

# Seeing the Unseen

## Leadership and Culture in the UN organizations

The study of institutional changes in the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees,  
the Secretariat of the World Health Organization and the Office of the International Labor  
Organization

**Maciej J. Bartkowski**

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this book is straightforward. It shows how the leadership and culture in the UN organizations matter. The study considers major institutional changes that occurred in the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Secretariat of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Office of the International Labor Organization (ILO) during the last decade under a particular executive head. While problematizing the leadership and cultural variables the study shows how the process of change implementation and its eventual outcome are determined. The analysis offers a detailed description of the leadership styles of particular executive heads and specific types of professional cultures inside the organizations. It explains how the identified leadership styles and types of professional culture generate a radical or a more subdued process and outcome of institutional change. The ‘mini case studies’ of WIPO, UNICEF and WFP inserted into this book reinforce the main arguments of the study

The book fills a significant knowledge gap that exists in the international relations (IR) literature and the academic work on international organizations (IOs) regarding the internal dynamics of the UN organizations. A combined impact of leadership and culture variables on the IOs’ behavior has been generally disregarded in the IR studies that are mainly focused on the impact of external factors on the IOs such as states, their representatives or international environment. This study brings leadership and, especially, cultural variables into open and suggests that behavior of the IOs and their administrations cannot be fully understood unless one goes beyond a narrow, state-centric, view of international relations. Finally, each empirical case study makes a significant contribution to the existing but relatively scarce knowledge about the internal workings of the particular UN agencies and their administrations: UNHCR, WHO and ILO and to a certain extent World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and World Food Program (WFP).

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## Chapter 1:

### **Analytical Introduction: studying the impact of leadership and culture on institutional change in IOs**

This chapter intends to reach three essential aims. First of all, it aspires to clarify the reasons for selecting a particular topic, given variables and specified case studies. Secondly it aims to define, conceptualize and operationalize the main concepts and arguments that will help a reader to navigate through this book. Finally, it wants to describe the research methods and show the practical difficulties in studying the inner workings of the permanent administrations of intergovernmental organizations.

#### *1.1 Analytical puzzle and research questions*

##### *1.1.1 Change and resistance to it*

The underlying premises of this book are that change in organizations is omnipresent, while resistance to it is robust. In fact, never before have so many social organizations embarked on so many institutional changes; yet an internal organizational resistance to such changes continues to be powerful. Although changes become a daily occurrence in the organization's life, there are still strong, organizationally built-in mechanisms that hinder the process and outcome of change. The organizations' bureaucracies resist changes because of their habit-driven behavior, aversion to risk-taking, and fear of greater uncertainties associated with change and its implementation. At the same time, the organizations are strongly interested in change as a way to survive in the competitive environment and oftentimes manage to overcome an internal resistance towards change in favor of the process of organizational reinvention. It is thus equally puzzling *how to account for the fact that a particular change is or is not implemented and under which conditions a given change is or is not carried out.*

Change becomes more perplexing if one considers public organizations or large and complex international administrations of intergovernmental organizations (IOs). The latter happen to be even more resistant to change than the national private and public enterprises due to the fact that they are generally further away from the market forces and the citizens' calls for greater accountability and efficiency. In his study on the leadership in IOs, Robert Cox, a scholar and international civil servant, discusses a bureaucratic *immobilisme* inside international administrations. Cox states that this immobilisme is reinforced by a long-term tenure and legally enforceable internal regulations - the very factors that were designed to

support independence of the international civil service in the face of the constant attempts to politicize international administrations by the states.<sup>1</sup> Shanks, Jacobson and Kaplan conducted a comprehensive analysis – one of this kind available - on the fluctuation in the “population” of intergovernmental organizations. Published in 1996, the analysis revealed that between 1981-1992 one third (335) of the total number of IOs ‘died’, often because of their inability to change. More importantly, those that survived persisted not because they introduced specific changes in functions, programs or structure, but mainly because they were successful in enlarging their membership.<sup>2</sup> Thus, it is puzzling that *if international organizations and, in particular, their international administrations have a powerful inertia, how can the process of change inside international administrations, as well as its eventual outcome, be accounted for?*

#### *1.1.4 Specifying analytical research questions*

The book is not interested in explaining why a given policy choice was made or what were the factors (or actors and their motivations) that initiated change as these issues have been explored to a certain degree in previous studies. This book will take a leap forward and focus on no less challenging and more neglected aspects of institutional change in international organizations, namely, *implementation* processes and *outcomes* of these processes.

Consequently, *the analytical questions* of this book are: How was the contents of a given institutional change (reform) implemented, or what, who and why determined the implementation process of the proposed institutional change (reform)? Why did the process of implementation lead to a particular outcome of institutional change (reform)? Or more precisely, why was the outcome of a given institutional change (reform) different from or similar to its earlier envisioned results?

#### *1.2 Analytical and empirical conceptualization of change*

##### *1.2.1 Defining institutional change and types of change*

In this book, institutional change is understood as a programmatic and structural shift in the substantive (mandate-related) activities of an international administration. This book

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<sup>1</sup> Robert W. Cox, The Executive Head: An Essay on Leadership in International Organization, *International Organization*, vol.23, no.2 (Spring 1969): 217.

<sup>2</sup> Cheryl Shanks, Harold K. Jacobson and Jeffrey H. Kaplan, Inertia and Change in the Constellation of International Governmental Organizations, 1981-1992, *International Organization*, vol.50, no.4 (Autumn 1996): 594, 599 and 621. These quite unexpected findings prompted the authors to note that international organizations “do have a mortality rate, (which) can be surprisingly high.” Shanks *et al.* (1996): 594.



makes a distinction between two main opposing types of processes and outcomes of institutional changes. First type is a conservative outcome of change called *accommodation*, which is derived from an *accommodative* process. Second type is a radical change named *transformation* determined by a *transformative* process. Any change and its outcome falling in between two earlier-mentioned extreme poles will be viewed as *semi-transformation* generated by a *semi-transformative* process—a moderate process and outcome of change.

For the purpose of this book, the following definitions of processes and outcomes of change are offered:

An *accommodative* process stands for an incremental and distorted implementation of change. *Accommodation* is the outcome of an accommodative process of change that does not question the concept of causation, which defines the organization's tasks and functions. Consequently, organizational mandate and objectives remain the same while the organizational means change in order to better implement the stated goals.<sup>3</sup> Accommodation in international organization has a limited impact; it affects only some technical or programmatic units and does not bring about a considerable rise in the profile, public visibility or competitiveness of the whole organization.

A *transformative* process is characterized by a rapid and undistorted implementation of change. *Transformation* is the outcome of a transformative process of change that questions basic beliefs, which, until now, have been prevalent and determined a selection of means in an organization.<sup>4</sup> Transformation is a comprehensive change that affects a major part (or every part) of the substantive work of the organization and can involve a shift in organization's mandate. Such change can bring about a dramatic reallocation of financial and human resources, can cause an increase in the size of the budget and/or staff, and can amplify visibility and relevance of the organization for the outside actors.

A *semi-transformative* process of change is rapid but partly distorted. *Semi-transformation* is the outcome of a semi-transformative process or a limited revolutionary change that is more profound than accommodation but not yet transformation.

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<sup>3</sup> This definition of accommodation reflects the concept of adaptation within international organization as defined by Ernst B. Haas, *When Knowledge is Power. Three Models of Change in International Organizations*, University of California Press (Berkeley 1990): 36.

<sup>4</sup> This definition of transformation resembles the concept of learning within international organization as presented by Haas (1990): 36.

### *1.2.2 Identifying change in the case studies*

This book concentrates on the most important institutional changes that took place in the 1990s in three different United Nations organizations: the International Labor Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The changes were implemented under the leadership of particular executive heads: Director General Michel Hansenne in the ILO, Director General Gro Harlem Brundtland in the WHO and Sadako Ogata in the UNHCR. Because not all leaders (e.g. Brundtland) remained in office for more than one term only the change initiated and implemented during the first office term was considered. This helped to avoid a possible analytical incoherence.

Three organizations embarked on the following major institutional changes in the 1990s:

- a) Humanitarian Agenda promoted by Ogata from 1991,
- b) Making a Difference initiative pushed by Brundtland from 1998,
- c) Active Partnership Policy launched by Hansenne in 1993.

Ogata, Brundtland and Hansenne implemented their own ideas of change with a hope of radically transforming the workings of their organizations. The underlying assumption of all initiated changes was swift and comprehensive transformation of how a given organization worked. The implementation of changes and their final outcomes however varied from organization to organization. The process of change in the Office of the High Commissioner was rapid and undistorted; the outcome of Humanitarian Agenda was considered transformational as it involved a dramatic shift in the way the organization carried out its core tasks and brought about an expansion of the organization's mandate. The process of change in the Secretariat of the WHO was rapid and partly distorted. The outcome of Making a Difference was somewhat closer to transformation but, at the same time, fell short of a full-blown, comprehensive organizational overhaul as it was initially hoped for. Therefore, the change in the WHO is considered semi-transformational. Finally, the process of change in the Office of the ILO turned out to be incremental, and distorted. The result of change differed greatly from earlier expectations about its impact. The outcome of Active Partnership Policy corresponded with accommodation because it turned out to have a limited influence on the Office and its substantive work (see **Table 1** below).

