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Inter-Organizational Relations in the United Nations System

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ABSTRACT

Tell Me Thy Company: Inter-Organizational Relations in the United Nations System

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For all its significance in world affairs, the United Nations is full of paradoxes. As a system – i.e. as a collection of independent yet interrelated entities – its contradictions derive from the juxtaposition of forces encouraging fragmentation and calls for improved harmonization. On its part, the reality of inter-organizational relations in the United Nations ever portrays a varied landscape: some agencies reveal a higher proclivity to engage in partnerships than others; while those establishing links show certain preferences in their choice of associates. In an inter-organizational context marked by both integrating and dividing forces, which logic explains the relational behavior of United Nations agencies? In quest of an answer, the present analysis engages a resource-based perspective of organizational action. The main contention is that international organizations are purposeful actors that need both material and symbolic resources in order to function and survive. As follows, their relational behavior is strategic, and mainly driven by the effort to acquire and maintain essential capital. The explicit inference is that the proclivity of a given agency to cooperate with its cohorts will be determined by the extent of its resource needs, and its choice of partners by the specific type of asset it lacks. In order to test the

suggested argument, a qualitative research method is used to analyze in-depth four United Nations organizations: the World Bank, the World Food Programme, UNICEF and UNESCO. The findings confirm that inter-organizational relations in the United Nations are largely shaped by the strategic decentralized decisions of individual agencies, as guided by their organization-specific asset situation. The broader conclusion is that the (relational) behavior of international organizations mainly responds to a resource-based rationale.

*To my mother, Nike Ivankovic-Murphy
and to Martin Yaconis, mi todo.*

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Administrative Committee on Coordination
CAME	Conference of Allied Ministers of Education
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CCO	Committee of Cosponsoring Organizations (UNAIDS)
CEART	Committee of Experts on the Application of Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel (ILO/UNESCO)
CEB	Chief Executive Board for Coordination (UN System)
CGAP	Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CO	Country Offices
CPR	Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit (World Bank)
DHA	Department of Humanitarian Affairs (United Nations)
ECHA	Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council (United Nations)
ECPS	Executive Committee on Peace and Security
EDUCAIDS	Global Initiative on Education and HIV/AIDS
EFA	Education for All
EPI	Expanded Programme on Immunization
EPTA	Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance
EWLP	Experimental World Literacy Programme
EXCOM	Executive Committee
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FIRST	Financial Sector Reform and Strengthening Initiative
FRESH	Focusing Resources on Effective School Health
GA	General Assembly (United Nations)
GAIN	Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition
GAVI	Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEI	UN Girls Education Initiative
GIEWS	Global Information and Early Warning System
GOOS	Global Ocean Observing System
GWP	Global Water Partnership
HLCM	High Level Committee on Management (CEB)
HLCP	High Level Committee on Programmes (CEB)
HQ	Head Quarters
IANWGE	UN Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality
IAPSO	Inter-Agency Procurement Service Office
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IAWG	Inter-Agency Working Group on Evaluation
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development

ICEF	International Children's Emergency Fund
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies (United Nations)
IDA	International Development Association
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFI(s)	International Financial Institution(s)
IGO(s)	Inter-Governmental Organization(s)
IIEP	International Institute of Educational Planning
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INEE	Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies
INGO(s)	International Non-Governmental Organization(s)
IOR(s)	Inter-Organizational Relation(s)
IO(s)	International Organization(s)
IR	International Relations
ISDR	International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (United Nations)
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
JP	Joint Programme
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MI	Micronutrient Initiative
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGLS	Non-Governmental Liaison Service (United Nations)
NGO(s)	Non-Governmental Organization(s)
NIEO	New International Economic Order
NWICO	New World Information and Communications Order
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (United Nations)
OCP	Onchocerciasis Control Program
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (United Nations)
SCN	Standing Committee on Nutrition
SF	Special Fund
TCE	Transaction Costs Economics
TF	Task Force
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCG	United Nations Communications Group
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistant Framework
UNDCP	United Nations International Drug Control Programme
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNFIP	United Nations Fund for International Partnerships
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGIWG	UN Geographic Information Working Group
UNHABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIACC	United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Committee on Human Rights Education in School Systems
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNKRA	United Nations Korean Relief Agency
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNRRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
UNWRA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization
WWAP	World Water Assessment Programme

“Tell me thy company, and I will tell thee what thou art.”

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra
Don Quixote. Part ii. Chap. xxiii.

And vice-versa

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The last six decades have witnessed a true Big Bang of international institutionalization. By the turn of the century, there were approximately two hundred and fifty intergovernmental organizations¹ ever growing in size, complexity and scope. International organizations (IOs) have further become “central actors on the stage of world politics ... they are active agents of global change.”² And amid it all stands the United Nations (UN) system, itself “an alphabet-soup of semi-autonomous programs, funds, committees, commissions, and agencies.”³ On its deliberative side, the UN materializes as an enormous policy-making and administrative structure with quasi-universal membership. On its operational side, the ‘system’ encompasses a multiplicity of separate organizations that carry out important activities in a vast array of issue-areas and virtually every corner of the world. To offer a few examples: UNICEF buys half of the world production of vaccines, while the United Nations Population Fund is the largest purchaser of contraceptives in the world.⁴

For all its magnitude and significance in international affairs, the United Nations lives in a world of paradoxes. As a ‘system’ – i.e. as a collection of independent yet interrelated entities – its contradictions derive from the juxtaposition of centrifugal and centripetal forces. Historically, the trend has been towards fragmentation. At birth, the United Nations was designed as a

¹ See: Union of International Associations, ‘Yearbook of International Organizations, 1999/2000 Edition’, <http://www.uia.org/statistics/organizations/ytb199.php>

² Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 156.

³ Weiss, Forsythe and Coate 2004, 246.

⁴ Mentioned, for instance, in: United Nations, ‘Questions and Answers...Image and Reality...about the UN’, <http://www.un.org/geninfo/ir/index.asp?id=150>

decentralized structure of loosely coupled independent organizations. Indeed, “[w]hen the post-World War II system of international organizations was created, its founders deliberately designed it to be decentralized.”⁵ Some entities – the ‘specialized agencies’, including the Bretton Woods institutions⁶ – were born apart from the world body; some before, some concomitantly to the UN core administration.⁷ Accordingly, each of the agencies “has its own charter, membership, assembly and other organs, and its own policies, programmes, budget, and secretariat, with the executive head ... elected by its member governments.”⁸ In 1945, these independent IOs were formally incorporated into the UN orbit through relationship agreements with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), as stipulated in the UN Charter.⁹ However, such links were to be based on ‘consultations’ with and ‘recommendations’ from ECOSOC, while the sovereignty of the agencies was in essence maintained. Further mitigating their amalgamation into the system has been the frequently emphasized powerlessness of ECOSOC as a harmonization hub: “[t]he UN Charter assigns to ECOSOC the role of coordinating UN activities in the economic and social fields but with little or no effective means of exercising its influence.”¹⁰ The resulting state of affairs has been that, “despite their links to the UN, the specialized agencies have operated quite independently ... [and] [t]he Bretton Woods institutions, in particular, have operated quite independently of ECOSOC and the rest of

⁵ Ruggie 2003, 302.

⁶ For a list of the different organs and organizations comprising the UN system, as well as their formal status and relationships, see the organizational chart of the UN in Annex A.

⁷ For instance: the ITU dates back to 1865 and the WMO to 1873. FAO, on its part, was established in 1943 and held its first session in 1945 – the same year of the San Francisco Conference that established the United Nations.

⁸ Childers 1995, 21.

⁹ Articles 57 (Chapter IX) and 63 (Chapter X) of the UN Charter – the text of which is available from: <http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/index.html>

¹⁰ Nordic UN Project 1991, 34.

the UN system.”¹¹ At the other end of the UN ‘family’, the ‘programmes and funds’ were alternatively conceived as emanations of the UN proper, and were thus to respond directly to it: “[t]hese funds are not autonomous ... they are UN subsidiaries set up by the General Assembly and under the responsibility of the Secretary-General.”¹² Still, they are separately run, and hence despite the fact of having “a direct line of responsibility to the UN, in practice they are as independent as the specialized agencies with their own governing bodies and sources of funds.”¹³ Adding to the fragmentation is the tendency generally attributed to public organizations of trying to maximize their autonomy.¹⁴ The Jackson Report of 1969 on the capacity of the UN development system characterized the specialized agencies as ‘principalities’;¹⁵ while some analysts have compared the relationship between the UN Secretariat and the agencies to the struggle between the king and the feudal barons in medieval England.¹⁶ Accordingly, “[t]he semi-autonomous parts of the ‘UN system’, and particularly the specialized agencies’ jealously protected empires, do not lend themselves to an effective programme coordination.”¹⁷ Overall, “the highly decentralized nature of the system and its resistance to integrative reforms have tended to fuel perceptions of institutional disarray and fragmentation.”¹⁸

Moreover, the IOs now pertaining to the ‘UN family’ were one by one created with a functional purpose in mind, and following the notion that “the world could be ordered functional sector by functional sector – e.g., trade, finance, food and agriculture, health, social affairs,

¹¹ Karns and Mingst 2004, 116.

¹² Childers 1995, 18.

¹³ McLaren 2001, 321 (note 1).

¹⁴ Alter and Hage 1993, 13.

¹⁵ Beigbender 1997, 36. The Report was written in 1969 by UN official Sir Robert Jackson and was entitled “A Study of the Capacity of the United Nations Development System.”

¹⁶ McLaren 2001.

¹⁷ Beigbender 1997, 49.

¹⁸ Luck 2003, 18-19

disarmament, and the like – through the work of specialized international organizations, technically staffed and closely linked to kindred staffs within member states.”¹⁹ Hence, for instance, “the immediate need to deal with homeless and orphaned children in the postwar world led to the creation in 1946 of ... UNICEF.”²⁰ In their early days, UN organizations could find in such functional mandates a straightforward validation for their activities and a compelling basis for receiving financial support. The division of global issues into functional areas like ‘health’ or ‘education’ – aligned with their mandates – was furthermore compatible with their separate organizational existence. Soon, however, the reality of global issues proved to be more intricate and multifaceted. In response to such complex and ever changing circumstances, international organizations constantly formulate new tasks and procedures, the generally persistent and often observed phenomenon of ‘mission creep’ in bureaucracies.²¹ Moreover, and as I will argue throughout this dissertation, UN agencies – like any organization – need resources in order to survive. The search for prosperity has also led to the expansion of activities – as a way of enlarging the organization’s basis for support. The result has been a historical record for UN agencies of unsystematic growth and expanding mandates, which has in turn resulted in the often criticized duplication and overlap of activities. Within an ever more crowded organizational environment, incentives for competition were added to the tendency towards fragmentation.²² During the 1960s and 1970s, “the generous availability of donor funds led existing and some new UN bodies into an unprecedented scramble for new projects and programmes – often, and

¹⁹ Puchala 1996, 243.

²⁰ Nordic UN Project 1991, 34.

²¹ Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 9.

²² High organizational density generates incentives for rivalry by rendering resources scarcer – in relative terms – and by increasing uncertainty (for instance: Cooley and Ron 2002, 6). Similarity of goals – as materialized in overlap and duplication – and of resource needs – i.e. agencies lacking the same assets – also breed competition (Akinbode and Clark 1976, 103).

increasingly, in fierce internal competition over turf and funds.”²³ That being the case in times of ‘prosperity’, the financial stress the UN has often faced in the past two and a half decades could only be expected to increase the incentives for inter-agency rivalry – now over scarce resources.

In view of this historical tendency towards fragmentation and rivalry, it would be hard to expect the UN organizations to act in concert. Yet this has been the case. Alongside the described centrifugal trends, there have been a series of *centripetal expectations*. First, the reality of multifaceted and cross-cutting issues has persistently called for more ‘holistic’ policies, expecting UN organizations to join forces and act in concert. In 1997, then Secretary General, Kofi Annan, emphasized “the degree to which policy issues have become, or are now better understood to be, inter-sectoral or trans-sectoral in character ... The implications of this change for the United Nations are clear: future success hinges on its ability to achieve a unity of purpose among its diverse departments, funds and programmes, enabling it to act coherently and deploy its resources strategically.”²⁴ Second, against the described tendency towards separation and autonomy stands the fact that these diverse organizations were officially brought together under the same institutional umbrella. They are all, in one way or another, formally linked to the UN core administration. Moreover, as component parts of a ‘system’, UN organizations cannot avoid the actuality of their interdependence.²⁵

Finally, both member states and the UN administration itself have repeatedly raised criticisms of the system’s fragmentation and have further advanced calls to increase its coherence. Ever since its inception, there have been numerous attempts at reforming the United

²³ Bergesen and Lunde 1999, 76.

²⁴ Annan 1997, 12 (par. 17-18).

²⁵ By definition, “[a]ll systems are characterized by an assemblage or combination of parts with relations among them such that they are interdependent.” (Scott 1981, 103).

Nations, and the improvement of coordination and collaboration among its constituent entities has surfaced as a central and constant feature of discussion. Hence, for instance, “[t]he bulk of reformers’ proposals directed toward improving the U.N.’s development performance calls for somehow improving coordination among U.N. developers.”²⁶ Similarly, improving coordination and bringing unity of purpose to the diverse UN operational activities was a central theme in the comprehensive reform plan introduced by Kofi Annan in 1997.²⁷ Before expanding on the calls for greater harmonization and integration, two caveats are in place. First, the attitude of member states in this regard has sometimes been considered ambiguous. On the one hand, there is a “persistent pressure from the USA and even from the majority of member states, at least in the North, for the UN to continue to streamline the Secretariat and to reduce the budget.”²⁸ Demands have also pointed to reducing overlap and duplication and to improving the overall coherence of the system. On the other hand, member states have been argued to favor certain UN organizations over others – encouraging individuality rather than harmonization. They have also spurred inconsistency by sustaining themselves contradictory positions in the governing bodies of different UN agencies. Finally, there have also been divisions among member states and indifference on the part of many, all of which have contributed to fragmentation by providing “ample opportunities for agency heads to engage in splitting tactics or to pursue independent agendas.”²⁹ The second caveat is that the push for greater harmonization coming from the UN itself has also sometimes been described as weak and ambiguous. One suggestion has been that the “General Assembly does not possess the authority, by virtue of either its constitution or its

²⁶ Puchala 1996, 233

²⁷ As signaled in Annan 2002, 20.

²⁸ Bertrand 1993, 429-430.

²⁹ Luck 2003, 22.

past history, to impose strategies or priorities, even on the organizations of its own ‘family’.”³⁰ Others have argued that “[b]ecause the Secretary-General lacks the power either of the purse or of appointment in dealing with the specialized agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions, he must rely on persuasion, personality, and indirect appeals to publics and Member States to give a sense of direction and coherence to the system as a whole.”³¹ Finally, within reform proposals, many instances have been emphasized as still maintaining and reinforcing the distinctiveness and independence of the different UN organizations.³²

Nonetheless, there have been both a plurality of declarations and reports condemning the divisive tendencies of the system, as well as an identifiable push towards greater harmonization and coherence. Starting with the 1969 report mentioned above, diverse UN studies have “pointed to the dearth of coordination within UN economic development programs, making them costly and ineffective. Such criticisms were reiterated with increasing vigor in the 1980s.”³³ More recently, in his 1997 program for reforming the UN, then Secretary General Kofi Annan suggested that “[t]he major source of institutional weakness in the United Nations is the fact that over the course of the past half century certain of its organizational features have tended to become fragmented, duplicative and rigid, in some areas ineffective, in others superfluous.”³⁴ Likewise, the push to increase collaboration and coordination among the organizations of the UN system can be concretely observed in the many organs and mechanisms created for that purpose – particularly in the area of development operations. As early as 1946, an Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) was established, with the purpose of implementing the

³⁰ Williams 1987, 222.

³¹ Luck 2003, 22.

³² Bergesen and Lunde 1999, 93.

³³ Mingst and Karns 1995, 34.

³⁴ Annan 1997, 11 (par. 12).

relationship agreements between the specialized agencies and the UN. Its mandate eventually evolved and the committee was re-baptized in 2001 as the Chief Executive Board for coordination (CEB) – currently including 27 UN organizations. As previously mentioned, ECOSOC was set up to function as a coordination focal point and as a force of integration for UN activity in the social and economic fields. Subsequently, “[w]ith the merger of the EPTA and the Special Fund in 1965, UNDP was created and, with the so-called consensus resolution in 1970, was given the role of central funding and coordinating body for technical assistance under the UN system.”³⁵ The 1997 UN reform plan included the establishment of the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and the UN Development Assistant Framework (UNDAF), both collective action tools intended to assist in the articulation by all concerned UN agencies of a coherent, coordinated and collaborative approach to development in the field. The UN Resident Coordinator System likewise pursues this objective: it consists of representatives at the country level –funded and managed by UNDP – who lead a ‘UN country team’ (UNCT) and foster collaborative activities among agencies, such as the sharing of information and joint planning. Kofi Annan’s reform plan also promoted the use of common premises – the ‘UN House’ – and established the UN Development Group (UNDG), a forum for UN organizations to further come together. The Millennium Declaration of 2000 was later translated into a set of concrete objectives and indicators – the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – the intent of which is, among other things, to promote convergence among agencies through a unifying conceptual framework.³⁶ And as recently as 2006, the High Level Panel on UN System-Wide Coherence drafted a report suggesting a pilot initiative – ‘One UN’ – similarly aimed at harmonizing the

³⁵ Nordic UN Project 1991, 57.

³⁶ See for instance: Ruggie 2003, 305.

work of UN operational organizations.³⁷ Cooperation has been also indirectly pushed for through other appeals by member states and the UN Secretariat, such as that of ‘doing more with less’ – reducing costs – and of enhancing the response capacity and efficiency of the UN system as a whole. These are just a few examples among many, and they all demonstrate the presence of a tangible drive towards increasing the level of teamwork among UN organizations.

Overall and as the preceding description suggests, the life of operational agencies pertaining to the UN system unravels amid the conflicting forces of centrifugal tendencies and centripetal expectations (summarized below in Table 1.1). With a focus on the agencies, the interesting analytical point is to see how they have responded to such environment – i.e. what is the content of their relational behavior.

Table 1.1: Centrifugal and Centripetal Forces in the UN system

<p>Tendency towards Fragmentation</p>	<p>→ Decentralized structure of the UN system, as designed (largely autonomous organizations; argued weakness of ECOSOC as harmonization hub).</p> <p>→ Tendency of public organizations to maximize their autonomy.</p> <p>→ Incentives for competition (ever more crowded environment with domain overlap and duplication, and ever scarcer resources).</p>
<p>Drive towards Harmonization</p>	<p>← Complex and cross-cutting global issues (require concerted action).</p> <p>← UN-IOs formally brought together under the UN institutional umbrella (all part of the 'system', interdependent).</p> <p>← Push towards system-wide coordination and collaboration (UN reform).</p>

³⁷ The report can be found at: <http://www.un.org/events/panel/>

INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONS IN THE UN SYSTEM

Within the contradictory picture described above, the reality of system-wide coherence in the United Nations ever portrays an uneven landscape. Some organizations reveal a higher propensity to engage in collaborative relations than others; while those establishing links show certain preferences in terms of their choice of partners. Moreover, variation can be found in the proclivity for cooperative interaction by any single agency across time. Overall, however, the collaborative behavior of UN organizations does draw a discernible pattern. Yet again, interestingly enough, such pattern does not respond to the plain prevalence of any of the two forces – inward and outward – described above. The centripetal tendency present in the history of the UN system emanates, as suggested, from factors such as: the constant search for autonomy by organizations; the functional and formal separation of these agencies' mandates and organizational structures; and the competitive environment that emerges at the intersection of increasing overlap – product of individual expansion – and the ever scarcer resources available in the UN context of recurrent financial crises.³⁸ If any or all of these centrifugal logics is accepted and narrowly followed, then the instances of inter-organizational collaboration become hard to explain. If we acknowledge, for instance, the “premise that there is a strain toward organizations maximizing their autonomy, then the establishment of an interdependency with another organization would seem to be an undesirable course of action.”³⁹ In other words, if organizations are essentially concerned with their independence, why would they sacrifice such autonomy to cooperate with others, and especially with potential competitors?

³⁸ The last set of factors is linked to the argument that goal similarity and resource shortage lead to inter-organizational competition, as organizations try to monopolize an area's available resources (see for instance: Gillespie and Perry, 1975).

³⁹ Aiken and Hage 1968, 914.

Alternatively, if we take the factors highlighted in the centripetal forces, the unevenness of collaboration given by the cases of reticence to cooperate becomes problematic. As I explained above, the push for greater coherence and harmonization of activities has surfaced in the form of expectations, either as demands from the UN core administration and/or member states, or as an efficiency goal based on the multifaceted character of the issues to be dealt with. By and large, the external push to improve system coherence has been fairly widespread. Because of the multilateral nature of partnerships, and the universal applicability of harmonization, the request to increase collaboration has been directed to all the entities pertaining to the UN system. Hence, for instance, while the focus of the 1997 reform plan was on the organizations most closely attached to the UN, the funds and programs, part of it likewise pointed to the most independent agencies, as it sought to “bring the UN and the international financial institutions into closer working relations.”⁴⁰ In this vein, then Secretary General, Kofi Annan, stressed: “In the context of development operations, in particular, the United Nations must develop closer cooperation with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the regional development banks.”⁴¹ Therefore, if we take the collaborative behavior of UN agencies to derive from this external push to increase system coherence – a line of reasoning that I will later show to be linked to traditional approaches to IOs in international relations – then the unevenness of the response by different organizations is left unexplained. Alternatively, it could be argued that the demand for increasing partnerships has been differently applied to each organization – i.e. that the pressure itself has varied and hence so have the reactions. Even then, and as the case-studies will show, the empirical pattern still does not seem to apply, in that a

⁴⁰ Weiss, Forsythe and Coate 2004, 259.

⁴¹ Annan 1997, 49 (par. 147).

number of the organizations that should be responsive appear reticent, and some enjoying greater independence of action appear more receptive to the external demands. Finally, since the push to bring together the different pieces of the UN system has, in one way or another, always been present, it fails to fully account for the longitudinal variation also identifiable within the behavioral history of each organization. The argument that explains inter-organizational collaboration as responding to the need for greater efficiency in the face of complex global problems faces similar difficulties. Its inner logic is static, as it is based on a constant: organizations collaborate simply because partnerships offer a more efficient response to complex issues than uncoordinated separate action. However, the world maladies UN agencies fight against – such as hunger – have always been complex, yet international action has not always nor in all cases been coordinated and orderly structured. Indeed, collaboration and coordination in the UN system forever cohabit with overlap and duplication, the latter left unexplained by the efficiency argument. If the inescapable external demands and the often claimed efficiency aspirations are there, and their impact on organizations significant, why is it that the UN system still struggles with fragmentation?

By and large, neither of the conflicting forces described – integrating and fragmenting – appears to predominate in the UN system. From there it further follows that variables linked to either one of these forces cannot by themselves fully account for the pattern of partnerships actually revealed by the agencies. The question stands: which logic explains the relational behavior displayed by different UN organizations? And moving a step forward into the content of such behavior: what determines their choice of partners?

IN A NUTSHELL

The line of reasoning I propose in this dissertation to explain the mixed pattern of partnerships in the UN is mainly informed by resource-based perspectives. I contend that international organizations need assets in order to survive and to carry out their activities. These resources are of two types: material and symbolic. Material assets include funds and infrastructure (e.g. field offices, personnel), while symbolic resources comprise the organization's 'image' (whether it is favorable) and its 'saliency' in a domain of activity. IOs strive to obtain and maintain these resources, and will partner with other organizations in order to achieve this. While states occupy a central role in the environment that surrounds UN agencies, there are also other relevant actors, such as non-governmental organizations, the private sector and other international agencies. In trying to manage their resource portfolios, UN agencies see sister UN organizations as possible sources of assets. Accordingly, the key rationale driving the proclivity of any of these organizations to cooperate with its cohorts is given by the need to cover its 'resource gaps'. Finally, once within the confines of a partnership and assuming a minimum of mandate congruency, the choice of partners can be expected to follow a logic of complementarities, again in terms of resources – e.g. agencies with a deteriorated image will look for prestigious partners, financially 'poor' organizations will seek to associate with 'rich' ones, etc. Overall, as my analysis shows, inter-organizational relations in the UN are significantly shaped by the strategic decentralized decisions of individual agencies, attached to their organization-specific resource situation.

CONTRIBUTION

The central purpose of this dissertation is the analysis of inter-organizational relations among United Nations organizations. At the empirical level, the aim is to identify and explain the propensity of different UN agencies to collaborate with ‘sister’ organizations, as well as their choice of partners. The contribution that such an analysis is expected to make is linked, at the most basic level, to the fact that “[o]rganizations are important not only as objects of study in their own right, ... but also for their effects on individuals and the economy.”⁴² International organizations – such as the UN agencies or the United Nations itself –play a key role in world politics. IOs are at the core of an international landscape of expanding institutional density, and constitute at this point in history a perennial and ubiquitous feature of world affairs. Their emergence and marked growth, as well as the more general “bureaucratization of the world are among the most important developments of the last two centuries.”⁴³ IOs also deal with countless and important global issues, permeating the globe with policies and programs that crucially affect the daily reality of much of the world’s population. Given both their pervasiveness and the impact of their activities, the study of international politics cannot be complete without an understanding of IOs and their behavior. The United Nations offers a suitable empirical setting for the analysis of international agencies, as it gathers under its institutional umbrella an ample group of distinct yet comparable IOs.

On its part, the issue of inter-organizational relations represents a particularly interesting and consequential instance of IO behavior. To begin with, multifaceted global issues are increasingly understood as requiring a holistic, integrated approach. Such a strategy in turn calls

⁴² Pfeffer 1982, 26.

⁴³ Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 44.

for different stakeholders to act coherently together. Accordingly, team work is ever more at the center of discussions about international action in general, in complex multi-stakeholders situations such as the 2005 Tsunami or the 2006 Darfur crises. Shortly after the former, for instance, a New York Times article pointed to the attempt by aid workers in the area to bring order to the ‘anarchy of altruism’, and further emphasized: “[w]ith emergency provisions now piling up in warehouses and on tarmacs around the Indian Ocean, officials are trying to avert a potential tragedy that often strikes after a disaster: the lack of coordination among those seeking to do good.”⁴⁴ Referring to the same instance, another observer stated: “[b]ringing lasting relief to tsunami-affected countries will continue to be extremely complex, and that is why all those involved must work together strongly. Coordination between bodies including the International Federation [of the Red Cross] and UN agencies has to date contributed significantly to the alleviation of suffering.”⁴⁵ Similarly, it has been suggested that in humanitarian crises “coordination is of paramount importance. Good coordination literally saves lives.”⁴⁶ As follows within this context, “before implications can be derived for the design and administration of public policies involving multiple organizations, the factors leading to the development and maintenance of interorganizational relationships must be identified.”⁴⁷

The United Nations is in essence a multiple-organizations structure. Accordingly, partnerships result inescapably consequential for the UN in that they can crucially affect – for

⁴⁴ *New York Times*, January 3 2005.

⁴⁵ Declaration by Johan Schar, Tsunami Operations Special Representative of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies – in a UNICEF Press Release (23 June 2005). Available at http://www.unicef.org/media/media_27478.html

⁴⁶ From a statement on behalf of the European Union by Mr. Koen Davidse, Minister Plenipotentiary, Plenary. Agenda item 39: Strengthening of the Co-ordination of Humanitarian and Disaster Relief Assistance of the United Nations, including Special Economic Assistance (New York, November 11, 2004). Available from: http://europa-eu-un.org/articles/es/article_4037_es.htm

⁴⁷ Schmidt and Kochan 1977, 222.

better or for worse – the system’s overall performance and outputs. As explained above, the operational facet of the world body is organized as a ‘system of planets’ – i.e. as a collection of separate yet interrelated organizations. Due to this configuration, the functioning of the UN as a whole is largely shaped by the extent and character of the interaction among the different distinct units that constitute the ‘family’. In such situations “where the components of an organizational system are functionally interdependent ... The parts cannot behave without affecting each other; they cannot be understood without reference to each other and to the whole.”⁴⁸ Adding to their significance as a subject of study, inter-agency collaboration and coordination are being palpably promoted in the UN as a preferred configuration and *modus operandi* for the system.⁴⁹ They have accordingly emerged as recurrent themes in reports and reform schemes on UN management and administration. Behind this trend there is, in part, the reasoning described before: namely, that complex multi-stakeholders issues – ubiquitous in the UN context – are better tackled by both a holistic approach and concerted action. There is also the belief that harmonization addresses core failings of the system. Among the main criticisms targeted at the UN as a whole are those pointing to fragmentation, individual agencies’ mission creep, task overlap, and inefficient use of resources. Alternatively, partnerships are perceived by advocates as consequential in offering higher performance and a more cost-effective and flexible type of organizational arrangement.⁵⁰ They are also seen as helping avoid duplication and reduce overhead costs.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Chisholm 1989, 17.

⁴⁹ This assertion is based on the diverse harmonization mechanisms established within the UN system, as exemplified above, as well as on various declarations – by the UN Secretary General, representatives of member states, etc. – and reports highlighting the importance and desirability of greater inter-agency coordination and collaboration. See also, for instance, the report of the Secretary General’s High Level Panel on UN System-Wide Coherence, ‘Delivering As One’ (available from: <http://www.un.org/events/panel/>).

⁵⁰ Smith, Carroll, and Ashford 1995, 11.

⁵¹ The general case could be and has been made that greater cooperation among separate organizations is not necessarily more efficient or simply ‘better’. For instance, Edgren and Möller have suggested that “[c]ompetition

By and large, partnerships appear ever more at the forefront of deliberations on global governance, and on UN management and reform, due to their effects on collective performance and mission accomplishment. They are also acquiring a center-stage position as a postulated solution to many ‘UN maladies’, and as a necessity when tackling intricate global situations involving a multiplicity of actors. Still, notwithstanding its apparent significance and encouragement at the system-wide level, and as a study of the UN suggests: “coordination cannot be *forced upon* sovereign organizations.”⁵² As follows, a careful look at the rationale determining the motivation of separate IOs to interact and collaborate with each other results of particular importance. From an individual organization’s perspective, and as I will show throughout this dissertation, resources are the main issue at stake in partnerships. I argue that IOs enter into associations with one another for strategic reasons – in order to garner needed assets. Partnerships therefore result crucial for the focal organization due to their implications – rewards and costs – in terms of capital, both symbolic and material. Interestingly, this resource-based logic that predominates at the level of individual IO behavior results distinct from the largely utilitarian reasoning behind system-wide harmonization efforts described above. The juxtaposition of these two rationales adds relevance to uncovering the underlying impetus in inter-IO collaboration, since the relational pattern and dynamics ensuing from decentralized strategic action need not lead to the results intended by a system-wide, functionally-oriented synchronization scheme.

between [UN] agencies for the job of executing projects is seen as no more harmful than competition between private consultancy firms for a contract” (1990, 32). Alternatively, Helfer, for e.g., has contended that “competition with other organizations does not necessarily improve performance ... To the contrary, competition can lead organizations to engage in behaviors that are inefficient or undesirable from a functional perspective” (2006, 704). The assessment of which of these positions is more valid or correct exceeds the purposes of this dissertation. I take increased partnerships to be overall favored and promoted in the UN context, and thus portray the reasoning and beliefs behind such particular position.

⁵² Nordic UN Project 1991, 21 (my emphasis).

At the theoretical level, the intended contribution of this dissertation is two-fold. On the one hand, it adds to the study of partnerships – of the factors and processes leading to their establishment – by examining their occurrence among a particular type of organizations: international agencies. On the other hand, in analyzing an instance of IO choice, strategy and action, it contributes to the field of international relations by furthering the understanding of international organizations and their behavior. To be noted, there is ample literature dedicated to the study of relations among organizations.⁵³ Scholars from a variety of disciplines – sociology, economics, business – have “chosen strategic alliances as an arena for scholarly inquiry, reflecting the fact that strategic alliances themselves have grown dramatically in number and in importance for many organizations.”⁵⁴ International organizations, on their part, have not been subject to such analyses of relational and cooperative behavior. This responds indeed to the fact that, for most of international relations theory, “the story of IOs ends where it ought to begin – with their founding. What these institutions do once they have been created remains under-examined and under-theorized.”⁵⁵ In all fairness, a number of scholars within the discipline have begun to look at international organizations as independent actors in world politics and to analyze their organizational features, behavior and impact.⁵⁶ Then again, there is still much to be explored in the life of IOs, their ‘social’ behavior being one example. In this respect, there are many theoretical developments taking place in other research fields dealing with organizations more generally that can be fruitfully imported to the study of international agencies. My analysis of inter-IO relations undertakes such an interdisciplinary endeavor.

⁵³ For a review of this literature see for instance: Galaskiewicz 1985; Oliver 1990.

⁵⁴ Gulati and Zajac 2000, 365.

⁵⁵ Helfer 2006, 658.

⁵⁶ For various studies in this vein, see for instance the edited volume: Martin and Simmons 2001.

A closer look at the patterns of association among different international agencies and at their rationale for partnership formation can offer important insights regarding IO behavior. This is so in that, as Pfeffer and Salancik suggest, “[t]o understand organizational behavior, one must understand how the organization relates to other social actors in its environment.”⁵⁷ First, the act of associating with others entails strategic choice, as organizations decide whether to partner and with whom to do so. Hence, by looking at the path followed by IOs in this regard, their conduct as purposeful and strategic actors can be grasped. Second, my focus here is on the links international agencies establish with other IOs. This approach moves the spotlight away from states and the IO-states relation, adding to the analysis of international agencies as actors in their own right. It also incorporates a broader and more complete definition of the environment surrounding IOs: “[s]pecifically, this environment includes not only the IO’s member states (principals) that star in realist and rationalist-based accounts of IOs, but also other non-state actors that may hold means of direct or indirect material and normative influence over the IO.”⁵⁸ By examining how IOs respond to and interact with this more comprehensive environment, a more complete view of their life and behavior can be obtained.

STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

The present analysis is organized as follows. Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical lineaments of my argument. It introduces the topic of inter-organizational relations and the case of the UN system of organizations. It further contemplates alternative explanations and the literature on organizations and associations, on the one hand, and on IOs on the other. Subsequently, the

⁵⁷ Pfeffer and Salancik 1978, 257.

⁵⁸ Weaver 2003, 16.

chapter details the scheme of the argument I propose – its variables, main causal mechanisms and hypotheses. The chapter ends with a note on methodology. Chapters 3 through 6 in turn explore the empirical application of my argument. Each of these chapters introduces a case-study examining the resource situation, expected collaborative inclination, and observable relational behavior of a selected UN-IO. More precisely, the empirical chapters contemplate the following organizations in their listed order: the World Bank, the World Food Programme, UNICEF and UNESCO. Chapter 7 then concludes the dissertation. It first introduces a brief recapitulation of the case-studies, and subsequently extends the analysis by discussing the ‘flip-side’ of inter-organizational relations. Such section is in turn followed by a consideration of the general trends identifiable for the UN system as a whole regarding the issue of partnerships. The chapter closes with a number of final reflections and remarks.

CHAPTER 2
TO PARTNER OR NOT TO PARTNER:
EXPLAINING THE RELATIONAL BEHAVIOR OF IOS

Inter-organizational relations can be defined as “relatively enduring transactions, flows, and linkages that occur among or between an organization and one or more organizations in its environment.”⁵⁹ While an interaction per se may involve either rivalry or collaboration,⁶⁰ my focus here will be on cooperative associations.⁶¹ These in turn, entail “the presence of *deliberate* relations between otherwise autonomous organizations for the joint accomplishment of individual operating goals.”⁶² Alliances are voluntary.⁶³ And so, in the UN system, “any cooperation that has been achieved has been *because the agencies want it*.”⁶⁴ From there it further follows that in order to understand and explain the pattern of partnership formation among UN organizations we need to start by investigating individual IO behavior – as seen in the proclivity of each agency to establish ties with others, as well as in their choice of partners. Such is the aim of the discussion that follows. The first section of the chapter explores different disciplines and approaches in the search for useful theoretical tools to analyze the relational conduct of (international) organizations. In the process, I will present a range of alternative explanations for the pattern of collaborative action revealed by various UN agencies, and will

⁵⁹ Oliver 1990, 241.

⁶⁰ Benson 1975, 230.

⁶¹ Throughout this dissertation, I will use such terms as inter-organizational relationship, partnership, association or alliance interchangeably. They are all meant to refer to cooperative links between two or more organizations.

⁶² Schermerhorn 1975, 847 (my emphasis).

⁶³ The business literature on strategic alliances, for instance, defines them as ‘voluntary arrangements’ or ‘voluntary inter-firm cooperative agreements’. See: Gulati and Gargiulo 1999, 1440 ; Das and Teng 2000, 33 ; Gulati and Zajac 2000, 366.

⁶⁴ McLaren 1980, 143 (emphasis in original).

further assess their soundness for the case here in point. A later section introduces the theoretical antecedents of my approach to the topic. Finally, I describe in detail the line of argument I propose to explicate IO behavior as materialized in inter-organizational relations within the UN system.

THE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Within the discipline of international relations (IR), there is a long tradition in the analysis of IOs: “[t]he role of international institutions has been central to the study of world politics at least since the conclusion of World War II.”⁶⁵ And yet, the investigation of the topic is still very much in its infancy. As a review of organization theory in sociology suggests, “what we know about organizations is a consequence of how the questions have been phrased and raised.”⁶⁶ In the literature on international organizations, many questions – such as how they relate to other IOs – remain under-explored. Two mainstream theories in IR, realism and neoliberal institutionalism, have simply not focused on such types of questions about IOs. The reason is twofold: first, IOs have been conceived by such traditional perspectives “as simple forums for state interaction or passive embodiments of rules and norms.”⁶⁷ As *means* for others to operate, rather than actors in their own right, IOs are not seen as capable of engaging in purposive action. When such behavior is envisaged, these institutional ‘tools’ are mainly assumed to straightforwardly and passively follow states’ directives. Hence, from a realist perspective, international organizations are largely “arenas for acting out power relationships

⁶⁵ Martin and Simmons 1998, 729. For a review of the field, see also: Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986; Archer 1983, ch. 3.

⁶⁶ Pfeffer 1982, 3.

⁶⁷ Weaver 2003, 10.

[between states].”⁶⁸ Moreover, the independence of IOs is often regarded as illusory, in that they respond “chiefly – and perhaps exclusively – to the interests of the most powerful states in the system.”⁶⁹ Realism adds to this a disregard for IOs as epiphenomenal – not significantly affecting the international system – and as “little more than a means for the great powers to exercise their hegemonistic desires.”⁷⁰ As a whole, such conception of IOs has derived in their behavior being perceived as a theoretically predefined outcome that can be deduced from states’ preferences and that does not necessitate further explanation. On its part, neoliberal institutionalism, maintaining the premise of state-centrism in world affairs, similarly views IOs as institutional ‘structures’, but proposes rather that they are created to minimize collective action problems for states. As Keohane asserts, “international regimes perform the functions of establishing patterns of legal liability, providing relatively symmetrical information, and arranging the costs of bargaining so that specific agreements can more easily be made.”⁷¹ Here, IOs fulfill useful and important functions, yet they continue to be perceived as empty frameworks, as tools for states to manage their relations.⁷² Once again, the claim is that “IO behavior follows directly from state demands, ergo IOs exhibit little autonomy of any consequence.”⁷³ Within these assumptions and claims, then, the theoretical debate about international organizations as sustained between these two IR perspectives has often “rested upon the rather static, unproductive question of whether IOs even ‘matter’ in explaining the great issues of world politics.”⁷⁴ It has also attended to the question of

⁶⁸ Mearsheimer 1995, 13.

⁶⁹ Lyne, Nielson and Tierney 2006a, 3.

⁷⁰ Geri 2001, 446.

⁷¹ Keohane 1984, 88.

⁷² See also regime analysis – for instance: Krasner 1983.

⁷³ Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 10.

⁷⁴ Weaver 2003, 20

why states create and act through international institutions.⁷⁵ But in conceptualizing IOs as passive arenas or structures, these perspectives miss a systematic consideration of IO independent and purposeful behavior. Due to this omission, the preceding perspectives do not offer straightforward alternative explanations to the question of why international agencies establish cooperative links with each other. Yet, I will incorporate them in my theoretical discussion by importing the central assumptions and claims these paradigms hold about IOs to the analysis of organizational behavior and alliances. I will do so by highlighting the links between these and other theories from sociology and economics that embrace similar contentions yet do address the rationale for relational action in organizations, and will hence indirectly consider realism and neoliberal institutionalism when contemplating alternative explanations below.

To be fair, the preceding criticism does not apply to all perspectives on international organizations within IR. While there is still much to be asked and answered in the study of IOs, a number of theorists within the discipline have indeed thought about international institutions as independent and influential actors whose activities demand explanation, and have embarked on a “deeper exploration of that IO agency and its effects on IO behavior itself as well as the ‘feedback’ mechanisms through which IOs proactively influence their external environments.”⁷⁶ Constructivist studies have advanced a triple counter-claim to the traditional paradigms, arguing that: IOs do in fact matter and have an effect on states and world politics; they constitute autonomous strategic actors; and they not always do what states want. In this tradition we find analyses that focus on the bureaucratic attributes of IOs, their internal dynamics or their

⁷⁵ See for instance: Abbott and Snidal 1998.

⁷⁶ Weaver 2003, 27.

organizational culture.⁷⁷ As a group, authors in this vein have put forward the “recognition that these international organizations past the point of their creation evolve into social actors in their own right, developing degrees of autonomy and influence and displaying cultures, interests and behavior that ensure their legitimacy and survival in their external environments.”⁷⁸ Here again, the literature is missing studies specifically applied to the question of how IOs relate to other international agencies in their environment. However, by being directed to the understanding of IO action, they can still be considered as an alternative approach to inter-organizational relations – an instance of organizational behavior. Therefore, I will return to this tradition and contemplate it more in detail in the section that follows.

WHAT MAKES THE WORLD OF ORGANIZATIONS HANG TOGETHER?

Organizations are collectivities oriented towards the attainment of specific goals.⁷⁹ They are worlds in themselves, and contain within their boundaries actors and dynamics that add to their overall character and conduct. At the same time, “[e]very organization exists in a specific physical, technological, cultural, and social environment to which it must adapt. No organization is self-sufficient: all depend for survival on the types of relations they establish with the larger systems of which they are a part.”⁸⁰ From there it follows that factors potentially affecting the conduct of a given organization can be found either in its inside or in its milieu. Hence, alternative explanations can be classified by whether they point to internal or external determinants of behavior.

⁷⁷ See for instance: Finnemore 1993; Barnett and Finnemore 1999 and 2004; Barnett and Coleman 2005.

⁷⁸ Weaver 2003, 10.

⁷⁹ See Parsons 1960, 17; Scott 1981, 21.

⁸⁰ Scott 1981, 17.

EXTERNAL DETERMINANTS' ACCOUNTS

The action by an organization of interacting cooperatively with others may be prompted by the need to conform to external pressures, such as that coming in the form of demands from a higher authority.⁸¹ Following this logic, inter-organizational relations basically occur when “a powerful extra-organizational force demands this activity.”⁸² This line of argument can be associated with Agency Theory, which examines the governance mechanisms in delegation relationships, where a ‘principal’ – here the higher authority –delegates a task to an ‘agent’, who performs such work for the former, and hence needs to follow its directives.⁸³ The link is in the claim that “the preferences of the principal determine the design of the contract, its mechanisms of control, and the subsequent *behavior of the agent* ... alterations in the principal’s preferences ought to induce change in agent behavior even if the principal does not re-contract or ratchet up control mechanisms.”⁸⁴ In the case of international organizations, such as the UN agencies, member states are the higher authority or principal advancing demands. Accordingly, the behavior of IOs has been argued to follow from states’ demands. Similarly, Realism can be linked to the present argument on inter-organizational relations. As mentioned before, realists see IOs as tools of states and their behavior as deriving directly from powerful states’ desires. If applied to partnerships, the realist logic would coincide with the one now portrayed: if UN agencies harmonize their activities, it is because powerful states want them to.

⁸¹ Oliver 1990, 243.

⁸² Schermerhorn 1975, 849.

⁸³ For a brief description of Agency Theory see for instance, Rowlinson 1997, 29-33.

⁸⁴ Hawkins, Lake, Nielson and Tierney 2006, 34 (my emphasis). To be sure, Agency Theory contemplates both the existence of some range of autonomy on the part of the agent as determined by the delegation contract, and the possibility of ‘agency slack’ – namely, independent action by the agent which is undesired by the principal. Still, monitoring, sanctioning and incentives are seen as reducing the possible slippage and as helping overcome the ‘agency problem’.

There are a series of problems with the preceding argument as applied to inter-organizational relations in the UN. First, the idea of a higher authority imposing its will on agencies seems to suggest that the resulting behavior is *mandated* – i.e. that organizations have no choice but to passively comply with the external directive. On its part, the push to increase system-wide coherence in the UN has taken the form of an appeal rather than a command. UN resolutions and reports prompt and invite specialized agencies and other organizations to implement harmonization measures, but “[a]n invitation is not a directive, and everything is still left to the individual agencies to take whatever action they choose.”⁸⁵ Even if they all equally conform to the external push to increase partnerships, UN organizations still have a choice in the content of the collaborative action, as given by the selection of preferred partners. Ultimately, cooperative associations between autonomous entities are voluntary, and the passive view of organizations that the present argument suggests fails to consider the deliberate choice entailed in them. Furthermore, the argument runs into difficulties when faced with situations where the actors in question do not respond automatically or perfectly to the external pressure or demand. Such instances demonstrate that there are IOs “that are capable of exercising discretionary behavior independently of the wishes of their dominant member states.”⁸⁶ As I have explained in the preceding chapter, the push to increase system-wide coherence has been relatively constant, both throughout the history of the UN and across the system. Nonetheless, and as the case studies will show, there is variation in the proclivity of UN agencies to collaborate with others, not only across cases but also along time for each single IO. This variation could, in turn, be explained from this perspective with the argument that the attitude of member states towards harmonization

⁸⁵ McLaren 2001, 317 (my emphasis).

⁸⁶ Haas 2004, 2.

is itself ambiguous – i.e. that partnerships are endorsed by some states in certain occasions, while in other instances fragmentation is encouraged instead. The reasoning would read that IOs are responding to states' directives, yet that the latter are mixed, and therefore so is the outcome. Such argument, however, proves underdetermining, since it does not allow for clear predictions as to which incentive – towards division or integration – will predominate and in which cases. The case could be also advanced that the pressure applied by states displays indeed a clear pattern and that it varies from one organization to another. Even then the empirical landscape – as I will demonstrate in the case studies – still does not match the prediction that those more susceptible to states' pressures conform the most to them. Adding to the shortcomings of this perspective we find a limited view of the IOs' environment and of their behavior too. Here states are seen as the only actors in the context surrounding UN agencies notably impacting on their behavior. As I will subsequently argue, however, there are other actors that significantly affect international agencies and the actions they undertake, such as other IOs. Similarly, to think of IO behavior simply as either matching or not states' demands offers a circular and incomplete view of the content of such action. It presupposes states' desires to be omnipotent, and so classifies IO behavior only in those terms. It also assumes that proximity to states' demands is all there is to IO conduct. If the goal is to understand IO behavior, we need to consider action per se. What is more, the limited focus on the IO-states axis can obscure the recognition of variables external to such dyad that may be crucially shaping organizational behavior. And omitting significant factors can derive in the fallacy of adjudicating causal association to what is in fact a spurious correlation. In other words, IOs may be indeed doing what states want, but for other reasons not grasped by the IO-states relation. The external demands argument also suffers from an inherent

weakness: its explanation of IO behavior rests on the specification of states' preferences, which are not only difficult to measure but also tend to be inferred from the very outcome they are supposed to explain – what IOs do. Simply put: if IOs establish partnerships, then it is deduced that states want them to do so; if they do not collaborate, it is speculated that harmonization is not the course of action actually favored by states. Such reasoning is tautological and falls prey of the circularity intrinsic in the effort “to ‘induce’ preferences from observed behavior and then use these preferences to explain this very behavior.”⁸⁷ Lastly, even if we acknowledge that IOs subserviently follow the push from states to partner, the agencies still have some margin as to the actual content of such behavior – for instance, in terms of the choice of associates. The theoretical approach described so far offers no clues as to the rationale that shapes the pattern of preferred partners' selection.

Alternatively, the ‘external’ factor affecting the proclivity of an organization to establish collaborative links may be given by an abstract notion of efficiency or functionality. In this sense, agencies immersed in a context of interdependence will partner in order to minimize the costs involved in their interactions with others – for e.g. in terms of minimizing opportunistic behavior through contractual relations – or simply because team work is viewed as a more efficient and effective approach to the issues to be tackled by the multi-organizational system as a whole. Such reasoning finds representation in Transaction Costs Economics (TCE), itself concerned with the institutional mechanisms – markets or hierarchies – that govern economic exchanges.⁸⁸ Developed to explain the existence and influence of firms, this theoretical approach

⁸⁷ Frieden 1999, 60.

⁸⁸ See for instance: Williamson 1981.

“focuses on organizations as efficient solutions to contracting problems, incomplete information, and other market imperfections.”⁸⁹ In essence, the TCE argument suggests that there are a number of costs inherent in economic transactions, such as the risk of opportunism or the bounded rationality of the actors involved. Due to these limitations “markets may fail and be replaced by hierarchies as a governance mechanism. Hierarchies may foster common goals and objectives between transacting parties and facilitate close monitoring of each other’s behavior through rules, thus overcoming some of the difficulties of a market governance mechanism.”⁹⁰ Applied to inter-organizational relations, this approach “stresses the efficiency and cost-minimizing rationales for cooperation.”⁹¹ Partnerships can be seen as contractual relations between organizations aimed at managing their exchanges and at promoting reciprocity. The central argument in TCE is that “if one institutional governance mechanism is more efficient than another in reducing the costs of exchange, that is, the costs of information search and enforcement of contracts, then there is a tendency towards that form.”⁹² Hence, alliances will increase as a preferred strategy for organizations due to the economies of scale to them associated – their cost-minimizing and efficiency-maximizing character. Indeed, a third and in-between contractual mode has been added in more recent elaborations of TCE analysis: the ‘hybrid’ form of organization.⁹³ Alliances and networks can be argued to fall in this intermediate category.⁹⁴ Overall, the transaction costs perspective is “consistent with the argument that efficiency is an underlying determinant of IORs [inter-organizational relations].”⁹⁵

⁸⁹ Barnett and Finnemore 1999, 702.

