In this domain, too, international parliamentary institutions are picking up the ball and running with it. Their role, however, is not limited only to periodic forms of dialogue and consultation (e.g.: the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership – ASEP; the EU-Africa parliamentary dialogue under the Joint Africa-EU Strategy; the Agreement between the Arab Inter-parliamentary Union and the African Parliamentary Union); in some cases, indeed, fully fledged joint parliamentary institutions have been established, such as the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union of the Mediterranean and the EuroNest Parliamentary Assembly.

Drawing on this brief overview, some concluding observations can be formulated in relation to IPIs' historical evolution. First of all: once they start to operate, they are robust over time (Marschall 2007). Situations where IPIs happen to vanish are indeed extremely rare⁵; sometimes they can become “dormant” institutions, due to declining political interest and/or the lack of resources, but still they keep on gathering meetings from time to time (e.g. the Assembly of Caribbean Community Parliamentarians). As a consequence of their geographic proliferation and robustness over time, according to the recent literature, the number of currently existing IPIs ranges between a minimum of 40 (De Puig 2008) to a maximum of about 100 (Kissling 2011), depending on the kind of definition and categorisation adopted (see section 2).

Secondly, IPIs seem to have become rather an essential component in the institutional architecture of international organisations (Marschall 2007). On the one hand, the creation of new intergovernmental organisations goes often along with discussions about incorporating a parliamentary body into them; on the other, existing international organisations that lack a parliamentary body are more and more criticised for what is supposed to be an institutional deficit⁶.

Finally, at least three main “waves” in the historical evolution of IPIs can be identified, each of them responding to different demands arising in the context of international relations. During a sort of “prehistoric” phase (1889-1945), the creation of the first IPIs dealt with peace, security and conflict resolution: the IPU, in particular, was thought as a permanent institutional structure for the peaceful settlement of disputes among States. A second wave developed in the post-WWII

⁵ An (isolated) example is represented by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Western European Union, founded in 1954, that ceased to exist on 30 June 2011, as a consequence of the dissolution of the WEU as a treaty-based international organisation. Some of its original functions have been transferred to the EU Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), which held its inaugural meeting in September 2012, during the Cypriot Presidency of the EU (see Wouters and Raube 2012).

⁶ This is especially true for the United Nations and its system organisations. Scholars like Held and Archibugi (1995), for instance, advocate the creation of a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly as a body representing the national legislatures, thus supplementing the General Assembly; others like Falk and Strauss (2001) evoke the establishment of a “global democratic forum”, a sort of overarching parliamentary body with oversight functions on IGOs like the IMF, the WTO and the World Bank.

and the Cold War period: in this phase, the proliferation of IPIs can be associated to the phenomenon of regional integration (old integration), that includes parliaments as part of a regional “internal” process and the need for its legitimisation and democratic dimension (Cofelice and Stavridis 2014). A third wave, started in the late 1980s, is closely linked to major trends and developments in international relations, such as the processes of democratisation (third wave of democratisation: Huntington 1991), globalisation (and its “annex”, such as de-territorialisation of politics, trans-nationalisation, etc.), and new - or open - regionalism (that calls for IPIs to play a role in global and multi-level/actor governance).

Table 1 - Three waves in the evolution of IPIs

	1889-1940s	1950s-1980s	1990s-onwards
<i>Related international processes and demands</i>	Conflict resolution Peace Security	Old regionalism (internal legitimisation and democratic dimension)	Democratisation Globalisation New/Open regionalism
<i>Exemplificative cases</i>	Inter-Parliamentary Union	– Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe – North Atlantic Assembly (NATO Parliamentary Assembly) – Latin America Parliament	– European Parliament – Parlasur – East African Legislative Assembly – ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly

2. The puzzle of definition and categorisation

After exploring the historical evolution of IPIs and identifying the major developments and processes in international affairs associated to IPIs’ proliferation, this section deals with the second aspect traditionally tackled by the literature: i.e. the issue of definition and categorisation of IPIs

The first efforts towards a definition of IPIs were made by the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments⁷, which adopted two reports on this topic during the 1980s⁸. In the second report submitted in 1989 by Heinrich Klebes, at the time Clerk of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, introduced the term “international parliamentary institutions” as an umbrella definition to cover all categories of international parliamentarianism. The categories were: *associations, assemblies and integrated assemblies*. IPIs that could be identified as an integral part of international governmental or supranational organisations were labelled as “integrated assemblies”. The term “assembly” is used where the members of the institution concerned are

⁷ The Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments is a consultative body of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, aiming at facilitating personal contacts between holders of the office of Secretary General or Clerks in any Parliamentary Assembly at the national or international level.

⁸ The first one was submitted in 1980 by John Priestman, then Clerk of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. In his report, Priestman focused primarily on cooperation between national parliaments and what he called “international parliamentary assemblies”.

either directly elected or designated by national parliaments in such a way as to ensure fair political representation, while “association” refers to those institutions whose members may well be appointed by their national parliament without necessarily reflecting the distribution of political forces on the national scene. Consequently, the difference between these two latter categories seems to be based on whether the membership in an IPI reflects the political spectrum in the national parliament of a member State. Klebes himself, however, admitted that there can be difficulties with this categorization: “it is not always easy to draw a sharp dividing line between assemblies and associations [...]. The difference is clear where parliamentary associations are based on individual membership” (Klebes 1989, p. 78).