### 1.3 Empirical research questions and puzzles

#### 1.3.1 Specifying empirical research questions

In connection with the identified changes in the analyzed organizations, this study introduces the following *empirical questions*:

- The UNHCR-related research questions: How was the change, Humanitarian Agenda, implemented? More precisely, why was the process of change rapid and undistorted (transformative), and why was the Humanitarian Agenda implemented successfully (occurred transformation) in accordance with the previously articulated radical ideas of change (predicted transformation)?
- The WHO-related research questions: How was the change, Making a Difference, implemented? More precisely, why was the process of change rapid but distorted (semi-transformative), and why was the outcome of Making a Difference radical but not quite accomplished (occurred semi-transformation) despite the earlier envisioned revolutionary change (predicted transformation)?
- The ILO-related research questions: How were the contents of Active Partnership Policy implemented? More precisely, why was the process of change incremental and distorted (accommodative), and why did the outcome of Active Partnership Policy (occurred accommodation) fall short of earlier envisioned far-reaching change (predicted transformation)?

**Table 1**

| 'Units' of analysis                                      | Office of the High Commissioner                               | Secretariat of the WHO   | Office of the ILO   |
|--|---|--|---|
| <b>Contents</b> of proposed change/policy choice         | Humanitarian Agenda   | Making a Difference  | Active Partnership Policy   |
| <b>Predicted impact</b> of proposed change/policy choice | Radical/transformation  | Radical/transformation   | Radical/transformation  |
| <b>Process</b> of change/policy choice implementation    | Transformative (rapid, undistorted)                           | Semi-transformative (rapid, partly distorted)  | Accommodative (incremental, distorted)                                    |
| <b>Outcome</b> of implemented change/policy choice       | Transformation<br>(outcome in sync with the predicted impact) | Semi-transformation<br>(outcome partly in sync and partly out of sync with the predicted impact) | Accommodation<br>(outcome entirely out of sync with the predicted impact) |

The above research questions indicate that the main dependent variables of this study are particular reforms (institutional changes) that were initiated in three selected organizations. Dependent variable in the UNHCR case is the institutional change identified as Humanitarian Agenda, in the WHO case, Making a Difference initiative, while in the ILO Active Partnership Policy. Explaining a specific process and outcome of these institutional changes will shed greater light on the organizational dynamics of particular agencies and their international administrations. As the **Table 1** illustrates, the inquiry about *why* the change was initiated in the first place has been, from the very beginning, placed outside the scope of this research.

### *1.3.2 Specifying empirical puzzles*

This study is informed by the specific empirical puzzles that are derived from the three empirical cases. A radical, humanitarian change in the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees at the beginning of the 1990s is seen in literature as the outcome of external forces. However, the World Food Program (WFP) and the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), operational agencies like UNHCR, which were surrounded by the same external forces, did not go through similarly radical humanitarian change.<sup>5</sup> *How then can such a fundamental change in UNHCR be accounted for while no other UN relief-oriented organizations had experienced it?* In the case of the reforms introduced in the WHO Secretariat at the end of the 1990s, the change has been described by many as a radical overhaul that transformed the organization from a moribund agency into a global leader in health. However, certain propositions that underpinned this change were, in practice, modified and their impact either mollified or augmented. Consequently, the final outcome is still radical but some of its elements were altered and subdued more than is usually acknowledged. *How then can the nearly but not quite fundamental as earlier planned process and outcome of change be accounted for?* In the study of the Office of the ILO the change initiated at the beginning of the 1990s was intended to be a radical overhaul of the Office's interactions with its constituents. However, during the process of change implementation the proposed contents of change were modified and the outcome fell short of the anticipated results. *How then can such a difference between a projected impact of the proposed change, on the one hand, and the process of change and its eventual outcome, on the other hand, be accounted for?*

This study is not so much puzzled about why there were differences in change implementation and the outcomes between three considered cases, which would necessitate taking a comparative approach. Instead, this analysis introduces three, self-standing and independent from one another, empirical puzzles and the answer to any of them is viewed as bringing a particular contribution to the knowledge about the workings of a specific institution. Therefore, what this book focuses on is why there were differences or for that matter similarities between a predicted change, on the one hand, and the process and outcome of change implementation, on the other hand, in a single organization and not across three case studies (see **Table 1**).

The answers to the analytical and empirical puzzles and questions are found in the endogenous aspects of the international organizations' lives, which are explained in greater detail in the next sections.

#### *1.4 Selecting leadership and culture*

##### *1.4.1 'Nested' approach to the analysis of change: bringing together culture and leadership*

While the organizational change is complex and contingent, it is desirable to find more parsimonious explanations for the phenomena under study. Consequently, the 'nested' approach is suggested as a relatively parsimonious analytical solution that lays a conceptual groundwork for explaining a multifaceted organizational change.

Behavior of organizations is determined, as the new institutionalists claim, by the *institutions*: rules, procedures, routines and common understandings.<sup>6</sup> The old institutionalists, on the other hand, see *people* inside the organization, particularly those in the positions of formal authority, as the main architects of the organizational behavior. In the context of the analysis on change in organization, the question derived from the old-new debate is whether the socially structured organizational environment can explain the process and the outcome of change or if it is necessary to look at the actions of individuals to account for the direction and the result of change?<sup>7</sup> It is essentially a structure vs. agency question. The answer to this question is found in the observation made by Richard Scott. He claims that the processes of change in organization

... are best examined by designs that incorporate multiple levels of analysis. ... Although every study cannot attend to all levels, analysts should be aware of them and craft designs to include

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<sup>5</sup> The detailed analysis of WFP and UNICEF activities at the beginning of the 1990s can be found in the Chapter 5, which addresses contending explanations.

<sup>6</sup> For an overview of the old and new institutionalism see B. Guy Peters, *Institutional Theory in Political Science. The New Institutionalism*, Pinter, (New York 1999).

<sup>7</sup> This question is a modified version of the structure-agency inquiry. See Peters (1999):34 and 35.

*critical actors* and *structures* engaged in maintaining and transforming institutions (emphasis added).<sup>8</sup>

Informed by the above comment, this study addresses the structure-agency question by combining both units of analysis: the institution and a critical actor. Such a combined analytical framework joins growing number of theoretical and empirical research in organizational studies that advocates a more integrated model for analyzing organizational change, which would include both elements of agency (individual action) and social construction (structure).<sup>9</sup>

More specifically, this study introduces a “nested” approach where the organization is seen as a symbiosis of interactions between structure (institution) and an agency (key individuals). This study sees the key actor as an autonomous unit, who comes to the organization from outside and is thus, at least at the beginning, not socialized within its structure and able to design actions independent from it. The interaction between the structure and the intended action of an agent only become important when the latter wants to see his action being implemented within a given institutional framework. Consequently, the “nested” approach takes into account the action of a key actor, who holds a formal position of the highest administrative authority in the organization and the independent impact of a socially constructed organizational structure. The structure takes a normative form of a professional culture, and the leadership of an executive head exemplifies the agency. As a result, the “nested” approach justifies bringing together variables that, at first (analytical) sight, look as if they were completely unrelated to one another.

The process and outcome of change in the international administration are thus seen as being determined by a normative organizational framework that constrains and enables particular activities (cultural variable) and by the action of a top manager shaped by his social skills or by the specific manner he relates to the people around him<sup>10</sup> (leadership

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<sup>8</sup> See Richard W. Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Sage Publications, (London 2001):203.

<sup>9</sup> For example: Peter Holm, The Dynamics of Institutionalization: Transformation Processes in Norwegian Fisheries, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol.40 (1995):398-422; Stephen R. Barley and Pamela S. Tolbert, Institutionalization and Structuration: Studying the Links between Action and Institutions, *Organization Studies*, vol.18, no.1 (1997): 93-117; Paul M. Hirsch and Michael Lounsbury, Ending the Family Quarrel: Towards a Reconciliation of “Old” and “New” Institutionalisms, *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol.40, no.4 (1997): 406-419; Royston Greenwood and C. R. Hinings, Understanding Radical Organizational Change: Bringing Together the Old and the New Institutionalism, *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 21, no. 4 (1996):1022-1054; Scott (London 2001): 196-197.

<sup>10</sup> In this study, the actions of critical actors are seen as being determined less by power considerations, resource capabilities or rational interests and more by the executives’ social skills of leading the people.

variable). In other words, the “nested” approach proposes a parsimonious analytical solution for explaining the process and outcome of institutional change by incorporating two basic organizational variables: professional culture and leadership, which typify the structure-agency dyad. As a result, this study makes a direct causal link between leadership and professional culture on the one hand, and the process and the outcome of changes in the selected UN organizations on the other hand. At the same time, this analysis does not disregard the possibility that particular changes may have been triggered by other, external or internal, factors. The elaboration that would focus on the *origin* of change is, however, outside the scope of this research that is interested in the *process* and *outcome* of change. This study assumes that the two internal organizational variables, professional culture and leadership, have a sound explanatory power that accounts for the implementation process and the outcome of changes in the selected UN organizations.

#### *1.4.2 Why leadership and culture?*

Leadership and culture are treated as independent variables because it is assumed that these factors matter in both the process of change implementation in an organization and in determining the outcome of change. More precisely, the selection of these variables over others has been justified on the grounds of their testability and refutability proven by previous organizational analyses.