⁹⁰ Ulrich and Barney 1984, 474.

⁹¹ Faulkner and De Rond 2000, 9

⁹² Alter and Hage 1993, 14.

⁹³ See for example: Williamson 1991.

⁹⁴ Thompson 2003, 30.

⁹⁵ Oliver 1990, 245.

In the discipline of international relations, transaction costs analysis has informed “neoliberal and neorealist debates over international institutions ... [N]eoliberals and neorealists understand world politics to be analogous to a market filled with utility-maximizing competitors. Thus, like the economists, they see organizations as welfare-improving solutions to problems of incomplete information and high transactions costs.”⁹⁶ The TCE line of reasoning finds clear echo in the view of IOs as created to minimize collective action problems and transaction costs for states: “In Coase’s ... theory, firms are formed when the transaction costs of direct contracting are too high for efficient operation. Similarly, the move from decentralized cooperation to IOs occurs when the costs of direct state interaction outweigh the costs of international organization.”⁹⁷ Linked to both neoliberal institutionalism in IR and to the efficiency-based argument for inter-organizational relations, we also find Functionalist Analysis. The connection is given by the “belief that governance arrangements arise out of the basic, or functional, needs of people and states.”⁹⁸ In TCE organizations exist to facilitate transactions. Functionalism, on its part, adds necessity to convenience and asserts that the purpose for which a given institutional structure has been created fundamentally explains both its emergence and its attributes. For the origin of institutions, the reasoning stands on a chain of reverse causation: the projected output of an organization becomes its founding source. Regarding their shape, the central axiom is that “form follows function.”⁹⁹ In IR, functionalist studies have advanced the claim that the existence of IOs can be explained by states’ need both to overcome collective action problems in achieving common goals – given a reality of interdependence – and to address

⁹⁶ Barnett and Finnemore 1999, 703.

⁹⁷ Abbott and Snidal 1998, 9.

⁹⁸ Karns and Mingst 2004, 40.

⁹⁹ Weiss 1975, 6.

complex global problems. In turn, the “form that specific functional organizations take is determined by the problem to be solved.”¹⁰⁰ If applied to the issue of partnerships in the UN, the contention would be that inter-organizational collaboration is prompted by the multi-faceted character of the issues to be dealt with. In today’s international context, “[t]he complex inter-relatedness of issues and their cumulative, often unforeseen, consequences demand far greater policy coherence than the existing system of national and international institutions has been able to muster.”¹⁰¹ Functionally assigned to issue areas that frequently overlap, and faced with intricate problems, agencies must act in concert for the larger UN system to better function.

The efficiency and functionality based arguments share many of the weaknesses highlighted above for the external demands approach. First, they are built around a constant – an abstract notion of efficiency or functionality – and therefore fail to fully grasp and explain both diachronic change and cross case variation. Of transaction costs analyses it has been said that “[c]oming from the economics literature, they replicate that literature in terms of offering what is essentially a static, equilibrium analysis.”¹⁰² Functionalism too has been criticized “for being a static theory which is ill-suited to the analysis of complex and dynamic social and organizational environments (...) [and that] fails to take account of two basic elements of social action – change and conflict.”¹⁰³ Applying these approaches to inter-organizational relations, the reasoning reads that agencies establish partnerships due to the higher efficiency derived from team work, or because they are a needed ingredient for the operation of the ‘system’ as designed – that is, as a set of separate yet formally related organs dealing with interconnected issues. The problem is

¹⁰⁰ Karns and Mingst 2004, 40. On the connection between problems to be solved and the design of institutions, see for instance: Koremenos, Lipson and Snidal 2001.

¹⁰¹ Ruggie 2003, 301.

¹⁰² Pfeffer 1982, 175.

¹⁰³ Hassard 1993, 50.

that none of these two variables changes across different UN agencies, and they are also relatively static time-wise. If the key *raison d'être* of partnerships is that they are cost-effective, or a necessary means for a multi-parts structure to deal with complex global issues, then all UN agencies should equally and pervasively pursue such course of action. Yet some organizations reveal a higher proclivity to establish collaborative links than others. And those who associate tend to favor certain others as partners. The same logic applies longitudinally. While the world is indeed ever more complex, the issues tackled by the UN were not much less multi-faceted six decades ago. Problems such as hunger or education are in essence multi-dimensional. From the moment UN organizations were established and assigned to separate functional issue areas – cutting across and arbitrarily dividing a complex reality – the need for concerted action was there. Similarly, global issues have for quite some time now involved a multiplicity of stakeholders. If team work is an efficient format for international action under such circumstances, it must have been so in the past as today. Since neither the need for harmonization nor its virtues as a strategy can be proved to have significantly changed over time, the behavior of UN agencies in reaction to such factors should have remained similarly stable. Yet, the level of partnership formation in the UN has varied over time. The efficiency and functionality arguments are also marked by a teleological tone: in stressing the end point of organizational action, they imply an unproblematic course towards the intended purpose. Such reasoning, however, does not allow for a systematic consideration of possible deviations, in the form of unintended consequences, conflict or dysfunctional behavior.¹⁰⁴ It does not contemplate, for instance, the “tendency of bureaucratic structures to outlive their purposes and to become

¹⁰⁴ See for instance: Merton 1968.

ends in themselves.”¹⁰⁵ As applied to the empirical case of inter-organizational relations in the UN, this shortcoming materializes in the failure to account for the persistence of fragmentation in the system, the agencies’ search for autonomy, and the conflict inherent in the combination of integrating and dividing forces. Moving a step forward into the content of relational behavior, the choice of partners would be based, following the portrayed arguments, on functional relatedness – which derive in common concerns and points of synergy. However, UN organizations have over the years considerably expanded their mandates – a tendency that has resulted in mandate duplication and overlap. In such context of high domain proximity, a functional explanation does not allow for clear predictions as to the pattern partnerships will follow in terms of the choice of associates. That is, where there are many stakeholders for any given issue-area, it becomes difficult to discern preferred partners selection solely from functional match.

INTERNAL DETERMINANTS’ APPROACHES

As I have suggested, the accounts described so far point to a passive view of IOs as structures devoid of agency, their actions being straightforwardly shaped by external influences. The premise has also been that such behavior is functional, efficiency-oriented and non-problematic. Countering such positions, a series of scholars have advanced the claim that IOs represent indeed independent and influential actors in world politics, as they embark on autonomous action – beyond states’ demands – and “over time attain and engender types of power and authority that enable them to proactively shape that environment.”¹⁰⁶ Some studies have also contemplated the possibility of IOs revealing anomalous behavior, as occurring when

¹⁰⁵ Weiss 1975, 53.

¹⁰⁶ Weaver 2003, 11.

their actions do not follow states' desires, or where IOs produce dysfunctional and inefficient outcomes.¹⁰⁷ In the attempt to account for the variation and anomalies that the external determinants' accounts were leaving unexplained, this alternative literature opened up the black box of international organizations, and shifted the focus to their internal life. The logic is that, as collectivities, organizations comprise a series of sub-actors, internal features and inner political dynamics. Accordingly, organizational behavior can be perceived as being crucially shaped by the constellation of such internal factors. In this vein, a number of scholars in IR have argued that IOs "develop an internal culture that drives IO behavior, or echo the personal views of an autonomous leader."¹⁰⁸ Some works on IOs have accordingly stressed the role of particular figures or positions within them.¹⁰⁹ The executive head, for instance, has been argued to play "a key role in converting an international organization conceived as a framework for multilateral diplomacy into one which is an autonomous actor in the international system."¹¹⁰ Other analyses have explained IO behavior by pointing to its organizational culture, defined as "a set of basic assumptions, values, norms, beliefs, and formal knowledge that shapes collective understandings."¹¹¹ The underlying reasoning here is that "the pattern of assumptions, ideas, and beliefs that prescribes how a group should adapt to its external environment and manage its internal affairs influences calculations and actions."¹¹²

Many of the studies contemplating internal dynamics have centered on the conception of IOs as bureaucracies. They have thus looked at certain features of international administration

¹⁰⁷ For instance: Barnett and Finnemore 1999.

¹⁰⁸ Lyne, Nielson and Tierney 2006b, 43.

¹⁰⁹ For example: Finkelstein 1988.

¹¹⁰ Cox 1969a: 229.

¹¹¹ Kier 1996, 202. For an analysis of the role played by organizational culture in shaping the behavior of a UN-IO, see for instance Weaver 2003.

¹¹² Legro 1997, 35.

and civil service, as well as at the process of decision-making within IOs.¹¹³ Similarly, the ‘bureaucratic approach’ to IOs advanced by Barnett and Finnemore has looked at the strengths and weaknesses of international agencies as derived from their nature as bureaucracies.¹¹⁴ The argument put forward by these authors can be disaggregated in two related claims. The first one is that IOs constitute autonomous actors, which engage in purposive action and possess authority and power beyond that assigned to them as agents of states. The independence and influence of IOs is based on bureaucratic attributes such as expertise and impartiality.¹¹⁵ Second, Barnett and Finnemore suggest IOs can reveal pathological behavior, that is, “behavior that undermines the IO’s stated objectives.”¹¹⁶ In this regard they posit that the same bureaucratic traits and “internally generated cultural forces that give IOs their authority and power also can be a source of dysfunction.”¹¹⁷ The argument reads, for example, that IOs may become obsessed with their own procedures and rules – losing sight of their goals – and that their staff can also develop insulated and parochial worldviews as a product of bureaucratic specialization and compartmentalization. Here again, the main determinants of IO behavior are to be found inside the organization – in the dynamics triggered by its bureaucratic character and ethos.

One of the main limitations of perspectives based on internal determinants’ of IO behavior is that they tend to be highly relative and case-specific. Factors such as the style of leadership of a director general or the political influence of a given intra-organizational group in decision-making are often idiosyncratic to each single organization, and therefore prove difficult to generalize to other cases. Within the literature itself it has been acknowledged, for instance,

¹¹³ For example: Weiss 1975; Cox and Jacobson 1973.

¹¹⁴ Barnett and Finnemore 1999 and 2004.

¹¹⁵ On the influence of IOs based on their expertise, see for instance Finnemore 1993.

¹¹⁶ Barnett and Finnemore 1999, 716.

¹¹⁷ Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 17.

that “the evolution of ... organizational culture can only be described on a case-by-case basis.”¹¹⁸

The problem of using such perspectives to analyze inter-organizational relations in the UN is that they would not allow for a full comprehension of the general pattern that partnerships formation adopts in the system until each and all of the agencies are independently examined. This is so in that the conclusions from a given organization, as they are based on unique elements like the worldviews of its staff, cannot be generalized or compared to other instances. Indeed, many of the empirical analyses in this theoretical vein are based on single-case studies or, if contemplating several organizations, focus on a single occurrence of behavior within each case. Consequently, such analyses frequently materialize as post-hoc reconstructions of events which lack predictive ability and which cannot be falsified. Moreover, the internal dynamics approaches present themselves as surmounting a key theoretical gap in traditional perspectives by being able to conceive of and explain purposive and autonomous action by IOs. However, their treatment of these two features of IO behavior is still quite limited. Firstly, IOs are presented as purposive actors in that they do not subserviently respond to external pressures. Yet at the same time IO behavior is portrayed as determined by factors – like bureaucratic traits or organizational culture – that are somehow beyond the control of the organization. The elements of intentionality and choice are missing in these accounts of allegedly agency-driven action. This is particularly so for the narrative on IOs’ pathologies, where the unintended consequences of bureaucratic attributes result in behavior that is self-defeating for the organization. On its part, IO independence is in most cases signaled as occurring where organizational action is beyond or contrary to states’ intentions. Such view, however, is incomplete in that it circumscribes the behavior of international agencies to the IO-states relationship axis. With a principal-agent

¹¹⁸ Weaver 2003, 72.

undertone, it assumes that IO autonomy can only be considered vis-à-vis states. It also presupposes that states are the sole significant actors in the environment surrounding IOs. In contrast, there are a number of other actors – NGOs, other IOs – in the organizational environment of international agencies, which interact with and have an effect on them. IOs maintain complex relations of both dependence and independence with several elements in their environments, not just states. And so, for instance, a given organization may show greater autonomy from member states while at the same time it becomes more dependent on another IO. Moreover, and as some authors in the internal determinants literature have themselves suggested, “IOs might act independently from, but consistently with, states interests.”¹¹⁹ The analysis of inter-organizational relations in the UN will take us to a more comprehensive understanding of IOs and their behavior than the one offered by the mentioned perspectives. The point of interest will be action itself and the rationale for it, rather than whether or not it conforms to states’ interests. Additionally, I will show how establishing cooperative links and selecting preferred partners entail purposive action and choice on the part of IOs. In partnering with sister agencies, UN-IOs are also managing their dependence-independence relations not only with member states but also with these other actors in their environment.

Ultimately, theories need to be assessed in terms of their empirical usefulness – namely, by how much they assist in the understanding of a particular phenomenon. As shown, much of the variation across cases and throughout time is left unexplained or underdetermined by the external determinants’ perspectives, which are based on general, constant or indefinite factors. Those approaches based on internal factors reveal the opposite shortcoming, with case-specific

¹¹⁹ Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 11.

accounts that prove hard to project beyond single instances. Overall, the perspectives described so far fall short of fully accounting for the pattern inter-organizational relations assume in the UN system – where both partnerships and fragmentation cohabit. In later sections, I will introduce an alternative argument that seeks to compensate for such empirical shortsightedness and to therefore offer a more adequate theoretical framework for the study of IOs and their relational behavior. In the paragraphs that follow, I will expose the lineaments of the literature that has guided my approach to inter-IO relations.

THEORETICAL ANTECEDENTS

The argument I advance in this dissertation has been largely informed by resource-based perspectives in organization theory. In particular, I have drawn on various insights from the Resource Dependence Approach – chiefly introduced in the work of J. Pfeffer and G. Salancik.¹²⁰ First, my argument seconds these authors' claim that organizations require resources in order to survive.¹²¹ According to the resource dependence perspective, “interorganizational interactions – communication as well as joint activity – are ultimately and fully dependent on resource acquisition.”¹²² Second, I concur with the postulate in this approach according to which organizations are ‘open-systems’ in that they interact with their environments in the attempt to “ensure future survival and growth by establishing favorable relations with other organizations controlling essential resources.”¹²³ This process in turn generates dependencies, as those controlling the resources needed by a given organization acquire power over it. Similarly, the

¹²⁰ The main presentation of the perspective is to be found in: Pfeffer and Salancik 1978.

¹²¹ Pfeffer and Salancik 1978, 258.

¹²² Alter and Hage 1993, 109.

¹²³ Aldrich 1979, 121.

lack of control by the focal organization of the assets it needs for survival confronts it with uncertainty. Inter-organizational relations are in turn seen as tools for organizations to manage such reliance and insecurity vis-à-vis environmental elements. In this way, the resource dependence perspective places emphasis on the environment and on organizational behavior as given when “organizations seek to manage or strategically adapt to their environments.”¹²⁴ Finally, I share with the described perspective the proposition that organizations are not passive structures but rather active actors determining their own fate, “and capable of changing, as well as responding to, the environment.”¹²⁵

While my framework of analysis follows the central lines of the resource dependence perspective as described above, it also departs from such approach in some respects. First, my unit of analysis is the whole organization. Alternatively, Pfeffer and Salancik conceive of organizations as ‘coalitions of interests’ and therefore also look at subunits and internal processes within them. Along this line, they suggest that the environment affects organizations “through the impact of environmental contingencies on the distribution of power within the organization. This power distribution, in turn, affected who succeeded to administrative positions and what point of view came to characterize the organization’s decision making.”¹²⁶ Second, my analysis looks at inter-organizational relations as a strategy for organizations to acquire needed resources. The resource dependence perspective, on its part, looks at the interaction involved in resource acquisition as potentially problematic, in that it may imply for an organization dependency and uncertainty. This is so in that control over the resources needed by an organization confers others with power over it, and so, the focal organization “must attend to the demands of those in its

¹²⁴ Pfeffer 1982, 192.

¹²⁵ Aldrich and Pfeffer 1976, 83.

¹²⁶ Pfeffer 1982, 202 (discussing Pfeffer and Salancik 1978).

environment that provide resources necessary and important for its continued survival.”¹²⁷ Accordingly, organizations seek to manage interdependence and avoid uncertainty by acquiring *control* over assets, which in turn entails “decreasing the organization’s dependence on others and/or ... increasing others’ dependence on it, that is, modifying an organization’s power relations with other organizations.”¹²⁸ Overall, the emphasis of the resource dependence approach is placed on power relations of control and reliance, and on how organizations adapt to the environment by managing resource-related external demands, dependencies and uncertainties. As follows, its focus is on the ‘reactive’ aspect of organizational action. My emphasis is in the more ‘proactive’ side of IO behavior – as seen in the proclivity of agencies to collaborate and partner with others.

Additionally, the present analysis of inter-IO relations incorporates a few insights from Institutionalism.¹²⁹ In such perspective, an accent is placed on the social and normative context, the claim being that “organizations are structured by phenomena in their environments and tend to become isomorphic with them.”¹³⁰ Along these lines, organizational behavior is argued to respond to a logic of appropriateness, and be meant to “conform to what is societally defined as appropriate and efficient.”¹³¹ Organizations incorporate externally legitimated norms and practices into their actions as a means of maintaining stability, promoting success, acquiring legitimacy, as well as garnering resources.¹³² This responds to the fact that “an organization’s life

¹²⁷ Pfeffer 1982, 193.

¹²⁸ Ulrich and Barney 1984, 472.

¹²⁹ On Institutionalism – ‘old’ and ‘new’ – see for instance: Powell and DiMaggio 1991.

¹³⁰ Meyer and Rowan 1977, 346. See also: DiMaggio and Powell 1983.

¹³¹ Tolbert and Zucker 1983, 26.

¹³² Meyer and Rowan 1977.

chances are significantly improved by organizational demonstrations of conformity to the norms and social expectations of the institutional environment.”¹³³ Applied to inter-IO relations, the institutionalist perspective can be linked to two related claims. First, IOs can be argued to collaborate insofar as partnerships constitute an institutionalized practice seen as a ‘natural’ way of conducting activities or a ‘good thing to do’. Second, IOs may associate – i.e. pursue a collectively valued activity – in order to derive from such action legitimacy and external approval.¹³⁴ Combining the two, the reasoning is that, “[w]hen some organizational elements become institutionalized, that is, when they are widely understood to be appropriate and necessary components of efficient, rational organizations, organizations are under considerable pressure to incorporate these elements into their formal structure in order to maintain their legitimacy.”¹³⁵

To be sure, my argument agrees with institutionalism on the point that the adoption of prescribed practices may allow organizations to demonstrate organizational worth and that therefore IOs can derive from the very act of collaborating resources in the form of legitimacy and support. My analytical framework, however, departs from institutionalist arguments in that I conceive of legitimacy as one among the resources that organizations strive to obtain, while “from an institutional perspective, legitimacy is not a commodity to be possessed or exchanged but a condition reflecting cultural alignment, normative support, or consonance with relevant rules or laws.”¹³⁶ A second point of divergence between my analysis of IO behavior and institutionalist postulates coincides with one of the main criticisms targeted at the latter. Namely,

¹³³ Baum and Oliver 1991, 189.

¹³⁴ Hinings and Greenwood 1988, 53.

¹³⁵ Tolbert and Zucker 1983, 26.

¹³⁶ Scott 1995, 45.

I emphasize the active agency of IOs, claiming them to be purposeful actors that strategically adapt to their environment. Alternatively, institutionalism points to conformity, habit and passive acquiescence as components of the rationale for organizational action.¹³⁷ In this respect, institutionalists have been argued to present “too oversocialized and passive a conception of organizations.”¹³⁸ For my purposes here, the lack of attention by the institutionalist perspective to the role of strategy and agency limits its capacity to explain the element of choice embedded in the relational behavior of IOs – as materialized, for instance, in the selection of preferred partners. It also restricts the approach’s ability to account for the fact that different organizations can respond in diverse ways to a common institutional environment.

EXPLAINING THE RELATIONAL BEHAVIOR OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

In an inter-organizational system marked by both integrating and dividing forces, what explains the relational behavior of UN agencies? To answer this question, I will start from the premise that IOs constitute *purposeful* actors with *intended rationality*. Organizations are by definition goal-oriented – that is, one of their defining characteristics is “the primacy of orientation to the attainment of a specific goal.”¹³⁹ Moreover, an organization, “whatever the need or intent which called it into being, generates imperatives derived from the need to maintain the system.”¹⁴⁰ Beyond their official objectives, organizations generate goals of their own, the most basic one being their survival. At the same time, behavior is “almost inevitably constrained – by physical realities, by social influence, by information and cognitive capacity, as well as by

¹³⁷ Oliver 1991, 151.

¹³⁸ Scott 1995, 124.

¹³⁹ Parsons 1960, 17.

¹⁴⁰ Selznick 1949, 256.

personal preferences.”¹⁴¹ The assumption is then that, targeting a set of goals and faced with certain constraints, IOs will attempt to choose the best course of action. Their calculations are rational in that they evaluate costs and benefits, while seeking to minimize losses and maximize gains. Given that there are some constraints to such calculations, IO rationality is best described as ‘bounded’.¹⁴² This implies that IOs may fail to choose the optimal alternative among possible courses of action, yet the claim is that they *aim* to do so and their observed conduct is in accordance with such intent – in this sense, their rationality is ‘intended’.¹⁴³ Applied to relational behavior, the assumption is that organizations “make conscious, intentional decisions to establish an IOR [inter-organizational relationship] for explicitly formulated purposes ... for specific reasons within the constraints of a variety of conditions that limit or influence their choices.”¹⁴⁴

The second premise in my analysis is that, in order to carry out their activities and to survive, all organizations – among them IOs – need to acquire and maintain (a stable flow of) *resources*.¹⁴⁵ First, almost every endeavor involves assets, and so “[e]very formal organization ... attempts to mobilize human and technical resources as means for the achievement of its ends.”¹⁴⁶ Second, resources like staff or facilities are also needed for the very running and maintenance of the organizational system itself. Accordingly, asset procurement is a key exigency for IOs, and much of their behavior is oriented towards such purpose. In this respect, each IO possesses a particular resource ‘portfolio’ – with strengths and weaknesses – which the

¹⁴¹ Pfeffer and Salancik 1978, 15.

¹⁴² On ‘bounded’ rationality see for instance: Simon 2000. I here introduce the notion of ‘bounded’ or ‘intended’ rationality mainly as a caveat on the limits of rational choice and action. It aims at relaxing the rationality assumption and at contemplating the possibility of suboptimal outcomes, unintended consequences and limitations to strategic decision-making. My overall postulation is that IO behavior is the outcome of goal-oriented choice within constraints.

¹⁴³ Rowlinson 1997, 18.

¹⁴⁴ Oliver 1990, 242.

¹⁴⁵ See Pfeffer and Salancik 1978, 2.

¹⁴⁶ Selznick 1949, 251.

agency constantly monitors and manages. Moreover, organizations “strain to maintain their autonomy”¹⁴⁷ – as they prefer to have control and discretion over their work and to avoid dependencies. Yet again, “[n]o organization is self-sufficient; all must secure a continuing supply of resources from the environment.”¹⁴⁸ As follows, organizations “face a trade-off between operating autonomy and resource constrains.”¹⁴⁹ The fact that IOs do not entirely have or control the assets essential for their goal attainment and survival in turn implies that they must “inevitably interact with their social environments.”¹⁵⁰ In this sense, “[i]nherent in the relationship between any formal organization and its environment is the fact that it is to some degree dependent upon its environment.”¹⁵¹ The milieu international agencies are embedded in includes all the elements and developments that surround and influence the IO.¹⁵² No organization stands in a vacuum, and “[t]he major factors that organizations must take account of in their environments are other organizations ... Regardless of the niche an organization occupies, it must deal with other organizations in obtaining resources it needs.”¹⁵³ On their part, environmental forces materialize as constrains and opportunities for resource acquisition. IOs, in turn, strategically respond to contextual conditions in the process of securing needed assets and as guided by their individual resource situation. From this there emanates the relational behavior of international agencies.

¹⁴⁷ Van de Ven 1976, 28.

¹⁴⁸ Scott 1981, 156.

¹⁴⁹ Varadarajan and Cunningham 1995, 290 (the original text refers more particularly to firms).

¹⁵⁰ Pfeffer and Salancik 1978, 19.

¹⁵¹ Evan 1965, 218.

¹⁵² Barnett and Coleman 2005, 598.

¹⁵³ Aldrich 1979, 265.

THE RESOURCES

As previously noted, for any organization – including IOs – “[t]he primary adaptive exigencies ... concern the procurement of the resources necessary for it to attain its goal or carry out its function.”¹⁵⁴ The ‘capital’ of an organization is given by the set of assets that are attached semi-permanently to it.¹⁵⁵ Such resources can be of two types: tangible (material) or intangible (symbolic).¹⁵⁶ The former include money, personnel and facilities, while the latter entail elements such as authority and prestige.¹⁵⁷ IOs need both “material and symbolic resources if they are to survive and accomplish their goals.”¹⁵⁸ My suggestion is that international agencies hold a *portfolio of essential assets* that they constantly monitor and seek to build up and maintain.

In terms of the material capital of IOs, the mentioned portfolio is conformed by two subcategories of significant assets: funds and infrastructure. *Funds* represent the more straightforward manifestation of material capital and it refers to financial resources mainly in the form of money. For those organizations that receive part of their funding in the form of in-kind contributions, I will take the cash value of such support as adding to their material assets. The World Food Programme, for instance, at times receives in-kind contributions in the form of food commodities which are versed directly into their operations in the field. I take those goods to have a value for the organization that is comparable with financial support. The importance of monetary resources is for any organization apparent and clear-cut. At the most basic level, “[t]he prominence of the financial aspect of the procurement responsibilities of institutional

¹⁵⁴ Parsons 1960, 22.

¹⁵⁵ Das and Teng 2000, 32.

¹⁵⁶ Rao 1994, 29.

¹⁵⁷ Mulford and Rogers 1982, 25.

¹⁵⁸ Barnett and Coleman 2005, 597.

organizations is ... a result of the fact that money is the generalized facility par excellence.”¹⁵⁹ IOs need financial support if they are to operate, provided that all elements of such functioning – facilities, staff, etc. – entail the mobilization of funds. In the case of operational IOs like those under study here, the relevance of monetary assets is even higher. This is so because the “primary purpose of IGOs with a focus on operative functions is to carry out operations in the field, which places emphasis on management and funding.”¹⁶⁰

The second subcategory of significant material capital comprises what I have labeled *infrastructure*, and which namely denotes non-financial resources such as facilities, personnel and – of particular pertinence for operational UN agencies – country presence. To be noted, the elements comprised in ‘infrastructure’ appear oftentimes intertwined with purely financial assets. As suggested, for instance, the establishment and maintenance of facilities frequently involves the mobilization of funds. Yet, this is not always the case and the separate category is hence justified by those instances where IOs obtain or possess a given element of infrastructure independently of their financial capital situation. A given agency, for example, may be short of cash yet have at its disposal a vast army of voluntary personnel. Moreover, the original mandate and institutional configuration of certain UN agencies has given them world-wide presence, which “is often pointed to as one of the basic strengths of the UN system.”¹⁶¹ Such country presence is not necessarily matched by financial strength, yet it represents in itself a relevant asset when time comes to carry out operations in the field. Illustrating this point, the World Bank has been argued to recognize that “the UN system, with its close relationship with and presence in developing countries, is often better placed to deal with many sensitive and ‘political’

¹⁵⁹ Parsons 1960, 90.

¹⁶⁰ Bergesen and Lunde 1999, 11.

¹⁶¹ Bergesen and Lunde 1999, 77.

issues.”¹⁶² Agencies with a strong field presence can more easily reach their target areas and populations, more fluidly interact with local NGOs, better grasp and adapt to the domestic situation of the recipient country, etc. – all of which greatly facilitates their task and further adds to their influence in the setting up and implementation of operations.

Next to the described material resources, IOs maintain a portfolio of *symbolic capital* – defined as “those resources available to a social actor on the basis of prestige and recognition.”¹⁶³ Symbolic capital is here meant to comprise factors such as the prestige, reputation, mandated authority and legitimacy of an IO. It is further intended to capture how such intangibles affect organizational power, and how IO behavior is therefore guided by the management of symbolic aspects of its organizational life as it is by that of material ones. As Bourdieu suggests: “The interest at stake in the conducts of honour is one for which economism has no name and which has to be called symbolic, although it is such as to inspire actions that are very directly material.”¹⁶⁴ Intangible assets are socially constructed but objectively held,¹⁶⁵ and they affect the prospects and constrains an organization faces. Accordingly, organizations are attentive to their projected image and related intangibles, and this in turn crucially shapes how they act.

For the purposes of the present analysis, the symbolic capital of IOs bifurcates into two subcategories of most-valuable intangible assets: *image* and *salience*. I here characterize the former as the general estimation of an organization by its relevant audiences. This working definition of ‘image’ brings together two key elements: the external representation of an IO and

¹⁶² Nordic UN Project 1991, 70.

¹⁶³ Calhoun 2002, s.v. “symbolic capital.”

¹⁶⁴ Bourdieu 1990, 121.

¹⁶⁵ Fischer and Reuber 2007, 55. The authors refer in particular to ‘organizational reputation’.

its assessment by pertinent publics.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, by ‘relevant audiences’ I mean those actors or groups of actors surrounding the organization that can influence and/or are influenced by it – its stakeholders. In the case of the UN agencies under study here, the pertinent publics include states, other IOs, NGOs, the UN core administration, among others. As I will explain below, a positive image provides IOs with external backing, which directly and indirectly adds to its organizational capital. I further intend the term ‘image’ as an umbrella concept to encompass a series of related notions: standing, status, reputation and prestige. The concept of ‘standing’ has been referred to as an “organization’s ranking on relevant criteria, which, as a whole ... form the relative position of that organization in the eyes of given constituencies.”¹⁶⁷ The term ‘status’ also points to the relative location of an organization within a hierarchy of positions.¹⁶⁸ Both of these are captured by those instances in which the judgment about an organization’s projected image involves a comparison with its cohorts. The same applies for ‘reputation’, which has been defined as “a perceptual representation of a[n] [organization’s] past actions and future prospects that describe the [organization’s] overall appeal to all its key constituents when compared to other leading rivals.”¹⁶⁹ Reputation invokes an expectation based on past performance and has a neutral character in that it can either be good or bad. The notion of ‘prestige’, on its part, has a positive connotation and denotes esteem, a high standing, a favorable image.

There is an additional concept which should be contemplated under this subcategory of symbolic capital – that of ‘legitimacy’. To be noted, I here adopt a strategic approach to

¹⁶⁶ Accordingly, the term ‘image’ will be generally accompanied by an adjective – favorable/unfavorable, good/bad, etc.

¹⁶⁷ Shenkar and Yuchtman-Yaar 1997, 1362.

¹⁶⁸ Podolny 2005.

¹⁶⁹ Fischer and Reuber 2007, 56. Note: the definition in its original version in the cited text refers to firms rather than organizations, and has accordingly been adapted to the present discussion.

legitimacy by considering it a resource – as something that can be owned, borrowed and shared.¹⁷⁰ In his analysis of the politics of the UN Security Council, I. Hurd defines legitimacy as “an actor’s normative belief that a rule or institution ought to be obeyed.”¹⁷¹ Akin to my working conceptualization of ‘image’, the concept of legitimacy involves both an element of perception and one of estimation – i.e. it points to the external judgment of an organization. The peculiarity of legitimacy is to be found in the criteria and results of such assessment. On the former, and as M. Suchman contends, legitimacy points to “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are *desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions.*”¹⁷² In other words, organizational legitimacy is based on congruence between the organization – its structure, functioning and outputs – and the larger institutional environment.¹⁷³ Regarding its consequences, if an IO is perceived as legitimate, it will receive support mainly in the form of compliance with and deference to its decisions and actions. The respect and obedience that an IO derives from a legitimate status in turn facilitates its functioning and survival, further adding to its organizational strength – for as Hurd further contends, “[t]he power of social institutions in a society is largely a function of the legitimacy of those institutions.”¹⁷⁴ Legitimacy, then, represents one among different possible expressions of the general external evaluation of an organization and the sentiments generated by it.

¹⁷⁰ This puts me partly at odds with institutionalism in organization theory, where legitimacy is conceived not as a resource that can be exchanged, but rather as a condition that reflects alignment or correspondence with relevant norms or rules (Scott 1995, 45). Still, there is a point of concurrence between my argument and this perspective: I similarly argue that organizations may be behaving in a certain way in order to conform to prescribed norms. For instance, IOs may partner because such practice is well regarded by states and other pertinent audiences. By conceiving legitimacy as an asset, however, my argument adds a strategic tone to the institutionalist view on organizational behavior. I read the alignment with prescribed norms to be not a passive acceptance of the institutional environment but a strategy for obtaining legitimacy, both directly – from the ‘prized’ act itself – and indirectly – e.g. by borrowing legitimacy from better positioned partners.

¹⁷¹ Hurd 2007, 7.

¹⁷² Suchman 1995, 574 (my emphasis).

¹⁷³ Dowling and Pfeffer 1975, 122.

¹⁷⁴ Hurd 2002, 36.

Accordingly, I include it as one among the various elements that compose the category here labeled as ‘image’.

With the preceding theoretical associations established, I will combine the hitherto mentioned terms in my description and analysis of the present category of intangible assets.¹⁷⁵ Overall, my focus is on the image of IOs and its assessment by relevant audiences, absolute or comparative, and along diverse criteria. This general approach serves my working purpose of placing organizations “along a continuum from unfavorable to favorable public images.”¹⁷⁶ This in turn allows me to locate them on the symbolic capital scale.

Why is a favorable image important for IOs? In their analysis of corporate reputation, Fombrun and Shanley suggest that a firm’s reputation signals publics about its quality and performance.¹⁷⁷ Podolny makes a similar suggestion¹⁷⁸ for status, which he argues represents an observable indicator of an actor’s underlying quality.¹⁷⁸ In absolute terms, the value of an organization as projected in a good image justifies it being supported. In the presence of inter-organizational competition, a good reputation or standing can be the source of comparative advantage. This is so because, in such a context, the projected image of organizations offers stakeholders a basis for choosing among alternatives. Overall, when the signal is positive – i.e. when an organization is seen as efficient, reliable, trustworthy – then the entity becomes an appealing recipient of support for donors and a reliable resort for the potential beneficiaries of its activities. In other words, “[i]f an organization and its product are well regarded, it may more

¹⁷⁵ I will also use the terms ‘image’, ‘reputation’, ‘standing’ and ‘status’ interchangeably, and ‘prestige’ as a synonym of favourable image, good reputation or high standing/status. The term ‘legitimacy’ will be referred to on its own.

¹⁷⁶ Perrow 1961, 335.

¹⁷⁷ Fombrun and Shanley 1990.

¹⁷⁸ Podolny 2005.

easily attract personnel, ... and insure adequate numbers of clients, customers, donors, or investors.”¹⁷⁹ In the business literature, this interpretation has led to corporate reputation being “widely considered to be a valuable resource associated with sustained competitive advantage ... if not *the* most valuable intangible resource a firm can possess ... firms with favorable reputations benefit because they are more attractive to investors, customers, suppliers, and employees.”¹⁸⁰ A similar case has been made for IOs and their legitimacy: “[b]ecause nonprofit organizations [like UN agencies] do not generate their own source of revenue, they depend on their perceived legitimacy for generating external support. Consequently, IOs are likely to be very attentive to their legitimacy and whether they are perceived as serving ends valued by international society in general and key constituents in particular.”¹⁸¹ The opposite likewise applies, in that a negative image can lead to the neglect of, or a decrease in support for an organization. Moreover, the consequence of a given projected image is magnified by the path dependent way in which it self-reproduces. Put simply: an IOs’ positive reputation radiates toward the audience to generate in turn more favorable attitudes vis-à-vis the organization, while a negative reputation in turn breeds pessimistic expectations and opinions. This logic has been alluded to as the Matthew Effect – namely, “the fact that higher-status actors obtain greater recognition and rewards for performing a given task at a given level of quality and lower-status actors receive correspondingly less.”¹⁸² In brief, a positive image generates increasing returns and so it becomes a valuable asset for organizations not only in itself but also by the shadow it casts – prolonging or even amplifying its associated benefits.

¹⁷⁹ Perrow 1961, 335.

¹⁸⁰ Fischer and Reuber 2007, 54 (emphasis in original).

¹⁸¹ Barnett and Coleman 2005, 598.

¹⁸² Podolny 2005, 22.

A good standing also represents a valuable asset in that “once acquired, [it] can be converted into other resources.”¹⁸³ The corollaries to a good image, as described in the previous paragraph, can take diverse forms. In some instances, the benefits will be symbolic, such as the attainment of greater influence. As an example: “[t]hrough their existing authority and reputations IOs can generate new ideas, act as coalition builders and branch into new subject areas.”¹⁸⁴ In others, the result may overlap with what I have characterized as tangible resources. Indeed, material and symbolic assets are separate yet certainly interrelated. One such connection is given by the fact that a good image can be a source of profit and financial returns.¹⁸⁵ Hence, for example, a highly regarded IO will more likely receive voluntary contributions from donors than an ill-reputed one. To be sure, the greatest proof of the importance of a favorable image is to be found in the fact that “[o]rganizations make direct investments in enhancing their standing.”¹⁸⁶ Illustrating this point is the fact that UN-IOs are increasingly appending an ‘external affairs’ section to their organizational charts, as a tool to handle their projected image and their relations with different audiences and stakeholders.¹⁸⁷ On the whole, and as I. Claude suggests for states, “collective approbation is an important asset and collective disapprobation a significant liability in international relations.”¹⁸⁸

The second subcategory of symbolic capital is represented by the notion of ‘salience’. I use such term to invoke the association relevant publics make of the organization to a domain of activity. This connection is made in three respects. First, in terms of ‘authority’, which refers to

¹⁸³ Shenkar and Yuchtman-Yaar 1997, 1373.

¹⁸⁴ Kelly 2008, 26.

¹⁸⁵ Dollinger, Golden and Saxton 1997, 128.

¹⁸⁶ Shenkar and Yuchtman-Yaar 1997, 1366.

¹⁸⁷ As C. Perrow states: “Shaping the image held by external groups is the explicit task of public relations departments” (1961, 339).

¹⁸⁸ Claude 1966, 375.

“the right and responsibility to carry out programs of a certain kind, dealing with a broad problem area of focus ... The possession of a domain permits the organization to operate in a certain sphere, claim support for its activities, and define proper practices within its realm.”¹⁸⁹

The second aspect of salience is ‘visibility’ – namely, the exposure of the organization to public notice in relation to an issue area. A ‘visible’ organization in a given domain ‘comes to mind’ and is straightforwardly associated with the topic in question by relevant audiences. Finally, the third facet of association is given by the notion of ‘relevance’ – that is, the extent to which an IO is considered important and pertinent in a given field of activity. Created following a functional logic, the formal mandate delegated to an IO at birth delimits for it a domain of action that is from then on under its responsibility and for which it can claim authority. In order to operate effectively, agencies require the support of stakeholders, which is in turn based on the continual recognition and revalidation by such publics – e.g. states – of the IO’s endowed authority over and significance for a certain field of activity. The importance of saliency is clear-cut: a ‘sphere of influence’ is a source of assets and power. An organization that is directly linked to an issue area, that is perceived as *the* authority on such topic and/or that is seen as having relevance in that domain has a basis for justifying its existence and for receiving support. This explains, for instance, the effort by IOs to demonstrate their relevance to prospective benefactors.¹⁹⁰

In the UN, recent decades have seen an increasing overlap between the activities of different organizations – a corollary to mandate expansion and the ever more marked multifaceted character of international issues. Within this context, competition over domains has ensued, and many UN organizations have faced the risk of losing part of their original

¹⁸⁹ Benson 1975, 232.

¹⁹⁰ Barnett and Coleman 2005, 616.

jurisdiction to other agencies. As a result, not only possessing an ‘official’ domain but also being persistently associated with it – to be salient in it – has become a concern for such IOs. In consonance with this idea, some studies have highlighted the fact that UN agencies compete for attention, relevancy and jurisdiction.¹⁹¹ Overall, the suggestion seems to be that “conflict over organizational domains [is] a component of interorganizational competition, and ... organizations frequently attempt to increase their domain of activity to ensure their survival.”¹⁹² And rivalries over organizational domains are ultimately fights over salience.

Overall, the resources IOs strive for are of two kinds: material and symbolic. While the former point to goods such as funds and field offices, the latter include elements such as reputation and relevance. In the effort to ensure survival and proper functioning, IOs continually monitor their portfolios of critical-assets, and further resort to partnerships with other organizations as a strategy to cover their ‘resource gaps’.

THE ENVIRONMENT

International organizations are embedded in an environment that “conceivably includes all events, processes, and structures in the world that surround the IO and affect its activities.”¹⁹³ For my purposes here, there are two distinct aspects of this environment that are relevant. First is the ‘social’ facet of an organization’s milieu. I have pointed to the claim that “organizations are not able to internally generate either all the resources or functions required to maintain themselves, and therefore organizations must enter into transactions and relations with elements

¹⁹¹ Nordic UN Project 1991, 35; Kelly 2008, 9.

¹⁹² Dowling and Pfeffer 1975, 125.

¹⁹³ Barnett and Coleman 2005, 598.

in the environment that can supply the required resources and services.”¹⁹⁴ In this respect, a key component of an organization’s setting is given by *other organizations*. Second, the environment affects IOs mainly by presenting them with *opportunities* and *constrains*. In this sense, contextual factors impact organizations and organizations act in reaction to environmental forces. An institutional context favorable to alliances can foster them by making them a viable and legitimate strategy. The environment can likewise shape the fate of organizations “through the process of making available or withholding resources.”¹⁹⁵ As a caveat, however, the effect of environmental forces varies across cases as filtered by each organization’s individual situation – here, as defined in terms of resources. Hence, for instance, a decrease in the availability of financial assets will be felt differently by ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ agencies. Overall, there is a dual and dynamic interaction between organizations and their environment. In their struggle to obtain critical assets, and given their own resource situation, organizations strategically adapt to contextual forces – constrains and opportunities – by managing their interactions with other organizations – also elements in their environment.

Turning to the IOs under study here, they all share a common environment given by the UN system.¹⁹⁶ That is, they have all been confronted with similar contextual pressures, which have in turn differently impacted each agency depending on its peculiar resource situation. Of relevance for the analysis of inter-organizational relations, the historical evolution of the UN context has been characterized by two main trends. First, on its institutional and normative side, the UN organizational environment has ever more favored teamwork among agencies. While

¹⁹⁴ Aldrich and Pfeffer 1976, 83.

¹⁹⁵ Aldrich 1979, 61.

¹⁹⁶ Throughout this dissertation I am referring strictly to the operational side of the UN as embodied in the UN system of organizations – i.e. I do not concern myself with the UN forums, such as the General Assembly and the Security Council.

present since the early days of the system, the recent wave of UN reform has added intensity to the call for greater system-wide coherence. This push for restructuring – which includes improved partnerships – is “fed partly by concern that the Secretariat, the agencies, and other parts of the UN system could be much more effective, efficient, and accountable than they are.”¹⁹⁷ From there it follows that the zeitgeist in the UN system increasingly equals teamwork with an efficient and proper way for international agencies to operate. Overall, the institutional environment applicable to the UN system has been increasingly ‘permitting’ of partnerships, in the sense that it has presented them as a widely accepted and well regarded organizational strategy.

The second – and main – development in the UN for my purposes here has been the fluctuation in the general resource situation of the system. The establishment of the UN system entailed the bringing together of separate organizations – some existent, some new – under a common institutional umbrella. The resulting UN organizational design was a “hybrid that emerged between central control and coordination on one hand, and decentralized anarchy on the other.”¹⁹⁸ Each constituting IO, on its part, was assigned both jurisdictional rights and authority in a functional issue area of concern – e.g. ‘health’. The functional division of labor further offered agencies a basis for claiming both material and symbolic support – that is, ‘backing followed mandate’. This initial resource situation created two types of incentives in UN-IOs: first, a concern over domains of influence; and second, a tendency towards ‘mandate creep’ and expansion. In other words, the fact that the agencies’ support and funding – together with the justification for their very existence – was essentially dependent on their domain of activities

¹⁹⁷ Fasulo 2004, 105.

¹⁹⁸ Bergesen and Lunde 1999, 24.

encouraged UN-IOs to both protect and expand their sphere of influence. Circa the 1980s this situation started to noticeably change, however. Sporadic crises regarding both material and symbolic capital became frequent and marked. On the one hand, earlier expansionism by the agencies had resulted in increased duplication and overlap of activities, leading both to criticism and to an increasing push to enhance the coherence of the system. It also promoted competition among the agencies themselves, as they confronted an ever more crowded organizational milieu. On the other hand, the core contributions coming from member states progressively declined, leading to incessant and pervasive financial shortages. Accordingly, UN-IOs began to face stagnation and lack of predictability in their funding. The described donor fatigue and the image decay experienced by the UN persist to-date. Overall, the general resource situation in the UN system has historically been one of increasing scarcity.

I have portrayed in the last paragraphs the main traits of the common UN environment that present the IOs under study here with similar constrains and opportunities in terms of my variable of concern – resources. To be noted, the peculiar situation of each IO – along material and symbolic capital – will filter the effects on the environment and lead each agency to experience these similar forces differently. As a final note, going back to the social aspect of an organization’s setting, my framework of analysis introduces a more encompassing definition of the IO environment. As I have highlighted, “most approaches to IOs conceive of the environment as defined by states.”¹⁹⁹ I however contend that there are other actors besides states that surround and significantly affect international organizations. In this, I second a number of IR scholars who have suggested that “[s]tates, NGOs, business firms, and other IOs all may have a hand, some

¹⁹⁹ Barnett and Coleman 2005, 598.

times a heavy hand, in an IO's work."²⁰⁰ My framework of analysis, with its focus on IO relational behavior vis-à-vis other international agencies, supports this more inclusive understanding of the IO social milieu.

THE RATIONALE FOR IO COLLABORATIVE ACTION

In my first premise above I have postulated that IOs constitute *purposive* systems.²⁰¹ My intent with such assumption has been to highlight the key fact that organizations “though they are tools, each nevertheless has a life of its own. Though formally subordinated to some outside authority, they universally resist complete control.”²⁰² That is, while constrained by external pressures, their behavior is still marked by *choice*. Organizations “are creatures of their institutional environments, but most modern organizations are constituted as active players, not passive pawns.”²⁰³ In terms of interorganizational relations, this means that “organizations do not merely cooperate, but cooperate for a reason. An appropriate assumption is that organizations *decide* to enter cooperative relations with one another.”²⁰⁴ As my second premise, I have further proposed that IOs need resources in order to function and survive. Obtaining and maintaining a stable flow of both material and symbolic capital represents an essential concern for IOs, and therefore they continually look after and manage their asset portfolios.

Standing on these two premises, my contention is that IOs will seek out to establish partnerships when they are willing and able to do so – namely, when inter-organizational

²⁰⁰ Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 156. See also: Weaver 2003.

²⁰¹ Aldrich 1979, 4.

²⁰² Selznick 1949, 10.

²⁰³ Scott 1995, 132.

²⁰⁴ Schermerhorn 1975, 852 (my emphasis).

linkages are necessary and feasible.²⁰⁵ On the feasibility aspect, I have pointed to the fact that IOs are embedded in an environment – including events, institutions, processes, actors – which presents them with both constraints and opportunities. A precondition for partnerships to emerge is that the institutional environment be ‘permitting’ – namely, alliances need to be a viable and valid course of action for organizations. As one author describes, “[t]o the extent that prevailing norms of the organization and/or its external environment support interorganizational cooperative activity, interorganizational cooperation becomes more likely as an element in an organization’s behavioral repertoire.”²⁰⁶ In the previous section I have shown how this has been the case – and increasingly so – in the UN. Worthy of note, an institutional context favoring alliances in turn allows IOs to obtain symbolic capital in the form of legitimacy from the very act of partnering itself, insofar as it represents a form of alignment with such environment. Additionally, my focus here is on the linkages UN-IOs establish with sister agencies. Accordingly, this particular set of associations are also ‘feasible’ to the extent that such potential partners are a viable source of what IOs look for in partnerships – as I explain below, namely resources. In this regard, whilst IOs greatly depend on states for funds and support, they can also obtain looked-for assets from other actors in their environment, such as other international agencies.

Concerning the element of necessity, since organizations cannot “generate internally all the resources and functions required to sustain themselves, ... [they] must enter into transactions with environmental elements supplying such requirements.”²⁰⁷ Relational ties between organizations constitute “channels for [such] transfer or flow of resources, ... material or non-

²⁰⁵ Pfeffer and Salancik 1978, 156.

²⁰⁶ Schermerhorn 1975, 851

²⁰⁷ Aldrich 1979, 266.

material.”²⁰⁸ For instance, some authors have suggested that “if an actor’s partner in a network form of organization possesses considerable legitimacy or status, then the actor may derive legitimacy or status through the affiliation.”²⁰⁹ Still, partnerships are also costly for IOs, both in terms of autonomy loss and in that associations require the investment of time, energy and resources themselves. From the organization’s standpoint, “to become involved in an inter-agency relationship implies (a) that it loses some of its freedom to act independently ... and (b) that it must invest scarce resources and energy to develop and maintain relationships.”²¹⁰ Overall, partnerships have “both costs and benefits ... as a whole organizations must calculate that the benefits outweigh the losses before they will concert their efforts with others.”²¹¹ While they would prefer to maintain their autonomy, organizations “will seek out or be receptive to interorganizational cooperation when faced with situations of resource scarcity or performance distress.”²¹² From there it follows that the proclivity of a given UN-IO to partner with sister agencies will be determined by the extent of its resource shortage and resultant wants, which also reflect the potential gains an agency sees in the association. The greater the deficit and need, the greater the willingness to collaborate, and thus to ‘pay the costs’ in terms of autonomy, time and energy. While guided by necessity, the relational behavior of IOs is adaptive and strategic. As rational and purposive actors, IOs “survey their environment and, to the best of their ability, choose the strategy that best meets their subjectively defined goals.”²¹³ Here the aim in focus is the acquisition and maintenance of capital critical for survival and the strategy is one of

²⁰⁸ Thompson 2003, 56.