Despite these difficulties, Klebes’ usage of international parliamentary institutions as an umbrella definition has been generally accepted in the literature. However, as the number of IPIs increased and their variety expanded during the 1990s, the need for a more comprehensive definition and refined categorisation became more pressing. Thus, Sabic introduces a slightly broader working definition of IPIs, trying to capture not only what they are, but also what they do. IPIs are understood as “institutions in which parliamentarians co-operate with a view to formulating their interests, adopting decisions, strategies or programs, which they implement or promote, formally and informally, in interactions with other actors, by various means such as persuasion, advocacy or institutional pressure” (Sabic 2008, p. 258). At the same time, he proposes a more parsimonious classification than Klebes’, reducing to two the number of IPIs categories: the first one consists of *international parliamentary organs* (IPOs), i.e. “organs of international governmental organisations composed of parliamentarians”; the second one is represented by *international parliamentary associations* (IPAs) as understood by Klebes, yet irrespective of their constitution and the extent to which their appointment reflects the political spectrum in national parliaments.

On the contrary, Kissling (2011) adopts a more sophisticated approach, based on IPIs’ legal status, identifying four different categories:

1. *Inter-parliamentary government run/inspired NGOs*: these encompass loosely structured entities to associate parliamentarians at the regional, supra-regional or international level. They are composed exclusively of parliamentarians who act in a private capacity, even though they are part of national legislative branches. These organisations are set up under national law and consequently lack international personality. Examples are Parliamentarians for Global Action and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (Kissling 2011, p.13).
2. *International or regional parliamentary organizations*, i.e. institutions whose members are official in the sense that national or regional parliaments dispatch delegations to them. Parliamentarians cannot join freely except as members of such a delegation. Mostly, these organisations also possess full (legal) autonomy. Examples are Inter-Parliamentary Union and Latin American Parliament (Kissling 2011, p. 15).
3. *International or regional parliamentary specialized agencies*: these are similar to international or regional parliamentary organisations, except for the fact that they are somehow integrated into an international governmental organisation’s system. They are “official” IPIs founded by parliaments and their members are parliaments. Examples are the North Atlantic Treaty

Organization Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Parliamentary Forum (Kissling 2011, p. 26).

4. *Parliamentary organs of international or regional organisations*, i.e. organs of international, regional or supranational organisations. Examples are the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Pan-African Parliament (Kissling 2011, p. 38).

Kissling's categorisation, however, seems to entail at least two problematic aspects. First of all, the inclusion of de facto NGOs (i.e. the inter-parliamentary government run/inspired NGOs) in the classification of parliamentary *institutions* may appear problematic. Indeed, from Klebes onwards, the literature has traditionally referred to IPIs as public institutions whose members are elected or appointed either by national legislatures or electorates in order to represent them. Thus, the inclusion of voluntary associations of parliamentarians, whose members act in their private capacity, at the same time overstretches the concept of IPIs and leads the author to overestimate the actual number of these institutions (Kissling reports over 100 IPIs).

Secondly, the boundaries of the "international/regional parliamentary specialized agencies" category are rather vague and, consequently, the choice to include/exclude IPIs from this grouping is not always clear and justified. Two examples can clarify this. The author states that what distinguishes "international/regional parliamentary organizations" from "parliamentary specialised agencies" (categories 2 and 3) is that these latter act within an international or regional governmental system. However, the argument goes, the conclusion of an international treaty for institutional cooperation between the parliamentary agency and the related international organisation is rather rare; normally, cooperation is based on a recognition by the governmental organisation *in one form or another*, mostly through a simple decision or resolutions (Kissling 2011, p. 26-27). Consequently, it is unclear the reason why the IPU, for instance, is not considered as a parliamentary specialised agency of the UN, given the cooperation agreement signed between the IPU and the UN Secretary-General on 24 July 1996 and subsequently ratified by the General Assembly Resolution 51/7 on 7 November 1996, but it is rather treated as an international (autonomous) parliamentary organisation. Similarly, the distinction between parliamentary specialised agencies and "parliamentary organs of international/regional organisations" (categories 3 and 4) is sometimes blurry. The Parlacen, for instance, is classified by the author as a parliamentary specialised agency, even though the 1991 Tegucigalpa Protocol, establishing the Central American Integration System (SICA), includes it among the main institutions of the Organisation (thus, the label of *parliamentary organ* would have probably been more suited).

Despite these shortcomings, Kissling's work remains the most comprehensive effort to map and classify IPIs so far realised.

Finally, Cutler adopts a slightly different approach, by introducing a functional and epigenetic typology of IPIs⁹. After defining an IPI as "an international institution (1) that is of a parliamentary nature, whether legislative or consultative, and has three or more member states, (2) of which the parliamentarians are either selected from national legislatures in a manner that they determine or

⁹ The term "epigenesis" is borrowed from biology and refers to emergence into existence through successive stages of maturation (Etzioni 1963). Here, it is used by Cutler to indicate how IPIs grow from one phase of development to another.

popularly elected by the electorates of the member states, and (3) that is a regular forum for multilateral deliberations on an established basis, either attached to an international organization or itself constituting one” (Cutler 2001, p. 211), he identifies, on the basis of different stages of their institutional development, 4 types of IPIs (namely *Congress*, *Assembly*, *Parliament* and *Legislature*) and three transitions between succeeding pairs of types (i.e. *initiation*, *takeoff*, and *spillover*), as shown in Table 2 below.