The analytical rationale for the selection of cultural and leadership variables comes from various middle-range organizational theories, new institutionalisms, cultural organizational studies and the analytical approaches on organizational, national and international leaderships.<sup>11</sup> This rich literature has theorized the impact of the normative organizational embedment within various rules, procedures, habitual actions, commonly shared organizational meanings. Literature has also discussed the influence of key organizational actors on the functions and change of organizations. Consequently, in the existing literature, there are strong theoretical bases that provide a sound justification for considering culture and leadership as the main variables of this study.

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Although it is true that the motivations behind individual actions could be based on interests, resource or power, the way the actions are implemented and their final outcome depend on the leaders’ social skills of interacting with, motivating and leading the people or, in other words, on their styles of leadership.

<sup>11</sup> Among others, see Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision. Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, Second Edition, Longman (New York 1999); P. J. DiMaggio and W. W. Powell, *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, University of Chicago Press, (Chicago 1991); Edgar H. Schien, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, Jossey-Bass Publishers (San Francisco 1992); G. Hofstede, *Culture and Organizations: Software of the Mind*, McGraw Hill, (Maidenhead 1991); Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones, What Holds the Modern Company Together, *Harvard Business Review*, (November/December 1996); Oran

The empirical justification for selecting leadership and cultural variables lays in their independent powers to successfully survive numerous empirical tests focused largely on the domestic-level, public or private, institutions.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, there is rich empirical literature on IOs, which has successfully tested the independent powers and influence of international organizations as well as their administrations. The gathered evidence shows that IOs as well as their international administrations are not merely the tools of their masters; the member states and other constituents have lives of their own.<sup>13</sup>

The independent powers of IOs and their bureaucracies are reflected in a relatively large analytical and empirical literature on leadership of the executive heads of IOs and their

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Young, Political Leadership and Regime Formation: On the Development of Institutions in International Society, *International Organizations*, vol.45, no.3 (Summer 1991): 281-308.

<sup>12</sup> Institutional and organizational studies as well as management and public administration literature are saturated by the research on the impact of culture and the role of leadership in public and private organizations but on the national level while international public organizations are generally disregarded. Because of the richness of this literature only selected studies are mentioned here. On the impact of culture see: James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions. The Organizational Basis of Politics*, The Free Press, (New York 1989); DiMaggio and Powell (Chicago 1991); Edgar H. Schien, Culture: The Missing Concept in Organizational Studies, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol.41, no.2 (June 1996): 229-241; Karin Breu, The Role and Relevance of Management Cultures in the Organizational Transformation Process, *International Studies of Management & Organization*, vol. 31, no. 2 (Summer 2001); Ann Swidler, Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies, *American Sociological Review*, vol.51, (1986): 273-286; Articles on the organizational culture in NASA published after the disaster of the *Columbia* space shuttle: Kathy Sawyer and R. Jeffrey Smith, NASA's Culture of Certainty. Debate Was Muffled On Risks to Shuttle, *Washington Post*, March 2, 2003; Kenneth Chang and Richard A. Oppel, NASA Pressed on When Officials Learned of E-Mail About Shuttle, *New York Times*, February 28, 2003. On the role of leadership see: J.M. Burns, *Leadership*, Harper & Row, (New York 1978); B. M. Bass, *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations*, Free Press, (New York 1985). B. M. Bass, From Transactional to Transformational Leadership: Learning to Share the Vision, *Organizational Dynamics*, Vol. 18, (1990): 19-31; Colin Campbell and Jane Margaret Wyszomirski, *Executive Leadership in Anglo-American Systems*, University of Pittsburgh Press (Pittsburgh 1991); Kevin Theakston (ed.), *Bureaucrats and Leadership*, Macmillan (Basingstoke 2000).

<sup>13</sup> The empirical literature on the IO's autonomy includes, among others, Jon C. Pevehouse, Democracy from the Outside-In? Regional Organizations and the Transition to Democracy, *International Organization*, vol. 56, no.3 (Summer 2002): 515-49; Celeste A. Wallander, Institutional Assets and Adaptability: NATO After the Cold War, *International Organization*, vol. 54, no.4 (Autumn 2000): 705 –735; Martha Finnemore, International Organizations as Teachers of Norms: the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization and Science Policy, *International Organization*, vol. 47, no.4 (Autumn 1993): 565-597; Judith Goldstein, "International Institutions and Domestic Politics: GATT, WTO, and the Liberalization of International Trade," in Anne O. Krueger, *The WTO as an International Organization*, University of Chicago Press (Chicago 1998): 133-152; David Strang and Patricia Mei Yin Chang, The International Labor Organization and the Welfare State: Institutional Effects on National Welfare Spending, 1960-1980, *International Organization*, vol. 47, no.2 (Spring 1993):235-262; Jeffrey T. Checkel, International Institutions and Socialization, *ARENA Working Papers*, 1999/5.

For the literature on the autonomy of the secretariats of the IOs and their staff see: Ian Johnstone, The Role of the UN Secretary-General: The Power of Persuasion Based on Law, *Global Governance*, no.9 (2003): 441-458; Megens Ine, The Role of NATO's Bureaucracy in Shaping and Widening the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, in Bob Reinalda and Bertjan Verbeek, *Autonomous Policy Making by International Organizations*, Routledge (London 1998): 120-133; Hans Mouritzen, *The International Civil Service. A Study of Bureaucracy: International Organizations*, Dartmouth, (Brookfield 1990); Xu Yi-Chong and Patrick Weller, International Civil Servants: Important but Uninvestigated, unpublished paper.



impact on augmenting the IOs' autonomy vis-à-vis external actors.<sup>14</sup> The issue of organizational leadership in IR gained such a prominence that some scholars felt the need to engage in refuting its significance for explaining political and organizational developments.<sup>15</sup> In turn, the academic research on the role and the impact of the organizational culture in IOs has only recently gained an increasing significance. These studies however are largely confined to the empirical cases of international financial and economic institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development or the European Commission.<sup>16</sup>

The richness of the theoretical and empirical literature on culture and leadership in domestic private and public organizations constitutes a solid point of departure for this research. These studies show that the culture and leadership, as opposed to other factors such as states, powerful interest groups or international environment, indeed matter for the way the organizations work and evolve. These variables are ideal for transposition into the international level of analysis because of the strong testability they presented in studies on the domestic-level organizations. On the international level, the units of analysis are international administrations of IOs. There is already a considerable body of literature on leadership in IOs despite a prevailing emphasis on the power of states and the

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Cox was, for example, in the opinion that “the quality of executive leadership may prove to be the most critical single determinant of the growth in scope and authority of international organization” See, Cox (Spring 1969): 205. Others, who emphasized the impact of executive leaders on the workings of the IOs, included, among others: P. Sewell, *UNESCO and World Politics, Engaging in International Relations*, Princeton University Press (Princeton 1975): 286-287; Cox and Jacobson (1973); Michael G. Schechter, Leadership in International Organizations: Systemic, Organization and Personality Factors, *Review of International Studies*, vol.13 (1987):197-220; Kent J. Kille and Roger M. Scully, Executive Heads and the Role of Intergovernmental Organizations: Expansionist Leadership in the United Nations and the European Union, *Political Psychology*, vol.24, no.1 (2003):175-198; Ernst B. Haas, *Beyond the Nation-State: Functionalism and International Organization*, Stanford University Press, (Stanford 1964); Ryan C Hendrickson, Leadership at NATO: Secretary General Manfred Woerner and the Crisis in Bosnia, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 27, no.3 (September 2004): 508-527.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Andrew Moravcsik, A New Statecraft? Supranational Entrepreneurs and International Cooperation, *International Organization*, vol. 53, no.2 (1999): 267-306 and Andrew Moravcsik, Theory and Method in the Study of International Negotiation: A Rejoinder to Oran Young on 'A New Statecraft? Supranational Entrepreneurs and International Cooperation,' *International Organization*, vol. 53, no.4 (Autumn 1999): 811 – 814.

<sup>16</sup> Catherine Weaver and Ralf J. Leiteritz, “Our Poverty is a World Full of Dreams”: The World Bank’s Strategic Compact and the Tenacity of Organizational Culture, Unpublished paper. <http://www.isanet.org/noarchive/WeaverLeiteritzISA.html>; Antje Vetterlein, Change in International Organizations: Innovation or Adaptation? The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund - A Comparison of Organizational Cultures. Paper presented at the Workshop “Research Bank on the World Bank,” Budapest, 1-2 April, 2005. [http://www.ceu.hu/cps/eve/eve\\_wbank\\_program.htm](http://www.ceu.hu/cps/eve/eve_wbank_program.htm); Jarle Trondal, Martin Marcussen and Frode Veggeland, International Executives: Transformative Bureaucracies or Westphalian Orders? *European Integration online Papers*, vol.7, no.4 (2004): 1-16.

epiphenomenal nature of the IOs' work. Literature on the role of culture in IOs also exists although it is considerably limited.<sup>17</sup>

At the same time, the work that considers a joint impact of leadership and culture on functioning of IOs is non-existent. In order to increase the confidence in the explanatory power of chosen independent variables and strengthen empirically-based justification for their selection over other, systemic or state-focused, variables this study introduces additional stories that depict determinative role and impact of leadership and culture in IOs. The presented mini case studies are simplified analyses and do *not* problematize the concepts of culture and leadership but merely depict their influence. Consequently they do *not* embark on a complex analysis of the impact of different styles of leadership and types of culture on various kinds of institutional change that is the core theme of the main case studies on UNHCR, WHO and ILO.