²⁰⁹ Podolny and Page 1998, 64. The idea that organizations can obtain and enhance their standing, legitimacy or reputation through affiliation with (more) prestigious organizations is also emphasized, for instance, by Shenkar and Yuchtman-Yaar 1997, 1367; Stuart 1998, 674; Fischer and Reuber 2007, 54.

²¹⁰ Van de Ven 1976, 28.

²¹¹ Alter and Hage 1993, 35.

²¹² Schermerhorn 1975, 848.

²¹³ Lake and Powell 1999, 7.

establishing partnerships.²¹⁴ In his analysis of social relations, P. Blau has argued that “human beings tend to be governed in their associations with one another by the desire to obtain social rewards of various sorts.”²¹⁵ Similarly, organizations “build cooperative ties to access capabilities and resources that are essential to pursue their goals but that are at least in part under the control of other organizations in their environment.”²¹⁶ The argument is overall that, as Cooley and Ron suggest, “many aspects of IO (...) behavior can be explained by materialist analysis and an examination of the incentives and constraints produced by the transnational sector’s institutional environment.”²¹⁷

The preceding line of reasoning (summarized in Figure 2.1 below) allows for a number of deductive propositions regarding the proclivity of UN-IOs to partner with sister agencies. Accepting the cited postulation that organizations have a preference for maintaining their autonomy, “we should expect that the more successful an organization is in acquiring financial resources, the less it will engage in [interorganizational coordination].”²¹⁸ In other words, the more resourceful the organization – both in terms of symbolic and material capital – the lower will tend to be its willingness to collaborate. Alternatively, “[w]hen resources are scarce and organizations are unable to generate needed resources, they will be more likely to establish ties with other organizations.”²¹⁹ That is, the greater the deficit of assets for a given organization, and hence its need for capital, the larger its inclination to establish partnerships.

²¹⁴ As opposed to other alternatives, such as reducing the amount of activities so as to diminish the need for assets or relying exclusively on states for support.

²¹⁵ Blau 1964, 18.

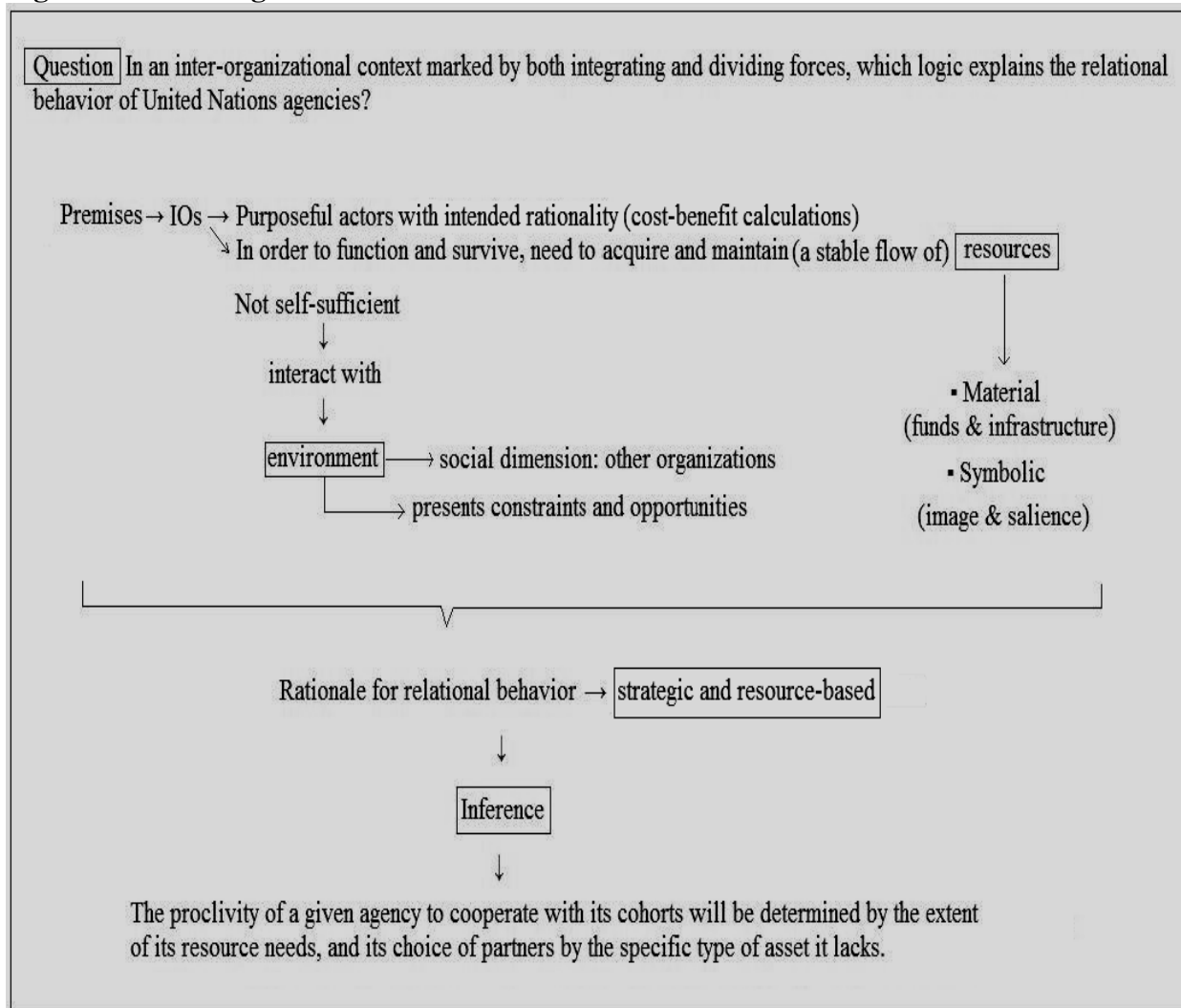
²¹⁶ Gulati and Gargiulo 1999, 1443.

²¹⁷ Cooley and Ron, 2002, 6.

²¹⁸ Van de Ven and Walker 1984, 603.

²¹⁹ Oliver 1990, 250.

Figure 2.1: The Argument at a Glance



On the whole, the proclivity of a UN-IO to collaborate with others will be determined by the agency's resource situation. Moreover, as I have explained above, the resources relevant for IOs are of two types: symbolic and material. Each of these categories in turn involves a series of elements, and it therefore materializes as a continuum – from low to high availability of assets. IOs may be 'rich' in one type of capital and 'poor' in the other. They may also experience abundance or scarcity concomitantly on both fronts. Extending the above propositions to include

both categories of assets, Figure 2.2 below depicts the behavioral outcome expected for each resource situation.

Figure 2.2: IO Proclivity to Partner

		Symbolic Capital	
		High	Low
Material Capital	High	Lower Proclivity	Intermediate Proclivity <i>(IO seeks resource rich partners in relevant area)</i>
	Low	Intermediate Proclivity <i>(IO seeks resource rich partners in relevant area)</i>	Higher Proclivity

As the matrix shows, the cases falling in the top-left box will reveal reticence to partner, while those fitting in the bottom-right corner will demonstrate a higher willingness to establish collaborative associations. The top-right and bottom-left boxes represent the in-between cases, where the proclivity to partner will be of ‘medium’ strength and will depend on the more specific position of the organization along the continuums of material and symbolic capital.²²⁰ To be noted, the resource situation of IOs varies along time as well as across cases, and the proclivity to collaborate with other agencies varies accordingly. In this way, an organization can

²²⁰ For instance, an IO which faces a sharp crisis in terms of material assets will be more strongly inclined to partner than an IO with modest material resources at hand.

diachronically move around the boxes, experiencing a greater availability of one or the two types of assets at one point in time, and scarcity in that resource portfolio at another. In the same way, “[t]he criticality of a resource for an organization may vary from time to time as conditions in the organization’s environment change.”²²¹ My analysis of cases in the empirical chapters will be in-depth and longitudinal, so as to capture these changes within the experience of each agency. Variation also occurs across cases. And so, taking the most significant or predominant resource-situation throughout the trajectory of an IO to be its distinguishing feature, I see each of my selected cases as roughly representing one of the boxes (see Figure 2.3 below).

Figure 2.3: Selected Cases and Proclivity to Partner

		Symbolic Capital	
		High	Low
Material Capital	High	UNICEF	World Bank
	Low	WFP	UNESCO

²²¹ Pfeffer and Salancik 1978, 46.

THE CHOICE OF PARTNERS

Once within the confines of a partnership, an IO's strategic choice can be seen in its selection of partners. In this respect, a basic requisite of collaboration is that both participating organizations have *related domains*. In other words, if two organizations "have nothing in common, and are likely not to be aware of one another, nor to have mutually desired resources, thus it is unlikely that an IR [interorganizational relation] will emerge."²²² A minimum proximity in terms of issue-area covered, activities and 'clientele' represents an essential basis over which the cooperative links can be established. In this sense, "the organization's function establishes [a basic] range of possibilities for exchange."²²³ As a caveat, however, such domain closeness may also be the source of tension and competition among organizations – for instance, over jurisdiction in a given field of activity.²²⁴ Indeed, there is a concave relationship between domain similarity and inter-organizational relations.²²⁵ Organizations that are too similar will compete, and those too functionally distant will lack grounds for partnering. Partnerships occur rather at intermediate levels of similarity. To be noted for the present analysis, all UN-IOs under study here are situated in the latter, in-between scenario. That is, while separate in certain aspects – e.g. their original mandate – they are also related in others respects – e.g. their de facto fields of action. Accordingly, the foundation for partnerships is there, though so is the potential for competition.

Past the basis of domain similarity, I argue that the choice of partners in interorganizational associations follows a logic of complementarities. That is, organizations will

²²² Van de Ven 1976, 32.

²²³ Levine and White 1961, 595.

²²⁴ Akinbode and Clark 1976, 103-104.

²²⁵ Van de Ven 1976, 30.

most likely choose to build ties with organizations that have complementary resources and capabilities.²²⁶ If the extent of an IO's need for resources determines its proclivity to collaborate, the character of such necessity marks its choice of partners. I have explained that IOs need both material and symbolic resources in order to survive and accomplish their goals. Moreover, an IO may be strong in terms of both types of capital, or it may be poor regarding one kind and rich in terms of the other. In turn, the "criterion for partner selection is 'the fit between one organization's resource needs and another's resource provision'."²²⁷ Applied to my working matrix of material and symbolic capital, the reasoning reads that those IOs revealing low levels of symbolic assets will seek to associate with organizations affluent in intangibles, whilst those poor in terms of material capital will look out for economically rich partners. Alternatively, IOs that are equally strong or weak in both types of assets will more likely have no preference as regards their choice of associates, tending to be either receptive or indifferent towards all. Figure 2.4 below presents the abovementioned inferences in schematic form. My argument regarding the choice of partners will be further examined and tested in the empirical case-studies that occupy later chapters.

²²⁶ Aiken and Hage 1968, 916.

²²⁷ Das and Teng 2000, 48.

Figure 2.4: Choice of Partners

		Symbolic Capital	
		High	Low
Material Capital	High	Indifferent	Affluent Symbolic
	Low	Affluent Material	Receptive

A CAVEAT – THE JANUS FACE OF INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONS

The focus of my argument as described above has been on the proclivity of a given IO to associate with others in a collaborative manner. I have chosen this as a first look at a complex phenomenon. Alliances, by definition, involve more than one actor – its most basic structure being the dyad.²²⁸ From there it follows that the actual emergence of partnerships, as well as other outcomes such as their evolution and characteristics, all rest on the combined decisions and actions of various actors. I have argued above that, in order for IOs to partner, they need to be *willing* and *able* to do so.²²⁹ The ‘feasibility’ aspect of this equation, I further described, has to do with the fact that partnerships need to be a viable option within the organizational

²²⁸ Thompson 2003, 56.

²²⁹ In turn, my argument proposes that certain organizations are more willing to partner than others. This section, moreover, points to the fact that some will be also more able to do so. The point is overall that “[e]ven though the external conditions [may be] favourable for strategic alliance formation, some organizations may be more willing (and able) to implement these strategies.” (Cravens, Shipp and Cravens 1993, 61).

environment. The ‘willingness’, on its part, depends on the individual organization and its particular resource situation. Still, the proclivity of one agency is a *necessary but not sufficient* condition for a partnership to actually emerge. An organization may want to associate with others, but in order for it to succeed, those ‘others’ need to also be willing to associate with it. The last point, in turn, adds another facet to the ‘feasibility’ condition above. An organization is ‘able’ to collaborate if it has the *social opportunity* to do so – in other words, if it is perceived by others as an *attractive partner*. As follows, the proclivity of an IO to collaborate may not match the absolute number of associations in its record. This responds to the possibility that an organization with a clear openness to associations have a low demand as partner, or that a reticent agency find itself to be highly solicited.

I will revisit and expand this discussion in the conclusion. My purpose with its inclusion here is simply to caution the reader as to the distinction between the proclivity of an organization to collaborate – the focus of my analysis – and the actual number of associations in which it participates. This will surface in the empirical chapters adding nuances to the case-studies, and should therefore be kept in mind.

NOTE ON METHODOLOGY AND CASE SELECTION

The preceding paragraphs have outlined the main elements of my argument on inter-IO relations. Still, “[a]ll hypotheses need to be evaluated empirically before they can make a contribution to knowledge.”²³⁰ That is the goal of the chapters that follow, where I will analyze in-depth the relational behavior of four international organizations. The case studies are: the World Bank, the World Food Programme, UNICEF and UNESCO. These cases were selected by

²³⁰ King, Keohane and Verba, 1994,16.

research design. On the one hand, they are all international organizations pertaining to the United Nations system. They are all also oriented – to a greater or lesser extent – towards operational activities in the field of development. In this sense, the UN system defines “the ‘whole’ into which the parts can be intelligibly related in such a way as to make possible useful comparisons between international organizations.”²³¹ More importantly, all the selected IOs share similar pressures from their common organizational environment regarding inter-organizational collaboration. Beyond their distinctive features and peculiar relationship with member states, they have all been subject to the call by the UN core administration to increase system-wide coherence. Recent UN reform proposals, conceivably representing member states’ demands and a zeitgeist for enhancing effectiveness and efficiency, have intensified this push to increase inter-agency collaboration. The fact that all selected organizations have been exposed to a similar external pressure allows me to neutralize the effect of the ecological variables of alternative explanations presented above – namely, states’ demands, the goal of ‘efficiency’ and an institutional environment favoring partnerships.

Alternatively, the organizations selected represent a varied sample of UN-IOs. The cases include one Specialized Agency (UNESCO), two Programs and Funds (UNICEF and WFP) and one International Financial Institution (the World Bank). Moreover, each has its own governing body, structure and budget. Of significance for my analysis, these and other peculiarities are together translated in differences across organizations regarding their resource situation – my explanatory variable. The World Bank, which raises its funds from the market, has traditionally experienced a strong financial situation. The controversial character of its governing structure and activities, however, has cursed the Bank with a poor image and reputation. The World Food

²³¹ Cox 1969b, 20.

Programme, on its part, has benefited from the prestige of dealing with the pragmatic aspect of a humanitarian cause: the logistics of food distribution to ‘feed the poor’. Alternatively, it has suffered from the vulnerability of its resource base, being often short of financial assets. UNICEF represents the case of an organization with a high level of both material and symbolic capital. The Fund has an elevated prestige product of a mandate that inspires a positive image – helping children – and a reputation for effectiveness and efficiency. Additionally, and despite its reliance on voluntary contributions, the Fund has established throughout its life a strong fund-raising machine and a vast field-oriented structure, both of which have enhanced its material capital situation. Finally, UNESCO’s resource situation has been predominantly one of weakness: the agency has not only suffered shortage of funding but has also confronted a sharp image crisis. The variation of cases in terms of my explanatory variable allows me to test its diverse ‘values’ and examine whether the predictions of my argument prove valid in each instance.²³²

Also of relevance, the cases selected vary in terms of the event I wish to explain – namely, the proclivity to engage in partnerships. An IO’s disposition to collaborate materializes in its openness and efforts to participate in alliances, which I identify as cooperative arrangements involving the exchange, sharing or pooling of resources – skills, funds, information, etc. – between two or more organizations. In an attempt to maximize analytical clarity, I further take a ‘serious’ collaboration effort to involve some type of formal mechanism

²³² Contributing to the testing of my argument, the group of IOs selected further includes a ‘least likely’ and a ‘most likely’ case regarding the proclivity to collaborate. As I will show in the pertinent empirical chapter, the World Bank constitutes a strong and independent organization within the UN system. As follows, the WB would be least expected to collaborate with sister UN-IOs. Still, as my argument suggests and its case-study shows, the Bank has indeed looked for allies. Alternatively, UNESCO can be expected to be, within my theoretical framework, the IO with the highest likelihood of seeking out partnerships – as determined by its weak situation in terms of both material and symbolic assets. This proposition is validated by UNESCO’s case-study in chapter 6.

and/or official public acknowledgment. As follows, I consider an overall cooperative relationship as analytically ‘countable’ when one or more of the following elements is present: the association has been publicized, formally announced and/or manifestly referred to by one or all organizations involved – e.g. through reports, publications, official statements, etc –; a formal agreement or memorandum of understanding has been signed; there exist manifest and reasonably relevant and enduring joint initiatives, mechanisms and/or activities – such as common projects, programs, committees, regular consultations, etc.²³³

The mentioned variation – in the resource situation of the focal organization and in its resultant inclination to partner – occurs not only across cases but also along time within each case. The longitudinal change adds the benefit of offering extra instances – ‘cases within cases’ – to further test my argument. My analysis therefore combines both cross-case and diachronic comparisons. It is qualitative and small-N (limited to four cases). Each of the empirical chapters presents an in-depth analysis of the ‘causal story’ over time of one IO. The cross-case comparison emanates from the sum of the four empirical chapters, and is complemented by a recap and further comparisons and reflections introduced in the conclusion. Moreover, I have used two methods for the analysis of my case-studies: the congruence method and process-

²³³ To be noted, partnerships may reflect different levels of meaningfulness/superficiality. Their importance can be measured in terms of either their overall impact – e.g. on collective mission accomplishment –, or of their value – in costs and benefits – for participating organizations. The former exceeds the purposes of this dissertation. On the latter, within a resource-based framework, the relevance of a given association for the organizations involved would be determined by the investments and rewards it entails for them in terms of capital. My analysis, however, does not attend to the varying level of meaningfulness of different cooperative endeavours. The reason is three-fold. First, I have pointed to the fact that alliances are costly – they demand ‘time and energy’ – and that organizations enter into cooperative arrangement with others so as to garner essential assets. From such strategic logic it follows that partnerships in general can be assumed to be relatively meaningful for participants – otherwise they would not be pursued. Second, my framework counts as ‘essential capital’ also symbolic assets such as image and reputation. Consequently, even partnerships that could be called ‘superficial’ for their purely ceremonial nature – e.g. naming another agency as a ‘key partner’ – may still constitute meaningful behavior within my perspective. This is so in that, for instance, such strategy could allow the focal IO to increase its prestige. Lastly, and in quest of analytical clarity, I have set the described threshold in the operationalization of alliances so as to capture as observations those most meaningful.

tracing.²³⁴ The former entails mainly an examination of the correspondence between the values of the explanatory factors and the observable outcomes. Hence, in each of the empirical chapters, I have detailed the resource situation of the focal agency, the predictions associated with such condition as derived from my analysis, and the discernible outcome in terms of the organization's openness towards associations. Additionally, I have resorted to process-tracing, a method that focuses on sequential processes as it seeks to trace and verify the link between causal mechanisms and observable implications.²³⁵ Hence, I have conducted a detailed examination within each empirical case, connecting the elements mentioned above – namely, the IO resource situation, the associated predictions and the recognizable behavior –, identifying and explaining the sequences and mechanisms between causes and outcomes. Finally, throughout the study, my unit of analysis is the international organization taken as a whole. This responds to the understanding that “[t]he unit of analysis should correspond to the level of the theoretical mechanisms that are presumed to be affecting the dependent variables.”²³⁶ My argument looks at relations among organizations and points to an individual organization's resource situation as the driving force behind its relational behavior. It further highlights the fact that IOs constitute purposive and strategic agents. Accordingly, I analyze international organizations as unitary actors for which a relatively consistent pattern of action can be discerned.

My investigation for this thesis has been based on both secondary literature and primary materials. First-hand documents have included: major organizational publications, reports and evaluations; publicly disclosed general and technical documents on projects, policies, reforms, etc.; official speeches; and information collected from the organization's website. The material

²³⁴ See: George and Bennett 2005.

²³⁵ George and Bennett 2005, 13.

²³⁶ Pfeffer 1982, 15.

consulted has concerned either individual organizations or the United Nations more generally. Finally, as part of the field-work for this dissertation, I conducted around 60 interviews in various UN organizations.²³⁷

As an overall point of reference, Table 2.1 below offers a schematic summarizing the main elements in each case-study, the key propositions derived from my argument, and the related empirical findings.

²³⁷ The interviews were semi-structured and built around open-ended questions pointing to the focal organization's take on inter-organizational relations and/or covering related topics such as UN reform. The interviewees, with a couple of exceptions all UN officials, included directors, officers, chiefs, and coordinators; predominantly in the areas of external relations and partnerships (with other international organizations, NGOs, and/or the private sector). The group also includes a few officials pertaining to other sections (issue-area-oriented). Interviews were carried out in the following UN organizations: UNESCO, WHO, UNICEF, ILO, the World Bank, OHCHR, UNHCR, UNAIDS, NGLS, OCHA, UNCTAD, WMO, FAO, WFP and IFAD. All interviews were conducted and analyzed carefully following the procedures and stipulations of the Northwestern University Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (Institutional Review Board – Social and Behavioral Research).

Table 2. 1: Hypotheses and Findings by Case

Cases	Resource Situation		Predicted Outcome	Observed Outcome
	Material Assets	Symbolic Capital		
World Bank	Key: financially affluent (throughout its history)	Key: controversial image, reputation crisis and criticism (especially 1980s and 1990s)	Proclivity to Partner: Intermediate. Choice of Partners: Looks for prestigious organizations.	Proclivity to Partner: Traditionally exceptionalism and independence. Over time: rapprochement (growing openness); two ‘boosts’ (1960s and 1990s). Balance out in intermediate proclivity. Choice of Partners: (case-defining) Preference for prestigious organizations (UNICEF versus UNESCO). Also, in early wave of collaboration, looked for issue relevant and field-oriented associates.
	Infrastructure: traditionally centralized; economic expertise.	Low issue-relevance in new areas of expanding task portfolio		
	Overall: High	Overall: Low		
World Food Programme	Key: Financially vulnerable (volatile contributions; increasing needs)	Key: Positive image (humanitarian mandate and good performance reputation)	Proclivity to Partner: Intermediate. Choice of Partners: Seeks financially rich organizations.	Proclivity to Partner: Longitudinal increase but overall moderate level. Gained independence from FAO. Choice of Partners: (case-defining) Look for financially rich organizations. Also: agencies salient in emergencies.
	Infrastructure: ample country presence; logistics expertise.	High saliency in issue area (food); weakness with incursion into emergencies.		
	Overall: Low	Overall: High		
UNICEF	Strong fund raising base. Large budget.	Prestigious (mandate appeal; good performance reputation)	Proclivity to Partner: Low (reticence). Choice of Partners: Indifferent.	Proclivity to Partner: Approach to partnerships increasingly marked by element of reticence (promotion of individuality). Choice of Partners: No clear preference (links with organizations of varied asset condition).
	Infrastructure: solid (important country presence; large staff + supporting organizations).	High saliency (leadership position in many areas)		
	Overall: High	Overall: High		
UNESCO	Limited funds (increased need by going operational - 1960s; crisis with U.S. withdrawal - 1980s)	Initially good reputation, then controversial and image crisis (1980s)	Proclivity to Partner: High. Choice of Partners: Receptive.	Proclivity to partner: Two waves of increased openness (1960s and late 1980s onward) Choice of Partners: Financially affluent organizations in the 1960s; expanded in the second wave of increased collaboration (open; look for both materially rich and prestigious partners).
	Infrastructure: limited country presence (centralized)	Formally/officially established issue salience (over time lost exclusivity)		
	Overall: Low	Overall: Low		

CHAPTER 3

THE UNDER-LOVED GIANT: THE WORLD BANK

INTRODUCTION

The World Bank (WB) stands on two pillars.²³⁸ One is represented by its lending arm, created at Bretton Woods in the mid 1940s – the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). The second is given by the International Development Association (IDA), a ‘soft loan’ affiliate created in 1960. As a whole, the Bank has evolved to embody today both a bank and a development agency. It is also a Goliath among UN-IOs. Traditionally, the Bank’s status within the UN system has been marked by exceptionalism. As reflected in their collaboration agreements with ECOSOC, both Bretton Woods institutions have maintained a high level of independence with respect to the rest of the United Nations. Additionally, a number of distinctive features – such as its weighted voting system or its bank-like character – have rendered the WB ‘unique’ among UN-IOs. Reflecting its independence and exceptionalism, the Bank has tended to keep its distance from the rest of the UN. Over time, however, such detachment has decreased as the WB has increased its ties to other organizations of the system. Longitudinally, the relational behavior of the Bank has been represented by a rising line, with two extra lifts – one in the 1960s and a second ‘boost’ from the early 1990s. Within its overall rapprochement to the UN, the WB has revealed a particular choice of partners. In recent decades,

²³⁸ To be noted, the World Bank is part of a broader structure, the World Bank *Group*. The latter is composed of five institutions: the IBRD; IDA; the International Finance Corporation; the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency; and the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes. Of these, only the first two constitute the World Bank proper, which is the subject of study here. See: World Bank 2003a.

for instance, the Bank has established strong ties with UNICEF – a striking preference given the latter’s criticisms of the former’s adjustment policies in the 1980s.

Which factors can be said to have shaped the diachronic pattern revealed by the World Bank’s relational behavior? What has been the rationale behind the organization’s choice of partners? In the sections that follow, I will analyze the theoretical framework presented in chapter 2 as it applies to the World Bank case. I will show how the rapprochement of this organization to the UN system and its choice of preferred partners have responded to the Bank’s evolving resource situation. The WB is characterized by the possession of vast financial resources, while it has faced challenges with respect to other assets. Firstly, with its incursion in new development fields, its centralized infrastructure and its issue-specialization proved limited. Subsequently, the organization has been targeted with mounting criticism, notably concerning its adjustment policies of the 1980s. The Bank has responded to these resource deficits by increasing its collaborative links with sister UN-IOs. The resource-based rationale behind the Bank’s relational behavior can be most clearly seen in its choice of partners, first oriented towards functionally pertinent organizations that would compensate for its limited experience in certain issue-areas, and more recently targeting prestigious organizations as its closest associates.

This first empirical chapter is organized as follows: the initial section describes the longitudinal pattern delineated by the WB’s proclivity to collaborate with UN-IOs. This is followed by a description of the Bank’s choice of preferred partners. Subsequently, I portray the resource situation of the Bank, both in terms of material and symbolic capital. Next, I introduce my resource-based explanation of the WB case. A later section considers alternative explanations of the organization’s relational behavior. The chapter closes with a brief conclusion.

THE BANK'S RELATIONAL BEHAVIOR: EXCEPTIONALISM AND RAPPROCHEMENT

Established in 1944, the Bretton Woods institutions – the World Bank and the IMF – became early manifestations of the international governance architecture emerging in the aftermath of the Second World War. A slightly younger sibling of the post-war optimism was the United Nations, whose constituting charter was signed a year later in 1945. The youngest rapidly grew to be the largest, as it started assimilating existing and emerging international organizations into its ‘system’. The World Bank was no exception and by 1947, when the IBRD was granting its first set of loans to war-torn European countries,²³⁹ it was simultaneously signing – together with the IMF – a cooperation agreement with the UN. The 1947 protocol recognizes the Bretton Woods Institutions as specialized agencies of the United Nations²⁴⁰ – a rarely acknowledged fact– and it further designates them as ‘observers’ in many UN deliberative bodies such as the UN General Assembly. As the financial arm of a larger functionally structured system, both the World Bank and the IMF were to be officially subordinated to the United Nations administration.²⁴¹ Hence, and akin to other specialized agencies, they would fall under the purview of ECOSOC.²⁴²

Within the system, however, the IFIs’ status has been exceptionally independent. Illustrating this point, it has been suggested that the Bank “refused in 1946 to sign an agreement, proposed by the UN, which would have been similar to those concluded with other specialized agencies.”²⁴³ On its part, the collaboration agreement that was eventually signed in 1947 grants

²³⁹ These were reconstruction loans to France, the Netherlands, Denmark and Luxembourg (Kapur, Lewis and Webb 1997, 10).

²⁴⁰ As defined in article 57 of the UN Charter, available from: <http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/>

²⁴¹ CIDSE 2005, 11.

²⁴² World Bank 2003a, 31

²⁴³ Adedeji 1995, 70.

“a significant degree of independence to the Bretton Woods Institutions as compared to that enjoyed by the rest of the UN agencies.”²⁴⁴ One of the elements setting the IFIs apart “is the provision that the United Nations recognizes that the World Bank and IMF ... enjoy ‘full autonomy’ in deciding the form and content of [their] budgets.”²⁴⁵ Similarly, the Bank and the Fund do not participate in the UN ‘common system’ of salaries, allowances and benefits.²⁴⁶ This stands in clear contrast with the accords signed between the UN administration and other specialized agencies – like FAO, ILO or UNESCO – which make explicit the aspiration of creating a unified international civil service by providing for the development of common standards of personnel and conditions of employment.²⁴⁷ Next to its formally recognized exceptional status within the system, the World Bank is set aside from other UN agencies by a series of organizational singularities. First, its decision-making arrangements are not guided by the rule of ‘one-country, one-vote’ that governs other UN bodies, but rather the “IBRD links member countries’ voting power to their capital subscriptions, which in turn are based on their relative economic strength.”²⁴⁸ Moreover, as a *bank*, the WB has organized its development assistance through loans and credits, as opposed to the grants and direct project implementation which mark the work of other UN agencies.²⁴⁹ The prevalence of economists among the Bank’s staff has likewise conferred the institution a unique organizational culture and *modus operandi*.²⁵⁰ Overall, the World Bank has been characterized by a *de jure* and *de facto* exceptionality among UN agencies, as projected in its association agreement with the UN

²⁴⁴ CIDSE 2005, 11.

²⁴⁵ Abraszewski and Quijano 1993, 16 (par. 45).

²⁴⁶ Meron 1967, 286.

²⁴⁷ Meron 1967, 285; Abraszewski and Quijano 1993, 16 (par. 42).

²⁴⁸ World Bank 2003a, 13.

²⁴⁹ To be noted, the WB started to confer concessional – ‘soft’ – loans in the 1960s, with the establishment of IDA.

²⁵⁰ See for instance: Weaver 2003.

administration and in its distinctive organizational character. As follows, the Bank – together with its sister institution, the IMF – “were particularly insistent in their early years on keeping ECOSOC and the other specialized agencies at a distance and on emphasizing the differences between them and these other agencies. Indeed, they conveyed the impression that they scarcely regarded themselves as specialized agencies of the UN.”²⁵¹ In line with the previous description, the Bank has historically assumed a distant attitude vis-à-vis the rest of the UN system. This was particularly so during its first decades of activity, when the WB was embodied in the IBRD, and acted chiefly as a bank charged with assisting in the reconstruction of war-thorn European countries. At the time, the exceptional character and status of the Bank was at a high, and therefore its links with sister UN-IOs remained at a low. Such state of affairs has often led to the suggestion that “the Bretton Woods institutions do not subject themselves to substantive coordination by the UN either at the inter-governmental (ECOSOC) or at the Secretariat (ACC) level as specialized agencies do. Their link is limited to their chief executive officers making, from time to time, appearances before ECOSOC, to maintain liaison offices at UN headquarters and to participating at some meetings of UN bodies.”²⁵²

Longitudinally, the relational behavior of the WB shows a growing proclivity to interact with sister UN agencies. Traditionally distant, the relationship between the Bank and the UN system has gradually improved over the past decades.²⁵³ As a caveat, the collaborative attitude of the Bank has been generally modest and marked by a tone of exceptionalism – thus ever echoing the lineaments of the 1947 relationship agreement it signed with the UN. With vast financial

²⁵¹ Reid 1973, 133.

²⁵² Adedeji 1995, 70.

²⁵³ Mention of such improvement can be found, for instance, in Reid 1973, 140.

resources, “the World Bank has become the giant of the world’s development organizations.”²⁵⁴ Its material dominance, coupled with its traditional independence and distinctiveness as an IFI, have shaped the extent of its involvement in collaborative links with other UN agencies and the system as a whole. Hence, for instance, the WB has joined the recently created coordination mechanism of the UN Development Group, yet it maintains in it an ‘observer’ status.²⁵⁵ Similarly, despite its involvement in UN sponsored collective strategies such as those linked to the Millennium Development Goals, the WB has concomitantly advanced its own tools – like the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers introduced together with the IMF. Still, the collaborative proclivity of the Bank has increased over time, and particularly in recent years. And indeed, the traditional disconnection of the WB vis-à-vis the UN renders such diachronic variation in its cooperative inclination most significant despite its modesty.

Over the years, the WB has evolved to constitute today not only a bank but also a development agency.²⁵⁶ As early as the 1950s, with the Marshall Plan taking care of Europe’s post-war recovery, the IBRD shifted its attention to development.²⁵⁷ Moreover, in 1960, a ‘soft-loan’ affiliate of the Bank was created – the International Development Association – to provide non-interest, concessional credits to the poorest countries. Throughout the years, the Bank’s role in “development-related technical assistance has expanded ... to become an extensive and integral part of the Bank’s operations and character ... [its] growth, especially under McNamara (1969-81), pushed the Bank into an even larger array of development activities.”²⁵⁸

²⁵⁴ Brechin 1997, 41.

²⁵⁵ A list of the members of the UN Development Group – and their respective status – is available from: <http://www.undg.org>

²⁵⁶ Brechin 1997, 32.

²⁵⁷ Karns and Mingst 2004, 364.

²⁵⁸ Brechin 1997, 33.

Conceptually, the Bank has also shifted over time from a purely economic perspective and a focus on infrastructure to a broader conceptualization of development, and has as a result incurred into new areas such as health, governance and the environment. As a corollary to such evolution and expansion, the WB has come closer “to the fields of activity and the concepts of development of the four socially-minded specialized agencies, FAO, ILO, UNESCO and WHO.”²⁵⁹ Accordingly, a first period of openness towards partnerships on the part of the Bank took place in the 1960s, when it concluded a series of formal cooperative agreements with FAO, UNESCO and WHO.²⁶⁰ On the one hand, this collaborative inclination responded to the fact that, with its incursion into new domains of activity, the Bank had to acknowledge the authority of the UN-IOs covering those issue-areas. In this sense, for instance, the Bank’s lending in education – underway since 1962 – had to allow for and accept UNESCO’s standing as the UN ‘lead agency’ in the topic.²⁶¹ On the other hand, the centralized structure of the WB and its focus on financing presented it with the need to rely on operational, field-oriented partners to assist in development projects. By 1995, the issue of partnerships inspired the drafting by the Bank of a Source Book illustrating its collaboration with more than 20 UN organizations over the period 1989-1993.²⁶² In it, the Bank is portrayed as actively interacting with UN-IOs, particularly with UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, IFAD, FAO, UNESCO, ILO and WFP. Table 3.1 below lists some examples of joint projects reported by the 1995 publication and details, for each agency involved, the area of activity – functional and geographic – as well as a brief description of the content of the collaborative endeavor.

²⁵⁹ Reid 1973, 135.

²⁶⁰ Reid 1973, 150.

²⁶¹ Jones 1992, 46.

²⁶² Pachter 1995.

Table 3.1: Examples of World Bank Projects with other UN Agencies

UN Organization	Project Type	Year	Location	Description
FAO	Food Security	1992	Cameroon	FAO approved pesticides used; FAO training for pesticide handling; FAO to provide technical assistance for Early Warning.
IFAD	Agriculture Services	1992	Central African Republic	Parallel work with an IFAD-funded project in food crops.
ILO	Transportation Rehabilitation	1994	Uganda	ILO developed labor-based equipment methods contract for use in IDA project.
UNDP	Financial Technical Assistance	1990	World (not specified)	With seed funding by UNDP, the Bank launched a technical assistance program (financial market technology).
UNESCO	Basic Education Quality Improvement	1994	Uruguay	UNESCO regional office in Montevideo involved in project execution.
UNFPA	Social Development II/ Health and Nutrition	1993	Ecuador	Contraceptives procurement and project cooperation.
UNICEF	Health Service Rehabilitation	1992	Rumania	UNICEF to procure drugs, training of staff in procurement procedures.
WFP	Food Security and Social Action	1992	Rwanda	Co-financing US\$15.9m; WFP to provide food (50% purchased locally) for vulnerable populations (e.g. AIDS victims, Children).
WHO	Health and Safe Motherhood	1993	Chad	WHO involved in health expenditure report, active with government and donors, to help in training planning for Pharmacy Division.

Source: Pachter 1995

A decade later, a Board Report monitoring the Bank's major institutional partnerships signaled its active engagement in the UN Development Group, as well as its support and engagement in the Millennium Project and the Millennium Development Goals Campaign.²⁶³ Similarly, in 2004, the WB's Operations Evaluation Department conducted an independent appraisal on the institution's approach to Global Programs.²⁶⁴ Such assessment included twenty six case-study programs dating from 1972 to 2002 and covering various themes – environment and agriculture, health, social development and infrastructure, among others. Here again, organizations such as UNDP, UNICEF and WHO are depicted as working together with the Bank in the global programs covered by the study.

Adding proof to the increased proclivity of the Bank to interact with sister UN-IOs is the institution's participation in activities related to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Traditionally, the WB had considered emergencies and humanitarian crises as falling outside its spectrum of action. As recently as the early 1990s, “[a]t the time of the creation of the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs ... no-one working in the relief and rehabilitation programs ... could be heard to question ‘where is the Bank?’ As the premier, wholesaler of development assistance ... its absence was taken for granted.”²⁶⁵ Less than a decade later, the World Bank established a Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction (CPR) unit. Moreover, in the period from 2000 to 2007, the Bank has made growing contributions to UN agencies in the field of humanitarian aid (see Table 3.2 below).²⁶⁶

²⁶³ World Bank, 2003b.

²⁶⁴ World Bank 2004.

²⁶⁵ Scott and Bannon 2003.

²⁶⁶ With ups and downs – in part resulting from the unpredictability of emergencies – the overall trend in Table 3.2 is one of increased funding: of seven instances where comparison with the previous year can be made, four show a higher amount than the preceding year.

Table 3.2: Evolution of WB Funding to UN Agencies - Humanitarian Aid (2000-2007)

Year	Amount WB Funding to UN Agencies (USD)	Appealing Agencies
2000	1.000.000	UNICEF
2001	2.700.000	UNDP and UNHCR
2002	260.000	UNDP
2003	3.327.504	WHO, UNICEF, UNDP and FAO
2004	824.375	UNDP and UNICEF
2005	2.767.078	FAO, UNICEF and UNDP
2006	30.605.698	WFP and FAO
2007	2.536.816	FAO

Source: Financial Tracking Service (FTS) – The Global Humanitarian Aid Database <http://ocha.unog.ch/fts/analysis/index.asp> (accessed March 2008)

Besides the previous description, and as I portray in the concluding chapter, the Bank is currently participating in a notable number of UN inter-agency coordination mechanisms.²⁶⁷ Table 3.3 below shows the ‘global partnerships’ highlighted by the Bank itself as most significant, and lists for each the UN-IOs that join the WB in them. Overall, the participation of the World Bank in joint projects and its development of collaborative links with other UN agencies has increased over time, and particularly in the last decade.

²⁶⁷ See Annex B for an illustrative list of the inter-agency mechanisms that count the Bank as a member.

Table 3.3: UN Organizations in 'Important Global Partnerships' for the WB

Global Partnership	UN Participating Organizations
Onchocerciasis Control Program (OCP)	FAO; UNDP; WHO
Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI)	WHO; UNICEF
The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)	FAO; UNDP; IFAD; UNEP
The Carbon Fund	No organization specified
The Global Environmental Facility (GEF)	UNDP; UNEP (+ IFAD; FAO; UNIDO)
Roll Back Malaria	UNICEF; UNDP; WHO
Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest (CGAP)	IFAD; ILO; UNDP
Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)	UNHCR; UNICEF; WFP; UNDP; UNFPA; UNODC; ILO; UNESCO; WHO
Financial Sector Reform and Strengthening Initiative (FIRST)	IMF
Education for All (EFA)	UNESCO; UNDP; UNICEF; UNFPA; WHO; WFP; ILO; FAO
Global Water Partnership (GWP)	N/A

Source: World Bank official web site (www.worldbank.org), under the heading 'About us', sub-heading 'Partnerships at Work' (accessed June 2006)

THE BANK'S PREFERRED PARTNERS

On average, where the Bank has established links with the United Nations system, it has tended to choose certain agencies as its preferred partners. As it could be expected, the closest partner of the Bank has traditionally been its financial twin – the IMF. Created in tandem, both institutions have tended to be closely associated with each other. Early links were materialized in a memorandum of cooperation signed by the Bank and the Fund in 1970. In the 1980s, both organizations worked together in the implementation of structural adjustment programs in many development countries. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers recently introduced as a tool for country assistance represent yet another instance of joint action combining both financial organizations. Alternatively, the Bank has established links with other UN organizations. As I

have mentioned above, and accompanying its activity expansion in the development field, the WB signed in the mid 1960s cooperation agreements with FAO, UNIDO, WHO and UNESCO. Collaboration with the later declined subsequently in the 1970s, as the Bank increasingly drew on 'in-house' work for education projects.²⁶⁸ A sign of normative and conceptual correspondence, the Bank has also carried out joint publications with the following UN-IOs: UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, ILO and UNFPA.²⁶⁹ Within this group, strong links have particularly been established in recent years with UNDP and UNICEF. Illustrating such closeness, both the Programme and the Fund appear as the prime UN-IOs receiving 'contract awards' from the Bank. As a lender, the WB finances projects that are then implemented in the field by a 'contractor'. In this sense, the number of Bank-financed contracts in which a given UN organization participates constitutes a good measure of that agency's closeness to the Bank as a partner. Table 3.4 below lists the 'preferred partners' mentioned so far and the number of contract awards they received from the Bank between 2000 and 2007.²⁷⁰ As it can be seen, UNDP and UNICEF comfortably head the list.

Similarly, I have mentioned above that the World Bank can be counted among the members of the UN Development Group, and has engaged within it in a number of joint activities. Figure 3.1 below shows, for each UN-IO, the percentage out of all UNDG joint programmes in which the WB has been involved that also show that agency as a participant. Here again, UNDP and UNICEF appear at the top, with the highest number of shared programs with the Bank.

²⁶⁸ Jones 1992, 127.

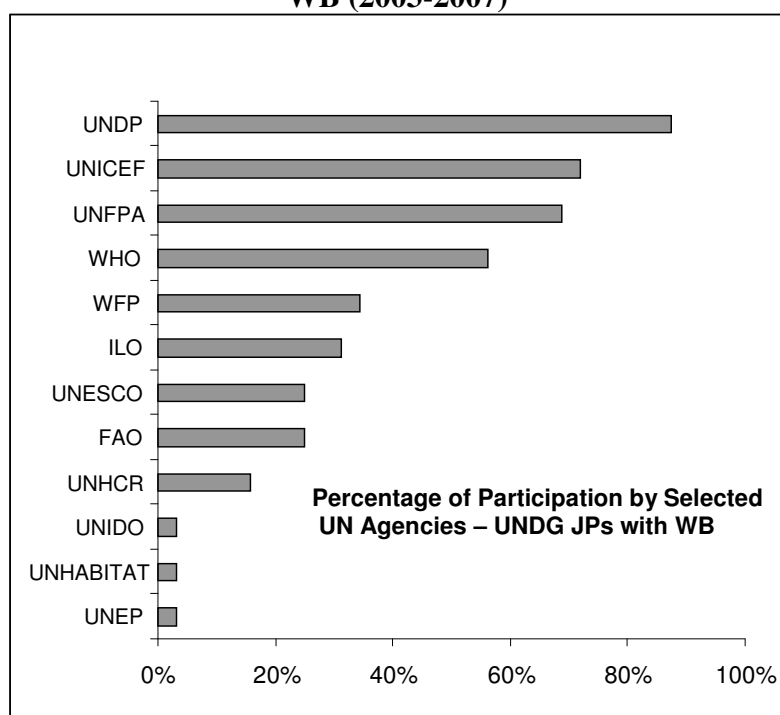
²⁶⁹ See the Publications Section at the World Bank web site: <http://publications.worldbank.org/ecommerce/>

²⁷⁰ Except for WHO, which could not be included in the database search given the broad nature of its acronym.

Table 3.4: World Bank Contract Awards by UN-IO Recipient (2000-2007)

Organization	Contract Awards (#)
UNDP	132
UNICEF	127
FAO	46
UNFPA	33
ILO	14
UNESCO	8
WFP	6
UNIDO	1

Source: World Bank Contract Awards Database
at: <http://www.worldbank.org> (accessed March 2008)

Figure 3.1: Other UN Agencies' Participation in UNDG Joint Programmes that Include WB (2003-2007)

Source: UNDG-UNCT Database
<http://www.unctdatabase.undg.org> (accessed March 2008)

Among the Bank's collaborative associations, the most striking partnership is that with the Fund. Both organizations have established close links throughout the past three decades and UNICEF constitutes today one of the WB's prime associates. The striking aspect of this

relationship has to do with the fact that UNICEF appeared in the 1980s as one of the most vocal critics of the Bank's structural adjustment lending. Following the world recession of the 1970s, the IMF and the World Bank put into operation a series of 'structural adjustment policies' in developing countries with the purpose of recovering national economies, which would in turn increase the capacity of borrower governments to pay off their debts. The 1980s, however, "witnessed economic decline in most of Sub-Saharan Africa and of unprecedented power being wielded by the Bretton Woods institutions. A corresponding sharp increase in vocal criticism of the Bank contributed to a growing 'image problem' for the institution."²⁷¹ Among such criticisms, the "most resounding objection came from the United Nations Children's Fund, which published a collection of papers in 1987 under the title, *Adjustment with a Human Face*."²⁷² This publication was accompanied by other documents and statements from the Fund – such as the 1983 report from the Executive Board and the 1990 volume of the State of the World's Children – all of which highlighted the deleterious social consequences of adjustment for the poor in the Third World. More pointedly, "some UNICEF managers and staff claim[ed] that child malnutrition among the poor has increased in some adjusting countries because of adjustment policies."²⁷³ Additionally, UNICEF's publications and declarations emphasized the need to protect vulnerable sectors of the population from the adverse effects of adjustment packages, and further proposed a series of economic and policy measures that would promote the 'human' aspects of development.²⁷⁴ By 1992, the State of the World's Children publication from UNICEF straightforwardly claimed that "the Bank contributed to large negative net transfers to developing

²⁷¹ Kapur, Lewis and Webb 1997, 766.

²⁷² Kapur, Lewis, Webb 1997, 352.

²⁷³ Pachter 1995, UNICEF 7-8.

²⁷⁴ See: Cornia, Jolly and Stewart 1987-8.

countries.”²⁷⁵ As follows from such state of affairs, “[f]or a time it looked as though the World Bank and UNICEF would be on a collision course.”²⁷⁶ Still, the resulting interaction was marked by collaboration and dialogue rather than confrontation. Far from distancing the two organizations, UNICEF’s criticism of the Bank’s policies has had “an impact on Bank adjustment planning and has contributed to the development of social safety nets and social funds.”²⁷⁷ What is more: in some areas like nutrition, it has been recently asserted that “the Bank and UNICEF do business quite frequently.”²⁷⁸ In that field, the WB has adopted the conceptual framework designed by UNICEF in 1990 to guide its projects and lending.²⁷⁹ Close ties are also present between the Bank and UNICEF in other issue-areas such as health and education. In the later, notwithstanding the formal leadership of UNESCO, the Bank has more often resorted to UNICEF as its partner of choice. Illustrating this, the Fund has been a contractor for the Bank in 27 education projects over the last decade, while UNESCO has only received 3 education-related contract awards from the WB.²⁸⁰ Overall, contrary to expectations, the Bank has built strong ties with a UN-IO that formerly stood as one of its main critics. This paradoxical fact can be explained, as I detail later, by looking at the World Bank’s resource situation.

THE WORLD BANK’S RESOURCES – STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

I have depicted above how the WB’s position within the UN system has been traditionally marked by independence and a tone of ‘exceptionalism’. The uniqueness of the

²⁷⁵ Pachter 1995, UNICEF 8.

²⁷⁶ Ruderman 1990, 483.

²⁷⁷ Pachter 1995, UNICEF 7.

²⁷⁸ Heaver 2002, 32.

²⁷⁹ See for instance: Rokx 2000, 4.

²⁸⁰ World Bank Contract Awards Database (at: <http://www.worldbank.org>).

Bank derives from organizational features that also shape its resource situation. In terms of material capital, the Bank possesses vast financial assets that it collects not only from member states' contributions but also by borrowing from international capital markets. In order to prove itself credit-worthy, the Bank undertook in its early years a conservative lending approach. By 1960, "the World Bank had earned itself the stature of triple A rating, allowing it to borrow money at the best conditions achievable. In less than 15 years, the Bank had grown to become the fourth largest financier of international development projects."²⁸¹ The ample availability of funds has set the Bank apart from sister UN-IOs and has also buffered it from the impact of the recurrent budget crises affecting the UN more generally. Adding to the Bank's strength is the fact that both IFIs "began their operations with endowments given by governments in the form of capital subscriptions, and governments did not ask for dividends on these subscriptions, they were not dependent on governments for annual appropriations for administration, as the other agencies were."²⁸² With the creation of IDA in the 1960s, and the concomitant expansion of the Bank's activity portfolio, its dependence on donor's contributions increased.²⁸³ Still, the WB has remained most affluent among UN-IOs. Hence, while the UN regular budget "amounts to a little over \$1 billion each year, with total spending through the entire UN system of core and specialized bodies – excluding enforcement and peacekeeping operations – at about \$10 billion per year ... the World Bank dispenses about \$40 billion each year."²⁸⁴

In some way, the Bank's vast monetary assets appear out of line with its infrastructure. Against its size and dominance, the Bank traditionally stood as a largely centralized and

²⁸¹ Bergesen and Lunde 1999, 109.