Cutler conceives the progression of IPIs through these levels by referring to the standard structural-functional typology of domestic interest groups (third column in the table):

Before the level of Congress, there is no organized interest group at all, or what is called an anomic interest group. The Congress level is a non-associational interest group: the membership of a potential IPI is defined by geography (or other categorical attribute). The level of Assembly is like an associational group, the sort of voluntary social or political organization typical of domestic society. The levels of Parliament and Legislature are both institutional groups; the difference is that the latter has relative international juridical autonomy. (Cutler 2001, p. 216)

Table 2 – Cutler’s ladder of development in the potential life of an IPI

[Note: the Table is arranged to be read from the bottom up so as to suggest ascent up a hierarchy]		
Characteristic	IPI Stage	World-societal group type
Exercise of compellent legislative authority over IO bodies (or members) with which the IPI may be affiliated, or similar other-directed authority if there is no such IO.	Legislature	Institutionalized supranational-authoritative
Operational activities then produce Spillover		
Exercise of not advisory but deterrent oversight over IO bodies (or members) with which the IPI may be affiliated, or similar other-directed oversight if there is no such IO.	Parliament	Institutionalized transnational-deliberative
Rule-supervisory activities then produce Takeoff (2nd stage) Rule-creating activities then produce Takeoff (1st stage)		
First regularized meeting following establishment of secretariat, a requisite for acquisition of international juridical personality permitting autonomous proactive initiative.	Assembly	Associational
Normative activities then produce Initiation (2nd stage) Informational activities then produce Initiation (1st stage)		
First actual meeting where members come together for the purpose of establishing an IPI, or an organization later becoming an IPI, whether affiliated with any antecedent IO or not.	Congress	Nonassociational
First preliminary or preparatory meeting that generated the organization later evolving into the IPI, or foundation of an antecedent regional IO with which it may (eventually) be affiliated.	[Pre-Congress]	Anomic

Source: Cutler 2001, p. 217

The main difficulty with Cutler’s framework is that the characteristics of each stage of development are neither clearly defined nor operationalised¹⁰: consequently, the matching between IPIs and their proper development level is not a straightforward endeavour¹¹. Moreover, as I will try to show in section 3, only a limited number of IPIs has the potential to ascend this hierarchical typology, from the pre-congress to the legislature stage; the functions and powers of many IPIs, indeed, are structurally constrained by their funding documents, as well as their legal and institutional arrangement. In this respect, Cutler’s approach is probably more useful to assess the functional development of a specific category of IPIs (namely “parliamentary bodies of international/regional organisations”: see section 3) than to generate a systematic typology of these institutions.

Having in mind these unresolved aspects in the literature, in the next section I will propose a distinct classification of IPIs, based on substantial differences among different categories in terms of legal, institutional and functional characteristics.

3. Institutional and functional categories of IPIs

The proposed categorisation is built through a bottom-up approach: an empirical survey has been carried out on official documents (i.e. treaties, statutes, rules of procedure, reports) of 70 international parliamentary “actors”, identified through a sort of snowball technique, relying on primary sources (mainly parliamentary websites and reports) and references in the previously quoted literature. This survey does not claim to be exhaustive, but it provides the necessary critical mass of empirical evidence in order to redefine the various categorisations of IPIs currently existing in the literature. The aim of this typology is also that of exploring whether and to what extent the various IPIs categories diverge not only in terms of legal and institutional status, but also in terms of what they can do (i.e. their functions).

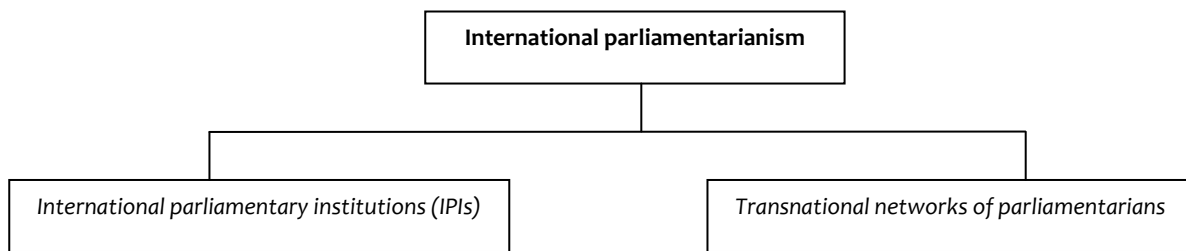
An initial basic distinction among different types of international parliamentary actors is between voluntary associations of parliamentarians, hereafter labelled as “transnational networks of parliamentarians”¹², and public international parliamentary institutions, the abovementioned IPIs.

¹⁰ How to assess, for instance, whether an IPI is able to assume “autonomous proactive initiatives”, or to exert “deterrent oversight” or “compellent legislative authority” over international organisations bodies?

¹¹ Cutler does not provide many examples on how to actually apply his own analytical framework to the classification of IPIs. The European Parliament is a recurring example (Cutler 2001; Cutler and Von Lingen 2003); apart from this case, in a 2006 article he indicates the relative institutional development of 7 IPIs, namely the EP (stage of development: legislature), the EurAsEC IPA (stage of development: parliament), the OSCE PA, NATO PA, PACE, IPA CIS and PABSEC (stage of development: takeoff – second stage).