Because of their relevance to addressing contending explanations two mini case studies of United Nations Children's Found (UNICEF) and the World Food Program (WFP) were included in Chapter Five. The cases showed determinative influence of organizational culture and/or leadership preferences on the choice of general programmatic direction that these two organizations made in the 1990s. The section below presents a separate mini case study of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) that provides a strong empirical justification for selecting leadership and cultural variables over other possible independent variables. More precisely, the mini case study explains an apparent passivity of WIPO in the face of a major take over by the World Trade Organization (WTO) of WIPO's mandated area of responsibility in the field of intellectual property rights in the first half of the 1990s.

#### *1.4.3 Mini case study of the impact of culture and leadership on the WIPO's policies*

In 1994, the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) was signed under the GATT (later WTO) framework. As a result, GATT/WTO incorporated under its structures the most substantive part of the intellectual property (IP) legislation, which had been under a sole responsibility of the World Intellectual Property

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<sup>17</sup> Literature on IOs and organizational culture, among others, includes Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore, *Rules for the World. International Organizations in Global Politics*, Cornell University Press (Ithaca 2004); Michael N. Barnett and Martha Finnemore, The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations, *International Organization*, vol.53, no.4 (Autumn 1999): 699-732; Catherine Weaver and Ralf J. Leiteritz, "Our Poverty is a World Full of Dreams": The World Bank's Strategic Compact

Organization (WIPO) since its creation at the end of the 1960s. This happened despite the fact that WIPO had the most extensive experience in working with intellectual property issues and seemed to be the most appropriate forum for strengthening the IP regime among other international organizations. WIPO had, for example, a wide expertise in specialized and technically sophisticated area of intellectual property law, larger membership (not all WTO—148— members are WIPO—182—members<sup>18</sup>) and a less politically charged atmosphere than WTO.<sup>19</sup>

The GATT/WTO incorporation of the intellectual property laws was a clear encroachment upon the competence of WIPO, which, up till then, had been the only intergovernmental organization with the mandate to enact laws on the IP rules. Furthermore, including the IP system under GATT/WTO meant that the WIPO rights to determine the nature and the contents of the IP regime independently from other international organizations were significantly curtailed, if not abolished altogether. Finally, the GATT/WTO overtake of the WIPO mandated areas of responsibility dissuaded the latter from continuing negotiations, underway since 1989, on the establishment of the dispute settlement mechanisms under its auspices.<sup>20</sup> Despite the fact that WIPO could have used its institutional advantage to defend vigorously its privileged position in the IP regime and argued against its core responsibilities being overtaken by another organization, WIPO voiced no public objection and offered no alternative solution. Essentially, WIPO remained surprisingly passive in the situation, which should have galvanized the organization to come up with counter-initiatives. Nothing like this happened. WIPO's relative passivity in the face of the GATT/WTO expansion becomes, however, less perplexing if one looks at the WIPO professional culture and the preferences of its long-serving Director General.

The professional culture of WIPO is driven by its mission, which stipulates the organization “to promote through international cooperation the creation, dissemination, use and protection of works of the human spirit (...).”<sup>21</sup> Consequently, the philosophy of work of WIPO and its secretariat is essentially based on inspirational and voluntary approach toward promotion of the IP regime. This organization's policy suppressed an alternative, compliance-based and rule-enforcement approach towards the IP system. Inspirational and

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and the Tenacity of Organizational Culture, Unpublished paper.  
<http://www.isanet.org/noarchive/WeaverLeiteritzISA.html>.

<sup>18</sup> The figures are from February 2005.

<sup>19</sup> Edward Kwakwa, Some Comments on Rulemaking at the World Intellectual Property Organization, *Duke Journal of Comparative and International Law*, vol.12 (2001): 185.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

voluntary culture is reflected in the WIPO administration's belief that a legal protection of the IP rights is first of all the responsibility of the states. According to one WIPO official

basically all our activities follow a certain philosophy that protection of intellectual property is for the state's benefit, it is for the country's cultural, social, economic well-being. therefore states *should have* an incentive to enforce intellectual property laws.<sup>22</sup>

Consequently, the organizational *modus operandi* is to rely on the voluntary approach toward IP protection, which encourages the states to take the initiative and adopt enforcement measures for the protection of IP rights. The WIPO administration assumes that the states understand fully the stake they have in protecting IP rights. Therefore, WIPO expects the states to feel greater responsibility for harmonizing and enforcing IP standards. As a result, the WIPO administration prefers not to do things for the governments in order to avoid giving a wrong impression that the organization no longer sees the member states as the main bearer of responsibility for implementation and enforcement of IP rights.

Consequently, by placing greater emphasis on the role of states in the area of IP protection, WIPO has distanced itself from the involvement in advocating any forceful IP measures. Overall, the WIPO philosophy of work, driven by the voluntary approach toward legal protection of IP, stipulated that the WIPO officials leave to the states the national and international IP protection and enforcement. This meant that the WIPO administration interpreted its role in an extremely limited fashion: "We cannot say to a member state what it should be doing or even *suggest* a member state [that is should] to propose this," says the WIPO staffer.<sup>23</sup> A strongly internalized promotional nature of the WIPO work, reflected in the WIPO administration's commitment to inspirational and voluntary measures to protect the IP rights, provides a plausible account for the secretariat's general reluctance to actively promote stronger international enforcement and dispute settlement mechanisms. The WIPO voluntary approach toward the IP national and international regimes explains why the WIPO administration had never strongly pushed for the establishment of the enforcement and dispute settlement mechanisms within its own institutional setting despite the fact that the WIPO secretariat had been heavily involved in the processes of the IP treaty-making.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> World Intellectual Property Organization, [www.wipo.int](http://www.wipo.int).

<sup>22</sup> Interview with the WIPO consultant, Geneva, 25 February 2004. Emphasis added.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. Emphasis added.

<sup>24</sup> Klaus Stegemann, The Integration of Intellectual Property Rights into the WTO System, *The World Economy*, vol.23, no.9 (September 2000):1239.

The preference of the WIPO administration for a voluntary-based IP protection regime and its lackluster attitude towards the adoption of compulsory measures seem to account for the secretariat's readiness to place the dispute settlement and enforcement mechanisms of various intellectual property treaties outside WIPO and, instead, rely on a judicial system of the International Court of Justice.<sup>25</sup> The power of the WIPO culture becomes even more pronounced when the Secretariat's lukewarm attitude towards legally binding enforcement mechanisms is juxtaposed with the developed states' enthusiastic support for a more robust IP regime to prevent piracy, which was so evident in the 1990s.<sup>26</sup> Despite a strong support that came from the developed states for much more "muscular" enforcement mechanisms to protect the IP rights, the WIPO's work culture pushed the administration to adopt a largely hands-off approach towards building a more assertive IP regime and dissuading it from assuming a firmer stance in the enforcement of the IP rights.

In fact, developed countries began perceiving WIPO as the organization that is unwilling to introduce more forceful enforcement mechanisms on the international level.<sup>27</sup> The voluntary-based culture of work on the IP rights present in WIPO resulted neither in the establishment of effective enforcement mechanisms on the national level (particularly in the developing states) nor did it improve the overall protection of IP rights on the international plane (based on the WIPO structures).<sup>28</sup> Generally, the WIPO's voluntary approach to the IP system allowed for too much diversity in the IP regime and was the main reason for the organization's general inaction to set harmonization and enforcement measures.<sup>29</sup> This situation led richer member states to start negotiating tightening of legal protection of the IP rights outside the WIPO's voluntary IP regime and in the institutional setting of GATT/WTO that was already toothed with certain coercive sanctions.

Overall, a dominant work culture in WIPO is set on the belief that the states should be left alone to set their own IP protection rules. In this situation, the role of WIPO is that of an encourager and promoter of the IP rights more than a pusher or enforcer. This prevailing organizational mindset led the WIPO administration to disregard calls from the business community and the governments of developed countries to establish effective enforcement

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<sup>25</sup> Kwakwa (2002): 186 and footnote 26.

<sup>26</sup> Christopher May, Cosmopolitan Legalism Meets 'Thin Community': Problems in Global Governance of Intellectual Property, *Government and Opposition*, vol.39, no.3 (Summer 2004): 394.

<sup>27</sup> Frederick M. Abbott, Distributed Governance at the WTO-WIPO: An Evolving Model for Open-Architecture Integrated Governance, *Journal of International Economic Law*, vol.3, no.1 (2000): 68.

<sup>28</sup> Stegemann, (September 2000): 1238.

mechanisms of the IP rules, particularly needed in the time when IP was becoming an integral part of a globalized commerce. As a result, a prevailing WIPO philosophy of work silenced an alternative approach to the IP regime within the organization and, more importantly, contributed to a general passivity of WIPO and its lack of response toward the WTO's encroachment upon its competence in the first half of the 1990s. The new intellectual property rules were located in WTO and not in WIPO not so much because the developed states could enforce them more effectively in the former<sup>30</sup> but, first of all, because the latter was so entrenched in the promotional culture of its work. This culture left little, if any room, for designing and implementing more forceful international measures to protect the IP rights within the WIPO framework.