²⁸² Reid 1973, 133.

²⁸³ IDA was created to provide concessional credits to the poorest countries and its loans are derived from a fund that is replenished by donor countries every three years.

²⁸⁴ Weiss, Forsythe and Coate 2004, 259.

hierarchical institution, with few and small country and regional offices. For this reason, historically, “[a]ll stages of the project cycle were managed from Washington, and field operations basically handled by short-term missions.”²⁸⁵ Next to its physical concentration, the Bank has also emerged as a highly technical and specialist organization. In its first decades of activities, it adopted a purely financial and economic approach to development, and focused almost exclusively on large infrastructure projects. The Bank’s staff has been further characterized by an ample proportion of professional economists, a fact that has contributed to “[t]he persistence of apolitical, technical and economic rationality as the hallmarks of the Bank’s espoused ideology.”²⁸⁶ From the 1960s onward, the expansion of WB’s operations to areas such as health and the environment challenged this top-down, centralized structure and exclusive economic orientation. On the one hand, the design of projects oriented to topics such as nutrition and education required experts in areas other than economics. On the other hand, the Bank’s detachment from the field and its “lack of a decentralized structure has constrained its potential for incorporating grassroots elements into its projects.”²⁸⁷ In this way, the expanding portfolio of the WB’s activities – both in terms of size and character – rendered some aspects of its original infrastructure limited. Faced with these and other shortcomings, the Bank’s response has been twofold. First, it has – particularly recently – embarked on a number of organizational changes. Hence, in terms of staff for instance, “[t]hroughout the early 1990s the Bank rapidly expanded the number of sociologists, anthropologists, and other social specialists.”²⁸⁸ More profoundly, the WB launched in 1997 the ‘Strategic Compact’, “a comprehensive reform plan to enhance the

²⁸⁵ Bergesen and Lunde 1999, 119.

²⁸⁶ Weaver 2003, 123.

²⁸⁷ Brechin 1997, 37.

²⁸⁸ Kapur, Lewis and Webb 1997, 375.

effectiveness of the World Bank's action to fulfill its basic goal of reducing poverty."²⁸⁹ The plan included, among other measures, further decentralization of activities to the field. Alternatively, and as I will explain in the next section, the Bank has resorted to partnerships with other UN agencies to compensate for its weaknesses. As follows, for example, the projects it finances have increasingly revealed UN-IOs as implementing contractors. In this last regard, the outstanding monetary strength of the Bank has allowed it to compensate for its limited field presence and related infrastructure gaps, its role in associations being generally that of financier.

Against its financial affluence, the Bank has suffered from a shortage of symbolic capital. On its part, the issue-saliency of WB has followed a diachronic pattern similar to that of its infrastructure. On the one hand, the Bank stands as highly prominent in its traditional field of concern, the financial and economic aspects of development. On the other, the steady expansion over the years of the WB's activities was accompanied by its adoption of an ever broader approach to development and an ever greater focus on poverty-reduction. Accordingly, the Bank has progressively incurred into, for it, atypical issue-areas, such as governance, the environment or health. For instance, the WB undertook its first education project in 1962 and its first nutrition-related intervention in 1976. The Bank's incursion into new domains has been tightly associated with a weakening of its saliency with respect to its overall, ever larger sphere of action. Thereby, domain-stretching has faced the Bank with the need to gain visibility and authority in sectors formerly outside its purview.

Next to the search for saliency in new fields, the institution has been historically characterized by a controversial image and has also faced various legitimacy and reputation

²⁸⁹ CEB 1999, 16.

crises. Under McNamara (1970s), the Bank strove for a more ‘socially conscious’ image,²⁹⁰ investing in a wider range of development areas and placing a greater emphasis on poverty reduction. Still, the WB’s “movement into the development arena has opened it up to criticism from conservatives who fear it has lost or will shortly lose its capitalistic approach. Likewise, the Bank has always faced general criticism from liberals who have long wanted the Bank to do more in the name of development.”²⁹¹ In the 1980s, and following the debt and oil crises of the previous decade, both the Bank and the IMF sought to assist in the economic recovery of developing countries by promoting structural adjustment policies. By the mid-eighties “external criticism surged ... much of it centered on the austerity at the heart of the adjustment effort.”²⁹² As I have mentioned above, UNICEF was among the first and most vocal critics of adjustment, pointing to and objecting its ‘social costs’. An akin case for the protection of vulnerable groups during adjustment – yet without criticizing the Bank directly – was made by WHO.²⁹³ Similarly, the “neglect of the ‘human’ dimension was also emphasized by the UNDP’s Human Development Report which emerged as an influential critic of the Bank.”²⁹⁴ Disillusioned borrower countries similarly condemned and questioned the IFIs’ adjustment prescriptions. Well into the 1990s, the Bank was still “facing an up hill battle.”²⁹⁵ Adding to its image crisis, recent decades have witnessed “mounting criticism of the Bank’s development paradigm and practices from a growing number of vigilant international non-government and local civil society actors.”²⁹⁶ With the slogan ‘50 years is enough’, advocacy groups have demanded from the

²⁹⁰ Reid 1973, 139; Kapur, Lewis and Webb 1997, 1187.

²⁹¹ Brechin 1997, 34.

²⁹² Kapur, Lewis and Webb 1997, 352.

²⁹³ Ruderman 1990, 483.

²⁹⁴ Kapur, Lewis and Webb 1997, 795.

²⁹⁵ Bergesen and Lunde 1999, 135.

²⁹⁶ Weaver 2003, 227.

organization greater transparency and accountability. The controversial and negative image of the Bank has been further reinforced by the asymmetrical power held by different member states in its decision-making procedures. In the IBRD, borrower countries have a voice in setting the bank's policies, but the organization has linked members' voting power to their capital subscriptions – in turn based on their economic strength. In the case of IDA, for instance, it was only in 2001 that borrower countries joined donors in deliberations on the association's prospects.²⁹⁷ Finally, the overwhelming influence of the United States in the WB's internal workings has been often emphasized. Along these lines, the organization has suffered from being considered by publics in low-income countries as being dominated by rich donor countries.²⁹⁸

As the previous description suggests, the Bank's resource situation has been increasingly marked by an imbalance between material and symbolic assets: financially affluent, the organization has found its Achilles' heel in a contentious image. The singular way in which the WB, as a *bank*, has organized its finances – with a combination of states-replenished funds in IDA and resorting to market mechanisms in the IBRD – has turned it into a wealthy, dominant and independent institution within the UN system. While the monetary assets place it in a *primus-inter-pares* position, the centralized structure of the WB has limited its presence at the country level. Furthermore, while its financial leverage has given this IFI exclusive access to economy-related ministries and government officials, the many criticisms its policies have received throughout its history have limited its capacity to negotiate and interact with other key actors like NGOs. What is more, the combined attitudes of frustrated recipient governments and vigilant advocacy groups have brought about many legitimacy and reputation crises for the Bank.

²⁹⁷ World Bank 2003a, 16.

²⁹⁸ Reid 1973, 155.

The resource situation of monetary wealth and weak symbolic capital that has come to characterize the WB can be seen taking shape throughout the organization's history. In its first two decades of existence – and mainly embodied in the IBRD – the Bank's work remained unadventurous, first dedicated to Europe's reconstruction and subsequently approaching development through concrete infrastructure projects. The WB emerged from this first period as a 'conservative but successful lender',²⁹⁹ thus acquiring a strong financial position. The 1960s saw the Bank's start as a development agency – a first stretch from its traditional banking activities. Under the presidency of McNamara in the 1970s, the WB experienced a sharp growth in the size and variety of its lending portfolio, and it further increased its focus on poverty alleviation. The Bank's expansion challenged both its infrastructure and its issue-salience. On the one hand, field-oriented projects presented it with the need for greater country presence and stronger links with local actors. On the other, incursion into additional domains also faced the organization with the challenge of building up authority and salience in new issue-areas. The growth in the Bank's lending portfolio and its focus on poverty reduction also meant that the institution would have a greater effect in a larger number of countries. This increased public scrutiny of the Bank's activities, which in turn impacted on the organization's image. In terms of public perceptions, "the Bank's image worsened rather badly in the later 1980s and 1990s."³⁰⁰ In the 1980s, in particular, the image of the WB was seriously damaged when the IFIs' structural adjustment policies came under fire. In the 1990s, criticisms coming from environmentalist groups and non-governmental organizations more generally have further challenged the institution's legitimacy and reputation.

²⁹⁹ Bergesen and Lunde 1999, 108.

³⁰⁰ Kapur, Lewis and Webb 1997, 1209.

Overall, the World Bank stands as an under-loved giant among UN organizations. As I show in the section that follows, the Bank's relational behavior has responded to this particular resource situation – in its modest yet ever-increasing proclivity to partner with other UN-IOs, as well as in its choice of partners.

A RESOURCE-BASED EXPLANATION OF THE BANK'S RELATIONAL BEHAVIOR

In view of the previously described resource situation of the Bank, the theoretical framework introduced in Chapter 2 would offer a series of predictive inferences regarding the organization's proclivity to collaborate with others. First, the financial strength of the WB constitutes a basis for reticence towards associations. Indeed, such asset and the power from it derived have contributed to the independence and 'exceptionalism' the Bank has traditionally revealed within the UN system. It has also added to the modest and cautious tone its collaborative behavior has assumed in general. Alternatively, with the Bank's expansion into more numerous and varied fields of action, resource gaps started to surface. In this respect, the organization has been faced with the need to compensate for its weakness and enhance its saliency, country presence and expertise in new domains. As follows, the Bank can be expected to reveal over time an increasing inclination to cooperate with other UN agencies. Along the same lines, the particular role of the Bank in joint projects and activities can be expected to be mainly that of donor, relying on partners for other inputs – such as the contact with local actors. Finally, I have suggested that the most striking resource gap of WB has to do with its controversial and contested image. The shortage of symbolic capital will further encourage a collaborative position, again in that the Bank "needs the partnership of the other agencies to

offset its weaknesses.”³⁰¹ Faced with a deteriorated standing, the WB will strive to appear as a ‘collaborating organization’, both to derive legitimacy from the act itself and to enhance its reputation by associating with more prestigious organizations. In terms of its choice of partners, moreover, the Bank will likely be more open to interact with high-prestige organizations, while trying to avoid controversial and discredited ones.

The pattern assumed over time by the Bank’s relational behavior concurs with the previous inferences. Within the World Bank’s longitudinally growing proclivity to partner, two periods stand out as revealing a boosted openness on the part of this organization to associate with UN-IOs: first, the 1960s; and second, from the early 1990s onwards. As I have described, the former period corresponds to the expansion of the WB’s activities and its incursion into ‘new’ areas of development, such as education and health. The Bank’s cooperative behavior was then crystallized, among other things, in its signing of collaboration agreements with issue-relevant agencies. I have suggested that the WB traditionally constituted a centralized organization, with limited field presence. It is also chiefly a lender, and while it remains responsible for project design and appraisal, it does not act as an executing agency.³⁰² As follows, the associations established by the Bank in this first period responded largely to its need to find partners that would assist with their expertise and field presence in the implementation of Bank-financed projects in atypical areas. Moreover, when entering different development fields, the Bank had to acknowledge the leadership and authority over each exercised by other UN-IOs. And also, by associating with agencies salient in a given realm of its interest, the Bank has sought to increase its own saliency in such area. Hence, for instance, having started its lending in

³⁰¹ Reid 1973, 141.

³⁰² Brechin 1997, 46.

education in 1962, the Bank channeled much of its early work in the area through its collaborative arrangements with UNESCO.³⁰³ By interacting with the lead agency in education, the Bank could compensate for its lack of experience and prominence in such field. The relationship would then function on the basis of the synergies created between an under-funded UNESCO and a Bank lacking in-house expertise and issue-saliency. Similarly, in the sixties and “[a]fter its first decade and a half of reluctance, the World Bank had become the major multilateral provider of investment assistance, cooperating closely with UNDP and quite comfortable with the Programme’s agenda setting, pre-investment role.”³⁰⁴ Subsequently, during the McNamara years, agencies such as FAO, ILO and WHO increasingly participated in the Bank’s economic missions by contributing with information and staff.³⁰⁵

For some time during the 1980s, the focus on poverty was muted in the Bank, to reappear by the end of the decade.³⁰⁶ The related downgrading in prominence of themes such as education in turn meant a distancing of the Bank from previously forged associations. Still, taken as a whole, the Bank’s lending has continued to expand and diversify over the years and, by the end of the 1990s, “total dollars lent for social development at the World Bank – in education, health and safety nets – exceeded loans for the traditional sectors of energy, industry, mining, oil and gas, irrigation, transportation and urban development *combined*.”³⁰⁷ Moreover, owing to its financial power, the Bank has become one of the largest providers of funding for sectors such as education and nutrition – even if still dedicating a small portion of its total budget to them. The Bank stands today as “the world’s largest financier of health, nutrition, and population

³⁰³ Jones 1992, 63.

³⁰⁴ Murphy 2006, 140.

³⁰⁵ Reid 1973, 145.

³⁰⁶ Kapur, Lewis and Webb 1997, 331.

³⁰⁷ Lyne, Nielson and Tierney 2006a, 2 (emphasis in original). The quoted text refers in particular to the year 1998.

interventions to development countries ... the World Bank started lending for nutrition interventions in 1976 and has since allocated more than US\$ 1.8 billion to nutrition. Average commitments amounted to about US\$ 120 million between 1996 and 2000.”³⁰⁸ Accompanying these developments, the WB has over time increased its interaction with UN-IOs. In 1990, it convened jointly with UNDP, UNICEF and UNESCO a World Conference on Education for All, later projected in the ‘EFA’ international coordination initiative.³⁰⁹ Similarly, the Bank has joined WHO and UNICEF in the Global Alliance for Vaccine and Immunization; is working with FAO, UNDP and WHO in the Onchocerciasis Control Program; and participates in the Roll Back Malaria initiative with UNICEF, UNDP and WHO – just to name a few examples.³¹⁰

In terms of the choice of partners, the collaborative links that have responded to the Bank’s portfolio expansion and diversification have been oriented towards UN-IOs with strong infrastructure and/or saliency in the pertinent issue-areas. Hence, for instance, in associating with UNFPA on population issues, the Bank stressed the Fund’s comparative advantages as “a grant making institution; having a strong field presence [with 70% of its staff in the field] and experience working with bilateral, NGOs and other donors; an advocacy role vis-à-vis government; the least expensive procurement of contraceptives; acknowledged predominance in the field; technical expertise and decentralized decision making.”³¹¹ Similarly, a “cooperative agreement signed with FAO helped pay the way for the Bank’s expansion of lending to agriculture.”³¹² As a final example: following a joint memorandum on health activities in 1976,

³⁰⁸ Rokx 2000, 6-7.

³⁰⁹ For information on the Education for All initiative see for instance: www.unesco.org/education/efa/

³¹⁰ See the ‘Partnerships at Work’ section in the World Bank website (at: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/0,,contentMDK:20040606~menuPK:34639~pagePK:51123644~piPK:329829~theSitePK:29708,00.html>)

³¹¹ Pachter 1995, UNFPA 5.

³¹² Kapur, Lewis and Webb, 190.

the Bank's collaboration with the World Health Organization has built upon WHO's technical advantage in disease control.³¹³

Alongside the shortening of its distance to the UN, the growth and diversification of Bank's activities has also resulted in the organization being increasingly exposed to public scrutiny. This in turn had an effect on the WB's symbolic capital – in particular, on its perceived image. In its early days, the Bank's almost exclusive dependence on the international banking community for investors in its securities had made it worry mostly about its credibility as a sound financial institution. With the increasing incursion of the Bank into broader areas of development there came a growing public awareness of WB activities and an increasing sensitivity of the organization to public opinion. In particular, the influence of NGOs and advocacy groups increased in the 1980s and 1990s. Moreover, in contrast to the traditional reliance of the IBRD on financial markets, the Bank's affiliate in charge of 'soft loans' created in 1960 – the IDA – depended on donor governments for the replenishment of funds. Accordingly, the WB's "vulnerability greatly increased when IDA grant money was added to IBRD market borrowing."³¹⁴ Within this context of intensified susceptibility to external pressures and approval, the Bank has faced in recent decades ever growing criticisms. In particular, the austerity of the structural adjustment policies the WB implemented together with the IMF throughout the 1980s damaged its image as an advocate of the poor. Adjustment measures were met with widespread and growing disapproval. As I have described, organizations such as UNICEF pointed to the social harmful consequences of adjustment for the poor. Hostility towards the IFIs and their policies also emerged in borrowing countries. Advocacy groups and

³¹³ See for instance: Pachter 1995, WHO 6 (India example).

³¹⁴ Kapur, Lewis and Webb 1997, 376.

non-governmental organizations added to the prevalent condemnation of the Bank as environmentalists, for instance, pointed to the organization's disregard for the ecological impact of its loan programs.³¹⁵ In the 1990s, the World Bank continued to face "a decisive crossroads. Critics from different quarters question[ed] its very existence. Environmental and anti-poverty advocacy groups have claimed that 50 years are enough, and want[ed] the Bank closed down."³¹⁶ By and large, and "[a]s the recent wave of mass protests surrounding the annual rounds and meetings of the WTO, IMF and World Bank attest, the increasing prominence of these large multilateral bureaucracies in the public eye has invited notoriety and mounting opposition."³¹⁷

The WB's response to external criticisms has taken different forms. First, the organization reinforced its dedication to poverty alleviation in the late 1980s, declaring it its 'overarching objective' and further increasing its social lending portfolio. Similarly, the 'Strategic Compact', a reform plan launched at the Bank in 1997, has sought to "resolve many of the conditions that had perpetuated the Bank's image as a hypocritical, dishonest and corrupt organization."³¹⁸ Second, the Bank has looked to counter perceptions of arrogance by strengthening its relations with the NGO community,³¹⁹ and by increasing the involvement of borrower countries in project planning.³²⁰ In this way, "[d]efining itself by contrast to its past and trumpeting its commitment to poverty and to other newly assumed social commitments, especially the environment and gender equality, the turn-of-decade Bank found energy,

³¹⁵ Brechin 1997, 39.

³¹⁶ Bergesen and Lunde 1999, 95.

³¹⁷ Weaver 2003, 8.

³¹⁸ Weaver 2003, 45.

³¹⁹ Kapur, Lewis and Webb 1997, 768.

³²⁰ As I mention above, for instance, in 2001 borrower countries joined donors in discussions on IDA's future direction (World Bank 2003a, 16).

enthusiasm, and *external approval*.”³²¹ In response to the reputation and legitimacy crises suffered by the organization in the 1980s and 1990s, and with the intention of improving its image, the WB has also underpinned its links to the UN and its agencies. First, the Bank has become involved in the recent effort to increase system-wide coherence by participating in collective strategies and coordination mechanisms, such as those related to the Millennium Development Goals. The Bank is also one of the co-sponsors of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS.³²² It similarly participates in several inter-agency initiatives on various themes, such as the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, the UN Forum on Forests, and the UN Girls Education Initiative.³²³

In later decades, then, the Bank has resorted to partnerships with UN agencies as a way of improving its legitimacy and reputation. This can be most clearly seen in its choice of partners. In particular, I include here two contrasting cases to illustrate my claim. The first is given by the history of the relationship between the World Bank and UNESCO. As I have mentioned above, the Bank came closer to UNESCO during the 1960s, at the time of its incursion in the field of education. The WB’s lending in such sector began in 1962, and its growing ties with the specialized agency led to a UNESCO-World Bank Cooperative Agreement in 1968. Guided by the need to compensate for its limited country presence and weak salience in new domains, the Bank’s early links to UNESCO were based on the fact that the latter was “indisputably the lead UN agency in education, with a solid reputation, global influence and a strong network of

³²¹ Kapur, Lewis and Webb 1997, 358 (my emphasis).

³²² Other UNAIDS Cosponsors include UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, ILO, UNESCO and WHO. See the UNAIDS web site: <http://www.unaids.org/en/>

³²³ For an illustrative list of inter-agency initiatives and mechanisms that count the Bank as a member, see Annex B.

experts.”³²⁴ UNESCO was also underfunded, so the relationship prospered, driven by mutual interests and complementarities. During the 1970s and 1980s, with the debate around NIEO and charges of politicization, UNESCO suffered a decline in financial and political support, its rank as leader in international education policies being increasingly weakened and its position marginalized. On its part, the Bank’s image deteriorated during the eighties, as its structural adjustment policies became widely criticized. Alongside these events, the Bank – increasingly weak in symbolic capital – started to distance itself from a discredited UNESCO. In 1989, just four years after the U.S. and the UK left UNESCO, the Bank terminated its cooperative agreement with the specialized agency dating from 1964.³²⁵ Instead, the Bank took on “more of an explicit policy *leadership role* for education development globally, partly to fill a vacuum left in the same area by UNESCO.”³²⁶ In recent years, the WB has further directed its collaborative links to a more prestigious UN organization also covering the education domain – namely, UNICEF. Hence, since 2000 for instance, UNESCO has received only three education-related contract awards from the Bank, while UNICEF has been a contractor in 27 projects associated to the same sector. On their part, the collaborative ties between the Bank and UNESCO have come to be increasingly channeled through inter-agency education undertakings involving other organizations – such as the Education for All initiative.

Alternatively, the Bank has maintained in recent years a close relationship with UNICEF. Next to the Education for All initiative mentioned above, the Bank has joined the Fund in various group ventures, such the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, the Roll Back Malaria

³²⁴ Jones 1992, 47.

³²⁵ Pachter 1995, UNESCO 3.

³²⁶ Rogerson, Hewitt and Waldenberg 2004, 31 (my emphasis). Emphasis added to point to the previously mentioned issue of the struggle for leadership. Here it is interesting to see the WB placing itself at the center of *education* policy.

initiative, and the Polio Plus campaign. Moreover, the Bank and UNICEF have amply collaborated in various sectors, such as those dealing with ‘water supply and sanitation’ and ‘rural, peri-urban and slum areas’.³²⁷ Similarly, the two organizations have joined forces in the area of nutrition, where “the Bank and UNICEF are among the most important providers of assistance.”³²⁸ As I have suggested above, the strong ties that link the Bank to the Fund are striking in view of the criticisms advanced by the latter during the 1980s pointing to the structural adjustment policies of the former. Rather than confrontation, the corollary to such developments has been an ever growing level of collaboration between the two organizations. Today, UNICEF can be counted as one the Bank’s closest associates. As I have shown above, for instance, the Fund stands in a top position among UN-IOs in terms of contract awards accorded to it by the WB in the last seven years. At the heart of the WB’s predilection for UNICEF as a partner is the fact that the Fund enjoys a high level of prestige.³²⁹ UNICEF also counts with conceptual leadership in many topics and a generally good relationship with governments and NGOs. Confronted of late with wide-ranging criticism, the Bank has endeavored to improve its image by association – namely, by moving closer to a highly regarded UN-IO. Further supporting this suggestion, the Bank ties with the Fund have been manifestly publicized – noted in WB news, reports and publications.³³⁰ Finally, despite the more clear-cut functional pertinence of other UN agencies in many of the mentioned issue-areas, like UNESCO in education, the Bank has tended to work intimately with UNICEF in them. The choice of partners in associations is generally explained through functional criteria. In the instance given by the Bank’s preference

³²⁷ Beigbeder 2001, 109.

³²⁸ Heaver 2002, 30.

³²⁹ On this point about UNICEF, see chapter 5 in this dissertation.

³³⁰ Examples can be found at the World Bank website: <http://worldbank.org>

for UNICEF, such alternative rationale appears neutralized and the workings of my resource-based argument can be more clearly identified.

ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS – THE BANK AS A SPECIAL CASE

I have observed in chapter 2 that a series of possible alternative explanations can be advanced to explain the relational behavior of IOs such as the World Bank. On the one hand, the proclivity of the focal organization to partner can be argued to respond to the desires and demands from member states, pushing for greater coordination and coherence in the UN system. Alternatively, it may be suggested that the rapprochement to the UN revealed by the Bank responds to the higher efficiency involved in stronger links with functionally relevant agencies. Finally, the internal dynamics of the WB can be emphasized as offering crucial insights into its behavior. Here, elements such as the role of a particular WB president or the organization's unique character – as a bank – could be signaled as shaping its attitude towards partnerships in a given period.

For the first two – external factors' explanations – the Bank's exceptionalism would make it a least likely case from which to expect a proclivity to collaborate with UN-IOs. The Bank is not a typical UN organization, despite the often-neglected fact that it formally constitutes a UN specialized agency. Besides its unique features, such as its bank-like character, the WB has – together with the IMF – traditionally set itself apart from the rest of the UN system. Originally, at the heart of such distancing from the UN was the Bank's need to ensure its creditworthiness in the eyes of the international financial community.³³¹ It was also the notion that the Bank, as such, could more effectively function if separate from the more 'political' UN. Accordingly, and as

³³¹ Jones 1992, 5.

reflected in its 1947 collaboration agreement with ECOSOC, the Bank's position within in the UN system has been marked by independence. Adding to the WB 'exceptionalism', the organization has emerged as a western, U.S.-dominated institution. The support from developed countries, combined with the early success of the IBRD in financial markets, has reinforced the Bank's independence from the UN by conferring it vast financial resources.

From the viewpoint of the states' demands argument, a possible inference is that the WB's special status and financial strength allow it to buffer itself from the demands for increased coordination targeted at the UN system. In this regard, in fact, the relationship between the IFIs and the UN proper has been considered as a separate issue within the broader push to increase system-wide coherence.³³² This would make the Bank a least-likely case in terms of collaborative behavior. The problem with this deduction is that the Bank has over time increased its ties with the UN, and thereby it appears to obey external demands that supposedly would not affect it. Alternatively, the case could be made that the influence in the Bank of powerful members would make it highly prone to follow states' directives. The Bank's exceptionalism, however, implies that those demands will be different from those targeted at other UN-IOs. The Bank has been traditionally treated differently by member states, which have generally fostered its independence. If this is the case, then the question still remains of why the preference of WB principals has changed to push now for the institution to come closer to the UN.

In what concerns the efficiency-based argument, the Bank's independence has been traditionally justified in part as a basis for its competence and soundness. This is at odds with the argument suggesting that closer working relations with the UN are indeed the most efficient

³³² For instance, and as I have mentioned before, Kofi Annan's reform plan had as an aim to bring the UN and the IFIs into closer working relations. (Weiss, Forsythe and Coate 2004, 259).

modus operandi. Alternatively, a functional explanation could point to the Bank's task expansion and the consequent need to enhance ties with the UN in order to deal with the consequent overlap of domains. This concurs with the empirical evolution of the Bank's collaborative proclivity, but it remains limited in that it cannot explain partnerships with not so functionally relevant associates, or differing ties with equally pertinent ones.

Finally, perspectives focusing on internal features and dynamics tend to derive in explanations that present the focal organization as 'incomparable' with other cases. In the case of the World Bank, this is exacerbated by its exceptionalism within the UN system. On the one hand, IO behavior may be linked in those analyses to unique elements such as the particular perception the staff has of its mission, the leadership style of the organization's president or the constellations of power and interests during the decision-making process. Such type of accounts can only be construed *ex post facto*, and they cannot be generalized to or compared with other instances. Still, the Bank's relational behavior reveals a discernible pattern that is also comparable to that of other UN-IOs. In this respect, explanations based on internal dynamics face the challenge of explaining why and how behavior emanating from unique traits fits a generalizable rationale.

My account of the Bank's relational behavior incorporates its exceptionalism, but it also places this 'unique' case within a broader theoretical framework and empirical analysis, allowing for its comparison and for the identification of common traits and action patterns the Bank shares with other UN-IOs. As I have shown, the independent and exceptional status of the Bank has been projected in the modesty of its association with UN organizations. Hence, for instance, the WB participates in many inter-agency coordination mechanisms only as an 'observer'. Still,

within such overall reserve, the Bank's relative proclivity to collaborate with UN-IOs has indeed augmented over time. Such increase, moreover, can be proved to correspond to the emergence of gaps in the Bank's resources – first in terms of its limited infrastructure and salience as applied to new fields, and subsequently as derived from its image deterioration. As suggested by the 'proclivity to cooperate' matrix introduced in chapter 2, the combined financial strength of the Bank and its weakness along the symbolic capital dimension have determined for the organization an *intermediate* need and ensuing inclination to associate with others. More explicitly, the impact of the specific WB resource situation on its relational behavior can be seen in its choice of partners, first oriented to technically pertinent organizations – to cover the infrastructure and salience gaps – and more recently selectively preferring prestigious agencies – to counter its damaged image. The intermediate inclination to partner has been further tamed by the reserve in the Bank's relational behavior associated with its traditional detachment from the UN. Nonetheless, changes over time in its resource situation have determined an identifiable variation in its collaborative behavior. And indeed, the least-likely character of the Bank's case as emanating from its exceptionalism within the UN makes the described rapprochement to UN-IOs even more significant.

CONCLUSION

The case of the World Bank has been analyzed as a first empirical testing for my resource-based argument on inter-IO relations. Within the proclivity-to-collaborate matrix presented in chapter 2, the Bank's mixed resource situation placed it in the 'intermediate degree' box. Here, the diachronic variation in the Bank's relational behavior has offered a case-within-

case, allowing for the more complete understanding of the subtleties within the organization's in-between level of collaboration. The variation over time has also permitted me to fully grasp the cause-effect link between this IO resource needs and its openness to partner. Similarly, by mapping the particular asset situation of the Bank, I have been able to show its 'gaps', which in turn have offered key insights as to the organization's choice of associates. The Bank's exceptionalism has rendered it a particularly interesting instance to analyze IO collaborative behavior. On the one hand, its exceptional and independent status within the UN makes it a least-likely case from which to expect collaboration. And still, the WB has established ties – and increasingly so – with other UN organizations. Hence, in its modesty, the growing collaborative inclination of the Bank represents a most significant outcome. Alternatively, given its exceptionalism, the WB may seem 'incomparable', affected by a 'special' treatment on the part of powerful states or by unique internal dynamics. Rather than constituting an exception, the case of the Bank fits the broader IO behavior model I have advanced. It represents the instance of an IO with an intermediate collaborative proclivity and predominantly characterized by a shortage of symbolic capital. The need to enhance its reputation and legitimacy in recent times has guided its search for prestigious partners.

As this first instance demonstrates, the relational behavior of IOs like the Bank is guided by strategic choice, in turn based on the organization's strengths and weaknesses in terms of assets. In the above analysis of the WB's proclivity to partner and its choice of associates, I have focused on the organization's resource gaps and needs. A note is in place regarding the Bank's strengths. I have suggested in chapter 2 that the actual number of partnerships a given organization reveals will be determined not only by its proclivity to collaborate but also by its

opportunity to do so, as given by its attractiveness as a partner. The inclination to establish links is a necessary yet not sufficient condition for an alliance to actually emerge, and therefore, an agency with a high openness to partner may still reveal a low absolute number of associations. In the case of the Bank, however, the pattern of associations the organization has revealed over the years represents a quite straightforward reflection of its attitude vis-à-vis partnerships. This is so because the WB has proved an attractive partner for UN-IOs, thereby experiencing a high opportunity to establish alliances with other system organizations. The appeal of the Bank derives in particular from its possession of a most desired asset among UN agencies – monetary resources. A lender rather than an implementer, and historically in a stronger financial position than the rest of the system, the Bank has generally assumed the role of financier in its collaborative ventures. On their part, perpetually underfunded UN-IOs have tended to welcome an affluent associate. Consequently, and despite recurrent complaints on the part of UN agencies as to the arrogant and dominant attitude of the WB in its dealings with them, the willingness of the Bank to partner has been generally met with the opportunity to do so. What is more, given its strength in a most looked-for asset within the UN, the Bank has been highly solicited. Combined with the institution's intermediate proclivity to collaborate, the final result has been – for instance – a relatively high level of involvement of the Bank in UN inter-agency mechanisms.³³³

³³³ I will come back to this point and further expand on it in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER 4**FINANCIALLY UNDER THE WEATHER: THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME**

INTRODUCTION

The World Food Programme (WFP) was established in the early 1960s with the specific mandate of using food aid to promote development, provide assistance during emergencies and to generally support world food security. Throughout its history, the Programme has undergone a series of transformations. Similarly to other IOs, it has vastly expanded its operations, and has in tandem witnessed an increase in its profile, personnel and country presence. Unlike many of its counterparts in the UN system, WFP has significantly altered the balance in its activities portfolio, moving from a focus on development projects to dedicate the bulk of its assistance to humanitarian emergencies. The Programme has also changed, over the years, its approach to inter-organizational partnerships. From a close yet challenging relationship mainly with one of its ‘parent organizations’ – FAO – and counted exchanges with a few agencies, WFP moved to explicitly underline an effort to promote collaboration with various of its sister UN organizations. Moreover, the recent increase in the Programme’s proclivity to collaborate has been targeted to a specific group of agencies. WFP’s ‘preferred partners’ include organizations like UNHCR, UNICEF and the World Bank.

Which factors can be said to have shaped the particular behavioral pattern of WFP, as reflected in its changing openness to inter-organizational cooperation and its specific choice of partners? I have elaborated in the introductory chapters a theoretical framework that explains the relational behavior of IOs by looking at their resource situation, both in terms of material assets

and of symbolic capital. In this chapter, I apply that argument to the case of WFP. I analyze the resource situation of the Programme, its predominant traits and its evolution over time. On the one hand, factors such as the volatile character of the contributions received by WFP and the fundraising challenges experienced by this and other UN agencies in recent years have contributed to the increase in the financial vulnerability of the Programme. The struggle for funding constitutes a defining characteristic of the WFP case. In line with the resource-based argument I presented in chapter 2, the ever growing need for financial stability can be expected to lead the Programme to increase its propensity to collaborate with other organizations. As I will illustrate, this is exactly what has happened. Additionally, I point to the Programme's choice of partners and I demonstrate how the preference for certain UN agencies responds to a search for complementarities. In this sense, WFP's strengths and weaknesses in terms of resources stand as a good predictor of its choice of associates: while having a strong reputation and infrastructure, the Programme has been increasingly thirsty for monetary and in-kind resources, while the recent re-orientation of its operational portfolio has added the need for the agency to cultivate a saliency in a new area of activity, that of emergencies. From there it follows that WFP will look to interact more closely with two types of UN-IOs: first, financially resourceful agencies; and second, major humanitarian agencies. WFP's main partners include both these kinds of organizations.

The structure of the chapter is as follows: the first section describes the diachronic evolution of the Programme's position vis-à-vis inter-organizational collaboration. This is followed by a portrayal of WFP's 'relational map' – listing its main partners and illustrating its relationship with them. Subsequently, the organization's strengths and weaknesses in terms of

both symbolic and material assets are detailed. Another segment then introduces a resource-based explanation of the pattern drawn by WFP's proclivity to cooperate, followed by an analysis of the Programme's choice of preferred associates. Next is an assessment of alternative explanations, as well as a note on WFP's opportunity to cooperate – linked to its attractiveness as a partner. A brief conclusion closes the chapter.

THE EVOLUTION OF WFP RELATIONAL BEHAVIOR

Created in 1961, the World Food Programme is the United Nations agency in charge of food aid. In carrying out its mandate, WFP has coordinated and collaborated with a number of its UN sister organizations, to different extents throughout its history. As an overall trend, the Programme has increased its level of cooperation with its UN counterparts in recent years, and particularly during the 1990s. The Programme's mission statement, newly drafted in 1994, makes explicit reference to the intent to promote closer links with organizations such as UNHCR, IFAD, UNDP and the World Bank, while further emphasizing the importance WFP attaches to collaboration with other agencies.³³⁴

Originally conceived as a temporal, experimental program for the utilization of agricultural surpluses,³³⁵ the creation of WFP represented a crystallization of concerted action in the UN system. The program was established “at a time when a high premium was placed on strengthening co-ordination among the agencies of the UN system in the context of the UN

³³⁴ World Food Programme Mission Statement, available at:
http://www.wfp.org/newsroom/press_pack/docs/mission2004_e.pdf

³³⁵ The ‘experimental years’ of WFP ended in 1965 when the Programme was extended indefinitely. See Talbot 1990, 47.

Decade for Development.”³³⁶ It was instituted by parallel resolutions of the UN General Assembly and the Food and Agriculture Organization, and constitutionally fashioned as a joint organ of these two bodies.³³⁷ WFP was not in its beginnings a self-contained entity: among other things, a joint UN/FAO unit would run its operations and the FAO director-general would be in charge of its finances. As a result, it was required “in all stages of the development of its activities ... to consult with, and seek the advice and co-operation from, its parents bodies, the United Nations and FAO, and operate in close liaison with appropriate UN agencies and operating programmes, bilateral aid agencies and non-governmental organizations.”³³⁸ For this purpose, staff in other UN organizations – such as FAO, ILO, UNESCO and WHO – were appointed as *liaison* officers to WFP, while the Programme’s country representation would be in the hands of the UN Technical Assistance Board (today’s UNDP).³³⁹

Against this background of high-cooperation potential, historical accounts of WFP’s first two decades of activity only make sporadic references to interactions with other organizations.³⁴⁰ Examples of such inter-organizational links from the late 1960s through the 1970s include: a cooperative undertaking with UNIDO on food aid in mining and industrial project; a joint study with ILO on WFP assistance for employment; a consultation with WHO on the use of vitamin A for blindness prevention; and collaboration with UNICEF focusing on feeding programs and institutionalized through a memorandum of understanding in 1976.³⁴¹ Particularly during its experimental years (1962-1965), WFP was set to be a modest institution, with low administrative

³³⁶ Shaw 2001, 45.

³³⁷ See Talbot 1990, ch.3.

³³⁸ Shaw 2001, 208.

³³⁹ Shaw 2001, 44.

³⁴⁰ This is leaving aside the peculiar relationship of WFP with its parent organization – FAO.

³⁴¹ Shaw 2001, 133, 91, 97, 100.

costs and restricted to providing assistance to specific projects – e.g. food-for-work – mainly in the area of development. By the 1980s, the activities of WFP had steadily expanded.³⁴² The operational expenditures of the Programme had gone from 130 million dollars in 1971 to 541 million in 1981 – and would surpass the billion by 1991.³⁴³ Reference has also increasingly been made in WFP-related reports and publications to collaboration with other agencies. As an instance, joint workshops were organized with UNESCO, and in cooperation with FAO, UNICEF and WHO on school feeding programmes; while a reassessment of WFP assistance for education was prepared for the World Conference on Education for All in 1990.³⁴⁴ In the 1986 Annual Report of the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes of the UN/FAO World Food Programme, it was noted that WFP was participating in aid coordination mechanisms, including a World Bank-led Consultative Group and a UNDP-led Round Table.³⁴⁵ With the Programme's growing involvement in emergency operations throughout the 1980s also came a closer relationship with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees – in 1985, such emerging link was crystallized in a memorandum of understanding between the two agencies.³⁴⁶ During the same decade, various food aid donors and the Programme began to work more directly and thoroughly with the World Bank in linking their assistance to the Bank's economic adjustment programs.³⁴⁷

An ever more clear challenge for WFP throughout its history has been given by the combined reality of the long-term growth of its program portfolio and the ups and downs of

³⁴² FAO 1983, par. 127.

³⁴³ Source: WFP Income and Expenditures: 1971-2004, table compiled by Klaus Hübner, Global Policy Forum (available at: <http://globalpolicy.org/finance/tables/special/wfp.htm>). As noted in the source table, these amounts do not include programme support, administration and other non-operational costs.

³⁴⁴ Shaw 2001, 103.

³⁴⁵ FAO 1986, par. 59.

³⁴⁶ Shaw 2001, 168 and 176.

³⁴⁷ See Shaw 2001, 114.

unstable funding. As an instance: “resources for emergency operations had grown dramatically in 1991 and since ... [while] the pressure on resources had not enabled the WFP to fully meet its commitments to ongoing development projects in 1992.”³⁴⁸ Within this context, partnerships with sister UN agencies were initiated and/or further reinforced. A process of “informal inter-agency consultations between IMF, the World Bank, FAO and WFP began in 1995 against a background of deterioration in the world food situation and rising food prices.”³⁴⁹ Concurrently, WFP enhanced its participation in Bank-sponsored Consultative Group meetings; and further emphasized its involvement, along with the Bank, “in a number of inter-agency fora, including the ACC Sub-Committee on Nutrition and the ACC Inter-Agency Task Force on Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods for all.”³⁵⁰ With greater pressure coming from mounting emergency operations and the associated ‘refugee problem’, WFP and UNHCR reviewed and revised their joint working relationship: “[a] new MOU [memorandum of understanding] came to force in January 1994 [as a sequel to the one signed in 1985] ... the two organizations have undertaken to pool their resources and share their expertise and experience.”³⁵¹ By 1995, the WFP Annual Report of the Executive Director was succinctly stating: “working in partnership is a necessity.”³⁵² In the same document, allusion is further made to the Programme’s commitment to improved coordination in its humanitarian assistance operations, specifying that “in 1995 WFP conducted joint assessment missions with UNHCR in 10 countries and regions affected by refugee emergencies, and with FAO in 17 countries and regions affected by natural disasters.”³⁵³

³⁴⁸ FAO 1992, par. 111.

³⁴⁹ WFP 1996b, 3 (par. 2).

³⁵⁰ WFP 1996b, 4 (par. 4).

³⁵¹ Shaw 2001, 176.

³⁵² WFP 1996a, 21 (par. 67).

³⁵³ WFP 1996a, 21 (par. 68).

The 1980s and 1990s had also witnessed several changes in both the standing of WFP within the UN system and in its internal organization. By mid-1985, a transfer of authority from FAO to WFP became fully operational;³⁵⁴ and in 1991, as a result of changes in its constitution, the Programme effectively became a separate agency within the UN system.³⁵⁵ During the 1990s, and particularly within the process of UN reform undertaken by the Secretary General in the second half of the decade, WFP underwent a series of institutional changes. In 1996, organizational change led to the establishment of a ‘Resources and External Affairs Division’ in charge of mobilizing resources, public support and partnerships; an event that was accompanied by additional measures to promote cooperation with UN entities and NGOs.³⁵⁶ Similarly, other documents by the WFP Executive Board increasingly emphasized the Programme’s involvement in UN Reform;³⁵⁷ and its 1997 Annual Report details both WFP participation in newly instituted inter-agency coordination mechanisms – such as UNDG and UNDAF – as well as the progress made in enhancing operational partnerships with sister UN agencies.³⁵⁸

To further illustrate this growing attention placed – at least formally³⁵⁹ – by WFP on partnerships: in 1998 a MOU was signed between the Programme and UNICEF to provide a framework for their common work in emergency interventions; the MOU with UNHCR was revised in 1997, and succeeded by a series of workshops the following year; and preparatory

³⁵⁴ FAO 1986, par. 64.

³⁵⁵ Clay 2003, 700. While WFP would continue to be a joint UN/FAO organ, its governing body (the Committee on Food Aid) was given full powers of oversight of the Programme and WFP was given a ‘legal capacity’ (Shaw 2001, 222). WFP thereby gained independence in staff management, accounting and mission priority (See Hopkins 1999, 74).

³⁵⁶ WFP 1997a, 27 (par. 81) and 18 (par. 51).

³⁵⁷ See, for instance, WFP 1997b.

³⁵⁸ WFP 1998, 24.

³⁵⁹ Some evaluations have judged many of these partnerships to be of a rather ‘formal character’, further suggesting that only in a few cases are they translated into concrete activities (see: Russo, Luzot, Matella and Wilhelm 2005, 28 (par. 147)). Even if mostly ceremonial, a trend of increased commitment and reference to collaboration with other organizations is clearly identifiable in WFP recent history, and supported by official reports and other cited documents.

work was undertaken in 1998 on a formal agreement between WFP and FAO for the areas of food security and assistance for relief and recovery.³⁶⁰ Along the same lines, WFP established a *liaison* office to strengthen its relationship to the World Bank.³⁶¹ Subsequent reports by the Programme's Executive Board show an ever more explicit and ample account of WFP's involvement both in system-wide coordination mechanisms and in bilateral partnerships.³⁶² A greater participation in common initiatives was further solidified by WFP's 2003 decision to become a co-sponsor of UNAIDS – the joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS.³⁶³ Table 4.1 shows WFP current membership in different UN inter-agency coordination mechanisms, as well as its role in each case.

Table 4.1: WFP's Membership in UN Inter-Agency Mechanisms

Inter-Agency Mechanism	Role
Interagency Standing Committee (IASC)	Member
UN Development Group (UNDG)	Member of Executive Committee (EXCOM)
Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA)	Member
Chief Executive Board (CEB) including its High Level Committees (HLCP, HLCM)	Member
Executive Committee on Peace and Security (ECPS)	Member
UNAIDS	Member
United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN)	Member
UN Geographic Information Working Group (UNGIWG)	Lead/Chair

Source: Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on UN System-Wide Coherence, 'Basic Information on United Nations System Organizations' (see References for complete citation)

³⁶⁰ WFP 1999a, 19.

³⁶¹ WFP 2001, 21 (par. 51).

³⁶² See for instance: WFP 2005.

³⁶³ WFP 2004, 7 (par.20).

WFP is further involved in a series of global joint initiatives, such as Education for All (EFA) or the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN).³⁶⁴ Finally, WFP 2005 Annual Report counts partnerships for a total of 230 projects, “showing a 6 percent increase over 2004.”³⁶⁵

WFP’S CHOICE OF PARTNERS

So far I have concentrated on the general attitude of WFP with respect to inter-organizational cooperation, demonstrating how its proclivity to collaborate has increased over time. Now I will turn to the issue of the choice of partners. Once an organization has decided in favor of a cooperative strategy, it still faces a variety of options in terms of the counterpart to be selected for an alliance. A series of organizations appear in different WFP documents, accounts and reports as the organization’s closest associates.

In 2006, the External Relations Division of WFP issued a special issue on partnerships.³⁶⁶ Table 4.2 below lists the UN organizations included in that publication and further notes the number of joint projects with WFP reported for each for the year 2005. Similarly, in its coverage of the issue of ‘UN partnerships’ on its official website, WFP makes reference to the following organizations: FAO, IFAD, ILO, the World Bank, UNDP, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF and WHO.³⁶⁷ Within this group, more distant partners of WFP include ILO, with whom the

³⁶⁴ On the Education for All initiative see for instance: <http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/>

On GAIN: <http://www.gainhealth.org>

³⁶⁵ WFP 2006a 45 (out of circa 260 operational projects). In June 2006, the Programme issued for the first time a special publication exclusively on inter-organizational collaboration (see: WFP 2006b). The exercise was repeated in 2007 (see: WFP 2007).

³⁶⁶ WFP 2006b.

³⁶⁷ See the WFP web-page (at: <http://www.wfp.org>). The site also offers ‘links’ to the following organizations: United Nations, FAO, ICAO, IFAD, ILO, OCHA, the World Bank, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF and WHO.

Programme has consulted on labor issues,³⁶⁸ and UNESCO, which joins WFP as a partner, for instance, in the Education for All initiative.

Table 4.2: WFP's Main Partners - 2005

Organization	# Projects with WFP*
UNICEF	138
FAO	87
UNDP	71
WHO	69
UNHCR	43
UNAIDS	36
World Bank	26
UNESCO	13
IFAD	9

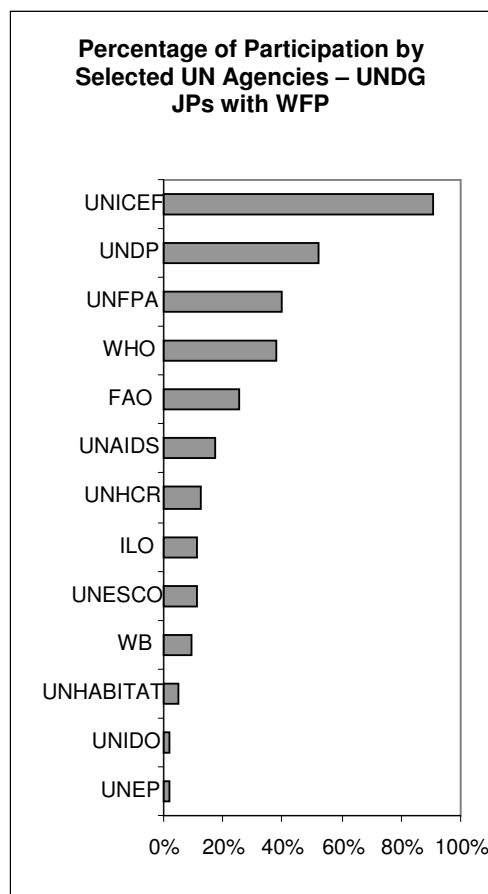
Source: WFP 2006 publication 'Working in Partnership' (WFP 2006b)

* Out of circa 260 operational projects (as reported in WFP 2006a, 45)

On many occasions, WFP's interactions with its sister UN agencies have been through the Programme's participation in inter-agency coordination mechanisms such as the UN Development Group. Hence, adding to the previous description, Figure 4.1 below lists UN-IOs by the extent of their participation in UNDG projects that have also involved the World Food Programme.

³⁶⁸ John Shaw notes, for instance, that WFP has from its inception "adhered to the ILO Convention governing work for which normal paid labour was employed in supplying food as wages." (2001, 42).