¹² Here, the word “transnational” is used according to the narrow meaning adopted by Keohane and Nye, who refer it to the international activities of nongovernmental actors (Keohane and Nye 1974, p. 41). In general, for the transnational-international distinction, see Huntington 1973.

Figure 1 – Initial basic categorisation of international parliamentarianism



The *transnational networks of parliamentarians* can be defined, following Cutler, as voluntary associations of national parliamentarians, acting not in their official capacity but rather as individuals taking private initiative, but who happen to be national parliamentarians and then translate that activity into parliamentary functions within their national legislatures (Cutler 2006, p. 80). They are generally set up under national law. These networks may be further classified according to their purpose (general or specific) and to their universal or restricted membership¹³: the resulting typology is contained in Figure 2. Since these transnational networks are basically self-constituted groups of parliamentarians and are not affiliated to any IGO, they have virtually no direct influence on intergovernmental decision-making processes and, therefore, the scope of their powers remains rather limited (Sabic 2008). Their functions, indeed, mainly consist in lobbying governments and national legislatures to promote particular values¹⁴, adopt specific policies or ratify international legal instruments¹⁵; providing democratic institution building and technical assistance programmes¹⁶; upholding confidence building and parliamentary socialisation¹⁷. In order to increase the efficacy of their work and their visibility, some of them have established strategic partnerships with intergovernmental organisations, obtaining a formal consultative status¹⁸.

¹³ Restrictions in membership may be due to geographical or linguistic characteristics. This typology is borrowed from classifications of international organizations proposed by several authors. See, inter alia, Cox and Jacobson 1973.

¹⁴ A good example is the Parliamentary Forum for Democracy, whose aim is “to strengthen democracy in the member states of the Community of Democracies and to promote democratic development in other states” (from the Parliamentary Forum for Democracy’s draft statement of purpose).

¹⁵ See, for instance, the key role played by the Spanish members of the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons in lobbying Spain to accede the UN Protocol Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition in 2007 (Sabic 2008, p. 264-265).

¹⁶ For instance, European Parliamentarians with Africa (AWEPA) promotes human rights and development in Africa via strengthening democratic institutions and supporting human resource development and institutional capacity building within parliaments.

¹⁷ During the 1980s, Parliamentarians for Global Action facilitated confidence building at the parliamentary level between the East and the West, particularly promoting the first interactions between the US Congress and the Soviet Union Duma.

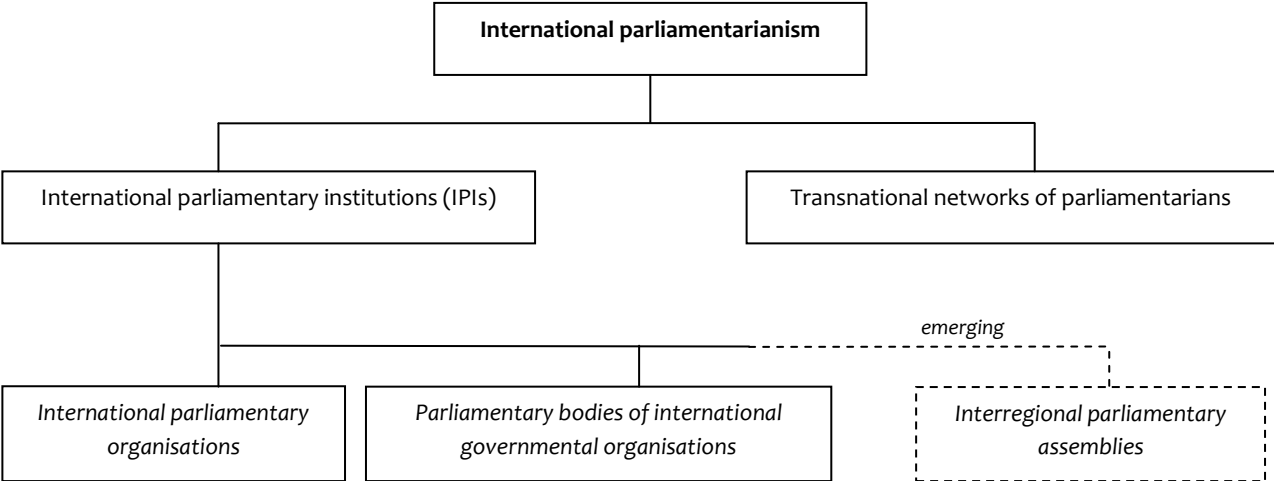
¹⁸ Seven transnational networks of parliamentarians have a consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council as “non-governmental organisations”. In particular, Parliamentarians for Global Action and the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development have a general consultative status; AWEPA, the Inter-American Parliamentary Group on Population and Development, the Inter-European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development and the Parliamentary Association for Euro-Arab Cooperation enjoy a special consultative status. Source: *List of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council as of 1 September 2009, Doc. E/2009/INF/4*.