It is not only the culture of the WIPO administration that accounts for WIPO passivity prior to and during the GATT/WTO's encroachment upon its mandate. The WIPO's longtime Director General, Arpad Bogsch, played an indisputably important role in determining the organization's policies and thus, its behavior. Arpad Bogsch, who is considered the "father" of the IP system and the founder of WIPO, had been its unchallenged Director General for 25 years (1973-1997); to the author's best knowledge the longest tenure of an executive head in the history of the UN system. Naturally, the impact of such long tenure that led WIPO from its formative period to maturation had a tremendous impact on the organization. And this impact was particularly strong because, as one WIPO official noted, Bogsch "ruled the organization as his own house."<sup>31</sup> During his directorship, Bogsch oriented WIPO heavily towards providing technical assistance to developing states. As a result, WIPO has had a strong tradition of working with developing states that remained at the heart of WIPO's self nominated mission until now.<sup>32</sup>

By providing technical assistance to developing states and supporting a voluntary-type of the IP regime Bogsch secured his recurring reelections.<sup>33</sup> The DG who preferred the

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<sup>29</sup> May (Summer 2004): 398.

<sup>30</sup> Kenneth W. Abbott and Duncan Snidal, Why States Act Through Formal International Organizations, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol.42, no.1 (February 1998): 11.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with the WIPO consultant, Geneva, 25 February 2004.

<sup>32</sup> Abbott (2000): 66 and May (Summer 2004): 398. The election of Kamil Iris, a national of Sudan, in 1997, as a WIPO next Director General and his subsequent reelection in 2003 only strengthened the WIPO orientation towards developing states.

<sup>33</sup> Voluntary IP regime allowed less developed states to absorb new technological knowledge and innovations generated abroad without considerable costs and fear of sanctions. Therefore, developing states opposed more coercive IP system and favored WIPO's and DG's support for the voluntary approach. Stegemann (September 2000): 1238. Eventually, the support of the third world countries, which praised the Director General for "his balanced perspective", was decisive for Bogsch's reelection in 1990. See [www.sunsoline.org/trade/areas/intellect/10010090.htm](http://www.sunsoline.org/trade/areas/intellect/10010090.htm). Accessed 20 February 2005.

voluntary-type of the IP regime, opposed the moves to internationalize intellectual property system.<sup>34</sup> However, when it became clear that the intellectual property would enter the WTO agenda anyway, Bogisch continued resisting the WIPO involvement in any negotiations.<sup>35</sup> As a result, Bogisch missed the opportunity to challenge the establishment of the new IP regime outside the WIPO framework. Ultimately, Bogisch directorship had a strong impact on the WIPO's general passivity and silence in the face of the GATT/WTO expansion into the area of the IP rules.

The WIPO's work culture and Bogisch leadership provide a convincing explanation for the unusually muted reaction of the organization whose mandate was suddenly overtaken by another institution. Driven by its specific work culture set on the voluntary principle of the IP regime and led by the DG, whose views were aligned with the interests of the developing states, WIPO remained relatively inactive in the creation of the new, more intrusive and assertive IP regime. This explains why WIPO ceded the driver's seat in the IP regime to GATT/WTO and why the WIPO administration was generally undisturbed by this apparent "dethronement." The WIPO's answer to the WTO's (more coercive) involvement in regulating the IP regime was to go even deeper to the promotional work. At the end of the 1990s, in contrast to their earlier treaty-making or hard-law focus, WIPO and its secretariat became increasingly involved in the enactment and promotion of non-binding, soft-law, instruments such as resolutions and recommendations as a way to regulate the IP system.<sup>36</sup>

The mini case study of WIPO adds its weight to the existing empirical evidences on the role of leadership and culture and strengthens the argument for their selection as the main variables of this inquiry.

### *1.5 Conceptualization of leadership and culture*

As mentioned in the previous sections, this study goes beyond a simple analysis of the impact of culture or/and leadership on the work of international administrations, and focuses on a more complex investigation of institutional change based on the problematized concepts of culture and leadership. Consequently, this study introduces a new approach to understanding the internal dynamics of international administrations. It problematizes leadership and culture within international administrations by distinguishing different styles of leadership and different types of culture. It then conceptualizes

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<sup>34</sup> Interview with the WIPO consultant, Geneva, 25 February 2004.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

interactions between various styles and types of leadership and culture in order to derive the analytical arguments for a formative influence of the selected variables on different kinds of change in international administrations. The general and specific arguments identified below will show the analytical conception of how exactly the independent variables matter and what their impact on change is.

### *1.5.1 Conceptualizing leadership in IOs*

In this study, leadership in IOs is understood as the manner in which a person in a position of formal authority relates to the people around him in the organization. Leadership originates from a single individual: the executive head of an IO. Hence, the focus of this study is on the individuals who were elected to the posts of the Directors General (WHO and ILO) and the High Commissioner (UNHCR) and were therefore given a formal authority to lead their organizations. This study goes beyond a simple analysis of whether organizational leadership matters (that has already been proven in numerous other studies) and focuses on a more complex inquiry of how it matters and what its impact is. Leadership is seen as a set of social skills that a person in a position of formal authority possesses and uses to interact with his subordinates inside the organization as well as with the outside actors. This analysis relies on organizational studies literature<sup>37</sup> in order to differentiate between two opposite styles of leadership: transactional and transformational, which, respectively, are based on strong and weak degrees of leadership dynamism. Additionally, a semi-transformative leadership style with relatively strong leadership dynamism is also discussed.

*Weak leadership dynamism* that generates *transactional leadership* usually lacks inspiration, compassion, authority, charisma and vision. It is essentially an introverted type of leadership, quite isolated from its immediate surroundings. Transaction leadership with weak leadership dynamism stresses the need for conformity of actions to existing rules and behavior within the confines of what is predictable and known. This type of leadership relies on the system of rewards and punishments in order to stimulate conduct in accordance to the rules within the organization (compliance-based behavior).<sup>38</sup> *Strong leadership dynamism* that generates *transformational leadership* is based on emotive, authoritative, visionary, charismatic and highly innovative leadership features. It is

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<sup>36</sup> Kwakwa (2002):187-195.

<sup>37</sup> Particularly, Burns (1978) and Bass (1985).

<sup>38</sup> Burns (1978) and Timothy R. Hinkin and J. Bruce Tracey, The Relevance of Charisma for Transformational Leadership in Stable Organizations, *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, Vol. 12 No. 2, (1999): 106.



essentially extraverted type of leadership, very open to the outside. Generally, such style of leadership places emphasis on intuition, imagination, intellectual autonomy<sup>39</sup>, greater freedom to question traditional ways of doing things<sup>40</sup> and greater openness for experimentation and trials. Leadership with strong dynamism relies on inspiration. Promotion of certain values and principles and close and personal ties with the staff instill a desired way of conduct (aspirational-based behavior). *Relatively strong leadership dynamism* that generates *semi-transformation leadership* is a leadership, whose majority of features fits the nature of transformational leadership, yet some of its attributes are missing (e.g. inspiration and emotive features).

In this analysis the construction of leadership variable is parsimonious in the sense that the study merely looks at the generic features of a given leadership style and does not explore the whole complexity that may stand behind the leadership phenomenon. This work does not, for example, problematize the concept of leadership by analyzing the connections between different leadership ‘mechanisms’ such as the leader’s persuasion strategies vis-à-vis his reliance on material incentives or disincentives. Although such analysis of leadership could reinforce explanatory power of the variable, it remains outside the scope of this research. Instead, the focus is on particular social skills that are characteristic for a specific style of leadership, albeit transactional, transformational or semi-transformational.

### 1.5.2 Conceptualizing culture in IOs

This study focuses on a specific, analytically more restricted, type of culture in organization: professional culture. Professional culture is defined as a dominant philosophy of doing substantive work in the international administration, which is generated and carried out by the members of the professional service. Professional service, which constitutes the core of international administration, is responsible for a substantive work of analyzing, evaluating and conceptualizing the main policy and programmatic aspects of work. In contrast, the general service staff deal with much more mundane tasks of administrative support such as secretarial work, translations, and service maintenance.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Bass (1978); Bass (1990): 19-31; Regina Eisenbach, Kathleen Watson and Rajnandini Pillai, Transformational Leadership in the Context of Organizational Change, *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1999): 84.

<sup>40</sup> W. Warner Burke and George H. Litwin, A Causal Model of Organizational Performance and Change, *Journal of Management*, vol. 18, no.3 (1992): 532-545.

<sup>41</sup> The staff of the UN international administration is divided into two broad categories: professional staff and general service staff. Professional staff is responsible for "analytical, evaluative, conceptual, interpretive and/or creative" work. General service staff is responsible for "procedural, operational or technical in nature (work) and supports the execution of the programmes of the organization." Job Classification, Definitions of Professional Level and General Service Work, *International Civil Service Commission*, Section 8.1.10, 1995.