Figure 4.1: Other UN Agencies' Participation in UNDG Joint Programmes that Include WFP (1996-2006)



Source: UNDG -UNDT Database
<http://unctdatabase.undg.org> (accessed December 2006)

As the figure shows, UNICEF has traditionally been considered by WFP as a ‘natural partner’: “[c]o-operation between WFP and UNICEF was recognized as being of particular importance in the implementation of supplementary feeding programmes from the inception of WFP’s operations. A memorandum of understanding was signed between the two organizations in 1976 covering collaboration in development and nutrition policies and emergency preparedness.”³⁶⁹ Discussions aimed at reinforcing collaboration and ensuring complementarities

³⁶⁹ Shaw 2001, 100.

between WFP and UNICEF led to the signing of another MOU in 1998.³⁷⁰ This latter agreement was directed at spelling out respective duties, “of WFP for the supply of basic food commodities and of UNICEF with regard to sanitation, water, health and protection of children.”³⁷¹ The relationship between these two organizations has grown over the years, with the deepening of existing interactions and the beginning of new initiatives. In 2003, for instance, WFP collaborated with UNICEF on the Micronutrient Initiative (MI) and the Global Alliance for International Nutrition (GAIN); in joint HIV/AIDS-nutrition pilot initiatives; in Back to Peace, Back to School Campaigns; and in the organization of joint training in public health and nutrition, among others.³⁷² UNICEF has constituted in recent years WFP’s major partner, “with 140 projects in 68 countries [in 2005], primarily in health, nutrition and school feeding. WFP and UNICEF carried out joint assessments for 41 projects. The Memorandum of Understanding with UNICEF was revised in July 2005, ... clarifying responsibilities for undertaking food security and nutrition assessments.”³⁷³

UNDP likewise stands among WFP’s preferred partners. In the early years of the Programme, and partly so as to maintain administrative costs to a minimum, the country representatives of WFP were indeed UNDP officials.³⁷⁴ UNDP has also helped to finance many WFP operations and by 2005 was collaborating with the Programme in 71 projects.³⁷⁵ WFP has also traditionally interacted with IFAD, but to a more modest extent. In 1995, for instance, the Programme participated in the steering committee led by IFAD to prepare a European

³⁷⁰ WFP 1997a, 19 (par. 53); and WFP 1999b, 11.

³⁷¹ WFP 1998, 25 (par. 71).

³⁷² WFP 2004, 8-9.

³⁷³ WFP 2006a, 45.

³⁷⁴ They were resident representatives of the UN Technical Assistance Board, which later became the UNDP. See Shaw 2001, 44.

³⁷⁵ WFP 2006b.

Conference on Hunger and Poverty.³⁷⁶ The Programme has also worked together with IFAD in India since 2001, WFP giving food assistance to different IFAD-supported projects.³⁷⁷ Finally, the Programme has worked together with the World Health Organization, mainly in the areas of health, nutrition and HIV/AIDS.³⁷⁸ This collaboration has strengthened in recent years: in 2005, for instance, WHO and WFP cooperated in 71 projects in 42 countries, a 61% increase in their number of partnerships over 2004.³⁷⁹

As I mentioned in the previous section, one of the key transformations undergone by WFP in the past decades has been the re-orientation of its activities, from development projects to emergency operations. Correspondingly, the Programme has cultivated and developed a closer relationship with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, a major humanitarian agency. Back in 1986, the Programme made reference to the fact that “regular contacts were maintained with ... UNHCR to collaborate with it regarding handling of refugee situations and providing food assistance to refugees everywhere.”³⁸⁰ In 1994, an official link was established between WFP and UNHCR through the signature of a memorandum of understanding. The following year, WFP conducted joint assessment missions with UNHCR in 10 countries and regions affected by refugee emergencies.³⁸¹ Further materializing their collaboration, the two agencies have conducted joint workshops and joint training initiatives.³⁸² The 1994 MOU was subsequently reviewed and replaced by a revised version in 1997, which included new or modified elements such as “those related to better assessment of the numbers and needs of beneficiaries, to be

³⁷⁶ WFP 1996b, 4 (par. 4).

³⁷⁷ FAO, IFAD and WFP, 2005, 12.

³⁷⁸ See for instance WHO 1969, 41; Shaw 2001, 97.

³⁷⁹ WFP 2006a, 45 (out of a little over 260 operational projects, as reported in the same page).

³⁸⁰ FAO 1986, par. 68.

³⁸¹ WFP 1996a, 21 (par. 68).

³⁸² WFP 1999b, 11; and WFP 2004, 9.

agreed jointly by WFP and UNHCR; ... the role of WFP in the final distribution of food, for which it is accountable to donors; ... timely information sharing; ... and the development of joint plans of action in the field.”³⁸³ UNHCR has been further alluded to in documents and reports as one of WFP’s ‘key United Nations partners’.³⁸⁴ As stated in WFP’s Annual Report to ECOSOC and the FAO Council for 2003, “[f]ield-level collaboration [has] included joint assessments, monitoring and programming ... [r]egular interaction at the senior and operational levels, and joint donor meetings.”³⁸⁵ Overall, UNHCR was by 2005 a major WFP collaborator, working together with the program in 54 projects in 37 countries.³⁸⁶

Most interestingly, WFP has developed over the years a closer relationship with the World Bank. This is remarkable in two senses. First, the domains of these two UN-IOs do not invite an obvious association in functional terms. Second, WFP’s ties with the Bank – the latter a development organization – have grown in tandem with the Programme’s re-orientation towards humanitarian emergencies. With only some sporadic exchanges in its first years of activity, WFP began in the 1980s to “work more closely and systematically with the World Bank in relating [its] food aid to the Bank’s adjustment lending programme.”³⁸⁷ By 1995, the Bank and WFP were collaborating in 11 projects, in some of which the WB “financed not only the preliminary studies and a monitoring/evaluation system, but also a number of health components in the operational phase.”³⁸⁸ The same year, a series of informal consultations were launched between

³⁸³ WFP 1998, 24 (par. 70).

³⁸⁴ For instance: WFP 1997a, 18 (par. 53).

³⁸⁵ WFP 2004, 9 (par. 26).

³⁸⁶ WFP 2006a, 45 (out of approximately 260 operational projects, as mentioned in the same section of the document).

³⁸⁷ Shaw 2001, 114.

³⁸⁸ WFP 1996b, 4 (par. 5).

WFP and the Bretton Woods Institutions regarding the evolution of the world food situation.³⁸⁹ Towards the end of the 1990s, the Programme was reporting that it had, “[f]or a number of years ... collaborated with the World Bank on development projects as well as in emergency-related work. At present, there are 25 WFP-assisted projects ... that either have collaborative arrangements or are complementary to the Bank’s sector work.”³⁹⁰ WFP has also interacted with the Bank while participating in inter-agency forums such as the ACC Sub-Committee on Nutrition and the UNDG.³⁹¹ The Programme’s collaboration with the WB in particular and the Bretton Woods Institutions more generally has continued to grow, for instance, through the “assignment of a senior staff member to Washington DC and through the linkage of Washington-based activities to collaborative initiatives in several country offices.”³⁹² Correspondingly, the Bank seconded two senior staff members to WFP Headquarters in 2004.³⁹³ Cooperation was also reported to have significantly improved by that year, particularly in post-conflict and post emergency situations.³⁹⁴ Finally, a recent special publication on partnerships issued by WFP included in the selected cases that of the World Bank, with which the Programme collaborated in 26 projects in 2005.³⁹⁵

Alternatively to the relations described so far, WFP has in recent decades detached itself from its parent organization – FAO. The Programme was constitutionally fashioned as a joint organ of FAO and the United Nations. As a corollary, many formal links were established with these two ‘parent bodies’ from the start. Among other things, WFP’s executive director was to be

³⁸⁹ WFP 1996b, 3 (par. 2).

³⁹⁰ WFP 1998, 25 (par. 72).

³⁹¹ See for instance: WFP 1999b, 19.

³⁹² WFP 2004, 15 (par. 54).

³⁹³ WFP 2005, 16 (par. 59).

³⁹⁴ WFP 2005, 16 (par. 60).

³⁹⁵ WFP 2006b.

appointed by the UN Secretary General and the director-general of FAO; the Programme was to report to both FAO and the UN; the two parent organizations were jointly responsible for convening the Programme's pledging conferences; and WFP's financial arrangements were entrusted to the FAO director-general rather than to the executive director of the Programme.³⁹⁶

Against this background, "the UN's involvement with WFP has always been rather tenuous and indefinite, much to the delight of WFP officials, but the FAO used to be considerably involved in WFP administrative matters ... certainly more so than the WFP leadership and bureaucracy were able to appreciate."³⁹⁷ The program would thus struggle throughout its history to gain independence from FAO, and to establish itself as a separate agency within the UN system. At the same time, the links between WFP and FAO were promoted within the UN system on the ground of the common area covered by the two organizations – namely, food and nutrition. In 1982, for instance, the Council of FAO drew attention in one of its reports to the "complementarity of functions of FAO and WFP and emphasized the importance of close relationships between them."³⁹⁸ Within this context, the Programme was caught in a double relational logic of trying to separate itself from its parent body while simultaneously attempting to re-define its relation with FAO, and to partner with it as one of its sister UN organizations. Hence, in 1992, shortly after WFP had gained autonomy through a constitutional reform, the Council of FAO "commended the close collaboration existing between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and WFP."³⁹⁹ In 1995, WFP reported to be interacting with

³⁹⁶ See Shaw 2001, 207.

³⁹⁷ Talbot 1990, 52.

³⁹⁸ FAO 1983, par. 129.

³⁹⁹ FAO 1992, par. 115.

FAO in 17 countries and regions affected by natural disasters.⁴⁰⁰ Afterward, in 1997, a technical agreement was signed between WFP and FAO's Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS), "aiming at strengthening collaborative arrangements in early warning systems and capacities."⁴⁰¹ In 1999, the two organizations signed a more general memorandum of understanding.⁴⁰² Reference to different attempts and actions to deepen the relationship between WFP and FAO are alluded to in subsequent reports and documents, and by 2004, the Programme reported that "77 joint WFP/FAO projects were operational in 41 countries, with WFP providing food and FAO supplying technical assistance."⁴⁰³ On balance, however, the distance between the Programme and FAO has grown in recent years. This is so in that, while they remain close partners, the Programme has gained independence from its formerly 'parent organization'.

WFP STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Along the lines of the argument I have proposed in chapter 2, the consideration of WFP's situation in terms of assets will offer key insights as to its proclivity to collaborate with sister UN agencies, as well as of its choice of partners. Starting with the material resources, one of the main peculiarities of WFP has been its constant and ever increasing thirst for funds. Its operational character, the nature of its activities – particularly its recent focus on emergencies – and the expansion that the Programme witnessed since its birth have all contributed to WFP requiring vast and ever larger financial resources to carry out its activities. Against this need, however, the Programme has traditionally faced the challenge of the volatile character of food aid. Together,

⁴⁰⁰ WFP 1996a, 21 (par. 68).

⁴⁰¹ WFP 1998, 25 (par. 71).

⁴⁰² WFP 1999b, 11.

⁴⁰³ WFP 2005, 9 (par. 19).

and as I will later show, these elements have been translated in access to material assets – particularly cash flows – being the Achilles' heel of the Programme. As follows, this 'resource gap' has shaped WFP's proclivity to collaborate – the growing need for funds being translated in a rising openness to partnerships. It has also guided the organization's choice of partners – as the program has largely looked for allies that could either complement financially its activities or at least share the burden of costly operations through joint-funding arrangements.

While contributions have proved hard to secure and have many times fallen short of pledged targets, WFP has managed throughout its existence to develop a solid infrastructure, and it now has “the largest global food aid operational network.”⁴⁰⁴ The Programme is very decentralized, field-oriented and operational – for carrying out its mandate entails the implementation on the ground of programs that involve practical tasks such as delivering food rations. As a result, its staff size has grown over the years to be one of the largest in the UN system, and its officials now represent the organization in over eighty countries around the world. The Programme has also developed an important network of contacts with NGOs. WFP's significant country presence is further complemented by its established systems of transport, procurement and logistics, giving the Programme a comparative advantage in these areas. To be sure, all these elements have resulted in the Programme having strong material, non-monetary assets – staff, field presence, etc. – as compared to other more centralized, more normative and less operational organizations like ILO or UNESCO. As I will remark in a later section, this has added to the attractiveness of WFP as a partner.

In terms of symbolic capital, the Programme has gained throughout its four decades of operation a good reputation as the food aid arm of the UN. The acquired prestige of WFP rests

⁴⁰⁴ Shaw 2001, 146.

on two grounds. First, the organization's positive image responds to the charitable character of its mandate. The humanitarian tone of WFP's mission – feeding the hungry – and its stressed focus on the world's poorest countries has conferred it with esteemed external representation. Second, the prestige of the Programme rests on its reputation as an efficient organization. In particular, “WFP is acknowledged as an accomplished logistical performer.”⁴⁰⁵ As early as 1975, the Council of FAO reported that “[t]he reputation earned by, and the confidence in, the Programme had together gradually induced donor governments to ask WFP to take responsibility for the processing, shipping and monitoring of supplies to their food aid bilateral programmes.”⁴⁰⁶ Over time, the Programme's “unique experience and expertise in transport and logistics has been recognized by the international community.”⁴⁰⁷ Its expansion and engagement in larger projects over the years has also “raised the profile of WFP among other aid agencies and increased its attractiveness as a partner in joint ventures.”⁴⁰⁸ Overall, by the 1980s, the Programme “had acquired a high standing and was universally esteemed.”⁴⁰⁹

Finally, in terms of saliency in a particular area of activity, I have emphasized how WFP had in its first decades established itself as a legitimate development assistance organization. Indeed, WFP's authority in development – enhanced by the expertise derived from its experience in the area – continues until now, as its placement in the Executive Committee of the UN Development Group demonstrates. Still, as described above, WFP has in recent years changed its focus to emergencies. As a consequence of this re-orientation, the Programme has had to

⁴⁰⁵ Ingram 2007, 23.

⁴⁰⁶ FAO 1975, par. 100.

⁴⁰⁷ Shaw 2001, 198

⁴⁰⁸ Shaw 2001, 70.

⁴⁰⁹ FAO 1983, par. 129.

cultivate a presence and gain authority also as a humanitarian organization.⁴¹⁰ As I will suggest in what follows, the attempt to boost this form of symbolic capital has predictably led WFP to closer cooperation with major agencies in the area of emergency assistance.

UNDERSTANDING WFP'S PROPENSITY TO INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL COLLABORATION

In a previous section I have introduced a longitudinal account of WFP proclivity to partner with other UN organizations. While some interaction with sister agencies can be identified from the start, there has also been a clear increase in the extent of WFP's collaboration with other organizations, particularly in recent years. The number of joint programs where the Programme finds itself involved has similarly increased, as has also its membership in inter-agency mechanisms. While this can be in part attributed to the larger portfolio covered by this agency, as well as to the sheer increase in system-wide coordination mechanisms available, it is also true that ever more reference has been made in the Programme's reports and documents to the issue of collaborative strategies, and such cooperation has been further crystallized in a series of formal agreements with different agencies. The argument I propose here is based on a strategic view of international organizations: UN agencies are seen from this perspective as purposive actors that decide on a particular course of action based on their peculiar resource situation. In particular, the extent of WFP's collaboration with sister UN agencies will be given by its weaknesses and strengths in terms of both symbolic and material capital.

WFP has, throughout its four decades of existence, faced the continuous challenge of instability and unpredictability of funds. First and foremost, this lack of certainty has been due to

⁴¹⁰ While representing a smaller percentage of its activities, development projects are still part of WFP's portfolio of operations. Indeed, the Programme is considered today to have an important role to play not only in emergencies, but also in post-crisis situations, with programs covering the transition from recovery to development.

the fact that “[u]nlike the UN specialized agencies, such as FAO, ILO, UNESCO and WHO, which have assessed financial contributions from member nations, from inception it was agreed that WFP would receive *voluntary* contributions in the form of appropriate commodities, services such as ocean transport, and cash.”⁴¹¹ Adding to the Programme’s financial vulnerability is the volatile character of food aid, the essence of WFP assistance: “[i]nternational food aid levels strongly reflect the short-term supply-side influences that determine commodity availability.”⁴¹² In other words, commodity contributions (i.e. food rations) by donor countries have traditionally fluctuated with international market prices and stock levels. As a result, while in some cases food aid targets were surpassed with record confirmed contributions, for many other instances WFP reports and historical accounts point to pledging targets being under-met and to the consequent inability of the Programme to meet the full needs of a certain number of its approved projects.⁴¹³ As Table 4.3 below shows, in the two and a half decades that go from 1978 to 2004, the total amount of contributions received by WFP was below that of the previous year in as many as nine occasions – one third of the time. If only the last decade is considered, this proportion rises to half of the instances. To be noted, this fluctuation appears at odds with the ever increasing expenditures of the Programme (see Figure 4.2 below).

⁴¹¹ Shaw 2001, 188. As explained by Shaw, a resource target would be set for each biennium by the WFP governing body and then donations would be requested at pledging conferences.

⁴¹² Clay 2003, 698.

⁴¹³ WFP 1996a, 31 (par. 93).

Table 4.3: WFP's Income 1978-2004

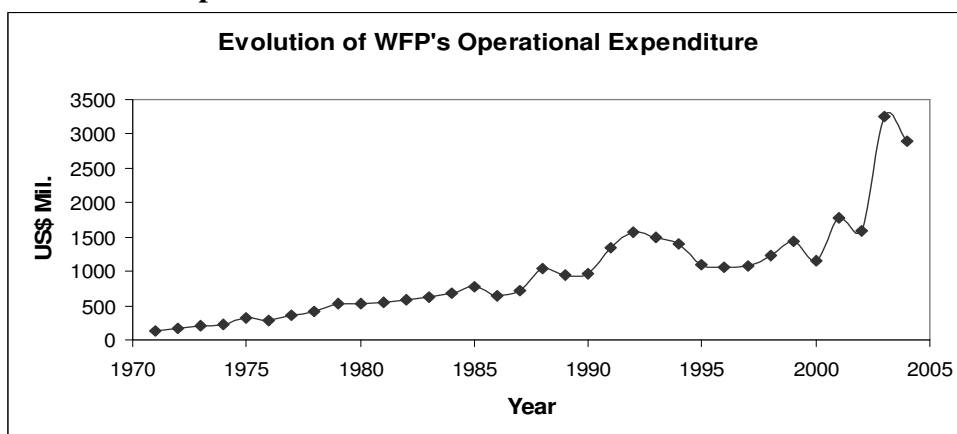
Year	Total Contributions (US\$ Mil.)
1978	423.0
1979	567.5
1980	659.4
1981	678.8
1982	745.0
1983	661.1
1984	663.5
1985	809.4
1986	701.1
1987	832.1
1988	981.3
1989	1064.6
1990	1029.1
1991	1404.6
1992	1734.9
1993	1435.1
1994	1515.0
1995	1282.4
1996	1333.3
1997	1212.9
1998	1047.3
1999	1566.8
2000	1571.3
2001	1812.0
2002	1808.8
2003	2573.7
2004	2242.1

Source: 'WFP: Income and Expenditure 1971-2004', table compiled by Klaus Hübner, Global Policy Forum, available at: <http://www.globalpolicy.org/finance/tables/special/wfp.htm> (accessed December 2006)

Alongside the traditionally unstable nature of food aid, and adding to WFP's ever-growing financial weakness, two long-term trends can be identified: first, the expansion and re-orientation of the Programme's activities, with a resulting amplified need for funds; and second, a general decline over time and a re-focus of the resources made available by donors. As far as

the first trend is concerned, WFP “grew from a small experimental programme into a separate agency, with a wide presence and the largest budget of any agency apart from the international financial institutions.”⁴¹⁴ Not only has the sheer quantity of projects WFP implements grown in the past decades, so has the number of countries in which it operates. Over the three years of its experimental period, the Programme carried out a total of 148 projects.⁴¹⁵ In 2006, WFP counted 274 ‘active’ projects/operations for that year only.⁴¹⁶ The Programme’s staff has grown accordingly, from 2,069 to 10,520 in the decade from 1996 to 2005.⁴¹⁷ WFP expansion is further and most clearly reflected in its rising operational expenditures, as shown in Figure 4.2 below. Insofar as the amount of funds needed by a given organization is in proportion to the size of its structure and activity portfolio, the described expansion of WFP has exacerbated its financial exigencies.

Figure 4.2: WFP’s Expenditure 1971-2004



Source: ‘WFP: Income and Expenditure 1971-2004’, table compiled by Klaus Hüfner, Global Policy Forum, at: <http://www.globalpolicy.org/finance/tables/special/wfp.htm> (accessed December 2006)
 Note: as observed in the original table, ‘Operational Expenditures’ do not include programme support, administration and other non-operational costs.

⁴¹⁴ Clay 2003, 707.

⁴¹⁵ Shaw 2001, 62

⁴¹⁶ See the Active Projects/Operations in 2006 table at: <http://www.wfp.org/aboutwfp/facts/2006/pdf/ACTIVE.pdf>

⁴¹⁷ See: WFP Facts & Figures at: <http://www.wfp.org>

In terms of the availability of funds, during its first two decades of operations, a stable growth in pledged resources allowed WFP to steadily increase its size and expand its operational portfolio. After the World Food Conference of 1974, “the organization’s voluntary contributions continued to grow; by the 1980s WFP had become the largest UN agency in resource transfers.”⁴¹⁸ Overall and over time, however, events like “[t]he emergence of a global cereal market under liberalized trade arrangements and the drastic reduction of commodity surpluses have irreversibly altered food aid assistance.”⁴¹⁹ Since the late eighties, global food aid in general, and that targeted to development projects in particular, began to shrink. Even though WFP – as a multilateral mechanism of food assistance – only channels a fraction of the total of international food aid, this overall drop in supply affected the level of tonnage the Programme could provide through its projects.⁴²⁰ Similarly, within WFP’s financial arrangements, the aim was that at least one-third of total contributions were provided in cash and services to cover transportation costs and other administrative expenses.⁴²¹ These cash flows also started to fall by the end of the 1980s.⁴²² During the 1990s, WFP was further hit by the financial crisis affecting the United Nations system, the corresponding reform process undertaken by the world body, and the associated pressure on its constituent agencies to cut costs.⁴²³

Adding to this mounting resource shortage was a change in the orientation of contributions: “[l]ike other UN organizations, WFP suffered a sudden and precipitous fall in its resources during the decade of the 1990s. But unlike most of them, this reduction was also

⁴¹⁸ Hopkins 1999, 73.

⁴¹⁹ Crawshaw 1998, intro.

⁴²⁰ Hopkins 1999, 76.

⁴²¹ Shaw 2001, 188

⁴²² See for instance: Hopkins 1999.

⁴²³ On the UN financial crisis see for instance the information provided by Global Policy Forum at: <http://www.globalpolicy.org/finance/index.htm>

accompanied by a marked transfer of resources from development to emergency relief.”⁴²⁴ In its first years, the main focus of WFP was on *development* projects, financed by its regular budget. The decrease in contributions for this type of food aid coincided with an increase in donations for emergency operations – concomitant to the increase in UN peacekeeping operations. WFP’s mission and activities were heavily affected by these changes in resource availability. In reaction, WFP re-oriented its operational portfolio, considerably increasing the percentage of emergency projects. Hence, while at the beginning of the 1990s development projects still accounted for “over half of WFP activity; by the end of the decade, the share had fallen to less than one-six.”⁴²⁵ While this re-orientation allowed WFP to survive and even grow against a background of tightening contributions, certain features of emergency operations resulted in the Programme still facing a more precarious financial situation than in previous decades. The higher logistical demands of crisis situations required larger cash resources, contributing to WFP’s increasing cash shortage and putting the Programme in more “direct competition with other UN organizations that operated entirely with financial resources.”⁴²⁶ Concentrating its assistance on situations of a more unpredictable character like emergencies – both man-made and natural – has further added to the vulnerability of the Programme, not being able to exactly predict when and how much funds will be needed and then having to mobilize and deploy contributions rapidly and on short notice.

On balance, WFP’s resource situation has evolved in the direction of higher needs and harder to secure funding. To be noted, it is not that the dollar amount of WFP’s budget has declined over time – as indeed, it has almost exponentially grown. It is that the Programme’s

⁴²⁴ Shaw 2001, 226.

⁴²⁵ Clay 2003, 701.

⁴²⁶ Shaw 2001, 193.

fund-raising situation has become ever more precarious. Pressed to do ‘more with less’, organizations like WFP have been faced in recent years with tighter budgets, even if they seem, at first sight and in absolute terms, to be getting more resources. The quantity of contributions received can hardly keep up with the outflows needed by continuously escalating activities. Moreover, the donor’s fatigue that has affected the UN as a whole throughout the 1990s has led to increased competition among international agencies for ever scarcer resources. This higher risk of turf-rivalry has further exacerbated the resource vulnerability of the Programme.

Captured as a whole, “[t]he dramatic changes [in the 1990s] in WFP’s resources and their deployment were to provide a major impetus for a thorough re-examination of the ways in which WFP operated.”⁴²⁷ More particularly for my purposes here and as WFP’s 1995 Annual Report explicitly states: “[i]n a climate of tighter budgets, resource mobilization has become a priority.”⁴²⁸ Challenged with a shortage of monetary assets, the Programme has responded with a concrete effort to identify non-traditional funding sources, such as the private sector.⁴²⁹ In 1997, the Programme secured, for the first time, a large in kind contribution from private donors.⁴³⁰ This search for alternative sources of financial support was strategically and explicitly undertaken to “provide further stability to the funding base.”⁴³¹ Similarly in reaction to “the resource changes in 1992-1998 (...) WFP decreased the number of countries in which it operates, gave greater organizational efforts to operations in complex emergencies, and *launched new relationships both in the UN and with NGOs.*”⁴³²

⁴²⁷ Shaw 2001, 226.

⁴²⁸ WFP 1996a, 30 (par.89).

⁴²⁹ Shaw 2001, 188.

⁴³⁰ WFP 1998, 33 (par. 104).

⁴³¹ WFP 1999b, 38.

⁴³² Hopkins 1999, 77 (my emphasis).

The recent increase in WFP's proclivity to collaborate with its counterparts in the UN system coincides with this more precarious situation in terms of material assets. As I have suggested in previous chapters, inter-organizational alliances may be conceived as a strategic response to augmented resource vulnerability. This is so because collaboration, despite its costs, stands as a tool for organizations not only to control competition but also to access needed capital. This logic explains the interesting fact that WFP, while struggling to gain autonomy from its parent organization – FAO – was at the same time becoming more open to the idea of interlocking its operations with those of other agencies. Concerned with the vulnerability associated with its heavy reliance on states for the funding of its activities, WFP has looked for alternative sources of revenue – namely, the private sector, NGOs and also UN agencies. Through increased collaboration with its sister UN organizations, the Programme has also sought to share the burden of the ever higher funds needed to carry out complex operations. Finally, enhanced coordination can be seen as a way of controlling competition – in that a portion of the limited 'pie' can be secured by agreement and/or the division of labor be officially recorded. This last reasoning helps explain why, in a context of increased competition for scarce resources, cooperation can not only emerge but be even promoted by a vulnerable agency.

RECONSIDERING WFP'S CHOICE OF PREFERRED PARTNERS

WFP has achieved a prestigious image as an efficient organization and as the 'food aid arm' of the United Nations. It has, however, had to re-institute its presence and legitimacy in a new area of activity, with its change of focus from development projects to emergency assistance. Regarding its material assets, the Programme has constituted itself as a largely

operational agency, with an emphasis on the implementation of programs on the ground. With its expansion over the years, it has not only gained the reputation associated with its expertise in areas like logistics, but it has also developed a strong infrastructure, being for instance present in almost ninety countries over the world. Alternatively, the nature of the assistance provided by the Programme has faced it with the double challenge of vast expenditures and a difficult funding base.

How has WFP's particular resource situation been translated into the choice of partners I described above? First, the coincidence between the re-orientation of WFP's operations towards emergencies and its efforts to more closely associate itself with a key humanitarian agency like UNHCR reveals the need on the part of the Programme to gain, through inter-organizational collaboration, a higher salience in a new area of activity. For most of the first three decades of its operations, the bulk of WFP assistance had been focused on using food aid in support of economic and social development projects.⁴³³ As a result, its expertise and its authority as a source of assistance were closely linked to such type of operations. When the Programme re-oriented its activities to increase the percentage of projects dedicated to emergencies, it had not only to adapt its practices – for instance, from long-term to rapid food deployment – but it had also to institute its visibility and authority as a 'humanitarian agency'. As a former Executive Director of Programme has suggested: "[t]he heavy, increasing involvement of WFP in emergency assistance during the eighties reinforced my initial view that WFP's long-term future would depend on it becoming an *indispensable* actor in the international response to emergencies."⁴³⁴ One way to do this was to team up with organizations that possessed saliency as

⁴³³ Shaw 2001, 67.

⁴³⁴ Ingram 2007, 199 (my emphasis).

a primary actor in emergencies. The trend revealed by WFP's choice of partners is in accordance with this logic: "coordination of WFP within the UN system in the first two eras had been closest with the FAO; and its projects in school feeding or maternal child health centers were often joint efforts with UNESCO and WHO ... More recently, certainly after 1991, WFP coordinated its growing humanitarian relief portfolio with DHA (now OCHA), UNHCR and UNICEF."⁴³⁵ In seeking to assume a major role in emergencies, WFP has come closer to UNHCR, one of the UN main humanitarian agencies and with the specific mandate of protecting refugees. UNHCR also has a vast presence in the field, in crisis situations. As one author has suggested, "[m]ore than any other single factor, it was the escalation of man-made disasters in the 1980s, and the concomitant new working arrangements between WFP and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), that greatly increased WFP's involvement in emergency operations."⁴³⁶ Moreover, for WFP to gain better access to and be one of the main actors called to assist in crisis situations, its role as an organization dedicated to emergencies had to be affirmed. Accordingly, as I have shown above, the Programme institutionalized its collaboration with UNHCR through memoranda of understanding which, among other things, were aimed at defining and crystallizing the division of labor and respective roles of the two agencies in emergencies situations. The Director General of WFP that presided over a collaboration agreement with UNHCR in 1985 subsequently commented that his intent was largely to consolidate the position of the organization as a provider of food aid in the UN system.⁴³⁷

The logic of resource complementarities for partner selection is further illustrated by the ties WFP has established with the World Bank. I mentioned before that a peculiar feature of the

⁴³⁵ Hopkins 1999, 77.

⁴³⁶ Shaw 2001, 168.

⁴³⁷ Ingram 2007, 201.

relationship between the Programme and the Bank was that it was feebler when the two organizations shared a common emphasis – namely, the area of development – and became stronger in recent years when WFP has been dedicating the majority of its assistance to emergencies, an area not traditionally within the Bank’s scope of action. Indeed, as acknowledged in a 2003 WFP/WB joint workshop: “both organizations have to stretch (pretty hard) to work together on a regular basis.”⁴³⁸ Despite differences and hindrances – such as the limited involvement of the World Bank in emergencies – there has been increased partnering between WFP and the Bank. As former Executive Director of WFP, James Ingram, has suggested, his approach to the Programme in the 1980s included striving “to build strong relationships with the providers of capital aid, namely IFAD, the African Development Bank and, above all, the World Bank.”⁴³⁹ Over time, the relationship between the Bank and the Programme has gone from informal consultations and sporadic interactions to collaboration in 26 projects in 17 countries by 2005. Not drawn to the Bank on functional grounds, the ties WFP has developed with the affluent IFI respond instead to strategic choice – namely, the search for needed financial assets. Supporting this claim, the main role of the Bank in its alliance with the Programme has been as a source of funding for WFP projects. This is clearly recognizable in the fact that the World Bank, hitherto absent from WFP’s list of top donors, came to occupy the eighth place in 2006 by the level of its contributions.⁴⁴⁰ The Bank also figures as a modest yet

⁴³⁸ Peter Timmer, ‘Food Aid for Development: Challenges and Opportunities’. Summary notes on the Workshop for the WFP and WB Staff on the Current Role of Food Aid (World Bank, Washington DC, July 21-23, 2003). Available at: http://www.wfp.org/aboutwfp/downloads/Timmer_Summary_Notes.pdf

⁴³⁹ Ingram 2007, 311.

⁴⁴⁰ A list of WFP donors and a ranking of contributions (per year, since 1998) can be found at: http://www.wfp.org/appeals/Wfp_donors/index.asp?section=3&sub_section=4

identifiable donor responding to WFP's humanitarian appeals.⁴⁴¹ As follows, a 'marriage of convenience' seems to be emerging between these two organizations, where the Bank provides the Programme with financial resources, and WFP contributes with its reputation and legitimacy as a food aid organization, as well as with its operational infrastructure – such as its field presence. In support of the latter point, a 1996 WFP report states that “the World Bank has entrusted WFP with the management of the funds [for a project in Mozambique] in view of the Programme's extensive presence in the country.”⁴⁴²

The role played by other 'preferred allies' of WFP further supports this understanding of the Programme's partnerships strategy as a search for complementary funding for its food aid activities. UNDP, with whom WFP collaborated in 2005 in 71 projects, assists the Programme with funding for technical assistance.⁴⁴³ UNICEF, with its strong resource-mobilization capacity, constitutes WFP's main partner.⁴⁴⁴ As an analyst of the Programme describes, “[m]any of the education and training projects that have received WFP assistance have also benefited from technical assistance from FAO, ILO and UNESCO, and *financial and material aid from UNDP and UNICEF.*”⁴⁴⁵ The Programme has also cooperated with IFAD by providing assistance to *IFAD-supported* projects.⁴⁴⁶ What is more, an evaluation of the Programme has called attention to its tendency to “conceive implementing partnerships as a search for resources complementary to WFP assistance, rather than to consider food aid as a complement to the implementation of

⁴⁴¹ See the data provided by 'Relief Web', an online gateway to information on humanitarian assistance and disasters, administered by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (<http://www.reliefweb.org>).

⁴⁴² WFP 1996b, 4 (par. 7).

⁴⁴³ See the section 'WFP's Partners' on the organization's web site (<http://www.wfp.org>)

⁴⁴⁴ UNICEF also brings to the partnership the added value of its other assets like country presence and reputation.

⁴⁴⁵ Shaw 2001, 106 (my emphasis).

⁴⁴⁶ See: FAO, IFAD and WFP, 2005 (my emphasis).

other, already-resourced initiatives.”⁴⁴⁷ Finally, as a WFP document itself straightforwardly remarks: “technical advice partnerships, such as those with FAO, ILO, WHO and UNESCO, are essential and will be maintained, but they do not increase the resources available for programming ... true partnerships will see the partners – such as the World Bank, regional banks, UNICEF, UNHCR, IFAD, NGOs and bilateral donors – sharing the intellectual and resource requirements with WFP.”⁴⁴⁸

A LOOK AT ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

There are other possible accounts for the pattern of relational behavior delineated by the WFP case. As I have mentioned before, the ties the Programme has increasingly developed with various UN agencies could be explained as the response of a submissive IO to the external demands of member states. In particular, the recent push to enhance system-wide coherence in the UN could be pointed to as evidence of such requests. This would explain the recent increase in WFP collaborative links. Yet, the limitation of such an account rests on the fact that external demands pointing to greater inter-agency coordination have not significantly changed over time. On the one hand, calls for greater coherence are not new to the UN system, as they have emerged and re-emerged in different evaluations and proposals throughout the past fifty years. As I have suggested before, initiatives of this sort have existed almost since the inception of the world body, while having in most instances only limited results.⁴⁴⁹ Even if conceding to the possibility of states’ demands in favor of partnerships to have augmented in recent years, and hence to be the factor driving WFP improved links with other agencies, the argument would still fall short of

⁴⁴⁷ Russo, Luzot, Martella and Wilhelm 2005, 42 (par. 227).

⁴⁴⁸ WFP 2001, 21.

⁴⁴⁹ See Luck 2003.

explaining the Programme's particular choice of partners. This is so in that the general act of 'collaborating' can be the subject of external demands, but beyond that, the choice of 'with whom' to partner is generally very much left to the IO. As a result, the selection of partners offers a good experimental setting to fully capture the strategic side of organizational action. In the case of WFP, if the preference of states was to be hypothesized, they could be assumed to favor the arrangements originally instituted in the UN for the Programme – namely, that it stands as a subsidiary organ of FAO. Counter to this 'as creators intended' situation, and as I have described, WFP has in recent years detached itself from its parent organization.

The alternative efficiency-based explanation I presented in introductory chapters would point instead to the functional, cost-effective nature of partnerships and teamwork, and would therefore argue that WFP has established links with sister UN-IOs with a view to the superior outcome such *modus operandi* can provide. Similarly from this perspective, the choice of partners can be expected to follow a functional logic – i.e. to be grounded on domain consensus. Such an account corresponds to the relationship the Programme has recently established with UNHCR, as both now share a concern in emergencies.⁴⁵⁰ Still, the reasoning appears at odds with other instances of WFP collaborative ties. For instance, the Programme and the World Bank are not necessarily closely synchronized in functional terms, yet the former has recently strengthened its partnerships with the latter. The choice for the Bank as a partner is clearly strategic, as this affluent IFI can offer WFP the financial resources it has increasingly needed. Similarly, when the Programme was created, “[t]here had been a logic in the placement of WFP

⁴⁵⁰ My resource-based argument also explains this partnership, but as the result of the search by WFP of greater saliency in a new issue-area.

under FAO, given both were concerned with feeding the world.”⁴⁵¹ Differing from such initial functional basis for a close relationship between WFP and FAO, however, the distance between the two organizations has somehow grown in recent decades, in tandem with the Programme’s increased partnerships. This is so in that, while WFP still collaborates closely with FAO, it now stands as a separate and independent entity with respect to its former ‘parent organization’.

Finally, in what concerns bureaucratic-constructivist approaches pointing to elements such as the culture of organizations, I have mentioned that they result too case-specific and endogenous as explanations, and therefore do not allow for a generalizable understanding of the behavior of IOs. For accounts highlighting the unintended consequences of bureaucratic traits or internal dynamics, moreover, it further results difficult to grasp the more strategic character of purposive action on the part of organizations, such as that of promoting inter-organizational alliances. This ‘agency’ is particularly clear in the case of the choice of partners. As my analysis has shown, both the longitudinal pattern of WFP’s relational behavior and its preferences in terms of associates have been shaped by the organization’s particular resource situation.

ON WFP’S OPPORTUNITY TO COOPERATE

I have shown in the previous sections how the increase in WFP vulnerability in terms of its capacity to secure funding contributed to its concomitantly higher propensity to interact with other UN agencies. The challenging context of a tighter budget and less predictable funding affected WFP’s cost-benefit ratio, and turned collaboration into a strategically convenient alternative. To be sure, this logic applies to the ‘motivation’ side of the equation, as it explains why an organization may be willing to cooperate with others. But, as I have also explained, for

⁴⁵¹ Ingram 2007, 23.

the actual alliance to emerge there also has to be an *opportunity* – that is to say, those ‘others’ have to also want to collaborate with the organization in question. In other words, the agency needs to have attractiveness as a partner.

In the case of WFP, many of the same developments that led to its increased financial vulnerability also led to the enhancement of its ‘collaboration appeal’. First, the Programme has, since its inception, greatly expanded. Its activities have multiplied and its expenditures exponentially grown. Its staff has quadrupled in the past ten years and WFP has also established a field presence in over eighty countries. As a result of its involvement in more and larger projects all around the world, the Programme has also raised its profile within the aid community in general and the UN system in particular. Adding to the Programme’s expansion is the experience, expertise and infrastructure WFP has developed through the implementation in its very operational and field-oriented projects over the years. Hence, the Programme has acquired a noted reputation in the area of transport and logistics. It has also built close contacts with local NGOs and other actors crucial for the channeling of food to areas in need. These assets have contributed to WFP being perceived as an appealing collaborator, essentially for operations involving the delivery of food but also for those involving non-food items.

Overall, as a counterpart to the vulnerability of WFP regarding contributions – and its consequent higher *need* to collaborate with others – some of the assets it has acquired throughout its history have also enhanced its attractiveness as a partner, further increasing its opportunity to collaborate and lowering the cost of pursuing such strategy.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have applied the resource-based model proposed in chapter 2 to the case of WFP. A longitudinal analysis of the Programme's asset situation allowed for an understanding of the changes over time in its approach towards inter-organizational initiatives. Likewise, the portrayal of WFP's strengths and weaknesses in terms of material and symbolic capital offered insights as to its choice of preferred partners. Rather than the demand from states or the more efficient nature generally attributed to team work, it was the resource situation of WFP and the particular way its financial vulnerability evolved over time that has offered the key towards understanding its recent increased involvement in collaborative initiatives. Moreover, unlike the search for prestige revealed in the previous chapter by the World Bank, in the case of WFP it was the thirst for funding and the need to gain presence in the field of emergencies that guided the Programme's selection of its closest allies. Here again, analyzing the relational behavior of an IO from a resource-based perspective has revealed the strategic nature of such actions. Contrary to the common understanding of IOs in IR theory, where they are either driven by external demands from member states or by unintended consequences of bureaucratic traits, I have shown how the way IOs approach an issue like collaboration with peer agencies responds to a cost-benefit analysis where needs and opportunities, strengths and weaknesses are taken into account.

CHAPTER 5
PRIDE AND PRESTIGE: UNICEF

INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapters I have analyzed the cases of two UN-IOs with a ‘mixed’ resource situation: the World Bank was affluent in material assets yet suffered mainly from a shortage of symbolic capital; the WFP, alternatively, held a strong reputation but a fragile financial position. With a combination of strengths and weakness, these two organizations revealed overall an intermediate proclivity to collaborate, their particular resource situation being reflected in their choice of partners. Now I turn to the two cases in the extremes – that is, to organizations affluent in both or neither type of capital.

This chapter looks at the case of the United Nations Children’s Fund - UNICEF. Over time and in terms of resources, the Fund went from weakness to strength. Born as a temporary organization with a limited mandate, UNICEF eventually solidified its position in the UN, further expanding its structure and activities. Today, the Fund stands in a strong position regarding both tangible and intangible assets. In contrast to the World Bank, the Fund counts with a prestigious image and high issue-saliency. At variance with WFP, UNICEF is also financially affluent: despite its reliance on voluntary contributions, the Fund possesses a large fund-raising base. Hence, within the resource matrix I presented in chapter 2, UNICEF fits the upper-left box – with a high level of both material and symbolic capital. Following the inferences from my resource-based argument, the Fund’s prosperity would lead it to display a low proclivity to collaborate with sister UN organizations.

As I will depict below, UNICEF appears throughout its history as a collaborative organization. Still, and as a defining feature in terms of the organization's proclivity to collaborate, the Fund's approach towards partnerships has been increasingly marked by an element of reticence. Such reluctance has been documented in various evaluations and reports, and has materialized in the Fund's promotion of its individuality, even within joint initiatives. Alternative explanations of this IO behavior would point to its embeddedness in the UN system and its efficiency-orientation to account for its active participation in inter-agency mechanisms. They would, however, leave the reticence intrinsic in the Fund's approach towards partnerships overlooked and unexplained. By examining UNICEF's resource situation I will be able to uncover and account for the element of reluctance that characterizes this case.

The organization of the present chapter is as follows. A first section portrays the general trends that emanate from UNICEF's relational action. Subsequently, I will introduce my resource-based analysis of the Fund's case. For this purpose, I will initially describe this UN-IO asset situation – both its evolution and current state. I then turn to my explanation of UNICEF's proclivity to collaborate. This is followed by a consideration of alternative explanations for the identified behavioral pattern. A number of concluding remarks close the chapter.

UNICEF'S RELATIONAL BEHAVIOR

In general terms, UNICEF can be said to have maintained a pro-partnerships approach throughout its history, participating since its early days in inter-agency projects with other UN-IOs, and further establishing close links with other actors, such as NGOs and the private sector. The Fund has, from the start, collaborated with other UN organizations. In accounts of the

history of the Fund, there are multiple references to programs carried out in conjunction with agencies like WHO, UNESCO and ILO.⁴⁵² Examples of collaborative projects include: the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) launched in 1974; the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (1988); the Baby –Friendly Hospital Initiative (1991); the Global Girls’ Education Program (1994).⁴⁵³ More recently, and as noted in its Annual Reports, UNICEF has continued to take part in various global partnerships with diverse UN organizations. Table 5.1 below lists the major initiatives reported by the Fund for the years 2001 to 2004, as well as its UN associates in each of them. The Fund is similarly involved in UN-wide inter-agency mechanisms. For instance, the Financial Tracking Service of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) lists UNICEF as one of the ‘top ten’ appealing agencies in emergencies.⁴⁵⁴ Moreover, the Fund is recurrently mentioned in reports related to humanitarian assistance as an important contributor and ‘leader’ – constituting “in fact the first agency to second the first Humanitarian Coordinator (in Somalia, 1992), and has contributed to strengthening the still imperfect system.”⁴⁵⁵ Similarly, UNICEF has actively participated and adopted a leading role in the UN Development Group, standing not only as a member but also as part of its Executive Committee – together with WFP, UNFPA and UNDP.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵² See: Black 1996 and Beigbeder 2001.

⁴⁵³ For details, see for instance: UNICEF Annual Reports (at: <http://www.unicef.org/publications/index.html>)

⁴⁵⁴ See the OCHA Financial Tracking Service web site: <http://ocha.unog.ch/fts/analysis/index.asp>

⁴⁵⁵ Stoddard 2004, 25.

⁴⁵⁶ See the undg web site: <http://www.undg.org/content.cfm?id=544>

Table 5.1: UNICEF's Global Partnerships and Collaborations

Area	Partnership	UN Partners
Early Childhood	Early Childhood	UNESCO, WFP, WHO, World Bank
	Child Nutrition	WFP, World Bank
	Iodine Deficiency Disorders	WHO, WFP, World Bank
	Malaria Prevention	UNDP, WHO, World Bank
	Water, Sanitation & Hygiene	WHO
	Women's Health & Save Motherhood	UNFPA, WHO, World Bank
Immunization 'Plus'	GAVI (Global Alliance for Vaccines & Immunization)	WHO, World Bank.
	Global Polio Eradication Initiative	WHO, World Bank.
	Vitamin A	WHO
	Measles	WHO
	Maternal & Neonatal Tetanus Elimination	UNFPA, WHO
Education/Girls' Education	UN Girls' Education Initiative	ILO, OCHA, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNIFEM, UNDG Office, UN Division for the Advancement of Women, UN Department of Econ and Soc Affairs, WFP, WHO, World Bank.
	Preventing Gender Discrimination & Promoting Gender Equality	OCHA, UN Division for the Advancement of Women, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNIFEM, World Bank.
HIV/AIDS	Fighting HIV/AIDS	UNAIDS, UNFIP, UNFPA, UNHCR, WHO, WB.
Protecting Children from Exploitation, Violence and Abuse	Protecting Children from Exploitation, Violence & Abuse	World Bank, ILO, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNHCR, WHO, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children & Armed Conflict.
	Children In Armed Conflict	OCHA, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children & Armed Conflict, Representative of the Secretary General on Internally Displaced Persons, UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations.
Other Initiatives	Adolescent Development & Participation	UNAIDS, UNFIP, UNFPA, WHO.
	Communications/ Media & Broadcasting	(No UN partners listed)
	Sport for Development & Peace	(No UN partners listed)

Source: UNICEF Annual Reports, 2001-2004 (at: <http://www.unicef.org/publications/index.html>)

UNICEF is furthermore reported to have made efforts to chair and participate in inter-agency working groups related to UN streamlining: it has served on each of the seven working groups of the Joint Programme on Simplification and Harmonization; and it has chaired the UNDG Working Group on Common Premises and Services for six years.⁴⁵⁷ Table 5.2 below lists the main UN inter-agency mechanisms in which UNICEF participates, as well as the Fund's role in them.

Table 5.2: UNICEF's Membership - UN Inter-Agency Mechanisms

Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism	Role
UN System Chief Executive Board for Coordination (CEB)	Member
CEB High Level Committee on Management (HLCM)	Member
CEB High Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP)	Member
UN Development Group (UNDG)	Member
UNDG Management/Programme Group	Lead/Chair
UNAIDS Committee of Cosponsoring Organizations (CCO)	Member
Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI)	Lead/Chair
Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA)	Member
Executive Committee on Peace and Security (ECPS)	Member
Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)	Member
Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN)	Lead/Chair
UN Water	Member
Education for All (EFA) Task Force	Lead/Chair
UN Girls Education Initiative (GEI)	Lead/Chair

Source: Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on UN System-Wide Coherence, 'Basic Information on United Nations System Organizations' (see References for complete citation)

⁴⁵⁷ Mendelsohn and Mackenzie 2004, 29-30.

As Table 5.1 above suggests, UNICEF's partners include many different UN organizations. Historically, and given its cross-cutting domain of action, the Fund has interacted with various specialized agencies. Hence, from the early 1960s, "[c]oncern with interdependent developmental needs allowed UNICEF to explore cooperation with UNESCO and ILO, in addition to the existing links with WHO and FAO."⁴⁵⁸

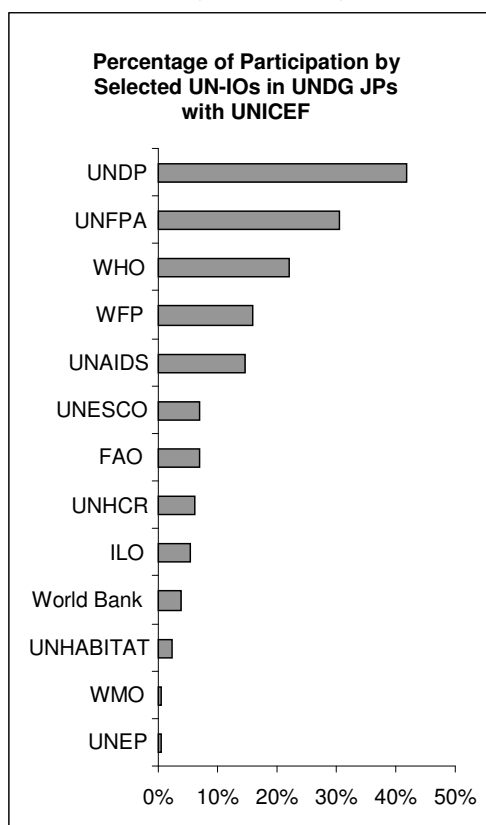
Additionally, the Fund has often worked closely with other UN 'programs and funds', such as UNFPA, UNHCR and UNDP. In emergencies, for instance, UNICEF complements the work of WFP, the former providing non-food assistance and the latter delivering food rations.⁴⁵⁹ A recent assessment by UNICEF's Evaluation Office has similarly signaled that both UNFPA and UNDP, together with WHO, have engaged in joint programming with the Fund in nearly half of the – circa one hundred – surveyed countries.⁴⁶⁰ Adding to this portrayal, Figure 5.1 below shows – for the period between 1994 and 2005 – the percentage of 'UN Development Group joint programmes *involving* UNICEF' in which each listed agency has also participated.