Figure 2 – Transnational networks of parliamentarians (as of 2012)

		Membership	
		<i>Universal</i>	<i>Restricted</i>
Purpose	<i>General</i>	Parliamentarians for Global Action Parliamentary Forum for Democracy	GLOBE International
	<i>Specific</i>	Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons Parliamentary Network on the World Bank Climate parliament Global Parliamentarians on Habitat Global Organization of Parliamentarians against Corruption International Parliamentarians' Association for Agriculture and Fisheries Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament Parliamentarians Network for conflict prevention and human security	Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum Coalition of African Parliamentarians against HIV and AIDS European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development European Parliamentarians with Africa African Parliamentary Poverty Reduction Network Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development Indigenous Parliament of America Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas Forum of Africa and Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development Inter-American Parliamentary Group on Population and Development European Interparliamentary Space Conference

The categorisation of international parliamentary actors is completed by “international parliamentary institutions”. Following Klebes and others, the term is used here as an umbrella definition to cover 3 distinct categories, namely “international parliamentary organisations”, “parliamentary bodies of international governmental organisations”, and “interregional parliamentary assemblies” (this latter is still in an emerging phase).

Figure 3 - Categorisation of international parliamentarianism



International parliamentary organisations are stand-alone parliamentary organisations, not formally affiliated with any international governmental organisation, ruled by a formal founding act (generally agreed upon by national parliaments, rarely by governments¹⁹), whose members are national parliamentarians who act in their official capacity and have been designated as delegates by national legislatures. These parliamentary organisations meet on a regular basis, and their statutes may provide for a permanent structure (including a headquarter, a secretariat and a governing body) in order to ensure the continuity of their work²⁰.

Table 3 – International parliamentary organisations (as of 2012)

Hybrid types	Pure types
Inter-Parliamentary Union SADC Parliamentary Forum Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly NATO Parliamentary Assembly Parliamentary Assembly of the Francophonie	Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference Baltic Assembly African Parliamentary Union Latin American Parliament (Parlatino) Forum of Speakers of Legislatures of Central America and the Caribbean Basin Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas Association of Pacific Island Legislatures Arab Inter-parliamentary Union Parliamentary Union of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference Member States Asian-Pacific Parliamentarians’ Union Asian Parliamentary Assembly Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region Amazonian Parliament Forum of Asia Pacific Parliamentarians for Education

The further classification according to purpose and membership would not be very useful here, since the Inter-Parliamentary Union is the only parliamentary organisation with a universal membership and general purpose; all the others have indeed a (geographically or linguistically) restricted membership. However, following Kissling, it has to be recognised that some international parliamentary organisations, although formally independent, have established working relationships with international governmental organisations: this is the case, for instance, of the Inter-Parliamentary Union vis-à-vis the UN, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly vis-à-vis the NATO, the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly vis-à-vis the ASEAN etc. Thus, a distinction can be envisaged between “pure types” of international parliamentary organisations (i.e. entirely

¹⁹ The Latin American Parliament (Parlatino) is an example of an international parliamentary organisation established through an inter-governmental treaty. However, in the majority of cases, these institutions are established by a decision of the national parliaments involved, through an international parliamentary agreement: examples are the Forum of the Presidents of the Legislative Powers of Central America and the South Caucasus Parliamentary Initiative.

²⁰ To be even clearer, what distinguishes the category of international parliamentary organisations from the previous one basically is: a) the fact that national parliamentarians cannot voluntarily join them, but have to be designated as delegates by national legislatures; b) the existence of a formal founding act (either an inter-governmental treaty or an inter-parliamentary agreement).

autonomous from any international governmental organisations) and “hybrid types” (i.e. independent parliamentary organisations cooperating with an international governmental organisation through a formal agreement or a decision taken by the bodies of the IGO²¹).

From a functional point of view, international parliamentary organisations share the same functions of transnational networks of parliamentarians, especially in terms of technical assistance programmes (IPU), and confidence building and parliamentary socialisation (NATO Parliamentary Assembly)²². However, being institutions where parliamentarians act in their official capacity, in addition to these basic functions they are also endowed with a general deliberative capability, consisting in the formulation of non-binding resolutions that at best can develop into soft law (i.e. declarations, recommendations etc.). Some of them can conclude international treaties (Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas) and private law contracts²³ (African Parliamentary Union; Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean); send election observation (African Parliamentary Union, Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas) and fact-finding missions (NATO Parliamentary Assembly); receive petitions from citizens (Parlatino). *Vis-à-vis* the national level, some have specific functions dealing with the harmonisation of national legislations (Arab Inter-parliamentary Union, Asian Parliamentary Assembly), including the possibility to adopt framework conventions (Forum of Speakers of Legislatures of Central America and the Caribbean Basin). Moreover, the fact that the hybrid types cooperate with international governmental organisations has led them to acquire some sort of consultative and oversight functions, too. Some of them, indeed, can adopt non-binding resolutions, proposals or opinions addressed to the States or governmental bodies of the IGO they cooperate with; these latter may be called to report to the parliamentary organisation in response to the recommendations received (NATO Parliamentary Assembly).

As to *parliamentary bodies of international governmental organisations*, these can be defined as parliamentary branches of IGOs, established through an intergovernmental agreement (either the same founding treaty of the IGO or a separate one), whose members may be appointed by national assemblies or directly elected to that office. This category of IPIs is closely linked to the phenomena of regionalism and regional integration and, thus, it is widespread where these phenomena are more consolidated, namely in Europe, Latin America, Africa and the former Soviet Union Area. As already mentioned, Europe has historically played a prominent role in this process, both because the Council of Europe was the first IGO to add a parliamentary dimension to its institutional architecture in 1949, and because the EP was the first supra-national parliamentary institution to be elected by universal suffrage in 1979. In other contexts, the experience of regional/sub-regional parliamentary bodies is more recent.