Consequently, this analysis adopts a more restricted analytical approach and focuses only on the work culture that is shaped by the administration's professionals. The general service personnel is usually composed of the local (in case of the Geneva-based UN organizations, French speaking) staff. The impact of the personnel on shaping the organizational culture is thus not taken into consideration. Furthermore, professional culture is a dominant philosophy of work among all professionals, and is strong enough to transcend and overshadow any existing subcultures of the specialized divisions and subunits either in the headquarters or in the fields within a given international administration. This study goes beyond a simple analysis of whether professional culture matters and focuses on more sophisticated inquiries of how it matters and what its impact is. In order to address these issues, the notion of professional culture is problematized by distinguishing two contrasting kinds of professional culture: static and agile professional cultures, which are based on a high and low rigidity respectively.

*High rigidity of professional culture* that generates a *static* organizational setting is set in a more inward-looking and process-oriented style of work. Within this kind of culture, professionals have a stronger proclivity to adhere to the existing rules and regulations and stress their duties and responsibilities. The professional culture with high rigidity is characterized by the aversion of risk, cautiousness, and an "ivory tower mentality." Anxiety about external criticism discourages extension beyond established ways of doing things. *Low rigidity of professional culture* that generates an *agile* organizational setting is set in a more outward-looking and action-oriented style of work. Within this type of professional culture the focus is on short-term results, quick responses and rapid outcomes combined with staff dynamism and their entrepreneurial attitude. The dominant style of work is flexible and adaptive, with a relatively higher degree of risk acceptance, willingness to experiment and reach established goals even if it means 'bending' established rules and procedures. Fear of external criticism encourages the organization to perform a certain action, rather than discouraging it from taking a risk.

### *1.6 General and specific arguments of the study*

Conceptualization of different styles of leadership and types of professional culture facilitates the formation of general arguments of this study:

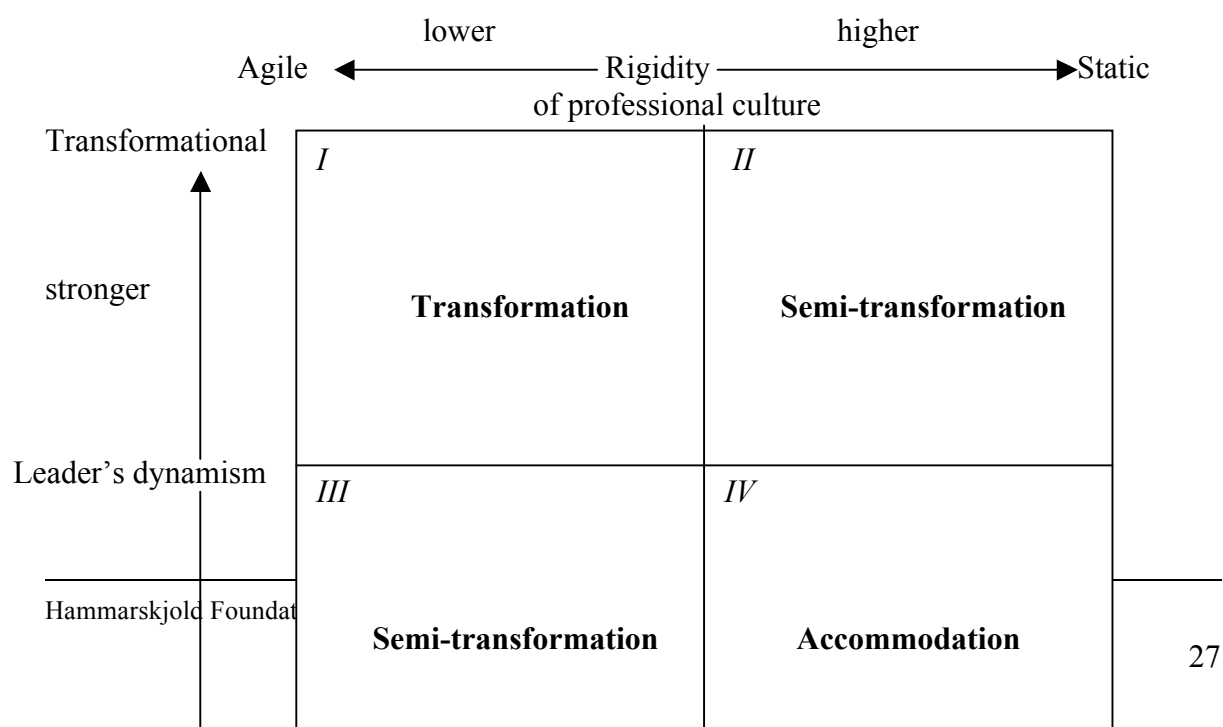
- ❖ Strong leadership dynamism or transformational leadership will tend to facilitate creativity and rule-changing behavior in organizations

- ❖ Weak leadership dynamism or transactional leadership will promote consistency and rule-following behavior in organizations
- ❖ Professional culture that is more rigid or static will hamper the process of change
- ❖ Professional culture that is less rigid or agile will facilitate the process of change

Finally, a juxtaposition of different styles of leadership and types of professional culture with the specific kinds of institutional change proposes several specific arguments. Their graphical presentation is shown below.

- ❖ When leadership dynamism is stronger (transformational leadership) and the rigidity of professional culture is lower (agility), the likelihood of transformation is higher. **(square I).**
- ❖ When leadership dynamism is weaker (transactional leadership) and the rigidity of professional culture is higher (staticism), the likelihood of accommodation is higher. **(square IV).**
- ❖ Semi-transformational leadership dynamism combined with lower rigidity of professional culture (agility) increases the likelihood of semi-transformation. **(square III).**
- ❖ Semi-transformational leadership dynamism combined with higher-rigidity professional culture (staticism) increases the likelihood of semi-transformation. **(square II).**

**Graphical presentation of different kinds of changes in the context of specific styles of leadership and types of professional cultures**



weaker

## Transactional

The introduced analytical framework leaves the so called ‘chicken and egg’ debate outside the scope of this inquiry. The analytical framework shows that both leadership and culture matter while the empirical study explains how they exactly matter. Whether leadership came first and determined institutional change to a degree greater than cultural variable or vice-versa is beyond the analytical and empirical focus of this book.

### *1.7 The case studies of UNHCR, WHO and ILO and the reasons for their selection*

The study concentrates on in-depth analysis of selected case studies. Consequently, this research provides thick case descriptions in order to account for the internal dynamics within international administrations. Furthermore, the study seeks to trace the patterns of influence and demonstrate the impact of internal features of selected individuals who were in charge of the international administrations and have recently retired. As a result, this study is set on an in-depth historical narrative in order to reconstruct the crucial elements of both professional culture and specific leadership. At the same time, interpretative analysis focuses the study on explaining why and how professionals and their leaders had acted and interpreted the environment around them in the way they did.<sup>42</sup> Overall, the study is thus empirically oriented, where the detailed analyses of particular cases are viewed as having the value in themselves. Consequently, the case studies are not merely an instrument for proving or falsifying the existing theoretical frameworks but each of them stands on its own and sheds a greater understanding about the work of a particular international organization.

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<sup>42</sup> Both types of analysis, which rely heavily on textual studies, archival investigations and interviews were used and successfully tested in Barnett and Finnemore’s work on organizational cultures and their impact on the IO behavior. See Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore, *Rules for the World. International Organizations in Global Politics*, Cornell University Press (Ithaca 2004):11-12.

Such analytical approach, however, should not depreciate the explanatory significance of the analysis. Informed by Barnett and Finnemore's study on the impact of organizational culture on the work of IOs, this research sees its empirical cases as exploratory and explanatory efforts to understand what international bureaucracy is and how it works rather than as mere descriptive accounts of the realities of international administrations. Thus, the question of "how certain kinds of bureaucratic behavior are possible, or even probable and why"<sup>43</sup> will be thoroughly explored in this study.

This inquiry considers three international administrations of the UN organizations: the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, the Secretariat of the World Health Organization, and the Office of the International Labor Organization. These three case studies were selected because of their common features as well as their differences.

All selected administrations belong to the UN system and, thus, the rules and procedures of the internal staff are similar. The rules are determined (unlike, for example, those of the World Bank or IMF) by the UN common system of salaries, allowances and other conditions of service,<sup>44</sup> including the principle of geographical distribution of positions within administrations.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, UNHCR, WHO and ILO belong to the same functional category of "service-oriented" UN organizations (in contrast to the "forum-oriented" UN organizations)<sup>46</sup> and have generally similar "institutional ecology" that includes organizational features and tasks. All of them are essentially responsible for delivering "common or individual services" for their member-states, have generally large budgets, large bureaucracies, complex structures and much more expanded technical services for their members than their forum-oriented counterparts like International Telecommunication Union, Universal Postal Union or World Intellectual Property Organization.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Barnett and Finnemore (2004):10.

<sup>44</sup> Paul C. Szasz, The Complexification of the United Nations System, *Max Planck Yearbook of United Nations Law*, vol. 3, (1999): 36-37

<sup>45</sup> Schechter (1987):201.

<sup>46</sup> In addition to ILO, WHO and UNHCR, the examples of the UN service organizations include Food Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), World Food Program (WFP), United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF). See Robert W. Cox and Harold K. Jacobson, *The Anatomy of Influence. Decision Making in International Organizations*, Yale University Press, (New Haven 1973):5-6.