⁴⁵⁸ Weiss 1975, 129.

⁴⁵⁹ Mendelsohn and Mackenzie 2004, 66-7

⁴⁶⁰ Mendelsohn and Mackenzie 2004, 58.

Figure 5.1: Other UN Agencies' Participation in UNDG Programmes that Include UNICEF (1994-2005)

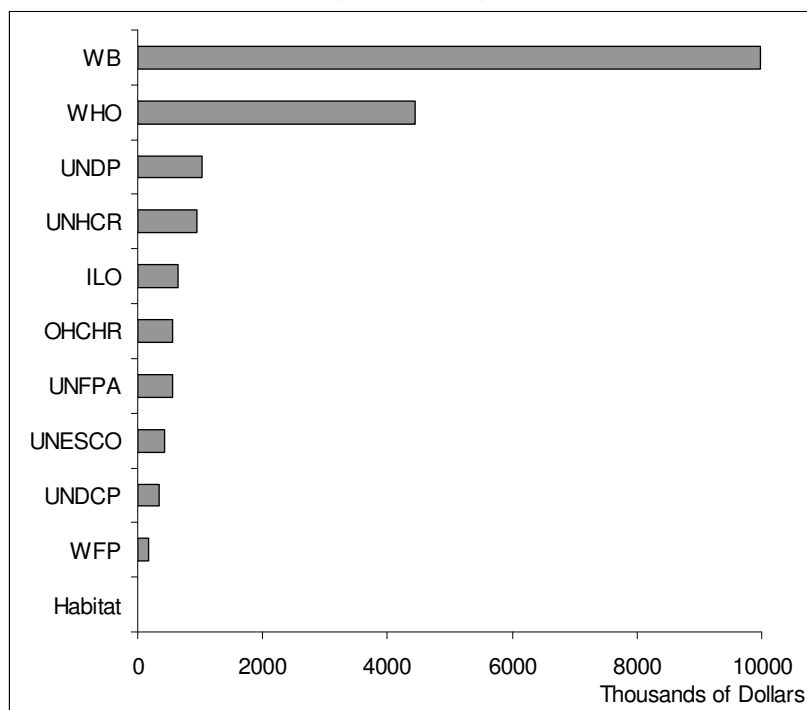


Source: UNDG-UNCT Database <http://unctdatabase.undg.org> (accessed September 2006)

As the figure shows, within the framework of the UNDG, the Fund partakes most joint programs with UNDP, UNFPA, WHO and WFP. In its 2001 Annual Report, UNICEF counted these organizations, as well as UNHCR, as its ‘strongest allies’.⁴⁶¹ The Fund has also worked closely with other UN agencies, for instance, with UNESCO in the Education for All and the Girls Education initiatives. Similarly, the World Bank constitutes an important partner for UNICEF (see Table 5.1 above) and its main donor among UN agencies (see Figure 5.2 below).

⁴⁶¹ UNICEF 2001, 7.

Figure 5.2: Total Amount of Contributions by Selected UN Agencies to UNICEF's Budget (1999-2003)



Source: UNICEF Annual Reports for the specified years
(available from: <http://www.unicef.org/publications/index.html>)

As described so far, a first look at UNICEF's relational behavior shows a good deal of collaboration with other organizations. Over time, moreover, the Fund reveals a certain increase in its ties with other UN-IOs, particularly by means of its participation in inter-agency mechanisms and initiatives. Two caveats are in place however. First, in part due to its high point of departure, the level of UNICEF's involvement in partnerships has been relatively stable over time. Second, a closer look at the case of UNICEF would permit to uncover a divergent behavioral trend which appears intertwined with the one portrayed so far. In particular, the history of the Fund's relational action has been increasingly characterized by a *reticence* towards partnerships. In this vein, various reports have pointed to the fact that "UNICEF has developed a distinctive and separate global reputation, and historically has tended to be independent from the

rest of the UN system in terms of public image and operational activity.”⁴⁶² The Fund has been also “criticized for seeking visibility and being reticent about collaboration.”⁴⁶³ Such external estimations have been complemented by statements from within the UN and the Fund itself. For instance, a recent evaluation report by the Fund has observed that country offices listed the loss of visibility and the competition for donors’ funds among the costs of joint programming.⁴⁶⁴ More concretely: “[a] number of CO [country offices] respondents expressed concern that UNICEF, as well as other agencies may end up in UN Agencies merged organizationally and as a result lose their distinctive organizational identity. Concerns were expressed that the mandate may be watered down and that UNICEF will lose its identity ... [and] suffer lost credibility.”⁴⁶⁵ Because of these tensions, and despite a certain increase in the participation of UNICEF in inter-agency processes, the image of the Fund as an organization that ‘keeps its distance’ has been argued to still remain.⁴⁶⁶ Similarly, a multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF in 1992 noted that while the Fund’s Headquarters “participated fully in UN inter-agency efforts, this was much less so at country level”⁴⁶⁷ – a significant fact given that over 80% of UNICEF’s staff is in the field.

Next to its reticence about collaboration, the Fund has revealed a tendency to guard and promote its autonomy and individuality. In this regard, a 2004 report from the Fund’s Evaluation Office observes: “according to informants from other agencies, UNICEF’s protection and promotion of its own identity has at times caused friction, and led to the perception that UNICEF promotes itself at others’ expense, to the detriment of the broader system. Although they

⁴⁶² DFID 2000, 3.

⁴⁶³ Kruse and Forss 2001, 52.

⁴⁶⁴ Mendelsohn and Mackenzie 2004, 59.

⁴⁶⁵ Mendelsohn and Mackenzie 2004, 73.

⁴⁶⁶ UNICEF 2004a, 18.

⁴⁶⁷ UNICEF 2004a, 7.

understand UNICEF's need to keep a high profile to maintain funding levels in the absence of assessed contributions, they stress that all agencies also have an important obligation to represent the UN and fly a common flag."⁴⁶⁸ Similarly, the Fund has shown a tendency to adopt a 'prime moving' role in programs – promoting its own approach to issues and seeking a leadership position.⁴⁶⁹ This has often translated in domain-related frictions in its relations with other UN-IOs. UNICEF's interaction with WHO illustrates this point, in that "[t]he reality of the first fifty years shows alternating cooperation, competition and conflict. WHO initially opposed the creation of UNICEF and then tried to limit its activities ... When these attempts failed, WHO has constantly insisted on its leadership in public health policies."⁴⁷⁰ Much of the tension between these two organizations has derived from the fact that UNICEF's views and approach to issues of joint concern – e.g. breastfeeding – have departed from those of WHO. In turn, from UNICEF's perspective, such divergence "is another sign that the Fund is, at times, loath to accept WHO's scientific and technical authority on public health issues in order to affirm its own identity and autonomy."⁴⁷¹ The same tension-within-association has surfaced between the Fund and UNESCO. Partnering since the 1960s, both agencies established a close association in 1990 through the joint initiative of 'Education for All.'⁴⁷² Still, the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar revealed "infighting between agencies, particularly between UNESCO and UNICEF, sister agencies in the United Nations system and today in open competition for hegemony over the world panorama of education (...) UNESCO resents the fact that the United Nations gave

⁴⁶⁸ Stoddard 2004, 23.

⁴⁶⁹ DFID 2000, 3.

⁴⁷⁰ Beigbeder 2001, 90.

⁴⁷¹ Beigbeder 2001, 71.

⁴⁷² The EFA initiative was launched at the 1990 World Conference on Education for All, convened jointly by UNICEF, UNESCO, the World Bank and UNDP. On EFA see: www.unesco.org/education/efa/

UNICEF world leadership over education for girls, while UNICEF resents that UNESCO was ratified by national governments as the lead agency for Education for All.”⁴⁷³

Overall, UNICEF’s relational behavior shows two contrasting trends. On the one hand, the Fund appears as a collaborative organization, working in concert with many UN-IOs and participating in various inter-agency mechanisms and initiatives. On the other hand, UNICEF has equally revealed reticence in cooperating with other UN agencies – an attitude for which it has been criticized.⁴⁷⁴ In terms of the ‘proclivity to collaborate’, this latter element of reticence constitutes a defining characteristic of UNICEF’s behavior, and one that should be accounted for. Hence, as I will contend in what follows, the resource-based argument I have presented in chapter 2 offers a more complete understanding of the Fund’s case than alternative explanations, as it can explicate both trends in UNICEF’s dual behavioral pattern and it also allows for the inference that reserve will surface for this organization regarding partnerships.

UNICEF’S EVOLVING RESOURCES – FROM WEAKNESS TO STRENGTH

When UNICEF was created in 1946 as a relief fund, it was conferred a limited scope: its geographic area was circumscribed to war-thorn Europe, its target population to children, its issue-area to emergencies, and its original temporal extension to less than 5 years. Today, UNICEF is simply “the best-known subsidiary organ of the United Nations.”⁴⁷⁵ It has significantly evolved since its inception, becoming a permanent UN organization, extending its geographic coverage to virtually all countries in the world, working on both humanitarian

⁴⁷³ Torres 2001, 9.

⁴⁷⁴ Such criticism has come, among others, from a number of donor countries. See for instance the ‘Organizational Strategy’ for UNICEF (2005-2008) by the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (at: <http://www.um.dk/nr/rdonlyres/54156E35-5991-498C-87D9-D6DCF078CBF4/0/UNICEF.pdf>)

⁴⁷⁵ Yoder 1993, 143.

emergencies and development, and expanding the focus of its assistance to women. Moreover, and in contrast to the cases analyzed so far, UNICEF has experienced over time an improvement in its resource situation. Unlike the World Bank, which faced mounting criticism in recent decades, UNICEF has achieved considerable popularity, building an independent identity and investing it with a prestigious ‘brand name’. And unlike the financial vulnerability experienced by the WFP in tandem with its task expansion, the Fund has managed to build a strong fund-raising base – relying on a variety of sources, and collecting annually a substantive amount of voluntary contributions.⁴⁷⁶

UNICEF was meant originally as a temporary successor of a declining organization. The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) had been established in 1943 by the Allied Powers with a view to provide assistance to war-affected European countries, in the form of clothing, medicine, food and other supplies channeled through their governments. With the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the Cold War, the fact that the beneficiaries of the UNRRA included many countries in Eastern Europe – under the influence of the Soviet Union – while most of the funds for the Administration came from the United States became problematic. With the growing East-West divide, the U.S. decided to withdraw its financial contribution to the UNRRA and instead channel it through the Marshall Plan, which would cover Western Europe only.⁴⁷⁷ This financial crisis for the UNRRA was further accompanied by a series of criticisms for mismanagement.⁴⁷⁸ As a result of these developments,

⁴⁷⁶ In 2004, for instance, UNICEF’s total budget (based on voluntary contributions) was US\$ 1978 million, being equal to a third of the UN System Assessed Budget (which includes: the approved Regular Budget, that of Peacekeeping Operations and assessed contributions to Specialized Agencies). See: UNICEF 2005, 43 for its budget and the information provided by Global Policy Forum for the UN system budget (at <http://www.globalpolicy.org/finance/tables/tabsyst.htm>).

⁴⁷⁷ Black 1996, 7.

⁴⁷⁸ Beigbeder 2001, 8.

the UNRRA was dissolved in 1946, just three years after its creation. With the disbanding of the Administration, there emerged a need to decide how to fill in the vacuum left by such organization in the area of humanitarian relief, and to re-allocate the remnants of its funds. The proposal was then introduced to hand over the residual funds of the Administration to a special fund for children.⁴⁷⁹ Within this context, the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted in 1946 resolution 57(I), and thereby established an International Children's Emergency Fund.⁴⁸⁰ The Fund was conceived as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, in accordance to article 22 of the Charter.⁴⁸¹ As a successor of UNRRA, the 'ICEF' was originally meant as a temporary postwar relief fund, not as a permanent UN agency: "[t]he proposal [for the ICEF] was approved, on the understanding that no specialized agency would be established, but only a simple machinery to collect funds and distribute materials."⁴⁸² As an illustration of the restrictive character originally intended for UNICEF, the General Assembly stated in its 1946 resolution that "to the maximum extent feasible, the utilization of the staff and technical assistance of the specialized agencies, in particular the World Health Organization or its Interim Commission, shall be requested, with a view to reducing to a minimum the separate personnel requirements of the Fund."⁴⁸³

By 1950, the circumstances that had inspired the establishment of the Fund were starting to dissipate as Europe recovered after the war. This exacerbated the unstable position of the organization, as doubts emerged on whether the Fund's existence should be extended or brought

⁴⁷⁹ Black 1996, 7.

⁴⁸⁰ Weiss 1975, 128. The name of the organization would later change to 'United Nations Children's Fund', but the original acronym 'UN-ICEF' was maintained.

⁴⁸¹ The content of Article 22 of the UN Charter can be found at: <http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/chapter4.htm>

⁴⁸² Beigbeder 2001, 10.

⁴⁸³ UN General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Plenary Meeting, Resolution 57(I), 11 December 1946. Available from: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/1/ares1.htm>

to an end. Those specialized agencies directly related to UNICEF's activities – namely, ILO, FAO, UNESCO and especially WHO – were against the extension of the Fund.⁴⁸⁴ UNICEF's mandate implied a distinct approach to international assistance as compared to that of these specialized agencies. While the latter were assigned the task of addressing a particular functional issue area, such as education or nutrition, the former was to focus on a portion of the population – namely, children. In view of this, many UN agencies argued that the creation of an international organization such as UNICEF, “with wide responsibilities for a particular age group or other special section of the population would cut across the whole of the existing organizational structure of the UN and the specialized agencies.”⁴⁸⁵ The cited UN-IOs, concerned with the potential overlap of activities and seeking to protect their respective domains, contested the temporal extension of the Fund. Some countries – such as the United States – similarly suggested that the work of UNICEF should be handed over to pertinent specialized agencies. On its part, the General Assembly had, in 1949, praised UNICEF for its achievements, and “when the time came in 1950 for the UN to close down its ‘ICEF’, a successful lobby was mounted to save it.”⁴⁸⁶ The General Assembly prolonged the life of the Fund for three more years. By the end of that period, the extension of UNICEF was no longer the subject of debate, as all delegations praised the work of the organization and provided unanimous support for the removal of its time limit. Hence, in 1953, the General Assembly confirmed, through resolution 802 (VIII), the Fund's permanent standing in the UN system.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁴ Beigbeder 2001, 13.

⁴⁸⁵ Beigbeder 2001, 13.

⁴⁸⁶ Black 1996, 8.

⁴⁸⁷ The text of the mentioned resolution can be found at: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/8/ares8.htm>

The uncertainty and contestation that marked UNICEF's first years of existence was superseded in subsequent decades by a striking expansion of the Fund, which turned it into one of the best-known and celebrated agencies in the UN family. As early as 1950, when the urgency for relief assistance was lessening in Europe, the General Assembly approved the proposition coming from the Fund's Executive Board to broaden the organization's geographic coverage to include programs outside of Europe. Hence, by the time UNICEF assumed a permanent status in the UN system, its activities were also being expanded to places in Latin America, Asia and Africa. Complementing this geographic expansion was a broadening of the type of activity carried out by UNICEF. In its first years, the organization had concentrated on the collection of funds and the provision of material assistance – in the form of food and medicines – needed to tackle famine and malnutrition in war-affected areas. Subsequently, UNICEF incorporated a series of analytical and normative activities, such as training, technical assistance and advocacy. Developments in international law, crystallized in the 1959 Declaration and the 1990 Convention on the Rights of the Child, further contributed to the expansion of UNICEF's work into more normative areas. Hence, for instance, the 1990 Convention has become – more than a 'reference' – a systematic guide to the work of the organization, permeating all aspects of its activities. This has translated in the Fund adopting in the 1990s a 'human rights based approach' to its work, in turn expanding its scope of action through a broader conceptualization of child welfare. Originally, the main area of concentration of UNICEF's activities had been child health. This theme formed part of the Fund's mandate from the beginning, and stayed the single most important focus of its activities throughout its first years of activity, when “almost half of UNICEF's aid ... was committed to mass campaigns against epidemic diseases, including

malaria, TB, yaws, trachoma and leprosy.”⁴⁸⁸ Following the 1959 Declaration on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF broadened its focus to capture the ‘whole child’ and increasingly added to its domain other issues like education, water supply and environmental sanitation, child labor and gender issues. During the three UN Development Decades – 1960s, 1970s and 1980s – a related shift took place, when UNICEF moved from a purely humanitarian focus to growingly include development issues. This, in turn, was translated into a move from short-term operations towards more long-term programs, as well as from precise and definite actions to more integral, cross-sector policies. In this way, from the mid-1960s to the late 1970s, “UNICEF succeeded in winning for itself a place at the table of development cooperation ... The formal recognition that UNICEF was a development rather than a welfare organization came in 1972, when for the first time its work was reviewed as part of the economic and social, rather than humanitarian, activity of the United Nations.”⁴⁸⁹ Similarly, while the Fund’s original mandate was circumscribed to children, “[l]ater General Assembly resolutions and decisions of the UNICEF Executive Board extended the mandate of the Fund to women, especially mothers and poor women.”⁴⁹⁰

Together with the portrayed expansion of UNICEF’s mission and activities came a transformation of its resource situation. In this respect, the Fund went from weakness to strength as regards both symbolic and material capital. On the former, UNICEF has acquired over time a high level of visibility and authority in a variety of fields – such as nutrition and education – while also gaining exceptional prestige. UNICEF has, through a series of innovative marketing strategies, grown to be a high-profile and popular organization. Back in 1949, for instance, the Fund started selling greeting cards to collect money for its programs. The first greeting card was

⁴⁸⁸ Beigbeder 2001, 21.

⁴⁸⁹ Black 1996, 11.

⁴⁹⁰ Beigbeder 2001, 19.

made “from a watercolour drawing given to UNICEF by a Czechoslovakian girl in thanks for UNICEF’s help to her village after World War II. Since then, sales of cards and gifts have totalled more than \$1 billion. In 2000, these items brought in \$117.3 million for UNICEF-supported projects.”⁴⁹¹ The Fund has also undertaken another similarly inventive advertising initiative: the enlisting of celebrities as ‘Good Will Ambassadors’ to assist in generating support for the Fund’s mission. The reasoning behind this enterprise was that “fame has some clear benefits in certain roles with UNICEF. Celebrities attract attention, so they are in a position to focus the world’s eyes on the needs of children ... They can make direct representations to those with the power to effect change. They can use their talents and fame to fund raise and advocate.”⁴⁹² By means of these and other promotion strategies, UNICEF has become one of the best known agencies of the UN system, often more familiar to the general public than the United Nations itself. Similarly, UNICEF constitutes a high-profile organization by virtue of its extensive presence throughout the world. As one of the UN most decentralized organizations, the Fund is present in 191 countries and has offices in 126.⁴⁹³ It further implements a vast array of programs, appearing as an active participant in many emergency situations – e.g. the South East Asia Tsunami of 2004 – and global development initiatives – such as the Campaign for the Eradication of Polio. As a field-oriented, executing agency, the Fund has developed a close relationship with NGOs, whose assistance on the ground is seen as a vital asset at the time of implementing programs. As I will later show, UNICEF further counts with an ‘extended family’ of supporters, composed of NGOs, National Committees, private companies, and the mentioned

⁴⁹¹ UNICEF 2001, 18.

⁴⁹² From the section on ‘goodwill ambassadors’ of UNICEF’s website, at: http://www.unicef.org/people/people_ambassadors.html

⁴⁹³ See UNICEF’s official description of its structure at: <http://www.unicef.org/about/structure/index.html>

good will ambassadors. This wide and varied support network has contributed to the broadcasting and promotion of UNICEF's name, mission and activities. All in all, the Fund has developed a high saliency in a variety of issue-areas of its concern. In many, it has further assumed a leadership position. Hence, while not formally the lead agency in sectors such as education or nutrition, for instance, UNICEF has still figured as one of the primary UN-IOs acting in those fields.

Regarding the second category of symbolic assets, namely that of 'image', UNICEF's situation is likewise one of affluence. The Fund stands as a prominent and well-regarded organization in at least two respects. First, it has the good image derived from its very appealing and incontestable good-will mandate – namely, to assist children. Second, it has the reputation of being one of the most efficient administrations within the UN system. At the most fundamental level, the prestige of the Fund can be linked to the popular character of its mission: “the cause of children is universally recognized as a priority and essential concern. Who would vote against children's welfare and health?”⁴⁹⁴ In its first years of work, for instance, the fact that the target group of the Fund was considered to be 'above politics', allowed it to equally assist those in need on both sides of the growing East-West divide, an exception in a context where the first traces of the emerging Cold War were felt in post-war Europe. To be sure, the humanitarian tone of its mandate is “one thing that differentiates UNICEF as an international institution ... The almost universal popularity of and support for the organization reflects the appeal of its purpose: to succor helpless children.”⁴⁹⁵ Alternatively, UNICEF has gained a good reputation for the efficiency and excellence of its management and administration. The effectiveness of the initial

⁴⁹⁴ Beigbender 2001, 17.

⁴⁹⁵ Weiss 1975, 133-4

International Children Emergency Fund – the precursor of UNICEF – in providing material assistance in war-thorn Europe was a key factor generating support when the permanent extension of the Fund was being considered in the early 1950s. Subsequently, in 1965, UNICEF was honored with the Noble Peace Prize for its achievements in promoting child welfare around the world. In its early days, the fact that UNICEF was managing a large budget with a small bureaucracy earned it the reputation of an efficient organization. Moreover, the Fund's field-orientation and decentralized structure – where country offices have significant decision power – added to its image of flexibility and fast adaptability to rapid changes on the ground. As previously noted, UNICEF's situation changed considerably since the 1950s and into the 1990s: its mission expanded and its staff and budget increased considerably. By the mid-1990s, this enlargement was coupled with an external environment characterized by donor's fatigue and pressures to streamline the UN. Within this context, UNICEF proved flexible enough to reorganize its administration, reduce its staff and sustain 0% budget growth for several years. As a result, the Fund maintained its image of a professional, well-organized and adaptable organization. Throughout its history, on very few occasions has the Fund received criticisms or condemnations for its administrative policies and practices,⁴⁹⁶ while it has carried out several internal and external institutional reviews – resorting in some cases to external auditors and consultants – in order to assess its management in the search for improvement.⁴⁹⁷ As an example, the evaluation carried out in 1994 by Booz Allen & Hamilton prompted the running of a

⁴⁹⁶ One example is the fraud and mismanagement scandal that affected the UNICEF office in Kenya in 1994 (see: Beigbeder 2001, 181).

⁴⁹⁷ Examples of evaluations include: a 1994 Booz Allen and Hamilton Management Study; a 1999 AUSAID Review of UNICEF Field Level Performance; and a 2002 Staff Survey (See: UNICEF 2004a).

Management Excellence Program between 1995 and 1999.⁴⁹⁸ Overall, while other UN agencies have been recurrently charged with inefficiency, inflexibility and/or mismanagement, UNICEF has been among the few to keep a separate image predominantly associated with such merits as competence, adaptability and professionalism.

Alongside a high saliency and a good image, UNICEF has acquired a high level of legitimacy within the UN system. As early as 1949, even before its mandate was extended indefinitely, “the General Assembly seemed to legitimize the Fund by recognizing the important role it had been playing in the structure of the UN. Its resolution also congratulated the Fund, then in its third year of operations, for its great humanitarian effort.”⁴⁹⁹ As I have suggested above, the Fund has been increasingly recognized by other organizations and by the international community as an authority in certain areas, such as child nutrition or breastfeeding, thereby assuming a leading role in the design and implementation of related international policies. For instance, the conceptual framework for understanding and tackling malnutrition that UNICEF designed in 1990 has become the main model guiding the international community on the topic, whilst the Fund has assumed a leading position in UN nutrition activities.⁵⁰⁰ To add another example: in 1979 – designated the ‘International Year of the Child’ – UNICEF “was appointed the lead agency within the UN system for the emergency in Kampuchea ... This assumption of the lead agency role was a mark of the organization’s increasing international prestige, and

⁴⁹⁸ For details on the Management Excellence Programme see for instance: UNICEF 1996, 89. The 1994 study is available from: <http://www.cf-hst.net/UNICEF-TEMP/Doc-Repository/Management-study-1994-Booz-Allen-Hamilton-for-UNICEF-r02.html>

⁴⁹⁹ Beigbeder 2001, 13

⁵⁰⁰ See for instance: Rokx 2000, 4.

served to enhance it further ... At the beginning of the new decade, UNICEF and the children's agenda were poised to achieve an extraordinary momentum."⁵⁰¹

Symbolic and material capital can be seen as closely related in the sense that a good image can be critical for fund-raising and the need to accumulate or maintain financial assets can encourage the search for greater prestige. In the case of UNICEF, "the fact that [it] did not automatically receive assessed contributions to its budget from UN member states meant that a fund-raising machinery had to be developed. This had the effect of keeping the organization sensitive to the public mood and made UNICEF well known to a degree enjoyed by no other member organization of the UN family."⁵⁰² The Fund's income derives exclusively from voluntary contributions. Despite the challenge imposed by such financial arrangements, the organization has managed to build a strong and diversified fund-raising machinery, and to raise extensive contributions. For this, UNICEF has counted with an 'extended family' of supporters. Over the last decade, for instance, governments and inter-governmental organizations have contributed on average to roughly 65% of the organization's budget, the United States standing throughout as the largest donor government.⁵⁰³ Adding to the remaining funds, UNICEF has been active in its relations with non-governmental-organizations. In 1952, the NGO Committee on UNICEF was created as a mechanism to connect the Fund with civil society organizations. Today, the Committee, which has direct consultative status at the UNICEF Executive Board, gathers nearly one hundred international NGOs around the world.⁵⁰⁴ Moreover, UNICEF counts

⁵⁰¹ Black 1996, 14.

⁵⁰² Black 1996, 9.

⁵⁰³ In total funds. On both points – the percentage of contributions from governments and IGOs, and the United States as the main donor – see: UNICEF 2001, 23; UNICEF 2002, 30 and 35; UNICEF 2003, 37; UNICEF 2004b, 37 and 40; UNICEF 2005, 43-44.

⁵⁰⁴ See the NGO Committee on UNICEF web site (<http://www.ngocomunicef.org/>).

with a network of ‘special’ NGOs – the National Committees – that assist the Fund by performing both advocacy and fund-raising in developed countries. The first National Committee was established during UNICEF’s first year of existence – 1946 – in Yugoslavia. Today they support the work of the Fund from 37 countries.⁵⁰⁵ These sustaining organizations constitute an key source of external revenues, while they represent “a significant organizational characteristic distinguishing UNICEF from other UN agencies.”⁵⁰⁶ Adding to its financial assets, the Fund has also developed partnerships with the private sector, to the extent of having “the most extensive corporate involvement of any single UN agency.”⁵⁰⁷ Together, the revenues received from NGOs, the private sector and the National Committees constitute a third of the Fund’s regular budget.⁵⁰⁸ The strength of its fund-raising machinery has enabled UNICEF to collect considerable funds, despite its exclusive reliance on voluntary contributions. Table 5.3 below shows the size of UNICEF’s core budget as compared to that of other UN agencies. Similarly, the diversity of the Fund’s sources of support has allowed it to be less susceptible to financial crises linked to a decline in aid coming from any given source.

⁵⁰⁵ For a list of countries with UNICEF National Committees, see: http://www.unicef.org/about/structure/index_natcoms.html

⁵⁰⁶ Mendelsohn and Mackenzie 2004, 22.

⁵⁰⁷ Beigbeder 2001, 58.

⁵⁰⁸ See: UNICEF’s Annual Reports (available from: <http://www.cf-hst.net/>).

Table 5.3: UNICEF's Budget and Staff Size as Compared to that of Selected UN Agencies

Organization	Core Resources/ Regular Budget (biennial) US\$ Millions	Organization	Staff Worldwide
UNICEF	1648	WFP	8829
UNHCR	1145	UNICEF	8188
WHO	880	UNHCR	5621
FAO	765	WHO	4331
UNESCO	610	FAO	3725
ILO	529	ILO	2672
WFP	173	UNESCO	2161
UNEP	154	UN-HABITAT	1431
UN-HABITAT	51	UNEP	587

Source: Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on UN System-Wide Coherence, 'Basic Information on United Nations System Organizations' (see References for complete citation)

Next to its purely financial assets, UNICEF has gathered substantial non-monetary material resources. The Fund has, over time, built a large and solid infrastructure. Originally, UNICEF had, compared to other UN organizations, a small-size administration. In 1971, for instance, ILO had 11 times more staff than the Fund, while UNICEF's budget was twice as big as that of the specialized agency.⁵⁰⁹ The size of UNICEF's worldwide staff has augmented considerably throughout the past six decades, today tripling that of ILO.⁵¹⁰ As Table 5.3 above shows, the Fund counts today with a vast work force. It also receives the support of an important

⁵⁰⁹ Weiss 1975, 134.

⁵¹⁰ See the background document on UN system organizations prepared by the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence (listed in the References under the Panel's name). There, 8188 staff members are reported for UNICEF and 2672 for ILO.

number of voluntaries. Adding to its material assets, UNICEF has distinguished itself as one of the most decentralized organizations in the UN system, a structure that has contributed to its adaptability.⁵¹¹ With offices in 126 countries and with around 85% of its staff stationed in the field, the Fund has a solid presence in most countries of the world.⁵¹²

To be noted, the symbolic and material assets UNICEF has accumulated over the years are ultimately attached to its individual character. In other words, UNICEF is a ‘brand name’: the Fund has developed its identity as a separate organization, not merely as a component of a larger system, and its achieved strength is linked to that individuality. This fact is of crucial significance for the analysis of UNICEF’s relational behavior. As I will show in the next section, inter-agency collaboration initiatives face the Fund with the risk of being dissolved in the crowd of UN agencies, thereby losing its independent identity and the capital – both symbolic and material – associated with it. As follows, an element of reticence permeates UNICEF’s approach to partnerships, constituting a defining characteristic of the Fund’s behavioral pattern.

A RESOURCE-BASED ACCOUNT OF THE UNICEF CASE

The evolution and current state of the Fund’s resource situation allows for a comprehensive understanding of its relational behavior. In its early days, the organization faced a weak position: its scope of action was limited both in temporal and geographic terms; its monetary assets were restricted and its infrastructure modest; its issue-salience – based on a cross-cutting mandate – was contested. Within this initial context, UNICEF started from a high point of openness to partnerships. The need to carve a position in a disputed domain and to find

⁵¹¹ Gwin 1995, 110; Weiss 1975, 134.

⁵¹² Number of field offices as reported on the UNICEF official web site: <http://www.unicef.org/about/structure/index.html>. Percentage of staff in the field from: Gwin 1995, 110.

voluntary contributions for its activities encouraged the Fund to interact and collaborate with relevant specialized agencies. Given its initial focus on health, for instance, UNICEF established an early relationship with WHO – curiously one of the organizations opposed to the permanent extension of the Fund. Over time, the resource situation of UNICEF changed from weakness to strength. Despite its reliance on voluntary contributions, the organization managed to establish a strong funding base, as well as a solid infrastructure – with ample country presence and a large force of voluntary staff. In terms of symbolic capital, the Fund has achieved high legitimacy and reputation, becoming one of the most prestigious and well-known organizations of the UN system. It has also assumed a leadership role in many issue areas, consolidating its salience. Today, UNICEF stands in a strong position along all resource dimensions. With this improvement in its asset situation, and as predicted by the framework advanced in chapter 2, the Fund has over time revealed an ever growing reticence to collaborate with others. While UNICEF continues to participate in numerous partnerships and inter-agency mechanisms, an outcome I will explain below, its proclivity to associate has been mitigated over time – as represented by an increased reserve towards collaboration and by the surfacing of tensions resulting from re-assertions of autonomy and individuality. Hence, UNICEF has been often perceived by other UN agencies as a ‘loner’, as “working too much in isolation and with its own agenda.”⁵¹³

Within the resource matrix I presented in chapter 2, UNICEF falls in the upper-left box – that is, with a high level of both symbolic and material capital. As inferred from my proposed framework, the Fund will lack the incentives to approach other organizations in the search for needed assets. Similarly, the Fund can be expected to be relatively indifferent as to its choice of

⁵¹³ UNICEF 2004a, 11.

partners, in that there is no particular resource-complement it would need to look for in potential associates.⁵¹⁴ What is more, “[i]ndividuals whose social status is precarious must eagerly guard it in social interaction against any infringement, whereas those whose superior prestige or power are well established can afford to risk some of it to gain more.”⁵¹⁵ As follows, UNICEF’s partners have comprised an assortment of organizations with diverse strengths and weaknesses in terms of assets, including controversial agencies such as the World Bank and financially vulnerable ones like WFP. UNICEF’s strong position is in many ways attached to its individual character, a fact that renders partnerships problematic for the Fund. Given the strength of its distinct image, interacting with other organizations faces UNICEF with the risk of compromising its reputation or of being ‘diluted’ in the larger system, which in turn could undermine its other strengths, such as its independent fund-raising base. In other words, the Fund “can be rightly claimed to be a UN agency with strong brand-name appeal ... There is some concern that UN reform, particularly joint initiatives involving the pooling of resources or common services and facilities will compromise UNICEF’s reputation, its operational independence, and its field level capabilities.”⁵¹⁶ Since its resources – both symbolic and material – are dependent on its individuality, UNICEF has sought to maintain its autonomy, even within its interaction and collaboration with other organizations. This has often materialized, as I have shown above, in tensions surfacing inside the Fund’s relations with other UN-IOs.

⁵¹⁴ With UNICEF’s ever growing strength in the UN, its choice of partners has been sometimes guided by the Fund’s attempt to ‘gain terrain’ and/or to acquire leadership in domains of its interest. Hence, for instance, it has looked for UNESCO as a partner in education, given this agency’s formal authority in the area and as determined by the Fund’s interest in entering further into that field.

⁵¹⁵ Blau 1964, 325.

⁵¹⁶ Mendelsohn and Mackenzie 2004, 43.

So far, the analysis of the Fund's resource situation has allowed to identify and explain the increasing reticence that has marked its proclivity to collaborate. Still, UNICEF's relational behavior has been also marked by its participation in diverse partnerships and inter-agency mechanisms. This tendency, which runs opposite to the reticence highlighted above, can be explained on three grounds. First, I have argued in chapter 2 that no organization is self-sufficient, and therefore all must interact with and are somehow affected by their environment. Accordingly, UNICEF could not completely buffer itself from the critical juncture faced by the UN in the 1990s – marked by 'donor fatigue', criticism and pressures for streamlining and reform. Adding to this is the fact that no case is an 'ideal type', and so, within its strength in all resource portfolios, UNICEF still reveals certain weaknesses. Hence, on the one hand, the Fund managed to evolve "from its difficult birth as an unwanted UN body to a successful, highly visible UN institution with extensive activities."⁵¹⁷ UNICEF's good reputation has served as a shield, allowing the Fund to evade the criticisms targeted at the UN more generally. On the other hand, UNICEF relies exclusively on voluntary contributions, a fact that renders it ever vulnerable to budget crises. Moreover, the Fund was by the 1990s a vast organization, with a large budget and staff, and with offices spread all over the world. Accordingly, UNICEF proved susceptible to the current donors' fatigue and could not completely ignore calls such as those for '0% budget growth'. Similarly, with a mandate that cuts across the spheres of influence of various UN agencies, UNICEF is in constant need to safeguard its saliency. The ever scarcer resources of recent times have brought the risk of exacerbating inter-agency competition over domains, thereby presenting the organization with the need to reinforce its visibility and authority. UNICEF responded to this context with a series of initiatives. In 1994, for instance, the Fund

⁵¹⁷ Beigbeder 2001, 19.

requested the consulting firm Booz Allen & Hamilton to conduct an external audit of the organization. It also performed staff cuts and further introduced new tools to enhance its monitoring and reporting mechanisms, while allocating more resources to increase appraisal activities.⁵¹⁸ Similarly in response to the resource crisis of the 1990s, UNICEF has maintained and improved its involvement in UN inter-agency mechanisms.

A second force encouraging the Fund's participation in partnerships emanates from its resource situation – it is the reverse from the logic inspiring its reticence. I have highlighted that my concern in this dissertation is mainly with the proclivity of the focal organization to collaborate, as opposed to the absolute number of ties linking it with other agencies. In this regard, it is the dilemma that partnerships present UNICEF, and its resultant reticence to collaborate, that have the most significance for my analysis. Still, this is only one aspect of the more multi-faceted relational situation of the Fund. I have pointed in previous chapters to the fact that partnerships involve several actors, and therefore the actual occurrence of an association will depend on the attitude towards collaboration revealed by all and each of the potential partners. As follows, for a given agency, the prospects for partnering depend both on its proclivity to associate and on its opportunity to do so, as determined by its attractiveness as a partner. In the case of UNICEF, the same affluence of assets that adds reticence to its approach to partnerships renders it a very attractive associate for other organizations. Given its strength in both symbolic and material capital, most other UN-IOs seek out for the Fund to be their partner in joint initiatives. They want their work to be associated with UNICEF's prestigious brand-name, and their projects to count with the field presence and local links the Fund can offer. In this vein, many UN agencies tend to mention UNICEF first among their allies. Hence, for instance, a

⁵¹⁸ See for instance: CEB 1999.

striking number of “representatives from other agencies ... point to UNICEF as their best or most important partner in humanitarian response.”⁵¹⁹ Being greatly solicited, the Fund has encountered a high level of opportunity for association – which in turn has altered its cost-benefit ratio for partnerships, rendering them less costly and more beneficial. This is so in that prestigious organizations such as the Fund “have the greatest number of opportunities to establish collaborative relations under terms that appeal to them.”⁵²⁰ The overall result has been that the Fund has participated in joint initiatives and inter-agency mechanisms, even when its individual approach to partnerships has been increasingly tinted with reluctance. The element of opportunity has here shaped the extent of UNICEF’s collaborations.

Thirdly and finally, the Fund’s participation in joint initiatives responds in part to the fact that it can derive legitimacy from the very act of collaborating. As the recent push for enhanced system-wide coherence testifies, partnerships constitute an ever more prized action in the UN institutional environment. Within this context, UN-IOs can improve their reputation and obtain legitimacy by engaging in such valued activity. This applies to all agencies, independently of their resource needs and capabilities. In this respect, it is noteworthy that UNICEF has channeled its most recent collaborative action through formal inter-agency mechanisms such as the UNDG. Institutionalized partnering is the most straightforward way to obtain recognition from the act of involvement itself, and beyond particular relations or associates. System-wide collaboration and coordination mechanisms, for instance, possess the legitimacy of being sponsored by the UN Secretariat. By being actively involved in them, UNICEF can capture such legitimacy. What is more, by engaging in collective initiatives the Fund can also show itself as a ‘good agency’, one

⁵¹⁹ Stoddard 2004, 27.

⁵²⁰ Stuart 1998, 676.

that participates in and that commits itself to group projects, thereby mitigating the negative perceptions and criticisms that its reticence to collaborate generates. In this manner, “[t]hrough its active involvement in both CCA and UNDAF processes, UNICEF was seen as a team player by other agencies and government partners.”⁵²¹ There are other benefits UNICEF can derive from taking part in collective initiatives. First, such participation translates into greater visibility and salience within the UN, which coupled with the Fund’s prestige can improve its overall position in the system. What is more, channeling its partnering through a formal structure, such as a committee where the organization can be the chair, allows UNICEF to lock-in its acquired leadership and standing, by crystallizing it both in a formal title – e.g. ‘Member of the Executive Committee’ – and in a system-wide established mechanism – e.g. the undg. For an IO such as UNICEF, with its high profile and prestige, solidifying its position in this way represents a convenient way to maintain and publicly reaffirm the power it has acquired throughout its history. Finally, for strong organizations such as UNICEF, the “interest in a venture is likely to stem from the fact that its superior bargaining position enables it to secure favorable contract terms.”⁵²² As a recent report by the Fund’s Evaluation Office observes: “[t]he COs [country offices] noted that UN Reform [a collective venture] permits UNICEF to exert more influence over the UN system in terms of the issues of importance to UNICEF ... programme priorities benefit from the wider exposure gained from UN collaboration.”⁵²³

Combined with the incentives towards teamwork described above, the strong resource situation of the Fund has presented it with the dilemma of partnering despite its reticence and while also safeguarding its individuality. UNICEF is caught between two positions, and has

⁵²¹ Mendelsohn and Mackenzie 2004, 69.

⁵²² Stuart 1998, 676.

⁵²³ Mendelsohn and Mackenzie 2004, 68-9.

thereby revealed a dual relational pattern: on the one hand, the Fund participates in joint initiatives and inter-agency mechanisms; on the other, the organization's *approach* has entailed reluctance towards collaboration.

OTHER APPROACHES TO UNICEF'S RELATIONAL BEHAVIOR

In my analysis of the World Bank, I suggested that the exceptionalism of this organization within the UN system would lead the two external factors' explanations presented in chapter 2 to see it as a 'least likely case' for cooperative behavior. Alternatively, UNICEF would presumably stand within such approaches as a 'most likely case'. According to one account, the Fund's actions will be shaped by the demands of states, as it is the case for IOs more generally. In what concerns inter-agency collaboration in the United Nations, states' preferences have materialized in the recent push towards greater system-wide coherence. On its part, UNICEF can be counted among the IOs more fully embedded in the UN machinery, with direct links to the General Assembly, ECOSOC and the Secretary General. This stands in sharp contrast to the situation of other members of the UN family, namely the specialized agencies and the international financial institutions, all of which count with a greater level of independence vis-à-vis the UN main administration. While having its own secretariat and budget, UNICEF's director is appointed by the UN Secretary General, and its Board reports directly to ECOSOC. In contrast to specialized agencies such as UNESCO and akin to other 'programs and funds' like UNFPA, UNICEF was created by a General Assembly Resolution and falls under its direct authority.⁵²⁴ Given the Fund's embeddedness in the UN system, the 'external demands'

⁵²⁴ UN General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Plenary Meeting, Resolution 57(I), 11 December 1946. Available from: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/1/ares1.htm>

argument would expect it to be most susceptible to the recent push for greater inter-agency collaboration, accordingly taking part in joint initiatives with other UN-IOs. Similarly, from an efficiency-based perspective, the Fund would stand as a most-likely case for partnering. UNICEF has a well established reputation as an effective, adaptable bureaucracy, as an organization that ‘gets things done’.⁵²⁵ In view of this, if teamwork is taken to constitute an efficient *modus operandi* for UN-IOs, then the Fund can be inferred to most readily establish collaborative links with other organizations in the system.

The main limitation of the alternative explanations presented above is that they only account for one of the two trends in UNICEF’s relational behavior. In particular, these accounts explain the Fund’s participation in inter-agency initiatives – identifiable from its early days and to some extent enhanced in recent years. Still, in considering only pro-collaboration factors, the described perspectives disregard the crucial element of reluctance embedded in UNICEF’s attitude vis-à-vis partnerships. For my analysis of IOs’ proclivity to associate, however, this latter facet of the Fund’s behavioral pattern results key – for it constitutes a defining characteristic of its *approach* to collaboration.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has analyzed UNICEF’s permeability to collaborative initiatives with other UN agencies. As I have described, the Fund appears to partner ‘in spite of itself’. On the one hand, it has participated throughout its history in inter-agency mechanisms and associations. On the other, its approach to partnerships has been increasingly marked by an element of *reticence*. This has materialized in the promotion by the Fund of its individuality and autonomy, within and

⁵²⁵ Mendelsohn and Mackenzie 2004, 43.

without joint ventures. If alternative explanations are taken to be valid, the reserve embedded in UNICEF's proclivity to cooperate with others results paradoxical and remains unexplained. In other words, if inter-IO associations constitute either a most effective *modus operandi* or the object of member states' demands, then why would an entrenched in the system, efficiency-oriented organization such as UNICEF still firmly advance its individuality? My resource-based analysis of the present case has offered an answer to this question.

The framework I here advance further permits to identify and account for the strategic intricacies of IO relational behavior. The element of reticence in the Fund's approach to partnerships with other UN agencies represents not only an expression of the predicted low proclivity of this organization to collaborate but it further uncovers the cost-benefit dilemmas IOs confront in associations. Akin to what I had described in the introduction for the UN system as a whole, the UNICEF case reveals a combination of both teamwork and independence-promotion. As depicted by a report: "UNICEF always works with partners including governments, NGOs, community groups and sister UN agencies, but it also sees itself as a competitor 'not only for financial resources but for the public's attention and trust' and must position itself as 'an indispensable headquarters organization, acting with and on behalf of children'."⁵²⁶ Indeed, centrifugal and centripetal tendencies, conflict and cooperation, all cohabit within inter-organizational associations and IOs' relational behavior. In the instance given by the Fund, the reticence factor is most evident and constitutes a defining characteristic of its approach to partnerships – the focus of my analysis. While collaborating may offer UNICEF many benefits – such as the legitimacy derived from the act itself – it still confronts the Fund with the risk of being lost in the crowd of UN-IOs and of thereby losing the strength attached to its

⁵²⁶ Mendelsohn and Mackenzie 2004, 23.

individuality. Only by looking at the organization's resources and by recognizing the power of its 'brand name' can such strategic dilemma be grasped and understood.

Beyond the particular instance of UNICEF, the analysis presented in this chapter offers key insights to the broader study of inter-IO relations in the UN system. First, the resource-based account of the Fund's reticence towards partnerships and its reaffirmation of individuality can be generalized to explain the centrifugal tendencies that surface in the UN family – namely, the ubiquitous struggle for autonomy by its constituent parts. Second, despite its strength along all resource portfolios, much of UNICEF's power, as well as its reticence, emanate from the value of its symbolic assets – namely, popularity and prestige. As follows, this case has served to illustrate the significance and impact of the often neglected *intangible* capital of organizations.

CHAPTER 6

FALLING IN DISGRACE: UNESCO

INTRODUCTION

UNESCO – the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – has experienced a hectic life. In its first years of existence, it was submerged in the search for a clear definition of its purpose and in trying to balance both ideal and tangible functions. As an intellectual forum, UNESCO faced the constant challenge of discrepancy among its Member States. As a reconstruction agency, it was soon ousted by bilateral policies like the Marshal Plan. Subsequently, in the 1960s, UNESCO turned its focus to education and ‘went operational’, expanding its activities and immersing itself into the broader UN development framework. In the 1970s, it was home to NIEO-related debates and was permeated by controversy. In the 1980s, it had to face severe criticisms and the withdrawal of one of its most influential Member States – the United States. By the 1990s, UNESCO was struggling to recover from a damaged reputation and financial constrains, while trying to cover a plurality of issue areas, both at the intellectual and operational level. UNESCO’s relational behavior followed a historically similar undulating pattern. After an initial period of indetermination there was a phase of increased partnerships in the sixties. This was followed by a downward period and then by a second wave of strengthened collaboration with other UN organizations from the late eighties on. In each of the collaborative intervals, UNESCO had a series of preferred partners: funding organizations like the World Bank, UNDP and UNICEF for the first; an expanded base with assorted organizations (including for instance UNFPA and UNEP) for the second.

What explains UNESCO's undulating pattern of relational behavior throughout its history? Which factors account for its choice of partners in each collaborative phase? In the paragraphs that follow, I will analyze the UNESCO case under the light of the resource-based argument presented in chapter 2. I will show how changes in the situation of the organization both in terms of material and symbolic capital prompted diverse levels of propensity to collaborate at different points in time. In its early years, the symbolic assets of UNESCO were strong: both its reputation and its salience in issue-areas like education were high. The Agency, however, was weak regarding material resources: it was short on funds and increasingly reliant on voluntary, more volatile, contributions. These strengths and weaknesses prompted and shaped, as the resource-based model would suggest, the first wave of increased collaboration by UNESCO – when the organization sought financial support. In more recent years, the Agency's resource situation became more precarious. After facing a political crisis that reached its peak with the U.S. departure, UNESCO's financial fragility and vulnerability were exacerbated, while its reputation was also damaged and its salience diminished. This even weaker position contributed and affected the second wave of strengthened cooperation – more widespread than the first. In both instances, the organization's situation in terms of material and symbolic capital also helps explain its choice of partners: financing organizations like the World Bank in the early interval; a variety of organizations in multiparty initiatives like Education for All in the more recent period.

The structure of the chapter is as follows: the first section offers a longitudinal description of the evolution of UNESCO's relational behavior. Subsequent sections analyze in more detail the two main episodes that coincided with an enhancement of cooperation, further

examining the resource situation of UNESCO in each case and its impact on the Agency's propensity to collaborate. This is followed by a discussion that focuses on UNESCO's choice of partners. Subsequently, a consideration and assessment of alternative explanations is introduced. The chapter ends with a brief conclusion.

UPS AND DOWNS OF COLLABORATION IN UNESCO'S HISTORY

The seeds for an international organization like UNESCO were planted in 1942, when Great Britain hosted a Conference of Allied Ministers of Education (CAME), with the practical purpose of discussing such issues as “the needs [allied] countries would have after the war when time came for rebuilding their education systems.”⁵²⁷ From CAME emerged the proposal of convening a United Nations Conference for the establishment of an ‘educational and cultural organization’, held in 1945 also in the UK. Towards the end of that year, the name and a draft constitution were adopted.⁵²⁸ By December of 1946, the first session of UNESCO's General Conference was being held in Paris.⁵²⁹

Similarly to other UN organizations like ILO, UNESCO had emerged in a separate time and place from the United Nations, and was brought into relationship with the latter by means of an agreement⁵³⁰ – as contemplated in articles 57 and 63 of the UN Charter.⁵³¹ More particularly,

⁵²⁷ M'Bow 1985, 12.

⁵²⁸ Imber 1989, 99.

⁵²⁹ UNESCO's constitution was signed on November 1945 and came into force one year later, after ratification by 20 countries. See: <http://www.unesco.org>

⁵³⁰ The relationship agreement between the UN and UNESCO [A/77] was approved by the General Assembly Resolution 50(1) in September 1946 and came into effect by mid-December of that same year. Together with ILO and FAO, UNESCO was one of the first organizations to sign such an agreement and become thereby formally incorporated into the UN. Of the other cases here analyzed, both UNICEF and WFP were directly created within the UN machinery and the World Bank (IBRD) signed its association agreement with the UN a year later, in 1947 (an accord which was much more generous in terms of the independence granted to the Bank).