²¹ Both from a legal and functional point of view, these hybrid types represent a sort “grey zone” between the category of international parliamentary organisations and that of parliamentary bodies of international governmental organisations (see below).

²² Similarly to transnational networks of parliamentarians, 3 international parliamentary organisations (namely the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, the Latin American Parliament and the Inter-Parliamentary Union) have established a strategic partnership with the UN. However, unlike the category of parliamentary networks, they obtained a permanent observer status at the United Nations General Assembly as “entities and organisations”, a circumstance that confirms the difference in terms of status between the two categories. Source: *List of non-Member States, entities and organizations having received a standing invitation to participate as observers in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly as of January 2010*.

²³ On the distinction between the right to conclude international treaties and the right to conclude private law contracts, see Kissling 2011, pp. 17-18.

Table 4 - Parliamentary bodies of international governmental organisations²⁴

Name	Acronym	Related IGO	1st session
Europe			
Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly	PACE	Council of Europe	1949
European Parliament	EP	European Union	1952
Nordic Council	-	Nordic cooperation	1953
Benelux Interparliamentary Consultative Council	Benelux Parliament	Benelux Economic Union	1955
EFTA Parliamentary Committee	EFTA PC	European Free Trade Association	1977
Parliamentary Assembly of the Central European Initiative	CEI PA	Central European Initiative	1999
Africa			
Consultative Council of the Arab Maghreb Union	UMA Consultative Council	Arab Maghreb Union	1993
Inter-parliamentary Committee of the West African Economic and Monetary Union	UEMOA IPC	West African Economic and Monetary Union	1998
Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States	ECOWAS Parliament	Economic Community of West African States	2000
East African Legislative Assembly	EALA	East African Community	2001
Pan-African Parliament	PAP	African Union	2004
CEMAC Community Parliament	CEMAC CP	Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa	2010
Latin America and the Caribbean			
Andean Parliament	Parlandino	Andean Community	1984
Central American Parliament	Parlacen	Central American Integration System	1991
Mercosur Parliament	Parlasur	Mercosur	1994
Assembly of Caribbean Community Parliamentarians	ACCP	Caribbean Community and Common Market	1996
Assembly of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States	OECS Assembly	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States	2012
Trans-regional IGOs			
Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of Member Nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States	IPA CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States	1992
Inter-parliamentary Assembly of the Eurasian Economic Community	EurAsEC IPA	Eurasian Economic Community	2001
Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization of the Collective Security Treaty	CSTO PA	Organization of the Collective Security Treaty	2007
Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe	OSCE PA	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe	1992
Arab Parliament	-	League of Arab States	2005
Parliamentary Assembly of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries	CPLP PA	Community of Portuguese Language Countries	2009

²⁴ In table 5, parliamentary bodies are associated to IGO they belong to. These IGOs are grouped according to the composition of macro geographical (continental) regions and geographical sub-regions adopted by the United Nations (unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm, latest access: July 2012). The criterion to place an IGO in a specific region/sub-region (namely Europe, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean) is that at least 90% of the countries composing the organisation have to be part of that single specific region/sub-region. A residual category has been created, labelled as “trans-regional”, to group those IGOs not satisfying this criterion, including those established in the former Soviet Union area (namely CIS, EurAsEC, and CSTO).

In addition to the functions displayed by the previous categories, the affiliation to IGOs confers on these parliamentary bodies the capacity to be part and virtually influence inter-governmental decision making processes, and at the same time to acquire and develop a set of functions that somehow mirror the traditional ones exercised by legislatures at the national level, such as consultation, legislation, oversight on budget and the executive. Thus, for instance, the European Parliament can adopt a motion of censure on the activities of the European Commission; the CEMAC CP and the UEMOA IPC may amend the draft annual budgets proposed by the respective Commissions; the PACE and the EurAsEC IPA have the right to appoint the judges of the judicial institutions of the respective organisations (i.e. the European Court on human rights and the EurAsEC Community Court); members of EALA has the right to introduce private bills in the Assembly.

Finally, an additional category is emerging within IPIs, dealing with the phenomenon of inter-regionalism²⁵. Traditionally, IPIs have established a network of contacts among themselves, mainly through meetings among delegations, speakers, committees, as well as through cooperation agreements. Thus, for instance, the EP organises joint parliamentary meetings, such as the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership (ASEP) and the EU-Africa parliamentary dialogue under the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, and it is represented in the Nordic Council, the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference and the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region²⁶; the East African Legislative Assembly organises the Inter-Parliamentary Relations Seminars, attended by speakers from the SADC Parliamentary Forum, the ECOWAS Parliament and the Pan-African Parliament. Moreover, cooperation agreements exist between the Latin American Parliament and the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, as well as between the Arab Inter-parliamentary Union and the African Parliamentary Union²⁷.

These contacts may be considered as part of the classical function of “parliamentary diplomacy”. However, when the interparliamentary cooperation 1) does not remain a parliamentary autonomous initiative, but takes place within a broader framework of interregional partnerships; and 2) is gradually institutionalized, it can give birth to fully-fledged *interregional parliamentary assemblies*. These assemblies are composed of parliamentarians from different IPIs and/or national legislative bodies, meeting on a regular basis and having an organised institutional structure (including a secretariat, a presidency, a bureau and standing committees). Examples are the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (ACP-EU JPA)²⁸, the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary

²⁵ Rüländ recognises that “the proliferation of regional actors created a need for intermediaries linking global and regional institutions and – at the lower end of the international system – regional and national policy-making levels. As a result interregional fora and subregional transborder institutions emerged” (Rüländ 2001, p.5). In this sense, see also Hettne 2003.