<sup>47</sup> In contrast to UN service organizations, the administrations of the forum-oriented UN organizations have relatively smaller staff and budgets and are essentially responsible for providing an institutional framework (e.g. secretariat and conference facilities with the established procedures) to their member states. In turn, the member states are able to carry out activities that range from an exchange of opinions to consultations, negotiations and adoptions of binding and non-binding legal instruments (such as conventions, resolutions, declarations). The examples of the UN forum organizations include: International Telecommunication Union

At the same time, each of these organizations has been identified as representing particular category of UN organization that is based on a dominant hegemonic orientation: UNHCR represents operational agencies, WHO technical agencies and ILO normative agencies (described in greater details in the section below). Hence the *unity* of case studies includes a strong element of their *diversity*.

The selection of diversified case studies based on their different hegemonic orientations aims to enhance comprehensiveness of the scope of this research as well as to demonstrate a range of organizations to which the main arguments of this book can be applied. The choice of empirical examples addresses a likely criticism about a bias in the case selection made on the “gut feeling” or in efforts to support predetermined arguments. In this particular instance, the selection of cases was based on unbiased methodological considerations to assemble a sample of nearly all (if not all) the types of international administrations of IOs (normative, technical and operational).

It needs to be underline here that the selection of particular case studies was *not* to carry out a comparative inquiry, which would juxtapose the processes and outcomes of institutional changes in three organizations but the main goal of selecting particular case studies was to increase the confidence in the explanatory power of independent variables and to make tentative claims to generalizability of the main arguments. The generalizability topic is explored further in the conclusion of this book.

The identification of alternative explanations (see Chapter 5) suggests that each of the selected case studies, and particularly that of UNHCR, was to a various degree a critical (“deviant”) case. The existence of empirical examples in which, according to a dominant opinion, the main variables of this research were not recognized as being powerful enough to account for the process and outcome of institutional changes in the organizations, constituted an excellent opportunity for discounting “disconfirming evidences.”<sup>48</sup> The use of such empirical examples provided additional evidence for an unbiased selection of the case studies that, at first sight, could not support the variable-oriented arguments of this study.

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(ITU), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Universal Postal Union (UPU), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Meteorological Organization (IMO). See Cox and Jacobson (1973): 5-6.

<sup>48</sup> Clive Seale, *The Quality and Qualitative Research. Introducing Qualitative Methods*, SAGE Publications (London 1999): 73.

### *1.8 Identifying hegemonic orientation and leaders in the selected organizations*

The identification of both hegemonic orientation and leaders in the analyzed case studies is essential for better conceptualization of cultural and leadership variables. More precisely, hegemonic orientation helps to justify a specific case-study selection and constitutes an important element that partly determines the character of the professional culture. In turn, a choice of particular executive heads from the analyzed agencies enables this study to attach the analytical concept of a leadership style to a particular life figure.

#### *1.8.1 Identifying hegemonic orientation in the selected organizations*

The important rationale for the specific case selection is the diversity of the case studies. Each of the case studies pertains to a different category of international administrations. The Office of the ILO is considered an administration with dominant normative (legal) functions (normative administration or normativity), the Secretariat of the WHO is an administration with dominant technical functions (technical administration or technicity) and the Office of UNHCR is an administration with dominant operational functions (operational administration or operationality). The analytical distinction between normative, technical and operational administrations made above is based on a *hegemonic* orientation. The hegemonic orientation in international administrations is derived from the dominant feature of their substantive (mandate-specific) work carried out by the officials in the professional categories.

Categorization of the analyzed cases on normative, operational and technical administrations has been done for the analytical purpose and as every analytical construct may have simplified a bit the reality. In fact, a given category does not mean that an international administration is monolithic. Indeed, none of the analyzed cases constitutes an example of a purely operational, technical or normative administration. Each of these administrations includes in their substantive work all three dimensions to various degrees. The ILO, next to norm setting activities (normative functions), pursues technical cooperation projects (operational/technical functions), the WHO next to its scientific, disease-oriented, work (technical functions) set various health standards, adopt legally binding conventions (normative functions) and carries out health related operations in the field (operational functions). Finally, UNHCR next to its involvement in emergencies (operational functions) is engaged in promotion of legal protection for refugees (normative functions), although without legally binding or enforceable mechanisms at its disposal.

A specified hegemonic orientation, derived from the substantive work of a given international administration, is determined by perceptible and imperceptible factors present inside analyzed administrations. Perceptible factors include mandate, dominant profession and a principal technical unit with its financial or/and human resources. Imperceptible factors encompass the organizational history or tradition and various expressions of a prevailing organizational discourse.

#### *1.8.1.1 Normativity of the Office of the ILO*

Normativity of the Office that comes from a norm-setting function of the ILO is set on a relatively static mandate that stipulates the organization to adopt legally binding international labor norms in order to move closer to its fundamental objective of “social justice.” Consequently, jurists, or people with legal education, are a dominant profession in the Office. Within the Office structures, the International Labor Standards Department (ILSD) has, traditionally, been a leading force behind the Office’s activities. In 2002, the ILSD was employing the largest number of permanently appointed (without limit of time) professionals (nineteen) among all functional departments in the Office. The second largest functional department is the Employment Strategy Department, which had, at the same time, only twelve established professional staff positions, or 35% less than its labor standards counterpart.<sup>49</sup> Despite the fact that the largest part of the regular budget expenditures goes to operational activities related to employment (e.g. skills and knowledge development), the combined expenditures on standards (the ILO core normative dimension) and other standard-driven programs like social protection (working conditions) and social dialogue (strengthening democratic tripartite consultations) constituted more than 63% of the 2000-2001 expenses of all the ILO substantive policy programs.<sup>50</sup> Within the Office there is a strong tradition built around the adoption, ratification and implementation of binding labor conventions, which are taken as a measure of the ILO successes and failures. This normative tradition is reinforced as well as depicted by the prevailing discursive expressions rooted in the “jurists’ talk” about legislation, processes, procedures, regulations, structures, and responsibilities.

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<sup>49</sup> Composition and Structure of the Staff, Program, Financial and Administrative Committee, GB.286/PFA/12, Geneva, March 2003: 15, Table IX.

<sup>50</sup> Programme and Budget for 2000-2001. Regular Budget Account and Working Capital Fund as at 31 December 2001, Programme, Financial and Administrative Committee, Governing Body, GB.283/PFA/1, Geneva, (March 2002): 6, Table 2.



### *1.8.1.2 Technicity of the Secretariat of the WHO*

Technicity of the Secretariat is grounded in its relatively static mandate, which stipulates the organization to provide authoritative (scientific) advice on health issues and technical assistance in health related matters. The dominant professional groups in the Secretariat are technical specialists with education background in the fields of natural science, who occupy more than 70% of all professional posts in contrast to the professional administrative specialists with less than 30% posts<sup>51</sup>. The leading departments that enjoy high prestige and manage the largest human and financial resources are highly technical divisions that deal with communicable, non-communicable diseases and disease-oriented research. Technically oriented Secretariat contributes to the WHO proclivity to spend high on technical assistance, which usually has a highly specialized, medical nature. At the beginning of the 1990s, the WHO spent around 75.4% of its regular budget on technical cooperation,<sup>52</sup> while no other UN organization even reached 30%.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, 75% of the WHO extrabudgetary resources by 1991 were spent on technical cooperation channeled through the large technical (disease-oriented) programs.<sup>54</sup> Finally, even the WHO Secretariat normative function is based on promulgating technical standards rather than legally binding norms. The tradition of the WHO Secretariat's work is deeply grounded in implementing highly technical programs designed to control or eradicate diseases, which bestow onto the organization a considerably degree of international visibility and recognition. This technical tradition is illustrated as well as reinforced by the discursive rhetoric of the WHO Secretariat, which is driven by the language of medical doctors regarding measurable objectives, targets and results, vaccine delivery, medical technology or health infrastructure.

### *1.8.1.3 Operationality of the Office of the High Commissioner*

Operationality of the Office is based on flexible mandate that directs the Office to provide protection and assistance for refugees as well as other victims of man-made disasters. The

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<sup>51</sup> This data concerns the requirements of a specific job position and not the skills of the incumbent. However, since in the specialized agency such as WHO, technical skills of experts (in contrasts to generalists) have to correspond closely with the requirements of a specific post, it is justified to assume that the data refers equally to the requirements of a post as well as to particular specialized skills of a person who holds the post. See Human Resources: Annual Report. Staffing Profile, WHO Executive Board 115<sup>th</sup> Session, EB115/25, 12 January 2005: 2.

<sup>52</sup> Estimated by the Development Assistance Committee of OECD and quoted in G. Edgren and B. Moller, *The Agencies at Crossroads: the Role of the United Nations' Specialized Agencies*, in Nordic UN Project, *The United Nations: Issues and Options*, Almqvist och Wiksell (Stockholm 1991):138.