UNESCO was incorporated to the UN family as a ‘specialized agency’, which meant that, while being formally incorporated into the ‘system’, it would maintain a degree of independence as a sovereign body, responsible primarily to its own member states.⁵³² In negotiating their association with the UN, “most bargainers for the specialized agencies were insisting, with evident success ... [on] institutional self-determination.”⁵³³ This set organizations such as UNESCO apart from other UN bodies like the ‘programs and funds’ (e.g. UNICEF or WFP), created by and formally experiencing greater subordination to the UN main administration.⁵³⁴ This ambiguity of ‘autonomous attachment’ would find direct reflection in UNESCO’s initial relations and collaboration patterns with the UN proper, as well as in those with other units in the system. As early as the UNESCO preparatory conference of 1945, participants “favored budgetary coordination with other UN organizational units, yet they also wanted their agency to ‘enjoy a large measure of autonomy’.”⁵³⁵ Correspondingly, Article X of UNESCO’s constitution both prescribes an association with the United Nations while also emphasizing the need for such an accord to recognize the agency’s independence.⁵³⁶ In terms of collaboration with other international agencies, the founding document goes only as far as suggesting that UNESCO ‘may’ cooperate with other specialized intergovernmental bodies whose interests and activities are related to organization’s purposes.⁵³⁷

⁵³¹ See the UN Charter (at: <http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/>). The mentioned articles were intended to link all the ‘specialized agencies’ to the UN.

⁵³² Jones 1988, 114.

⁵³³ Sewell 1975, 133-4.

⁵³⁴ As an illustration of this greater subordination of the ‘programs and funds’ to the UN, the Secretary General designates the head of such organizations, while those of the specialized agencies are elected by their own governing bodies.

⁵³⁵ Sewell 1975, 76.

⁵³⁶ UNESCO Constitution, article X – the text of which can be found at: <http://www.unesco.org>

⁵³⁷ See: Article XI of UNESCO’s Constitution, entitled ‘Relations with other specialized international organizations and agencies’ (at: <http://www.unesco.org>)

During its first decade of work, UNESCO's relations with the rest of the UN family were rather vague. This was not only due to its formal autonomy as a specialized agency. While covering functional areas of interest, such as education and culture, UNESCO's main purposes and functions – as crystallized in its constitution⁵³⁸ – were of an intangible character, being conceived as a forum for intellectual cooperation and the exchange of knowledge, and aimed at “the promotion of peace at the level of intellect and conscience.”⁵³⁹ In its founding years, the surfacing of seemingly intrinsic ills such as the tension between these diverse intended functions – philosophical and functional – engaged UNESCO in the search to more clearly delineate its purpose, philosophy and the content and direction of its program.⁵⁴⁰ Submerged in and shadowed by this ‘self-definition’ effort, relations with other organizations fell into a similar state of ambiguity and indetermination. On the one hand, according to Julian Huxley, UNESCO's first Director General, “the organization's relationship with other elements in the United Nations system were of considerable importance, not least because many of UNESCO's interests were to be shared with other specialized agencies.”⁵⁴¹ He further suggested, in 1947, the need for UNESCO to “establish a proper liaison, with clear delimitation of functions, between itself and the FAO and the World Health Organization.”⁵⁴² A formal cooperation agreement was signed with each of these organizations the next year.⁵⁴³ On the other hand, by the end of Huxley's term, “links with the rest of the UN system were also largely undefined, particularly with the

⁵³⁸ See UNESCO's constitution, article I (available from: <http://www.unesco.org>)

⁵³⁹ Wells 1987, 45.

⁵⁴⁰ See for instance Jones 1988 (ch. 1) and Sewell 1975 (ch. 3). For a more concrete expression of this attempt to define the ‘purpose and philosophy’ of UNESCO in its early years, see the essay written by its first Director General, Julian Huxley, on the subject (Huxley 1947).

⁵⁴¹ Jones 1988, 31.

⁵⁴² Huxley 1947, 27.

⁵⁴³ See the ‘United Nations System’ category in the ‘Communities’ section of UNESCO's official website (<http://www.unesco.org>).

Economic and Social Council.”⁵⁴⁴ The evidence of inter-organizational collaboration for UNESCO’s first decade is limited to very few mentions of explicit teamwork with particular organizations (an example being its cooperation in the 1950s with the UNKRA – the UN Korean Relief Agency)⁵⁴⁵ and to broad statements by its General Conference ‘instructing’ the Director General of UNESCO to collaborate with ‘appropriate’ organs of the UN and specialized agencies to ensure that attention was paid during reconstruction efforts to its issue-areas of concern (education, science and culture).⁵⁴⁶

Until 1950, “the UN (and the ECOSOC in particular) had enjoyed only a marginal impact on UNESCO; the boundaries between the various agencies in the system did not take long to become rigid, buttressed by rivalries and inadequate mechanisms for active co-operation.”⁵⁴⁷ The subsequent period saw an enhancement of UNESCO’s collaboration with its sister UN agencies. This ‘first wave’ of closer links coincided with UNESCO’s re-orientation of its field of priority, from intellectual cooperation to development operations. Indeed, the “shift of program emphasis to the developing world was seen ... throughout much of the UN system.”⁵⁴⁸ The 1950s and 1960s witnessed a general spreading out of development-oriented operational activities. In 1949 the United Nations Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance was set up, seconded in 1959 by the UN Special Fund – the two to be later merged in 1965 into the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). By 1961, two UN General Assembly resolutions – A/1710

⁵⁴⁴ Jones 1988, 37.

⁵⁴⁵ Mentioned, for example, in the records of the UNESCO General Conference, seventh and eighth Sessions (1952 and 1954 respectively), as well as in different Executive Board resolutions and decisions throughout the 1950s. The texts of these documents are available from: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/ulis/index.shtml>

⁵⁴⁶ See the records of the UNESCO General Conference and resolutions for the pertinent period (available from: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/ulis/dec_res.html)

⁵⁴⁷ Jones 1988, 117.

⁵⁴⁸ Jones, 1988, 40.

(XVI) and A/1715 (XVI) – were declaring the period 1960-70 as the ‘First UN Development Decade’.

The corollary to this growing focus on development and operational assistance was twofold: on the one hand, agencies such as the World Bank and UNICEF started to show interest in one of UNESCO’s major fields: education.⁵⁴⁹ On the other, “for its own institutional reasons, UNESCO was quick to claim, argue for and demonstrate its technical relevance and capacity.”⁵⁵⁰ Hence, for instance, UNESCO contributed to the education section of a Survey on the Needs of Children that UNICEF commissioned in 1960, and “the UNICEF Executive Board then agreed to extend the agency’s assistance to elementary, agricultural education and vocational training.”⁵⁵¹ A framework of collaboration with UNICEF was outlined in 1961 by which UNESCO would provide technical advice and evaluations to education projects financed by the Fund.⁵⁵² In 1972, the initiative was taken to formalize the relationship through the institution of a UNESCO-UNICEF Co-operative Programme.⁵⁵³ The year after the creation of UNDP, in 1966, the General Conference of UNESCO resolved that the organization “should cooperate in cultural restoration for development with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and with other agencies financing economic development.”⁵⁵⁴ The same year, UNESCO and ILO jointly convened a Special Intergovernmental Conference on the Status of Teachers and prepared draft

⁵⁴⁹ The World Bank ‘entered’ into the education field in 1962. UNICEF’s mandate did not include education, and the organization was initially concerned mainly with the provision of information for health and nutrition. Its interests then progressively expanded to include several aspects of the education theme (see Beigbender 2001, 101-102).

⁵⁵⁰ Jones 1988, 115.

⁵⁵¹ Beigbender 2001, 102.

⁵⁵² M’Bow, 1985, 183.

⁵⁵³ Gurugé 1983, 463.

⁵⁵⁴ Sewell 1975, 256.

recommendations concerning teaching personnel.⁵⁵⁵ In the field of education, one of the largest programmes involved the cooperation of UNESCO with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNWRA), a relationship which “began in 1950 and became the subject of an agreement in 1967.”⁵⁵⁶ It was also in the early 1960s that the first instance of collaboration in education between the World Bank (IBRD) and UNESCO took place, when both “shared a leading role in the establishment of the International Institute of Educational Planning (IIEP) in Paris ... [and] agreed to provide one fifth of the proposed IIEP annual budget of \$500,000, with an initial Bank commitment for three years.”⁵⁵⁷ Since its launching in 1962, “[m]uch of the Bank’s early sector work in education was conducted through its cooperative arrangement with UNESCO.”⁵⁵⁸ The two organizations outlined a Co-operative Programme in 1962.⁵⁵⁹ An agreement was then signed in 1964, which “made general provision for the Bank and UNESCO to work together at most points of the project cycle.”⁵⁶⁰ UNESCO also cooperated in this period with other agencies, like the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) on radio receivers,⁵⁶¹ and with WFP on school meals.⁵⁶²

Overall, then, the 1950s and 1960s saw UNESCO become “more closely integrated with the rest of the UN’s development efforts.”⁵⁶³ This panorama of growing collaboration was followed by one of ‘mixed experiences’ in the 1970s. After the World Bank’s restructuring in 1972, “[a]n immediate casualty was the dynamism of the UNESCO-Bank arrangements ... the

⁵⁵⁵ See: Sewell 1975, 225. The text of the recommendations can be found at the UNESCO web site (www.unesco.org).

⁵⁵⁶ M’Bow 1985, 57.

⁵⁵⁷ Jones 1992, extracted from pages 47 and 44 respectively.

⁵⁵⁸ Jones 1992, 63.

⁵⁵⁹ M’Bow 1985, 183.

⁵⁶⁰ Jones 1992, 72.

⁵⁶¹ See Sewell 1975, 258.

⁵⁶² M’Bow 1985, 183.

⁵⁶³ Jones 1988, 109.

new arrangements for Bank projects, combined with the looming and politically disastrous M'Bow period in UNESCO (1974-1987), saw a rapid decline in the utility of the Bank looking exclusively to UNESCO for educational expertise.”⁵⁶⁴ Similarly, by the early seventies “[t]here was no longer a uniform approach in UNICEF to utilizing UNESCO expertise in education. UNESCO, too, lost most of its field posts ... UNESCO-UNICEF cooperation, developed over a period of fifteen years, was at a low ebb.”⁵⁶⁵ The relationship with UNDP had also reached a low point in the late 1960s, at a time when UNDP was undergoing an evaluation of its activities and when, “[w]ithin only two years of the establishment of the UNDP, (...) there occurred a marked and steady decline in the number of projects financed by the UNDP and entrusted to UNESCO for execution.”⁵⁶⁶ Alternatively, the balance by the end of the 1970s counted “projects funded by UNDP to a total of ... two-and-a-half times the amount of the preceding decade.”⁵⁶⁷ Cooperation for development was also strengthened during this period thanks to links established with new programmes such as the UN Population Fund (UNFPA).⁵⁶⁸

As a background to this developments, UNESCO's situation changed significantly in 1974, when a series of events converged to precipitate a political crisis that would be felt in the organization for years: a controversial Director General – Mahtar M'Bow of Senegal – was elected; the UNESCO General Conference passed a series of contentious resolutions on Israel; the debate on a New International Economic Order (NIEO) entered the UN and acquired particular prominence in UNESCO's governing bodies, seconded later by a heated debate over

⁵⁶⁴ Jones 1992, 110. The ‘M'Bow period’ refers to the term in which Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow of Senegal was the Director General of the organization. His time in office witnessed the emergence of the NIEO debate and the politicization crisis in UNESCO.

⁵⁶⁵ Gurugé 1983, 464

⁵⁶⁶ Jones 1988, 123.

⁵⁶⁷ M'Bow 1985, 184.

⁵⁶⁸ M'Bow 1985, 184. UNFPA began its operations in 1969. More information about UNFPA can be found at the organization's official web site: <http://www.unfpa.org>.

communications and the ‘free flow of information’. The precarious position that these events brought about for UNESCO would reach its apex in December of 1984, when the United States implemented its decision to formally withdraw from the Organization.⁵⁶⁹ Hence, while some weakening of relations was perceptible from the early 1970s, UNESCO’s links with other agencies of the UN became more markedly diluted throughout the ‘crisis years’.

The parting came from both sides of the collaboration link. On the one hand, UNESCO itself – submerged in the storm and not yet perceiving its sequels – showed some reticence to embark in collaborative enterprises: “in 1982, Grant [UNICEF’s Director General at the time] made a determined but vain attempt to persuade UNESCO to collaborate on a major initiative to promote ‘primary education for all’ ... Cooperation improved with a change of leadership in UNESCO [at the end of the 1980s].”⁵⁷⁰ On the other hand, reliance and resources from other agencies also faded: “[w]ith the political crisis that had engulfed UNESCO by the late 1970s, no one in the Bank was prepared to defend UNESCO – either in general terms as the lead UN agency in education, or more specifically in terms of continuing with the formal cooperation agreement, which was formally abandoned in 1986 but had lapsed for most practical purposes well before.”⁵⁷¹ More generally, with its reorganization in 1987 and within the broader context of economic crisis and recession throughout the 1980s, the Bank’s lending in education was reduced.⁵⁷² The first half of the eighties also showed a new decline in funding from UNDP.⁵⁷³

A second wave of improved collaboration came once the peak of the UNESCO crisis had been reached – with the United States’ withdrawal in 1985 – and its impact started to be felt.

⁵⁶⁹ On the U.S. withdrawal from UNESCO see for instance: Imber 1989; Preston, Herman and Schiller 1989.

⁵⁷⁰ Beigbeder 2001, 103.

⁵⁷¹ Jones 1992, 74.

⁵⁷² Jones 1992, 243 and 261.

⁵⁷³ M’Bow 1985, 185.

Table 6.1 below shows the current membership of UNESCO in different UN inter-agency mechanisms. Most of the initiatives and bodies listed got underway in the last decade and in at least one fourth of the cases UNESCO appears as the lead or chair.

Table 6.1: UNESCO's Membership in UN Inter-Agency Mechanisms

Inter-Agency Mechanism	Role
Chief Executive Board (CEB) and its High-Level Committees on Programmes and Management (HLCP and HLCM)	Member
UN Development Group and subsidiary bodies	Member
UN Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Task Force	Member
UN Evaluation Group (UNEG)	Member
UN Communications Group (UNCG)	Member
UN Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE)	Member
UN-Water	Member
UN-Energy	Member
UN-Oceans	Member
Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)	Member
EDUCAIDS: The Global Initiative on Education and HIV/AIDS	Lead/Chair
Inter-Agency Steering Committee (IASC - humanitarian assistance)	Observer
High-Level Group and Working Group on Education for All	Lead/Chair
World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP)	Lead/Chair
Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS)	Co-Sponsor
UNDG Multi Donor Trust Fund for Iraq	Member
Interagency Consultative Group on Secondary Education Reform & Youth Affairs	Lead/Chair
Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)	Co-Sponsor
Focusing Resources on Effective School Health (FRESH)	Co-Sponsor
Joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel (CEART)	Lead/Chair
UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge	Lead/Chair

Source: Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on UN System-Wide Coherence, 'Basic Information on United Nations System Organizations' (see References for complete citation)

The 1990s and the early years of the millennium have seen UNESCO participate and even take a lead in several inter-agency initiatives. Against the 1982 experience, when UNESCO declined a joint scheme with UNICEF on ‘primary education for all’, the two organizations set up in 1989 a Joint Committee on Education to promote their mutual collaboration.⁵⁷⁴ This rapprochement was supplemented by an agreement in 1991, in turn renewed in 1999.⁵⁷⁵ In 1990, UNESCO joined UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank in convening the World Conference on Education, the sequel of which was the launching of an inter-organizational initiative on Education for All (EFA).⁵⁷⁶ In the attempt to maintain and strengthen its cooperation with WFP, UNESCO signed with the Programme a draft agreement on Education for All in 2002.⁵⁷⁷ UNESCO has also reinforced its cooperation with other UN agencies by joining system-wide mechanisms like the United Nations Development Group (UNDG).⁵⁷⁸ In this more recent wave of collaboration, UNESCO has not only tended to opt for more formalized or institutionalized associations – such as the Joint Committee with UNICEF – but has also involved itself with more multilateral rather than bilateral mechanisms – like in the case of EFA.

EXPLAINING UNESCO’S RELATIONAL BEHAVIOR

As shown in the above description, relational behavior throughout UNESCO’s history appears with an undulating pattern. From the initial vale of a still undefined approach to collaboration, UNESCO experienced a first upsurge of interactions in the emerging development

⁵⁷⁴ Beigbeder 2001, 103.

⁵⁷⁵ See: UNESCO 2002a.

⁵⁷⁶ See Conil-Lacoste 1994, 317. For more information on the World Conference on Education and the EFA initiative see: www.unesco.org/education/efa/

⁵⁷⁷ UNESCO 2002b, 8.

⁵⁷⁸ UNESCO became a member of UNDG in 2001. For more information on the UN Development Group see: <http://www.undg.org>

framework of the sixties. A downturn came then from the mid 1970s until the end of the 1980s, at a time when the organization was also undergoing an internal crisis. A second ‘wave’ of increased collaboration succeeded the downward period: relationships from 1989 on were recovered and strengthened through their formalization in inter-agency mechanisms. The two main increases in the cooperative inclination of UNESCO coincided historically with two significant events in the history of the organization: first, with its shift of focus to development-oriented operational activities; and second, with the crisis that culminated in one of its most powerful members – the United States – leaving the Agency. In chapter 2, I have introduced a resource-based explanation of IOs’ relational behavior. I will now employ that argument to explain UNESCO’s case. For that purpose, in the sections that follow, I will describe in more detail the two high-cooperation phases in UNESCO’s history identified above. I will further explain in each case how the capital of UNESCO – both material and symbolic – was affected by the developments of the given period. Finally, I will show how the changes perceived in the relational behavior of UNESCO around these two defining moments can be largely explained by the variation in its resource situation, and the needs and possibilities thereby created for the organization.

FIRST PHASE – GOING OPERATIONAL AND THE SEARCH FOR MATERIAL CAPITAL (1960s)

UNESCO had been brought into life for two diverse purposes: on the one hand, to assist with post-war reconstruction of Europe in the education sector; and on the other, to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and information as a way to prevent future wars through understanding. Soon after its establishment in 1946, UNESCO lost the first of these two integral functions, as

the United States opted for bilateral means of assistance to post-war reconstruction efforts in Europe – namely, the Marshal Plan.⁵⁷⁹ Yet the attribution of functional sectors – education, science, culture – remained, thus facing the Agency with the need to balance the vestiges of a more practical orientation and the ideal purposes of intellectual cooperation. Accordingly, the first years of UNESCO saw the emergence of different views on and the search to define the organization’s proper field of priority.⁵⁸⁰

The inclination of this balance towards the operational side started to surface as soon as the early 1950s, with the arrival of “a new Director General committed to development assistance and to strengthening UNESCO’s links with the broad UN development effort.”⁵⁸¹ This tendency meant the highlighting of UNESCO’s technical tasks and an estrangement from its initial philosophical orientation. By the mid-1950s “steadily increasing shares of agency resources were devoted to operative projects in the developing world; competing all the more critically with attention to [its] original norm-creation tasks.”⁵⁸² At the same time its programs, “like those of other United Nations units, have expanded and shifted, becoming more field-oriented and more closely attuned to other agencies development-financing initiatives.”⁵⁸³ The ‘operational’ work of UNESCO, however, “effectively came into being about 1960.”⁵⁸⁴ It was then that the organization set its course more firmly towards development aid, especially in the field of education. And furthermore, “when UNESCO did ultimately adopt operational assistance as a normal and indeed main method of work, this was due much more to the fact that it was a

⁵⁷⁹ Jones 1988, 261.

⁵⁸⁰ See for instance Sewell 1975, 196 and 219.

⁵⁸¹ Jones 1988, 38.

⁵⁸² Bergesen and Lunde 1999, 46. To be noted, the authors make this point for the ‘big four’ specialized agencies (UNESCO, ILO, FAO and WHO).

⁵⁸³ Sewell 1975, 27.

⁵⁸⁴ Hoggart 1978, 31.

member of the United Nations family than to its own exclusive initiative.”⁵⁸⁵ Two main trends in the UN appear as linked to the re-orientation of UNESCO’s activities. First, the advance of decolonization brought a significant and rapid increase in the agency’s membership: from less than 30 Member States in 1946, the agency was counting more than 100 by the mid-sixties, and “[t]he year 1960 alone brought seventeen UNESCO memberships from Africa.”⁵⁸⁶ Together with this enlargement of the organization’s governing body came demands for assistance to the newly independent countries, which “rendered urgent not only a fresh development impulse in UNESCO’s work, but also a rethinking of the entire UN development assistance effort.”⁵⁸⁷ The latter represents the second trend that surrounded UNESCO’s shift towards operational activities. In 1960, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution declaring education as an important factor for economic development. Of relevance for my analysis here, this recognition “was to justify the increase in resources devoted to education by the various programmes and funding sources.”⁵⁸⁸ The same year, the General Conference of UNESCO declared the sector of education to be the organization’s foremost concern.⁵⁸⁹ Hence, as a corollary to the above and through several mechanisms, funds began to come forward. Already in the early fifties “[t]he Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance (EPTA) had an impact upon UNESCO unlike that of any UN directive before it.”⁵⁹⁰ UNESCO flourished under it. By the end of the decade,

⁵⁸⁵ The statement is from UNESCO’s Director General Maheu (1962-74), cited in Sewell 1975, 190 and Jones 1988, 117.

⁵⁸⁶ Sewell 1975, 200.

⁵⁸⁷ Jones 1988, 89.

⁵⁸⁸ M’Bow 1985, 24.

⁵⁸⁹ Sewell 1975, 219.

⁵⁹⁰ Sewell 1975, 189.

“UNESCO was ready to intensify operational activities, for which the means were beginning to become available with the creation in 1959 of the United Nations Special Fund.”⁵⁹¹

With these developments as a background, UNESCO’s resource situation changed. And, in line with the altered portfolio of strengths and needs in terms of both symbolic and material capital, UNESCO’s relational behavior was also transformed. First, changes can be perceived in the vulnerability level of the Agency’s finances. Incorporated into the UN family as a specialized agency, UNESCO’s regular budget is centered on *assessed* contributions from Member states, along the lines of the broader system in place for the UN proper. Contrary to *voluntary* contributions, such as those sustaining WFP or UNICEF, the assessed contributions received by the specialized agencies like UNESCO cannot be earmarked and the failure of a Member State to duly provide their assigned payment could result in sanctions such as the loss of its voting rights within the agency in question. Given the character of assessed contributions, having a regular budget based on them implies a certain level of security in terms of accessing essential funds. Adding to this financial security was the fact that “UNESCO was clearly not designed as a multilateral agency concerned with substantive funding of activities undertaken in Member States. The envisaged budgetary limits could only permit UNESCO to guide, encourage and assist in activities financed by home governments themselves or through other international arrangements.”⁵⁹² As long as tasks were limited to things like ‘intellectual cooperation’, the ‘diffusion of knowledge’ or ‘advice to governments on educational matters’, a small budget would suffice. The panorama, however, changed significantly with UNESCO’s reorientation towards development operations and the associated expansion of its activities. In UNESCO’s

⁵⁹¹ M’Bow 1985, 23.

⁵⁹² Jones 1988, 20.

budget structure, the balance between assessed and voluntary contributions was altered, with the latter assuming a growing role.⁵⁹³ This implied a higher level of vulnerability given the more volatile character of voluntary funding. In terms of the actual financial resources, two parallel developments were taking place. On the one hand, with the increase in demands for development assistance and the concomitant expansion of UNESCO's tasks, the agency's resource needs increased. Within this context, its small regular budget turned the organization into a *poor* one – thirsty for extra-budgetary, external resources to finance its growing field undertakings. Illustrating this trend, extra-budgetary funds were absent from the budget in the 1950s, the annual figure for 1960 amounted to \$4.5 million, and that of 1970 to \$37 million.⁵⁹⁴ On the other hand, UNESCO's involvement in development operations meant for the agency access to the mushrooming funding available for such activities from various organizational sources. What is more, the re-orientation of the agency's work can be adjudicated to the attractiveness of outside financing: "UNESCO's commencing anew was more visibly affected by several intergovernmental organizations financing economic development."⁵⁹⁵ This was so in the sense that "the prospects of significant amounts of additional funding for directly operational activity proved irresistible."⁵⁹⁶ Hence, by going operational, UNESCO cultivated a variety of financial assets: for instance, "[t]he leaders of UNICEF, ... who had devoted their agency originally to alleviating hunger and disease, in 1960 began a small-scale educational program in conjunction with UNESCO ... the World Food Programme ... offered collaborative possibilities for

⁵⁹³ Imber 1989, 123.

⁵⁹⁴ As reported in the document 'Regular Budget and Extra-budgetary Funds' available from UNESCO's web site at: http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=6381&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

⁵⁹⁵ Sewell 1975, 202.

⁵⁹⁶ Jones 1988, 115.

UNESCO beginning in 1963.”⁵⁹⁷ External funding with a strong emphasis on development and on education bloomed throughout the sixties; and “[w]ith the UN Special Fund (1959), the World Bank’s IDA (1961) and the UNICEF decision to support education, UNESCO greatly enlarged its funding and functioning in education for development.”⁵⁹⁸ By 1967, “almost half the total UNESCO budget was funded from external sources.”⁵⁹⁹ At the time, moreover, the mandated ‘financer for development’ in the UN – UNDP – was among the agency’s main partners and contributors.⁶⁰⁰ It was only natural then, that ‘development’ would become a “sacred cause in UNESCO.”⁶⁰¹

As explained, UNESCO’s portfolio of material resources had undergone two main changes. First, the level of vulnerability in the access to funds increased, when the balance was tilt from guaranteed – assessed – contributions to more volatile – voluntary – ones. Second, while the growth of more resource-intensive tasks – field operations – raised the need for greater funds, the financing available to UNESCO from organizations ever more concerned with development grew as well. In turn, these changes in the material resources’ situation of UNESCO had two effects: on the one hand, they offered an *incentive* for the agency to enhance its relations with other UN organizations, in particular those involved in development financing. In reality, the fact that the source of funding for development-oriented operations was to be found in UN organizations like UNDP or UNICEF made UNESCO’s turn to field activities to largely overlap with inter-organizational cooperation. That is, whenever UNESCO participated in operations as

⁵⁹⁷ Sewell 1975, 203.

⁵⁹⁸ Preston, Herman and Schiller 1989, 97.

⁵⁹⁹ Sewell 1973, 145.

⁶⁰⁰ Initially as disaggregated in EPTA and the UN Special Fund. See the document ‘Regular Budget and Extra-budgetary Funds’ available from UNESCO’s web site at:

http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=6381&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

⁶⁰¹ Sewell 1973, 145.

the technical arm of a funding UN agency, it would be collaborating with the organization in question. Hence, the growth in UNESCO's involvement in development can be equally considered a growth in its proclivity to cooperate with others. Similarly, the argument stating that it was the prospects of accessing funding that drove UNESCO to emphasize operational tasks can be also extended to its cooperative behavior – namely, it was in the search for increased resources that UNESCO approached other UN organizations and became more integrated with the system, particularly with the development enterprise. On the other hand, as soon as the focus was placed on the field, the *need* was also created for UNESCO to maintain a greater inflow of funds. Hence, collaboration with funding agencies in turn spurred a higher need for cooperation.

If the changed situation regarding UNESCO's material resources generated the need and the incentive for the organization to increase its cooperation with the UN system, its situation in terms of symbolic capital added to the necessity and created also the *opportunity* for collaborative behavior. Following the functional logic that marked the creation of different international organizations at the time, UNESCO had been formally assigned at birth a series of 'sectors' of practice – among them education and culture. Throughout its first decade of work, and so long as there was no significant overlap with other agencies, UNESCO was able to uphold such status conferred to it as the 'lead agency' – by mandate and expertise – in those fields. Alternatively, the organization's initial ambivalence as to its 'direction' – between intellectual and operational activities – maintained its salience at a modest level. This changed with the advent of the development assistance in general and UNESCO's operational turn in particular. On the one hand, by submerging itself in field activities, the organization developed its technical capacities – rather than the intellectual component of its mission – and thus increased its prestige

in functional tasks. On the other, both the surfacing of sectors like education as key pieces in the development enterprise and the growing involvement of UNESCO in field operations had the effect of improving the salience of the agency within the UN system. With a developed reputation and a highlighted presence in increasingly relevant issue-areas, UNESCO became an attractive partner and one with control over a coveted ‘turf’, and thus the opportunity appeared for it to strengthen its cooperation with concerned organizations. At the same time, this symbolic capital situation also created the need for UNESCO to strengthen its links with the UN. Once the multifaceted activity niche given by ‘development’ opened up, “[m]any different UN bodies were developing implementation capacities in response to the funding made available through EPTA/SF/UNDP and other channels.”⁶⁰² This led, in turn, “to intensified opportunism, empire-building and competitiveness among the various UN agencies seeking dominance through their quests for status, influence and prestige.”⁶⁰³ Within this context, UNESCO – just like other contending organizations – “had to make haste to demonstrate its pertinence in the emerging arrangements for multilateral development assistance.”⁶⁰⁴ From the moment, in 1960, when *education* – a functional field formally assigned to UNESCO – was incorporated into the development framework, it became imperative for the Agency to demarcate its territory and secure its presence in educational activities. As an analysis of the organization states: the “Secretariat has always been obsessed with the need to appear to be at the forefront of trends within the UN system. The institutional strength of the organization, it has been argued, has depended on it. For as soon as UNESCO’s relevance and competence in a given field is seen to

⁶⁰² Bergesen and Lunde 1999, 48.

⁶⁰³ Jones 1988, 89.

⁶⁰⁴ Jones 1988, 101.

diminish, so too does its status, influence and share of UN finance for development.”⁶⁰⁵ Moreover, as I have mentioned, during the sixties other UN agencies like UNICEF and the World Bank started to show interest in education, and to include the sector in their practice.⁶⁰⁶ These moves presented UNESCO both with risks – in terms of losing salience and power over its ‘turf’ – and with opportunities – being able to offer its expertise in exchange for funding. Adding to the latter point, the involvement of UNESCO in development operations revealed many concerns that UNESCO shared with the rest of the UN system, and made other agencies acquire importance for its work. At the time of its turn towards operational activities in the 1960s, UNESCO was unquestionably the ‘lead’ UN agency in education – with established expertise and authority, and a prestigious reputation – “[y]et it was a financially poor organization, hugely dependent on external funding for anything beyond the intellectual.”⁶⁰⁷ Within this context, UNESCO’s symbolic capital – its prestige and salience in education – enhanced the agency’s opportunity to collaborate by making it an attractive partner. Hence, when the World Bank, for instance, went into the education sector, its financing had to “take into account – and accept – UNESCO’s status as the UN ‘lead agency’ in education In 1960, UNESCO’s reputation was sound.”⁶⁰⁸ The links that UNESCO established during this period were based on its expertise and status: agencies like UNICEF and the World Bank, while entering the field of education, were doing so initially mostly as donors, allowing UNESCO to assume the role of ‘technical arm’ in joint operations.

⁶⁰⁵ Jones 1988, 266.

⁶⁰⁶ See for instance: Sewell 1975, 203-4.

⁶⁰⁷ Jones 1992, 47.

⁶⁰⁸ Jones 1992, 46.

Overall, by the sixties UNESCO had built a good reputation for technical expertise in the functional sectors covered by its mandate. This gave the agency the opportunity to increase its cooperation with the UN system. With the advent of the development enterprise, UNESCO looked to protect its territory and to secure its presence in ever more relevant activities. This created the need. Stronger links with UN organizations thus became essential in UNESCO's search "to enhance its status and pertinence in the wider UN development-assistance enterprise, particularly by arguing its capacity to apply, competently, funds received from such agencies as the UNDP and World Bank Group."⁶⁰⁹ The result was an increase in inter-organizational collaboration, with UNESCO providing expertise and an 'escort' to its mandated province, and with other UN agencies providing the funds for project implementation. And these developments, in turn, further affected the agency's symbolic capital: "UNESCO, in its dealings with the rest of the international community, gained much (from the mid 1940s to the mid 1970s) from its apparent leadership in the struggle against illiteracy (...) it enhanced the image of UNESCO's technical capacity and its competence to manage projects on behalf of the international funding agencies. It also enhanced the organization's public image."⁶¹⁰

On the subject of UNESCO's choice of partners during this first phase of increased collaboration, certain agencies recurrently appear in accounts and reports as key associates – namely: UNDP, UNICEF and the World Bank. Other mentioned organizations include the WFP and ILO. The common denominator of these early partners is given by 'education' as a functional area of activity. The first three, moreover, share a status as 'financing agencies' in development. Both UNICEF and the World Bank began interacting with UNESCO as they

⁶⁰⁹ Jones 1988, 252.

⁶¹⁰ Jones 1988, 234.

entered the education sector in the sixties. The latter, as already mentioned, participated in a UNICEF's survey on the needs of children in 1960.⁶¹¹ Also, "[i]n the first decade of Bank education financing, project generation typically consisted of three distinct stages: identification and preparation (by UNESCO) and appraisal (by the Bank)."⁶¹² Collaboration with WFP similarly involved school meals.⁶¹³ At the same time, for instance, UNDP and the World Bank represented major funding sources and "were at the forefront of development assistance strategies."⁶¹⁴

At the time, as I have explained before, UNESCO had a sound reputation for technical expertise on issues like education and possessed also a prominent standing in that issue area. Conversely, as it was 'going operational', it became an ever poorly funded agency. By means of its association with funding organizations, "extra-budgetary resources were made available to UNESCO."⁶¹⁵ Collaboration was the product of pragmatism. UNESCO would act as the 'technical arm' for agencies interested in operating in its area of expertise, such as the World Bank in education.⁶¹⁶ On their part, agencies like the Bank or UNDP would provide the funding.⁶¹⁷ Further illustrating this complementarity rationale in early partnerships, a 1968 report describes the division of labor in joint UNESCO-UNICEF projects as follows: "UNICEF provides material assistance in the form of supplies and teaching equipment ... UNESCO provides guidance and technical supervision of projects."⁶¹⁸ And emphasizing the fact that UNESCO's choice of allies at the time was mainly determined by its need for material resources,

⁶¹¹ Black 1996, 10.

⁶¹² Jones 1992, 127.

⁶¹³ M'Bow 1985, 183.

⁶¹⁴ Jones 1988, 100.

⁶¹⁵ M'Bow 1985, 183.

⁶¹⁶ Jones 1992, 56.

⁶¹⁷ Jones 1988, 116.

⁶¹⁸ Greenough 1968, 10.

a 1972 joint document of UNESCO and UNICEF stated: “[t]he cooperation of the two organizations being based on commonality of objectives and concerns ... however, recognizing the difference in revenue sources and budget procedures of the two organizations, UNICEF accepts the principle of providing appropriate additional support to augment UNESCO resources ... to serve the common goals of the two organizations.”⁶¹⁹

SECOND PHASE – FALLING IN DISGRACE (1980s) AND REDEMPTION THROUGH ALLIANCES (1990s)

Following the period discussed above – that saw a reputable UNESCO employ its expertise to forge operational links with sister UN agencies and so increase its resources – there came a phase when UNESCO faced profound hostility and criticism from different fronts. A series of events converged by the mid 1970s and throughout the 1980s to complicate the Agency’s situation. Some of the developments were affecting the whole United Nations. Since the mid 1960s, the Third World was commanding more than a two-third majority on the formal policy-making bodies of ‘one-country-one-vote’ UN organizations like UNESCO, WHO, FAO and ILO, and in contrast to weighted-voting agencies like the IMF and the World Bank (IBRD) where the United States, for example, would control close to one third of the votes.⁶²⁰ This fact, together with the emergence of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) debate, the increased use by groups like G77 of collective voting power in several agencies, and the ever more highlighted prominence achieved by demands from the developing world on the UN agenda, all started to cause the unease of some state members including the United States. A focal battleground for North-South conflict, the United Nations was further submerged into a

⁶¹⁹ Gurugé 1983, 465.

⁶²⁰ Wells 1987, 14.

financial crisis – which sharpened by the mid 1980s – as major contributors showed resistance to the budgetary expansion of many UN agencies’ programmes.⁶²¹

UNESCO, on its part, became particularly controversial throughout the contentious administration of Mahtar M’Bow (1974-1987). In 1974, a key sign of strain was given by a series of “resolutions at ... the General Conference interpreted by some as unnecessarily hostile towards Israel.”⁶²² Two years later, and along the lines of the broader NIEO debate, discussions commenced within UNESCO on a New World Information and Communications Order (NWICO).⁶²³ Within this context, “[p]roposals to readjust the international economy and its communications marketplace became critically divisive issues”⁶²⁴ and UNESCO came under attack from the United States and western media as associated with ‘statist concepts’ of mass media regulation and therefore as a threat to the ‘free flow of information’.⁶²⁵ Ten years of controversy and criticisms ended with the United States announcing its formal withdrawal from UNESCO in December 1984. The reasons for withdrawal cited by the U.S. administration included: the ‘politicization’ of UNESCO – in that it treated subjects extraneous to its mandate and/or was biased against U.S.’s interests; mismanagement by its Secretariat and particularly by the Director General (M’Bow); the involvement of the Agency in the mentioned NWICO debate; the organization’s budgetary expansion; its over centralization and its ‘lack of efficiency’.⁶²⁶ Beyond these official criticisms of UNESCO, the withdrawal has been explained by pointing to pressures during the Reagan administration of domestic political concerns – from conservative

⁶²¹ Imber 1985, 125 and 130.

⁶²² Jones 1988, 215.

⁶²³ Imber 1989, 105.

⁶²⁴ Preston, Herman and Schiller 1989, 121.

⁶²⁵ See Preston, Herman and Schiller 1989.

⁶²⁶ See Imber 1989, 96-7; also: Preston, Herman and Schiller 1989, 10-11.

elements headed by the Heritage Foundation – and to the fact that “UNESCO’s failings represented the clearest target for an ideologically motivated campaign to achieve punitive humiliation of a major UN agency.”⁶²⁷ Almost two decades had passed by the time the U.S. returned to the Organization in 2003, arguing that the organization had finally been reformed.⁶²⁸

To be sure, the United States’ withdrawal from UNESCO was neither the first nor the last. As early as 1950 and in response to decisions on Korea, three countries – Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland – had ceased to participate in UNESCO’s governing bodies; while Portugal had also withdrawn in the 1970s following resolutions on decolonization and racism.⁶²⁹ In 1985, the United Kingdom and Singapore seconded the United States and withdrew from UNESCO. In justifying the decision, “the British Foreign Secretary urged greater attention to the overlap in UNESCO programmes with other UN activities, the role of ‘outside advisers such as manager consultants’, and the allocation of resources between HQ [headquarters] and field appointments.”⁶³⁰ What made the U.S. withdrawal so critical a challenge for UNESCO was the fact that such move took away one of its most powerful members, together with an important portion of its regular budget. Adding to the significance of the incident was the subsequent departure of the United Kingdom and the “very real concerns in 1984 that there might be a general western exodus from UNESCO.”⁶³¹

Thus, the exit of an influential member like the United States marked the peak of UNESCO’s crisis, as it radically affected the Agency’s situation regarding its material resources.

⁶²⁷ Imber 1989, 119.

⁶²⁸ See, for instance, President Bush’s remarks at the UN General Assembly, New York, September 2002 (available at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/20020912-1.html>). The Clinton administration did not return to UNESCO for fear of confronting the opposition of congress (see: Meisler 1995, 238).

⁶²⁹ See M’Bow 1985, 179. On its part, the United States had also interrupted its participation in ILO from 1977 to 1980.

⁶³⁰ Imber 1989, 118.

⁶³¹ Jones 1988, 229.

To begin with, its actual financial assets were reduced both in absolute and in relative terms. On the one hand, the United States applied with its exit the ‘power of the purse’ and ceased its assessed contributions to UNESCO, which totaled a fourth of its regular budget.⁶³² Such a decrease represented a drastic fall in the organization’s available resources. At the same time, while ceasing its payments to UNESCO – and actually reducing its contributions to the UN and some of its agencies – the United States acted “simultaneously to upstage the administration in the funding of such visible and publicly endorsed programmes as UNICEF.”⁶³³ As a result of this policy, UNESCO was left in a ‘poor’ position not only in terms of the actual size of its budget, but also as compared to organizations like UNICEF, a potential contender in the area of education. The United States’ departure from UNESCO also affected the Agency’s financial vulnerability. As I mentioned in the previous section, UNESCO’s susceptibility had increased in the 1960s due to its growing resort to voluntary contributions, which had then come to represent an important part of the *total* budget. Still, with its *regular* budget based on assessed contributions, UNESCO could maintain a certain level of economic security for its core functioning – such as staffing costs. The loss with the U.S. withdrawal of 25% of the ‘stable’ contributions amply exacerbated UNESCO’s financial vulnerability.

Adding to the deteriorating situation of UNESCO’s material resources during this period was the decline in the funding available to the organization from other UN agencies. In an international context of economic recession, the entire UN was undergoing a financial crisis. Hence, for instance, at the 1985 session of UNESCO’s General Conference, western

⁶³² See Imber 1989.

⁶³³ Imber 1989, 135.

governments requested that there be 'zero real growth' in the budget.⁶³⁴ Similarly UNDP, one of the main sources of finance for UNESCO's technical activities, had "its resources cut back by nearly 45 per cent for the period 1982-1986."⁶³⁵ For UNESCO, these developments meant an overall decrease of the total of extra-budgetary resources.⁶³⁶ Moreover, the agencies which had entered into the education field in the 1960s, and that had funded UNESCO as *the* 'technical arm' in operations, were now developing in-house capacities. As a result, they not only resorted less to UNESCO for expertise but also ambioned a larger role in joint undertakings. As an example of the former point: "[t]he 1970s saw a declining use of UNESCO, with the [World] Bank making greater use of its own preparation/appraisal and pre-appraisal missions."⁶³⁷ Illustrating the latter point, a 1983 account of UNICEF-UNESCO relations asserts: "UNESCO personnel ... are more accustomed, at the field level, to the practice of executing projects funded by UNDP, IBRD, UNFPA, etc. Further, ... the usual request addressed to UNICEF is for a financial contribution to an already planned or on-going activity. What UNICEF personnel would prefer is an invitation to co-operate, providing opportunities for participation as partners from the earliest stages of planning an activity."⁶³⁸ Faced with apparent budgetary constrains, UNESCO strove, towards the late 1980s and early 1990s, to improve its institutional dialogue with the organizations that represented sources of funding, such as UNDP, the World Bank and UNICEF. It managed to do so,⁶³⁹ even if at higher 'turf costs' than would have been the case three decades before. In other words: when interacting with UN development agencies in the

⁶³⁴ Jones 1988, 227.

⁶³⁵ M'Bow 1985, 55.

⁶³⁶ M'Bow 1985, 182.

⁶³⁷ Jones 1992, 127.

⁶³⁸ Gurugé 1983, 467.

⁶³⁹ See Valderrama 1995, 322.

1960s, UNESCO could preserve its salience as the main referent in, for example, education; by the 1990s, as seen in joint initiatives like Education for All (EFA), “[a]lthough UNESCO remains the agency responsible for education in the United Nations system, it now stands *shoulder-to-shoulder* with three other leading intergovernmental agencies [UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank].”⁶⁴⁰

The latter point brings us directly to the issue of symbolic capital and to how UNESCO’s situation has evolved in the past decades in this respect. As an operational organization, UNESCO’s salience and indispensability was essentially based on its command over a functional area of activity. It was due to its status as *the* UN agency in charge of education that UNESCO was approached as a partner for development activities during the first wave of increased collaboration. Over the years, however, this functional exclusivity and its associated salience have declined. By the time UNESCO’s crisis reached its peak, the organization was still the ‘official’ responsible for certain issue-areas, but it was no longer the *only* one. Hence, for instance, once it had departed UNESCO, the United States shifted related efforts “and resources towards organizations such as the World Meteorological Organization, and the ILO.”⁶⁴¹ As suggested during the withdrawal crisis: it became “UNESCO’s fate that the promotion of international exchange and provision in the fields of education, science and culture *can* be effected through numerous and diverse channels, and so cannot offer the USA the *unique* services which on the record of the great majority of UN agencies can create binding functional ties.”⁶⁴² The same logic of an ‘exit’ option applies to potential UNESCO partners among UN organizations. With other agencies interested in and acting on issues like education or

⁶⁴⁰ Conil-Lacoste 1994, 317 (my emphasis).

⁶⁴¹ Imber 1989, 110.

⁶⁴² Imber 1989, 140 (emphasis in original).

communications, UNESCO has been increasingly confronted with the choice between collaborating with concerned actors and thereby ‘take part’ in activities relevant to its mandate, or being left out. Illustrating this point is the case of the proposal by UNICEF – increasingly interested in advancing in the field of education – to collaborate with UNESCO on a major ‘education for all’ initiative. When initially proposed in 1982, the reticence of a ‘key partner’ like UNESCO made UNICEF put on hold the project.⁶⁴³ By 1989 UNESCO agreed to form a Joint Committee on Education with the Fund and then both agencies moved forward with the multilateral initiative of Education for All. The latter, moreover, was largely mobilized by UNICEF, which even set about persuading UNDP and the Bank to join.⁶⁴⁴ Besides the change in UNESCO’s administration distinguishing the two instances, the fact that UNICEF was by the late eighties not only rallying other UN-IOs around education initiatives but also interacting on a firm basis with agencies like the World Bank – also involved in the topic – most certainly added an incentive for UNESCO to change its attitude towards joint action in such field.

UNESCO’s symbolic capital situation has been further complicated by a decline in its reputation. First, somehow intrinsic to cooperative alliances and the less than perfect functioning of complex bureaucracies, UNESCO was experiencing – as early as the 1970s – some friction and image erosion in its dealing with the development agencies with which it had partnered a decade before. For instance, due to a series of difficulties and despite eventual achievements, the Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP, 1966-74) “procured for UNESCO within UNDP and the World Bank a damaging reputation.”⁶⁴⁵ Second, controversies impinging on the United Nations more generally during this period also affected UNESCO. Hence, for example,

⁶⁴³ Black 1996, 227.

⁶⁴⁴ See Black 1996, 228.

⁶⁴⁵ Jones 1992, 99.

with the spread of NIEO-related debates came a “depreciation of [UN organizations’] image among donor countries. Among the specialized agencies, UNIDO, UNESCO and the ILO were among those most liable to become submerged in ‘new order politics’ and politicization in more delimited forms.”⁶⁴⁶ By the mid 1980s, UNESCO’s standing had already declined when the United States’ withdrawal exacerbated such weakness. It is in this sense that some analysts of the crisis have reproduced a U.S. official’s statement suggesting that “UNESCO is the Grenada of the UN.”⁶⁴⁷ During the withdrawal crisis, “a full-scale attack [from the United States] demolished UNESCO’s standing and reputation.”⁶⁴⁸ This happened in two ways: on the one hand, the Agency was severely criticized and portrayed by the U.S. as inefficient and ‘politicized’, thereby directly losing esteem both domestically and internationally. On the other, with the departure of one of its major members, the decline in UNESCO’s budget and the erosion of its legitimacy as a collective organization complicated all the more the ability of the Agency to properly fulfill its mandate, thus making it harder for UNESCO to struggle against the fall and regain even previously enjoyed levels of reputation. Within this context, it became a stricter necessity for the organization to “demonstrate its effectiveness to its critics.”⁶⁴⁹ Great effort went over the next decades into recomposing UNESCO’s image, not only through several institutional reforms but also through a proactive strengthening of ties with the UN system. This explains the increased participation of the organization in joint activities, starting with Education for All in 1990 and extending to many other initiatives, like the World Water Assessment Programme or UNAIDS (see Table 6.1 above). In 2003 UNESCO’s Director General could finally assert that

⁶⁴⁶ Bergesen and Lunde 1999, 58.

⁶⁴⁷ Imber 1989, 106.

⁶⁴⁸ Preston, Herman and Schiller 1989, 153.

⁶⁴⁹ Jones 1988, 214.

the Agency's reputation was improving, "both on the ground and in the press; people outside are talking of a 'reformed' organization of ever increasing relevance."⁶⁵⁰

As explained above, UNESCO was facing by the end of the 1980s a quite deteriorated resource situation. Its financial vulnerability had increased as voluntary resources declined and assessed contributions – the securer funding – were drastically cut with the U.S. withdrawal. Its reputation, too, had been greatly damaged by years of criticisms coming from different fronts. The less affected asset was the organization's presence in areas such as education and science, as given by its formal functional mandate. Yet even there, the advance of other agencies into its assigned fields caused UNESCO to lose, if not its salience, at least its monopoly over certain issue areas. This challenging position in terms of both material and symbolic capital explains the variation in UNESCO's collaborative proclivity: the Agency assumed by 1990 a more positive attitude towards joint action and intensified its efforts to participate in inter-organizational initiatives. In this instance, the main drive for behavioral change was *need*. It was the struggle to recuperate declining resources in all fronts – material and symbolic – that led UNESCO to open up and concentrate on inter-organizational cooperation. By partnering with sister UN agencies, the Agency could obtain through associations looked-for funds, salience and reputation. Also, by linking its finances to that of others through joint action, UNESCO could further stabilize its budget. As compared to the previous wave of strengthened cooperation in the organization's history, a noteworthy aspect of recent associations stands out: the fact that they have assumed a more institutionalized and multilateral character. In the past two decades, the Agency has entered into formalized cooperation mechanisms, many of them multiparty or even system-wide, such as

⁶⁵⁰ Noted in an address by UNESCO's Director General Koichiro Matsuura to Secretariat staff, Paris, June 2003. The transcript (UNESCO document DG/2003/096) is available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001306/130603e.pdf>

UNDG. This differs from the more informal working arrangements that UNESCO had developed, often at the bilateral level, with development funding agencies in the 1960s. Such difference is partly attributable to current trends in the UN both towards increased inter-organizational collaboration and towards the establishment of formal mechanisms for interaction and coordination. Likewise, the institutionalized character of the links UNESCO has recently forged with sister UN agencies can be explained by its need to lock-in the improvements achieved in symbolic and material resources through that very act of collaboration, so as to protect the organization from the effects of potential crises like the one it had suffered a decade before. As previously mentioned, UNESCO has experienced a rather hectic history. By tying its image and finances to multilateral initiatives that include more steady and established organizations, UNESCO can transcend its volatile and vulnerable circumstance and so stabilize and make more secure its assets situation.