²⁶ The European Parliament has been described as a labyrinth of interparliamentary relations between parliaments of different levels (Herranz 2005)

²⁷ For a more detailed description of the interregional parliamentary cooperation, see Cofelice 2012 and Delputte 2013.

²⁸ Established under the 2000 Cotonou Agreement between the African, Caribbean and Pacific states and the EU. It brings together 156 participants, 78 from the European Parliament and 78 from the parliaments of ACP countries. It meets twice a year, once in the EU and once in an ACP country. However, the continuity of its work is assured by a Bureau (composed of a co-president and twelve vice-presidents from each side) and, since 2003, by three standing committees, namely on Political Affairs; Economic Development, Finance and Trade; Social Affairs and the Environment.

Assembly (EuroLat)²⁹, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM PA)³⁰ and the EuroNest Parliamentary Assembly (EuroNest PA)³¹.

Given their particular nature of a *trait d'union* among parliamentarians from different regional contexts, in addition to classical functions like deliberative, consultative and parliamentary socialisation, they have developed at least two specific competences. The first one deals with joint oversight of interregional partnerships. The ACP-EU JPA, for instance, can scrutinise the spending under the European Development Fund (over which democratic control is otherwise weak: Corbett *et al.* 2011) as well as the ACP-EU Economic Partnership Agreements, and may conduct fact-finding missions to this aim. Even though the ACP-EU JPA (and the other interregional parliamentary assemblies as well) does not have binding powers in this domain³², the importance of this function lies in the fact that it gives ACP parliamentarians (and not only European ones) a unique opportunity to question the EU institutions on the way how they carry out their policies towards ACP countries. Secondly, interregional parliamentary assemblies may function as a permanent and institutional setting to carry on a long-term policy- and action-oriented intercultural dialogue on issues such as human rights, democracy and global public goods. The number of resolutions and declarations unanimously adopted testifies their capacity to reach consensual agreements on these issues among parliamentarians from different regional (and cultural) contexts that may promote the harmonisation of national legislations to international standards. This dialogue has not only been fruitful in the deliberative domain, but it

²⁹ Established in 2006 as the parliamentary branch of the Bi-regional Strategic Association, launched in June 1999 in the context of the European Union-Latin American and Caribbean Summits (EU-LAC). It is composed of 150 members, 75 from the European Parliament and 75 from the Latin American component, namely Latin American Parliament (Parlatino), Andean Parliament (Parlandino), Central American Parliament (Parlacen), Mercosur Parliament (Parlasur, as of April 2009), as well as the Mexican and Chilean congresses, in view of the existence of the Joint Parliamentary Committees EU/Mexico and EU/Chile. Its institutional structure includes an annual plenary session; a Secretariat; an Executive Bureau, composed of the two Co-Presidents and 14 Vice Presidents (7 from each side) elected by the Assembly; three standing committees (on Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights; Economic, Financial and Commercial Affairs; Social Affairs, Human Exchanges, Environment, Education and Culture).

³⁰ It is the successor of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, that took place during 2004-2008 (Stavridis 2002, Pace and Stavridis 2010). Its main originality resides in the fact that there are parliamentarians from the EP but also from the EU-27, which is not the case in the other inter-parliamentary assemblies. There is a Plenary that meets each year or on an extraordinary basis, as well as a Bureau, four permanent committees (on Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights; on Economic and Financial Affairs, Social Affairs and Education; on Improving the Quality of Life, Exchanges between Civil Societies and Culture; and on Women's Rights), plus several working groups.

³¹ It is the parliamentary branch of the recently established (2009) Eastern Partnership of the EU, involving Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. It held its inaugural session in September 2011. It consists of two components: the European Parliament delegation (60 members) and the Eastern European partners' delegations (10 members each, whereas Belarus is not taking part, for the time being, in the Assembly's activities). It includes a plenary that meets, in principle, once a year, alternately in an Eastern European partner country and on the premises of the European Parliament; a Secretariat; a Bureau consisting of two Co-Presidents (one belonging to each of the two components of the EuroNest PA) and a number of Vice-Presidents; four standing committees (on Political Affairs, Human Rights and Democracy; Economic Integration, Legal Approximation and Convergence with EU Policies; Energy Security; Social Affairs, Education, Culture and Civil Society).

³² Indeed, reports and recommendations, as well as written and oral questions to decision-making and executive bodies, represent the common tools that interregional parliamentary assemblies are endowed with to implement this task.

has also produced joint strategies and concrete action plans to face the most serious challenges in the above mentioned areas³³.

