

By-Lined Article

MORE THOUGHTS FROM THE G-20: THE DREAM ASSIGNMENT

By Thomas R. Schmuhl

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Buried in the innumerable articles on this week's G-20 economic summit in Pittsburgh, I noticed an offhand comment upon which only a lawyer might fixate. It was something to the effect of the following: "The G-20 operates without a permanent secretariat or staff and does not have a formal set of rules or by-laws."

Most normal ambitious people in the world would focus on the first part of the comment. Their thoughts would turn to envisioning themselves as an important member of the G-20 staff or perhaps even as the first "Permanent Secretary General and Majordomo of the G-20" with a spacious office overlooking the gardens of a converted chateau somewhere on the outskirts of an appropriate city like Paris and an expense account befitting the first permanent official planner of the entire world's economy. Heads of state and finance ministers might change with the political winds, but the first Permanent Secretary General of the G-20 would be just that – permanent.

However, lawyers are not normal ambitious people. We do not focus as mere ambitious people do on the first part of the comment. We do not care terribly much about the office in the chateau or the expense account or even the permanency of the post.

Instead we focus on the second part of the comment. We focus on the brief clause about there being no formal set of rules or by-laws. That is the kind of thing that grabs our attention.

What an assignment! We could undertake to write the corporate governance document for the functional equivalent of the world's economic board of directors. An assignment like that has real importance. Let yourself dream of it for a moment.

Presiding over countless drafting sessions involving lawyers from twenty different legal systems writing in almost as many languages. Heroically sitting through all-night debates about the differences between theories of comma placement in the rule establishing the procedures applicable to decisions involving economic emergencies. Resolving the diplomatic intricacies of whether to number the rules with Arabic numbers or Roman numerals by suggesting that they be identified by

letters using only those letters that are found in the Esperanto alphabet. Finding a way to perhaps even ultimately create a special international court of arbitration (based in the Hague of course) as a peaceful means of interpreting the hundreds of confusing rules that we have written.

Those are things that appeal to lawyers. The fact that normal people could not care less about them is irrelevant. If normal people want to be extra normal, they can go to law school like we did.

Then, of course, we cannot forget the ultimate value that would come as a result of having focused on the truly important task of writing the rules, namely the business development value.

Just imagine the laudatory comments that could appear on the firm's website: "In addition to his active practice with respect to the allocatur and certiorari petitions to the Supreme Court involving parking ticket appeals in cities of the fourth class, Mr. _____ was the principal draftsman of the G-20's bylaws which determine the future of the world." That is the kind of record that could guarantee success in any competition to get a new client.

It's a good thing that normal people do not think the way we do. They might try to take away our dream assignment. Just imagine it – "Draftsman of Bylaws for the World."

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[Thomas R. Schmuhl](#) is a partner in Duane Morris' [Philadelphia office](#). He focuses his practice on [international](#) law, financial restructuring and corporate finance.

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