With the described crisis, UNESCO reached the ‘weak on all fronts’ end of my spectrum of cases. As a corollary to this resource situation, this second phase of collaboration in UNESCO’s history shows two important variations as compared to the previous one and with respect to the partners involved. First, the group of allies has expanded. Table 6.2 below lists some of the organization’s current partners as officially published in its website. The list is non-exhaustive, but it shows how the group of ‘key’ agencies interacting with UNESCO in its main areas of cooperation has expanded to include many more actors than the handful alluded to for the previous collaborative phase.

Table 6.2: UNESCO's Current Partners

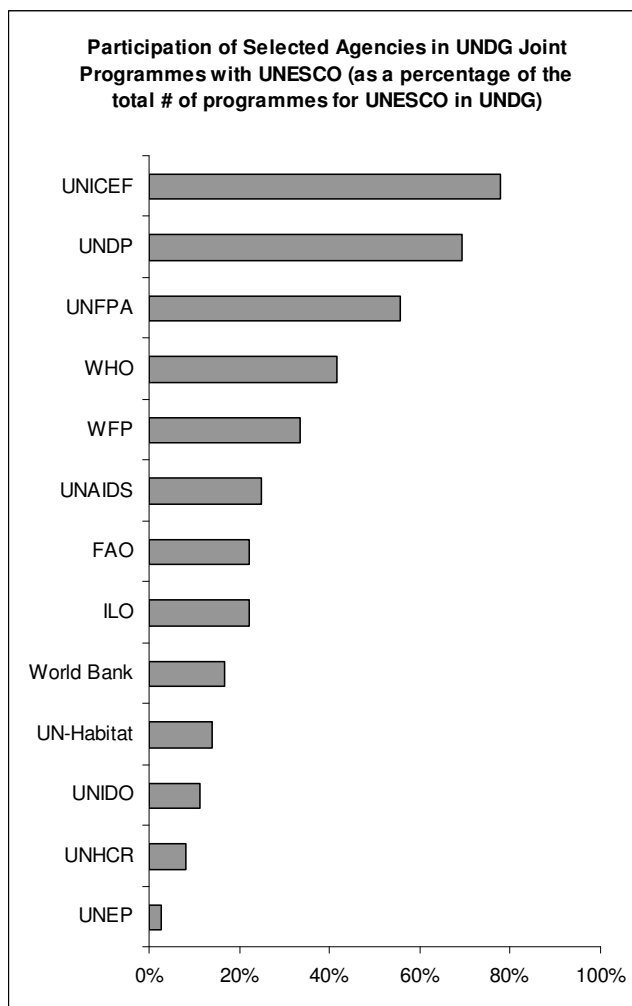
Area of Cooperation	Key Partners (non-exhaustive list)
Education	UNICEF, UNDP, UNAIDS, UNHCR, UNFIP, UNFPA
Natural Sciences	UNEP, UNFIP, UNDP, GEF, ISDR, OCHA
Social and Human Sciences	UNAIDS, UNOPS, UNFPA
Culture	UNDP, UNFIP, UNV, OCHA, UNAIDS, UNEP
Communications and Information	UNDP, OCHA, OHCHR, UNV

Source: UNESCO's official web site, 'Communities' section, under the heading 'Operational Cooperation with the United Nations System', sub-heading 'Main Areas of Cooperation', <http://www.unesco.org> (accessed June 2007)

To further single out UNESCO's partners in more recent joint initiatives, Figure 6.1 below shows the agencies that work with the organization through the inter-agency mechanism of the UN Development Group, and the amount of joint projects each has had with UNESCO. Here again, the list of partners has expanded to include other organizations, hardly if ever mentioned in the previous period, like WHO or UN-Habitat. By 1990, reports on 'funding sources' would include not only UNDP, UNICEF and the World Bank, but also agencies such as UNFPA and the UN Environmental Programme (UNEP).⁶⁵¹

⁶⁵¹ For instance: Valderrama 1995, 322. See also the document 'Regular Budget and Extra-budgetary Funds' available from UNESCO's web site at: http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=6381&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

Figure 6.1: Other UN Agencies' Participation in UNDG Joint Programmes that Include UNESCO (1998-2007)



Source: UNDG -UNCT Database, <http://www.unctdatabase.undg.org/> (accessed June 2007)

The expansion of the partners' base stands as a direct reflection of UNESCO's weaker resource situation. As I have argued, the forging of links with other UN bodies could offer the organization access to needed resources, both material and symbolic. From there it follows that the greater the necessity, the more extensive the collaborative predisposition. Back in the sixties UNESCO did count with good reputation and issue salience, while finances were its Achilles' heel; by the end of the eighties it was short on both material *and* symbolic capital. Confronted

with needs on all fronts, the Agency sought out for more diverse partners. As the resource-based argument here proposed would suggest, UNESCO's present associates include all types of organizations – rich and poor, prestigious and controversial, big and small. This is so because *any* functionally pertinent organization, as long as it possesses at least *one* of the assets being discussed, will already be in a position to contribute by association to the improvement of UNESCO's situation.

The second singular aspect of UNESCO's most recent collaborative experience is that the nature of its relations with some of its old partners has somehow changed. While agencies like UNICEF and the World Bank continue to be a source of financing for UNESCO, they have by now developed technical capacities in the intersecting issue-areas, and therefore expect a more involved role in joint initiatives – not just as the provider of funds.⁶⁵² This responds to these agencies' attempt to gain terrain in the field of education, in which they have increasingly showed interest. Yet it also demonstrates the more marked weakness of UNESCO in terms of its salience and status as *the* leading agency in education, and also of its reputation as the main expert on the matter. These symbolic assets constituted in the past the main contribution of the Agency to collaborative relationships, and its main attractiveness as a partner – they gave UNESCO the 'opportunity' to match its financial needs at the time. In the aftermath of the crisis, the Organization was left with a damaged reputation and a diminished salience. Hence, when partnerships were most needed by UNESCO, its appeal for potential partners was at its lowest. As a result, the Agency has had to invest the only asset left – its formally assigned control over a functional territory. At the most basic level, it was the interest shown by other organizations in UNESCO's turf – education, communications, culture, science – that has offered the basis for it

⁶⁵² For an illustration of this point with the case of UNICEF, for instance, see: Gurugé 1983, 467.

to promote valuable joint initiatives. Now accepting a greater level of territorial sharing, the turf-jealousy inertia still surfaces in the search for a 'lead' position within embarked on multiparty initiatives.

CONSIDERING ALTERNATIVE ACCOUNTS

Several possible explanations of UNESCO's relational behavior can be constructed based on the contending theories described in chapter 2. A first alternative would suggest that the actions of the agency in question are mainly shaped by the demands from member states. The problem that this argument confronts in the UNESCO case is that the presence and force of such external pressures does not correspond to the highlighted periods of expanded cooperation. On the one hand, allusions to the possibility and desirability of establishing links with other elements of the UN system can be found in the very Constitution of UNESCO – where Article XI states that the Organization 'may' cooperate with other specialized IOs.⁶⁵³ They can also be found in resolutions and decisions from its General Conference and the Executive Board throughout UNESCO's history, where member states 'instruct' or 'invite' the Director General to 'collaborate', 'continue to cooperate' or 'reinforce relations' with other UN organizations. In the early days the object of interaction would be to ensure that due attention is paid to UNESCO's provinces of education, science and culture in post-war reconstruction efforts; in later years it would point to development assistance.⁶⁵⁴ Against this background of constant directives and suggestions, the historical pattern of UNESCO's relational behavior is undulating, with rises and falls in the extent of its collaboration with other UN agencies. A variable that is temporally stable

⁶⁵³ UNESCO Constitution, article XI (available from <http://www.unesco.org>).

⁶⁵⁴ See for instance: UNESCO 1949, 13; UNESCO 1993, 15-16 and 74.

cannot explain diachronic variation. Alternatively, it could be argued that the ‘level’ of states’ demands has changed over time: there are some periods when pressures for higher efficiency – generally associated with calls for strengthened coordination and inter-agency cooperation – may be relatively more intense. Yet even then, at the time in UNESCO’s history when such requests for efficiency seem to have been most acute – that is, during the crisis, when in 1985 for e.g. the General Conference called for a 0% budget grow – cooperation with the UN system was concomitantly reaching its lowest levels.

Another possible explanation of UNESCO’s relational behavior could come from a functionalist account, which would suggest that collaboration occurs simply because it is an ‘efficient’ alternative and a natural response to the interconnection of UN organizational mandates. This argument, however, runs into difficulties when attempting to account for UNESCO’s history of collaboration. First, this approach has at its core an even more static variable than the previous one – the functional tasks in the agency’s mandate and an inert goal like ‘efficiency’ – and cannot therefore account for the dynamic character the relational behavior of UNESCO has adopted over the years. If cooperation with the World Bank in the education sector was functionally pertinent and efficient in the 1960s, there is no reason why it should decline in the 1980s when educational activities continue. Moreover, this alternative argument fails to perceive and explain the tension inherent in inter-organizational relations, where needs and incentives given by potential gains are balanced against the reticence of losing, for instance, one’s turf. In other words, if UNESCO cooperates with the World Bank simply because both cover the issue-area of education, the former would not have taken the trouble at the time of the

Bank's entrance into the sector to highlight its status as the 'lead' UN agency in education, or to convince the WB of its special competence and relevance in the area.⁶⁵⁵

A final alternative account would focus on UNESCO's idiosyncrasies and organizational culture, as well as its internal bureaucratic politics. Here, it should be acknowledged that, in the case of UNESCO, the Secretariat and the Director General have over the years gathered considerable authority.⁶⁵⁶ Many of its leaders, like Maheu or M'Bow, have also been described as showing strong personalities that have been projected to shape the organization's ways.⁶⁵⁷ Still, at many instances throughout UNESCO's history, the dynamics of the circumstance faced by the Agency would overpower any man's conception or bureaucratic style. Hence, while the attitude of the Secretariat may be seen as influencing some relational decisions, beyond the changes in Directors General and administrations, a broader pattern can be identified in UNESCO's cooperative behavior, one which corresponds best to its resource situation. And indeed, the Organization shares this resource-based logic of action with other UN agencies, as the other cases in this analysis demonstrate – a commonality that can neither be perceived nor deciphered by looking only at the peculiarities of a single case.

CONCLUSION

The UNESCO case analyzed in this chapter offers a last test for the resource-based argument proposed here. The diachronic analysis of the organization's relational behavior has revealed two main instances of enhanced collaboration: one back in the 1960s and a second one from the later eighties on. These corresponded to a series of changes in the Agency's resource

⁶⁵⁵ See Jones 1992, 46.

⁶⁵⁶ Sewell 1975, 18.

⁶⁵⁷ See for instance Hoggart 1978; Sewell 1975.

situation, both along the material and symbolic dimensions. In the first phase, UNESCO's incursion into the field of development operations stretched its infrastructure and presented it with the need to reach out for financial assets in the form of extra-budgetary, voluntary funding. By the second phase of UNESCO's collaboration with sister UN agencies, the organization's situation in terms of material and symbolic resources had changed. Having experienced both a time of recession in its extra-budgetary resources and a decline of its assessed contributions following the U.S. withdrawal, UNESCO was now in a financially weak and vulnerable position. Moreover, the political crisis undergone by the organization had left its reputation damaged and its salience in relevant functional fields at a low. Faced with a deteriorated resource situation in all its portfolios, UNESCO reinforced its collaborative links with other UN agencies.

The two periods considered have allowed me to compare UNESCO with itself, from its situation as a prestigious organization with financial constraints to that of an agency short on all resources. Similarly, I have shown how UNESCO's choice of partners was based on its strengths and weaknesses in terms of both material and symbolic capital. Beyond domain consensus, the logic has been one of complementarities: UNESCO has selected allies that could contribute to ameliorate its resource situation by compensating for its weaknesses, initially in terms of funding and subsequently regarding both symbolic and material assets. The division of labor identifiable within collaborative relationships adds evidence to the analysis, insofar as each organization's role fits its resource situation.

In this account, once again, the resource-based argument of relational behavior has proved forceful. As I have shown, neither external demands from member states, nor efficiency goals, nor bureaucratic characteristics offer a compelling explanation of the historical pattern of

inter-organizational relations followed by UNESCO. These alternative approaches further fail to account for the Agency's choice of partners. Both aspects of organizational action have proved to be instead guided by a cost-benefit logic based on strengths and weaknesses regarding material and symbolic capital.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

LOOKING BACK

The preceding chapters have explored inter-organizational relations in the UN system from a resource-based perspective. In particular, the argument exposed in chapter 2 pointed to explain the proclivity of IOs to establish partnerships with their cohorts. The claim has been that IOs are embedded in an environment – of institutions, events, actors – that presents them with both opportunities and constrains. Within those limits, IOs constitute strategic actors that can choose among a set of alternative courses of action in order to pursue their goals and to satiate their needs. A central concern for international agencies, as for all organizations, is the achievement and maintenance of resources indispensable for functioning and survival. It is the search for such critical capital that motivates IOs to establish collaborative links with other organizations. Accordingly, the proclivity of a given agency to partner can be deduced from its particular resource situation – with ‘poor’ IOs revealing greater eagerness to collaborate than ‘affluent’ ones. Finally, I have suggested that relevant resources can be of two kinds: material and symbolic. The type of capital an IO seeks to obtain from associating in turn determines its choice of partners.

The foregoing empirical chapters have offered ample application and testing of the argument here advanced. Two of the case-studies looked at IOs with an intermediate level of resources. The World Bank represents an organization affluent in material resources and with considerable formal independence vis-à-vis the rest of the UN system. Raising its funds from the

market, the Bank has had over the years a strong and stable financial situation, which has allowed it to even compensate for its traditionally limited field presence. Still, the WB has experienced in recent decades a sharp image crisis, which has materialized in numerous criticisms against its policies coming from NGOs and other publics. Moreover, the saliency of the Bank has intermittently trembled over the years, as a result of the organization's task expansion into ever more areas of the development field. Responding to such weakening of symbolic capital, the World Bank has revealed an increasingly open attitude towards partnerships – not only with other IOs but also with the non-governmental sector. In the particular instances of concern here – namely its associations with sister UN agencies – the Bank's choice of partners has been largely shaped by its resource needs. Short of symbolic capital, the WB has favored as partners prestigious organizations. A noteworthy example of this tendency was given by the Bank's choice to come closer to UNICEF than to UNESCO in the education sector. Contrary to functional expectations – that would point to UNESCO as the 'official' UN agency on that topic and therefore as the 'natural' partner – the WB opted to develop stronger links with another, less functionally obvious yet better regarded organization. In this instance, the Bank's relational behavior clearly appears as largely driven by resource scarcity concerns.

The counterpart to the WB case in the resource matrix I have presented is the World Food Program. The particular humanitarian nature of WFP's mandate – feeding the hungry – has conferred the organization with a positive image. Moreover, its marked focus on the logistics of food distribution has added to the Programme's salience in its area of concern, and it has also allowed it to develop over the years a strong infrastructure, with ample presence in the field. Still, WFP has confronted throughout its history a significant vulnerability in terms of material

capital, as determined both by its reliance on voluntary contributions and by the volatile nature of food aid. This resource gap has grown larger over the years, as the Programme has expanded its activities and has incurred in the more unstable terrain of emergencies. Accordingly, WFP has increasingly sought out for partnerships in order to access needed material assets in the form of funds and in-kind contributions. This agency's choice of partners has likewise responded to a resource-based rationale: the Programme has sought out for financially affluent associates, such as the World Bank, which could provide it with the assets needed to cover its material 'gaps'.

The other two empirical cases examined IOs tending towards the extremes of the resource matrix – i.e. being either strong or weak in both types of resources. UNESCO has experienced marked longitudinal changes in its material and symbolic resources, still revealing a predominant situation of weakness along both dimensions. In its early days, the agency counted with a prestigious image as a norm-developing and education promoting institution. Soon after its establishment, UNESCO incurred in the operational arena, carrying out projects in the field. This confronted the agency with higher requirements of funds and infrastructure, leading to an initial gap in its material capital. During the late 1980s, UNESCO suffered a misfortune of symbolic capital – targeted by criticisms and allegations of it being 'politicized'. As a corollary to this image crisis, the agency was deserted by one of its main contributors – the United States – and thereby added extra financial stress to its already weak position. Hence, in this second period in the life of UNESCO – from the mid-1980s onwards – the agency has been characterized by a resource situation of scarcity in both its material and symbolic capital portfolios. Accordingly, UNESCO has increased in recent years its proclivity to partner and participate in inter-agency mechanisms. Finally, given that its resource needs extend to all types of assets, the agency is

receptive with respect to partners – willing to collaborate with organizations strong in any kind of capital, for they can all add to relief its resource shortage.

UNICEF represents today an agency close to ‘having it all’. While relying greatly for its budget on voluntary contributions, it has established over the years a powerful fund-raising machine – as exemplified by the distinctive feature of having ‘national committees’ in developed countries devoted in part to this task. Moreover, as a decentralized organization, UNICEF’s infrastructure permeates the world with field offices in over 120 countries. This UN agency further possesses an appealing image and a strong reputation – often commended for its excellence and efficiency. Finally, UNICEF is highly salient – with ample visibility and established authority in its fields of activity. Over the years, the Fund’s resource situation has greatly improved. The agency experienced a weak position in its early days: with fragile future prospects as an originally temporary entity; a potentially problematic domain that cut-across those of other UN-IOs; and a voluntary thus volatile resource base. In six decades, UNICEF passed from weakness to strength and became one of the strongest IOs in the UN system. Accordingly, the initial enthusiasm for establishing links with other agencies gave way to an increasing reticence, product of the fear to be ‘lost in the UN crowd’. Possessing the resources it needs, the agency does not see substantial benefits in partnering – except the rewards derived from the very fact of performing an apparently prized action. Moreover, the power and prestige of UNICEF are notably attached to its own ‘brand-name’. In this regard, partnerships confront the Fund with the risk of potentially dissolving in teamwork the strength of its individual character. Finally, regarding the choice of partners, the possession by UNICEF of both types of

capital – material and symbolic – has rendered it indifferent as to the strengths of its potential associates.

The preceding paragraphs have briefly outlined the main observations identified in the empirical application of my argument. I have shown how the resource situation of each agency – and the needs generated by it – has shaped their relational behavior. Moreover, as it can be distinguished through this synoptic review of the cases, the cross-case variation matches the one theoretically predicted in chapter 2. Finally, the longitudinal variation identifiable for each IO has added empirical occurrences where to test my hypotheses. Here again, the outcomes have been proved to concur with my argument's expectations.

MOVING FORWARD

The main nuance of the UNICEF case was that, despite the manifest reticence of this organization towards partnering, it still did so. On the former, the level of collaboration revealed by the Fund has not changed so markedly over time, which represents in a way a sign of retrenchment. In its first years, UNICEF started with a proactive attitude towards collaboration, as it was seeking to establish and strengthen its position among UN organizations. Subsequently, with its increasing popularity and financial power came the spreading out of its activities and the growth of its structure. Such expansion, however, was not translated into a corresponding development of partnerships. Instead, the level of engagement in inter-organizational endeavors was relatively maintained, while hesitation and reluctance towards joint activities and alliances started to surface. In this sense, UNICEF's collaborative behavior fits the model introduced above: the Fund's ever higher level of resources diminished its need for associative links and

further confronted it with the dilemma of losing its individual strength by becoming diluted into team activities. Nonetheless, the case of UNICEF is particularly puzzling in that the agency still participates in alliances to a noteworthy extent.

The answer to this paradox rests in the double sided character of inter-organizational relations. As I have previously suggested, alliances involve by definition at least two actors. This means that the ultimate collaborative outcome – i.e. the actual emergence of an alliance – will depend on the behavior and attitude of *all* concerned parties. As a starting point for the exploration of UN partnerships and IO behavior, the preceding analysis has concentrated on the *proclivity* of a given organization to partner with others – i.e. its individual attitude towards collaboration. Yet, a willingness to associate is a *necessary* but not *sufficient* condition for the definite establishment of an alliance. An organization may want to partner with others, but those ‘others’ may be reluctant to link themselves to it. Before I have pointed to the fact that, to set up partnerships, organizations need to be willing and *able* to do so. I have further highlighted the aspect of feasibility linked to the general viability and legitimacy of alliances as an organizational practice. The other dimension of the ‘able’ element in my contention has to do with the individual *social opportunity* a given organization has to collaborate with others, which derives from its *attractiveness as partner*. As P. Blau contends for social relations: “[a] person who is attracted to others is interested in proving himself attractive to them, for his ability to associate with them and reap the benefits expected from the association is contingent on their finding him an attractive associate and thus wanting to interact with him.”⁶⁵⁸ Overall, for an actual alliance to emerge, the participant organizations need to be willing to collaborate, and each has to be perceived as an attractive partner by the other.

⁶⁵⁸ Blau 1964, 20.

Finally, in terms of the choice of partners, the flipside of inter-organizational relations adds to the logic of complementarities one of comparative advantage. That is, an IO will seek to partner with those others that can complement its resource gaps and that also need the resources the focal organization is affluent in. The reason for the latter is twofold: on the one hand, by contributing with its available assets, the focal IO can present itself as more attractive to the potential partner from which it expects to obtain needed capital. Second, by making the other organization dependent on it for resources, the focal IO can gain power over its partner –either as an end in itself or as a way of managing its own dependence on the other. On the whole, the main point I wish to highlight here is that “[a]lliances are ... cooperative relationships driven by a logic of *strategic resource needs* and *social resource opportunities*.”⁶⁵⁹

In line with the argument here proposed, resources provide both the needs and the opportunities for partnership formation. This in turn creates intriguing connections between the asset situation of an organization and its collaborative behavior, as the two mentioned elements – need and opportunity – move in opposite directions. On the one hand, and as discussed throughout the previous chapters, the poorer an organization is in terms of resources, the greater will be its necessity to partner, and so the higher its proclivity to do so. On the other hand, “[t]he reason a person is an attractive associate is that he has impressed others as someone with whom it would be rewarding to associate.”⁶⁶⁰ In other words, an organization will be solicited for alliances insofar as it owns appealing resources to share – namely, those sought after by others. Adding to this the fact that associations require investments in terms of time, energy and capital itself, the result is that resourceful organizations are less keen to partner and yet “it is

⁶⁵⁹ Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven 1996: 137 (my emphasis).

⁶⁶⁰ Blau 1964, 35.

organizations with ‘extra’ resources which are often best able to link with others.”⁶⁶¹ Alternatively, less affluent organizations will show a higher proclivity to collaborate, yet they may also be less attractive as potential partners, experiencing more difficulty in actually establishing links. As a caveat, however, not all resources add equally to an agency’s attractiveness as partner, having more weight in this respect those assets that are most wanted by others. The extent of affluence with respect to a valuable resource will also determine the level of social opportunity an organization will enjoy. Taken as a whole, the absolute occurrence of partnerships for a given organization will emanate from the balance reached between its strategic wants and its social appeal.

In the case of UNICEF, the combination is one of low need and high opportunity. While the former accounts for the Fund’s reluctance vis-à-vis partnerships, the latter explains why it continues to engage in collaborative links. In particular, the UNICEF case illustrates that “[t]he better a[n] [organization’s] reputation, the more likely it is to be targeted for joint venture activity and ... similar interorganizational relationships.”⁶⁶² Given the outstanding prestige attached to UNICEF’s ‘brand-name’, sister UN agencies are eager to link themselves – and so to ‘be associated with’ – the Fund. The high level of opportunity in turn counterbalances the low level of want. In this way, establishing inter-organizational links becomes a relatively costless yet potentially rewarding alternative, as organizations can derive resources both by associating with others and from the act of partnering itself – even if they do not need to. Hence, despite their low proclivity to collaborate, affluent organizations may still be drawn to associations if pushed by the high opportunity given by their attractiveness as partners.

⁶⁶¹ Schermerhorn 1975, 850.

⁶⁶² Dollinger, Golden and Saxton 1997, 136 (referring to firms).

To add another example, the World Bank is ‘rich’ in a most-valuable asset within the UN system – monetary funds. This has derived in the Bank being amply sought for as a partner, and ever more so given its increasing incursion into the development field, and the financial shortage that prevails among UN-IOs. Combined with the moderate level of willingness to cooperate that the WB has revealed – as derived from its shortage of symbolic capital – the high opportunity and intermediate need have derived in a noticeable level of interaction. This can be perceived in two respects: first, starting at a low, the amount of partnerships involving the Bank has markedly increased over time. Second, the Bank is presently more involved in collaboration initiatives with sister UN-IOs than the conventional expectation of the IFIs keeping their distance from the UN system would predict. Illustrating this point, Table 7.1 below shows the number of UN inter-agency coordination mechanisms – out of a list of 47⁶⁶³ – in which each of the organizations here analyzed participates.

Table 7.1: Participation in UN Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanisms by Selected UN IOs

UN Organization	World Bank	UNICEF	UNESCO	WFP
<i>Total Number of Memberships in UN Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanisms</i>	39*	31	31	23

* 36 without counting instances of ‘observer status’

Source: Appendix B.

⁶⁶³ A detailed listing of the mechanisms included is to be found in Appendix B. The list is non-exhaustive and its aim is merely illustrative. The inventory of inter-agency coordination mechanisms has been put together with information collected from the Official Website Locator for the UN System of Organizations (at: <http://www.unsystem.org/>), as well as from a background document on UN system organizations prepared by the Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence (listed in the References under the Panel’s name).

Interestingly, the table shows the World Bank as having the greatest number of memberships in the surveyed UN inter-organizational instruments. In comparative terms, the figure strikes the eye in view of the traditionally manifest independence of the Bank vis-à-vis the UN system. Moreover, the relative position of the selected IOs supports the present argument on resource-based strategic needs and social opportunities. The World Bank, with ample opportunity and a certain level of need heads the list. On a second shared position are the two organizations combining contrasting resource conditions. UNICEF, as I have explained, has little necessity for extra capital but a very high attractiveness as partner. UNESCO, on its part, is in a weak position in terms of both material and symbolic resources. Its situation is therefore one of low opportunity yet ample necessity for assets.⁶⁶⁴ Finally, the last position is occupied by WFP, which combines an intermediate level of both resource wants and social opportunity.

The foregoing observations are preliminary, and their purpose is simply to sample the projection of my argument to the other key condition for partnerships to form among IOs. This dissertation is only a first look at a multifaceted phenomenon, and so it inevitably leaves some aspects of IOs' relational behavior unexplored. Beyond their emergence, partnerships can have different governing structures and evolve in diverse ways. IOs further interact with other actors besides states and IOs, such as NGOs and private sector organizations. These are some of the potential fruitful areas for future research.⁶⁶⁵ To be gained is a better understanding not only of

⁶⁶⁴ The example of the Bank's choice of UNICEF rather than UNESCO as a preferred partner in education illustrates this dynamic. UNESCO's resource scarcity renders it eager to cooperate with the financially affluent Bank. Alternatively, the WB's need to enhance its reputation drives it to avoid a discredited organization like UNESCO – in turn implying reduced chances for the latter to partner.

⁶⁶⁵ I am referring here to the study of partnerships as applied to international organizations specifically. There is an ample literature on inter-organizational associations more generally (for a review see for instance: Oliver 1990; Faulkner and De Ron 2000).

the rationale behind IO behavior but also of the configuration of global governance as embodied in the network of interactions among international agencies.

GENERAL TRENDS

Beyond the unevenness given by the longitudinal and cross-case variation described so far, a general trend can be identified for the whole UN system of organizations in terms of inter-IO relations. The overall tendency over the last few decades has been one of a perceptible rise in partnerships and inter-agency coordination and cooperation mechanisms.⁶⁶⁶ UN agencies have been argued, for instance, to be increasingly aligning their operational activities behind the unifying substantive framework given by the Millennium Development Goals, and to be achieving a greater degree of rationalization at the country level.⁶⁶⁷ Similarly, following the UN reforms of the 1990s, the specialized agencies have been depicted as being more oriented to the whole UN system.⁶⁶⁸

In what follows, I will show that my resource-based argument can be safely extended to apply to the whole UN system and thereby it can explain this overarching tendency towards increased associations. This represents an extra test for the IO behavior model I have advanced. Moreover, one of my main challenges to the external determinants' explanations of IO behavior presented in chapter 2 – the 'efficiency' and the 'states demands' accounts – was that, given their focus on factors common to all UN-IOs, they could not account for the cross-case variation

⁶⁶⁶ While distinguishable, the rise in inter-organizational relations in the UN has still proved moderate and uneven. This has been the result, on the one hand, of the variations across agencies described in previous chapters. On the other hand, it also derives from the ever present tension in organizations between the desire for autonomy and the need to associate with others so as to obtain critical resources.

⁶⁶⁷ Ruggie 2003, 305 and 307.

⁶⁶⁸ Karns and Mingst 2004, 138.

identifiable in the proclivity of different agencies to partner. In this sense, analyzing a system-wide outcome allows me to contest these alternative explanations in their own terms.

My resource-based argument retains its explicative capacity when applied to the general trend towards increasing associations in the UN. As I have explained, UN organizations were initially established to address the world many maladies along functional sectors, such as education or health. Each agency was accordingly assigned both authority and responsibility over a domain of activity, which further offered the organization a basis for claiming legitimacy and support. In its first decades of existence, the UN system experienced a period of prosperity in terms of both material and symbolic capital. Each sovereign in an clearly-defined issue-area, UN agencies had an uncontested basis to receive support and funding. As the ILO case illustrates: in such “unfettered environment, ILO officials could expand the organization’s lawmaking and monitoring powers with little risk that states would shift their support to a competing organization.”⁶⁶⁹ The prosperity experienced in this first period – together with the growing complexity of international issues – led UN organizations to expand their activities, incorporating new tasks and topics of concern, while concomitantly growing in size. Expansionism led in turn to overlap and duplication of activities, which further prompted competitive pressures among UN organizations for resources and domains: “IOs faced little competition in the 1950s and 60s. It was an expansionary era for IOs (...) During the 1990s the environment for IOs has become much more competitive.”⁶⁷⁰ During this period, many new international organizations were also established, and “the growing number of IOs and INGOs within a given transnational sector increases uncertainty, competition, and insecurity for all

⁶⁶⁹ Helfer 2006, 725.

⁶⁷⁰ Kapur 2000: 13-14.

organizations in that sector.”⁶⁷¹ The crowding of issue-areas was combined in the last decades with periodic and ever growing resource crises affecting the UN. In recent times, funding decreased and criticism of the world body augmented. In the 1980s, financial cutbacks took the form of a zero-budget growth policy introduced by important donors. By the late 1990s, the ‘donor fatigue’ was palpable as “the UN faced by far its most serious financial crisis.”⁶⁷² In terms of symbolic capital, for instance, “[t]he first half of the 1980s were characterized by a deepening political and administrative credibility gap for the [UN] Organization.”⁶⁷³

As the foregoing description suggests, the environment of UN-IOs has crucially changed over the last decades. In terms of resources, the variation has been towards a decrease in the availability of resources, both material and symbolic. As I have argued, the effects of the environment differ across organizations, depending on the asset situation of each particular agency. Past such variation, however, the widespread scarcity experienced in recent times by the whole UN system has had, to a greater or lesser extent, repercussions in all its constituent units. Accordingly, the ever growing resource crisis has – interestingly enough – been accompanied by an increase in collaboration. To be sure, scarcity and overlap have also inspired competition among agencies. As I will explain in the next section, however, competition is not necessarily mutually-exclusive with partnerships and indeed both competition and collaboration often cohabit in inter-organizational relations. The point I wish to highlight here is that a decline in resources has coincided with an increase in partnerships. And in fact, as my argument suggests, the two events are causally tied together. Confronted to a resource situation of augmented scarcity and vulnerability, UN agencies have increasingly made use of partnerships as a means of

⁶⁷¹ Cooley and Ron 2002, 6.

⁶⁷² Karns and Mingst 2004, 135.

⁶⁷³ Nordic UN Project 1991, 28.

garnering needed assets. This has been so in two ways. On the one hand, after experiencing ‘donor fatigue’ from traditional sources – namely member states – IOs have turned to their cohorts as alternative suppliers of assets. On the other hand, given that the resource crisis coincided with an intensified reform push to increase inter-agency coordination and collaboration, UN-IOs could also obtain assets such as legitimacy and reputation – and by extension also funds – by carrying out a ‘laudable’ activity. And ultimately, “[a]s an increasing number of organizations adopt a program or policy, it becomes progressively institutionalized, or widely understood to be a necessary component of rationalized organizational structure.”⁶⁷⁴

Alternatively, the efficiency-based explanation presented in chapter 2 can be seen as also fitting the overall tendency among UN agencies to increasingly partner. Recent years have seen major reform proposals for redesigning the United Nations and aimed at addressing perceived shortcomings such as tasks overlap and redundancy, and at increasing efficiency. A central element in this pro-efficiency effort has been the push towards greater inter-agency coherence. While the case can be made that greater harmonization is neither desirable nor more efficient,⁶⁷⁵ there seems to be an implied understanding – as reflected in the orientation of UN reform plans – that coordination and inter-agency collaboration are more cost-effective than separate action by UN-IOs. In line with this assumption, it may be argued that the resort to partnerships has increased in the UN simply because they represent a more efficient way of operating. Indeed, the efficiency and effectiveness discourse is generally present in statements by the agencies on increased coordination and collaboration.

⁶⁷⁴ Tolbert and Zucker 1983, 35.

⁶⁷⁵ For example: Haas 2004, 3.

The growing number of inter-organizational links can be also attributed to states' requests to increase system-wide coherence and the associated push in that direction undertaken by the UN central administration. To be noted, however, some authors have emphasized the ambiguous character of states' demands, suggesting that, while officially favoring greater coordination in the UN system, member states also undertake certain practices that promote independence and competition among the agencies.⁶⁷⁶ If the claim about 'mixed' or 'contradictory' demands by states is accepted, then the argument that the general trend in IO behavior is a direct response to the wishes of states lends itself to a retrospective definition of states' preferences and to post hoc and circular inferences. That is: if IOs cooperate, the assumption is that those were the 'true' wishes of states; if IOs do not partner, then such is taken to be the actual states' demands. If the 'real' preferences of states cannot be determined a priori, then it results impossible to know whether IOs are following such wishes or not. Alternatively, the assumption may be made that states do increasingly favor the development of inter-organizational relations. As I have stated before, that is at least the official position of member states and the orientation adopted by the UN administration in its reform plans of the last two decades. If this alternative premise is accepted, then the general increase in partnerships in the UN system can indeed be attributed to states demands.

The problem with these two alternative explanations is that, even when they show a correlation between their explanatory factor and the system-wide trend, the causal explanation of the longitudinal change towards such outcome remains weak. In what concerns the efficiency-based argument, the claim that partnerships are adopted simply because they represent a superior way of running operations – a static feature – does not allow for longitudinal change. The

⁶⁷⁶ See for instance: Ruggie 2003.

argument then needs to be that inter-organizational coordination is *now perceived* as superior, and ergo it is being increasingly espoused by agencies. Still, for this latter line of reasoning, the explanation needs to rely on the push to increase system-wide coherence as the observable materialization of a growing zeitgeist matching teamwork with efficiency. Yet again, while intensified in recent years, the drive has been a constant feature in the UN. Indeed, since its inception, the operational side of the United Nations has materialized as a “complex and horizontally segmented mix of agencies, funds, programs that comprised the ‘system’.”⁶⁷⁷ Within this context, the “[c]o-ordination of the Agencies’ activities was identified at a very early stage of the UN’s history as one which was causing difficulty.”⁶⁷⁸ A feature that has been relatively constant over the years does not offer a strong basis for explaining longitudinal variation.⁶⁷⁹ Adding a complication to the efficiency-based account is the fact that “IOs almost always justify their reforms on the grounds that these changes will make them more efficient and effective at their tasks and better able to serve their constituencies.”⁶⁸⁰ An extensive use of the efficiency discourse makes it hard to determine when cost-effectiveness is actually driving IO behavior.

Similar limitations affect the ‘states demands’ argument. To argue that UN agencies are coordinating and collaborating because member states want them to requires observable evidence of an a priori preference on the part of states towards such outcome. On its part, the claim that IOs receive ‘mixed messages’ regarding partnerships from states does not allow for a clear pre-definition of what the actual preference of states is in this respect. Otherwise, proof that states favor partnerships is to be found mainly in the ‘official’ push to increase system-wide coherence

⁶⁷⁷ Luck 2003, 17.

⁶⁷⁸ Williams 1987, 106.

⁶⁷⁹ For this reason, I argue instead that the pro-partnerships zeitgeist constitutes rather a ‘permitting’ factor.

⁶⁸⁰ Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 163.

– as embodied in reform efforts headed by the UN core administration. Here again, the problem is that this drive has been relatively constant over time, and therefore cannot explain the longitudinal increase in inter-agency associations. And to the extent they have recently intensified, reform pressures themselves have not signified such a drastic change in the agencies' situation as, for instance, the resource crisis depicted above. Finally, the recent strengthening of the reform process can itself be said to respond in part to the crisis concomitantly experienced by the UN. States can also be argued to assert their preference – for e.g. favoring less overlap and duplication – through resource cutbacks, which in turn lead agencies to follow states and increase teamwork. If this is the case, however, the basis for IO action is still to be found in the struggle for assets, and only *indirectly* on states demands.

Indeed, this is precisely my contention regarding the influence of states over IO behavior – namely, that it is indirect and exercised mainly through the control of resources needed by international agencies. The impetus for IO behavior is the search for critical resources, and states' demands have an effect on IOs insofar as they are attached to the 'power of the purse'. In this way, "contributions (whether regular, voluntary or ad hoc) to the various UN organizations are the principal steering and control instruments at the member states' disposal."⁶⁸¹ IOs do what helps them obtain and maintain relevant assets and this sometimes coincides with what states want – particularly since states constitute an important source of capital for IOs. Still, the fact that there is an in-between factor shaping IO behavior and separating it from states' demands is crucial in at least two ways. First, it reveals that IOs constitute indeed purposive actors driven by strategic needs, as opposed to passive servants responding straightforwardly to states' commands. Second, it shifts the emphasis of the analysis from the coincidence between what IOs

⁶⁸¹ Nordic UN Project 1991, 91.

do and what states want to the action of international agencies itself – thereby allowing for a more accurate and complete understanding of IOs and their conduct.

In this manner, my argument contemplates the option that IO behavior be consistent with states demands. It further acknowledges the centrality of states in the life of IOs and the possibility of the former exercising control over the latter. My analytical framework, however, explores the rationale for IO behavior as *independent* from states directives, and looks at the variables and dynamics at work when such factor is kept constant. So as to neutralize states' demands, I have chosen for my analysis of IO behavior all organizations pertaining to the UN system. Moreover, my focus has been on inter-organizational relations, which constitute in the UN a 'universal' type of request from states – that is, they are expected from all constituting agencies. Finally, the push favoring system-wide coherence has been, to a lesser or greater extent, a constant feature in the UN system – as the creation of an 'Advisory Committee on Coordination' as early as 1946 testifies. Leaving states' demands momentarily aside, I have been able to identify the core factors driving IO behavior: the strategic struggle for vital resources. In this way, my analysis serves as a demonstration that "[e]ven where the IO did adopt policies favored by states, however, we must remember that correlation is not causation. IOs and states can arrive at similar policies but for very different reasons."⁶⁸²

Overall, my resource-based argument proves superior to the mentioned alternative explanations in that it not only accounts for the general trend in the UN regarding partnerships but also, as the preceding chapters have demonstrated, it can further explain the more fine variations across cases and along time within the experience of each IO, as well as the respective choices of partners.

⁶⁸² Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 11.

FINAL REFLECTIONS AND REMARKS

The present dissertation has brought together three topics of analysis: IO behavior; inter-organizational relations; and the UN system. This section includes a number of closing observations and inferences that are expected to contribute to the study of international politics by shedding light on each of the mentioned themes.

For the understanding of international organizations, my analysis has added proof to the fact that IOs constitute indeed purposive and strategic actors, and that their relevant environment and behavior are shaped by elements other than – the usually stressed – member states. In this way, I have seconded and added my contribution to the variant of IR studies which postulates that IOs are autonomous actors in world politics and that their behavior does not emanate directly from states demands.⁶⁸³ I have shown that the factor driving IO actions is the struggle for critical resources rather than states' directives. By looking at the strategic aspect of alliance formation and by analyzing the selection of partners, I have further uncovered the element of 'choice' in the behavior of IOs, thereby validating their conceptualization as purposive agents. I have also moved a step forward by investigating IO behavior per se, thus avoiding its characterization purely along the lines of whether it matches or not states' wishes. Finally, my analysis has moreover attested to the fact that there are other actors besides member states that can significantly affect IOs, such as NGOs, the private sector, and other IOs – the last being the point of focus here.

For my analysis of inter-organizational relations, I have taken a resource-based approach. The focus on assets has allowed me to grasp the strategic dimension of IO behavior. It also reveals a series of interesting facts about associations themselves. First, as I have mentioned,

⁶⁸³ See for instance: Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Barnett and Coleman 2005.

there is an ever present tension in organizations between the desire for autonomy on the one hand, and the need to partner in order to obtain critical resources on the other. While complete independence would be fostered by the possession of all needed resources, no organization is self-sufficient. IOs therefore enter alliances to obtain needed capital, and in so doing become dependent on the partner providing such assets. Curiously enough, however, associations may signify greater independence too. While losing some autonomy with respect to its associate, the partnering organization may retain or even increase its independence vis-à-vis other actors. In other words, for an organization, “[p]articipation in joint activities with other organizations may mean some loss of control over resources and programs, but at the same time, it may also mean more power relative to the larger environment within which it operates.”⁶⁸⁴ In the case of IOs, for instance, an increase in collaborative links with other IOs, NGOs or private organizations would lead international agencies to become more dependent on these actors for resources. Still, “[t]he fact that there are alternative sources from which a needed service can be obtained is a ... condition that fosters independence.”⁶⁸⁵ Accordingly, partnerships with other organizations can also allow IOs to gain greater autonomy with respect to member states – their traditional ‘masters’ – by making agencies less reliant on them for funds and support.

As the preceding discussion implies, inter-organizational partnerships, like all relations, are permeated by power. An actor that controls resources needed by others has power over them: “[i]n organizations as in other social systems, power organizes around critical and scarce resources.”⁶⁸⁶ I have concentrated throughout this dissertation on an occurrence belonging to the initial phase of partnership formation – the proclivity of organizations to collaborate. Once

⁶⁸⁴ Rogers and Mulford 1982, 88.

⁶⁸⁵ Blau 1964, 119.

⁶⁸⁶ Pfeffer and Salancik 1978, 259.

established, associations unravel in multiple dynamics. Among them, the differential power of participating organizations engenders hierarchies and dependencies.⁶⁸⁷ Similarly, I have focused here on collaborative links, yet both conflict and cooperation coexist in inter-organizational relationships.⁶⁸⁸ Partnerships do not necessarily rule out competition and conflict. Within an alliance, organizations may battle, for instance, over the division of labor. Within the broader inter-organizational system as structured through partnerships, organizations may compete to obtain a leadership position and to become a focal point for associations. Moreover, partnerships can also occur among rivals. Sharing and exchanging assets with a competitor may make sense for an organization to the extent that such action creates a dependence on the part of the recipient, and places the more resourceful partner in a position of power. Alternatively, if the organization needs vital resources that another controls, partnering represents a tool for obtaining critical assets and for managing the associated dependency. In this sense, partnerships and rivalry are not mutually exclusive events.

As derived from my analysis, the struggle for resources itself combines both an aspect of competition and one of collaboration. In a scenario that combines a crowded organizational milieu and scarce resources, competition and “[i]nterorganizational discord [are] a predictable outcome of existing material incentives.”⁶⁸⁹ Endemic ‘turf wars’ among UN agencies are often cited,⁶⁹⁰ and the resource crisis experienced by the UN in the last decades can be argued to have

⁶⁸⁷ On power and associations see for instance: Blau 1964; Cook 1977. On dependencies and inter-organizational relations see for example: Pfeffer and Salancik 1978.

⁶⁸⁸ Alter and Hage 1993, 50.

⁶⁸⁹ Cooley and Ron 2002, 17.

⁶⁹⁰ For instance: Paul, James. 2006. UN Reform: An Analysis. *Global Policy Forum*. Available from: <http://www.globalpolicy.org/reform/analysis.htm>

exacerbated them.⁶⁹¹ However, inter-organizational collaboration has also ensued from such context of resource scarcity. Two reflections derived from my argument explain this seemingly counter-intuitive outcome. First, organizations vary in their resource strengths and weaknesses. From there it follows that each will be affected in its own way – according to its asset situation – by the context of scarcity, and that the resource needs will be different in each case too. Second, IOs see other IOs – those more affluent and less affected by the crisis in a given type of capital – as potential sources of assets. Confronted with a decline in the availability of resources from traditional sources – states – IOs resort to partnerships with other IOs as an alternative path for reaching needed assets. As follows, resource scarcity breeds competition, but it can also foster collaboration between IOs.

Finally, regarding the United Nations, this dissertation represents a closer look at the dynamics of governance pertaining to the ‘system’. Concerning the internal politics of the UN, an analysis comparing the world body to a medieval kingdom suggests and wonders: “nothing has changed in the long relationship between the king [the Secretary General] and the barons [the specialized agencies], and yet something has changed because the barons are now seen to be more cooperative and willing to go along with the king’s wishes. What explains this apparent anomaly?”⁶⁹² My analysis presents a possible answer to this question, as it examines the proclivity of individual agencies to partner with their cohorts and to thereby become more integrated into the system. Moreover, as a whole, the operational side of the UN is constituted by

⁶⁹¹ The reasoning is that “[i]f the pool of resources in the community is suddenly decreased while the number of agencies remains the same or increases, then the agencies’ competition for funds should increase.” (Litwak and Hylton 1962, 403). Over time, the UN organizational environment has become ever more crowded – with new bodies and with many of its agencies having expanded their structure and activities. Combined with the resource crisis the UN has also been increasingly experiencing, the argument may be advanced that competition is likely to ensue.

⁶⁹² McLaren 2001, 317.

the aggregate and collective behavior of a group of separate yet interrelated organizations, and “the common system machinery is itself based on voluntary cooperation and mutual interest: it is pluralistic, decentralized and non-coercive.”⁶⁹³ From there it follows that the predominant governance structure and the overall output of the UN system as a whole will significantly depend on the extent to which constituent units link-up with each other, as well as of the character and pattern of such interaction. In helping explain the rationale behind the inclination of individual agencies to partner, my analysis is also contributing to the understanding of how the United Nations system – more generally – works. Indeed, partnerships and networks are becoming a common currency in the management of international affairs. As Ruggie suggests for the UN: the system “has generated highly innovative responses to the challenges posed by globalization (...) These novel approaches engage social actors other than states in promoting and implementing UN principles and roles, they involve the extensive use of networked forms of organizations.”⁶⁹⁴ Global governance is ever more structured as a network of partnering organizations. In view of this, the value of carefully looking at inter-organizational relations as applied to international agencies should be apparent.

⁶⁹³ Beigbeder 1997, 37.

⁶⁹⁴ Ruggie 2003, 317.

ANNEX B: PARTICIPATION OF SELECTED IOS IN UN INTER-AGENCY MECHANISMS

(MEMBERSHIP COUNT)

Inter-Agency Mechanism	UNICEF	UNESCO	WFP	WB
Alliance Against Hunger	X		X	
Chief Executive Board of Coordination (CEB)	X	X	X	X
Codex Alimentarius			X	
Ecosystem Conservation Group		X		X
Education for All (EFA)	X	X	(X)	X
Environmental Management Group	X	X	X	X
Focusing Resources on Effective School Health (FRESH)	X	X		X
Global Alliance for Vaccine and Immunization (GAVI)	X			X
Global Compact				
Global Migration Group (before: Geneva Migration Group)				X
Global Network on Energy and Sustainable Development				
Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health	X			X
High Level Committee on Management (HLCM)	X	X	X	X
High Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP)	X	X	X	X
Inter-Agency Committee on Bioethics		X		
Inter-Agency Consultative Group on Secondary Education Reform and Youth Affairs	X	X		X
Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE)	X	X		X
Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE)	X	X	X	X
Inter-Agency Procurement Service Office (IAPSO)	X	X	X	X
Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) - Humanitarian			X	(X)
Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction		X	X	X
Inter-Agency Working Group on Evaluation (IAWG)	X	X	X	X
International Programme on Chemical Safety				
Inter-Organizational Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals				(X)
Roll Back Malaria Partnerships	X			X

Inter-Agency Mechanism	UNICEF	UNESCO	WFP	WB
UN Counter Terrorism Implementation Task Force		X		X
UN Development Group (UNDG)	X	X	X	(X)
UN Forum on Forests				X
UN Fund for International Partnerships	X	X	X	X
UN Geographic Information Working Group	X	X	X	X
UN Girls Education Initiative (GEI)	X	X	X	X
UN Information and Communication Technology Task Force (UNICT-TF)		X		X
UN Public Administration Network	X	X	X	X
UN Secretary General Youth Employment Network	X	X		X
UN Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN)	X	X	X	X
UN System Network on Rural Development and Food Security	X	X	X	X
UN System-Wide Earthwatch Coordination	X	X	X	X
UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC)	X		X	X
UN Task Force on Indigenous Women	X			
UNAIDS (Committee of Co-Sponsoring Organizations)	X	X	X	X
UN-Energy		X		X
UN-Oceans		X		X
UN-Road Safety	X		X	X
UN-Water	X	X		X
Inter-Agency Committee on Radiation Safety				
Inter-Agency Task Force on Tobacco Control	X	X		X
UN Inter-Agency Coordination Committee on Human Rights Education in School Systems (UNIACC)	X	X		X
Total # Memberships (out of 47)	31	31	23	39*

Note: The 'X' stands for 'member' and the '(X)' means 'observer status'.

* Or 36 without 'observer' status.

Source: Information collected from the Official Website Locator for the UN System of Organizations (at: <http://www.unsystem.org/>), as well as from a background document on UN system organizations prepared by the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence (listed in the References under the Panel's name).

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