4. Conclusion

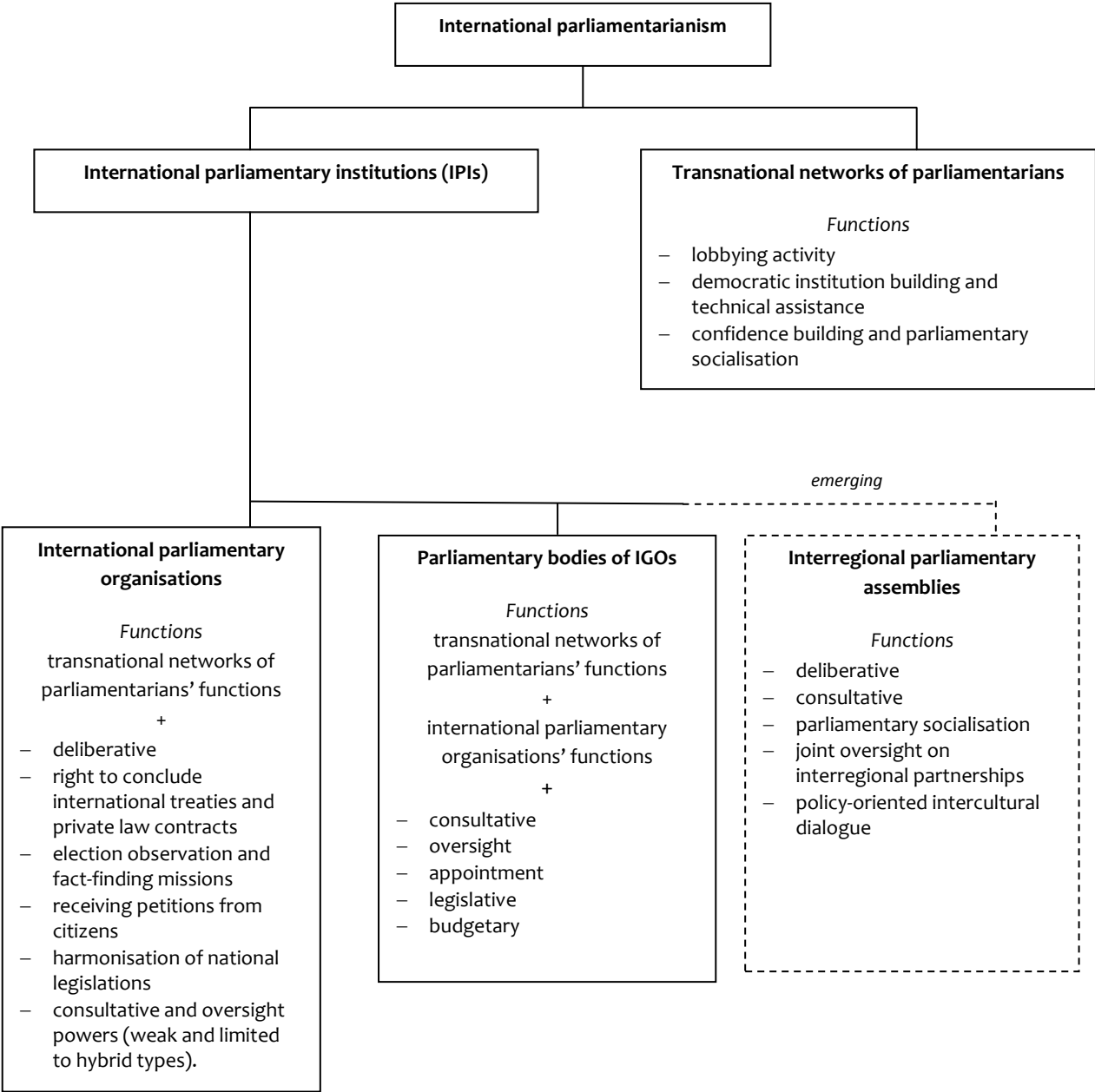
In functional terms, the effort of classifying various forms of international parliamentarianism matters because, as the empirical survey revealed, what international parliamentary actors can do depends first and foremost by their membership to a specific category of institutions/networks (i.e. by their legal and institutional “identity”).

Moreover, a sort of “ladder of parliamentary functions” can be identified. Basically, the functions of transnational networks of parliamentarians are in fact similar to those of NGOs and interest groups, namely lobbying governments and national legislatures to promote particular values, adopt specific policies or accede to international legal instruments; providing democratic institution building and technical assistance programmes; upholding confidence building and parliamentary socialisation. In addition, international parliamentary organisations may have a general deliberative capacity; the right to conclude international treaties and private law contracts, to send election observation and fact-finding missions, to receive petitions from citizens; specific functions dealing with the harmonisation of national legislations; some sort of consultative and oversight powers (but extremely weak and limited only to the hybrid types). Parliamentary bodies of IGOs represent the only category of IPIs that are located in a broader governance framework, where they perform their functions in relation to other political institutions, in particular political “executives”: this has allowed them to develop a set of core functions that parliaments traditionally exercise at the national level too, i.e. consultative, oversight, appointment, legislative and budgetary. In this respect, the EP, with its system of direct election and its wide range of functions, still represents the most advanced laboratory of international (parliamentary) democracy and, to a large extent, a model of possible trajectories of evolution for other IPIs.

However, parliamentary bodies are not equal at all in terms of how they can exercise these functions, and actually only few of them have the statutory powers to make decisions that are binding for the governments. In other words, the attachment to an intergovernmental organisation may represent a *necessary*, but not a *sufficient* condition for their empowerment. Exploring the way in which these powers may vary, as well as *why* they vary, may represent the object of future research.

³³ Examples are the ACP-EU JPA’s strategy to combat the child labour (2008), on achieving the MDGs (2010), on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in developing countries (2011); as to EuroLat PA, it is worth mentioning the coordinated strategy in the framework of the UNFCCC negotiations (2010) and the strategy on employment protection, especially for women and young people (2011).

Figure 4 – Categories and functions of international parliamentarianism



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