<sup>53</sup> Bo Stenson and Goran Sterky, *What Future WHO? Health Policy*, vol. 28 (1994):238. FAO spent 29.9%, ILO merely 8.6% and UNESCO 5.6% of their regular budgets on technical cooperation programs. Edgren and Moller (1991):138.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 132.

largest department, which deals with substantive policy issues is the Department of Operations (DO) with hundred twenty-six professionals, including six professionals on D2 and seven on D1 levels. DO is staffed by “field officers,” who have social science background.<sup>55</sup> Thus, a dominant group, which deals with substantive policy matters of the Office, is composed of social scientists. The second largest department, the Department of International Protection (DIP), employs thirty-five “protection or legal officers,” including only one on D2 and two on D1 levels (data from 2003).<sup>56</sup> In terms of the resources spent, the humanitarian assistance activities (e.g. a delivery of material aid) managed by DO were estimated to take more than 55% of the UNHCR extrabudgetary resources in 2001, which constitutes almost 98% of the total budget of the organization. At the same time, international protection activities (among others, legal assistance for refugees to obtain asylum) took 44.5% of the donor’s budget.<sup>57</sup> Thus, DO has managed considerably larger human and financial resources in the Office than other departments, including the second largest department, DIP. The tradition of the Office is closely related to various emergencies that the organization had been involved in throughout its history. In fact, the separation between different generations working in the Office is often established based on the “formative” emergency that each group was part of. The 1970s generation and the Indochina refugee crisis, the 1980s generation and the refugee emergencies in Central America and Afghanistan, and the 1990s generation and the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda all helped establish the Office’s tradition. The discursive elements that reinforce as well as demonstrate the operational nature of the Office are based on the field officers’ talks about operations, results, crises, disasters, relief, aid, physical protection, solutions etc.

The distinction between normative, technical and operational categories of international administrations makes an important contribution to the development of a new type of classification of IOs. The distinction helps classify the UN organizations in particular, which are set on the hegemonic orientation of the substantive (mandate-specific) work of their administrations. Such classification departs from a generally accepted division of IOs based on the membership (e.g. universal/regional) or functional criteria (e.g. service/forum-oriented or economic/military/social/cultural). Additionally, the identified hegemonic orientations are applied to the case studies with the purpose of problematizing

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<sup>55</sup> See the requirements of UNHCR occupational groups and functional titles, [www.unhcr.ch](http://www.unhcr.ch).

<sup>56</sup> UNHCR Annual Programme Budget 2004, Fifty-Four Session, Executive Committee of the High Commissioner’s Programme, A/AC.96/979, 25 August 2003: 85, Table III.4.

<sup>57</sup> Proposed Programme Budget for the Biennium 2002-2003. Part IV Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs. Section 23 Protection of and Assistance to refugees, General Assembly, A/56/6, 12 March 2001: 4.

the *impact* of normative, technical and operational elements of particular IOs and thus to determine their effect on generating a specific kind of organizational behavior. As such, the hegemonic orientations provide a significant contribution to the understanding of the causal power of the cultural variable (professional culture), whose value is, at least partly, determined by the impact of normative, technical and operational hegemonic orientations that are present in the analyzed IOs.

### *1.8.2 Identifying leaders in the selected organizations*

In each case, the study considers the last retired executive heads of the ILO, the WHO and UNCHR at a time (2002-2004) when the empirical investigation, which consisted of meetings and interviews with the current and former officials from the respective organizations, took place. Therefore, a resignation in February 2005 of the High Commissioner for Refugees, Ruud Lubbers, the successor of Sadako Ogata, did not affect the analytical underpinnings of this research that existed at the time when the empirical inquiry had been conducted (between 2003-2004). This study analyzes the leadership of Sadako Ogata in UNHCR, Gro Harlem Brundtland in WHO, and Michel Hansenne in the ILO. The time of their service is quite similar and covers the last decade. Ogata served as the High Commissioner for Refugees between 1991 and 2000. Brundtland served as the WHO Director General between 1998 and 2003. Hansenne served as the ILO Director General between 1989 and 1998. Because all of these leaders have not served two terms, this study considers only the first five years in office of particular leaders. Consequently, an analytical coherence of the study on leadership is maintained and the phenomenon of a “leadership fatigue” that often becomes visible during the second tenure is thus left out from the analysis.

All these leaders were outsiders; not only have they never worked in their agencies before, but they generally have not worked in any of the UN organizations previous to their elections to the positions of the executive heads. Consequently, the leaders have not been immersed or socialized within the professional culture of their agencies, nor have they been part of that culture when the change was initiated. In the analytical sense, leadership can thus be disconnected from the culture of the organization and can stand on its own, as an analytically separate (from culture) variable.

All three persons, regardless of their previous experience, were considered to exercise organizational leadership due to their formal positions of authority as the executive heads

of the respective UN agencies. They were all powerful thinkers with an exceptional talent for proposing an innovative idea of change in their organizations. Their intellectual potentials ensured that all three leaders were capable of conceptualizing a specific package of a radical change independently from their particular leadership skills.

A high intelligence of the people in charge of the ILO, WHO and UNHCR enabled them to diagnose the problems and challenges faced by their organizations and come up with specific sweeping proposals for institutional reinvention. It is thus assumed that the designing of the contents of change was not influenced as such by the leadership style but rather determined by the intellectual and analytical abilities of a particular leader. Only when these leaders had to interact with other people in order to implement their ideas of change (process of change) and eventually bring the change to its fruition (outcome of change) did their leadership styles or social skills become analytically and empirically significant. Such analytical approach allows to account for the transformational (radical) contents of the proposed changes in all three case studies (see **Table 1**) despite the fact that the leaders, who conceptualized the ideas that stood behind the change, had in fact different styles of leadership: transformational, semi-transformational and transactional.

### *1.9 Findings of the empirical investigation*

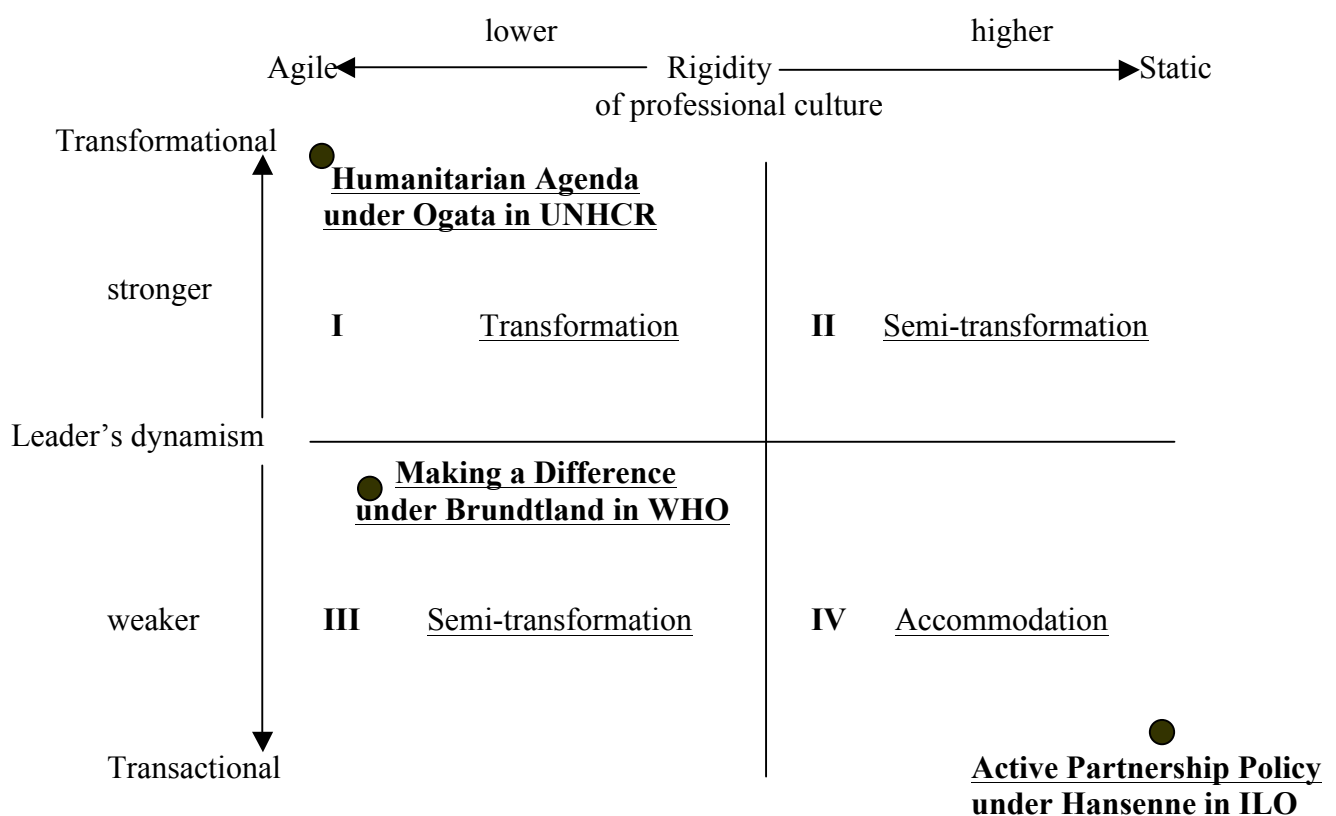
The empirical inquiry identifies the professional culture in the Office of the High Commissioner as having a very low rigidity. Similarly, the professional culture in the Secretariat of the WHO is characterized as being a low rigid culture. In contrast, the professional culture in the Office of the ILO is particularly rigid and static. Ogata's style of leading UNHCR in the first half of the 1990s shows strong leadership dynamism, which is called transformational leadership. In the WHO, Brundtland's leadership style had important transformational features but, at the same time, lacked other significant elements that constitute strong leadership dynamism. Hence Brundtland's term is categorized as a semi-transformational leadership. The leadership of Hansenne in the ILO had all the characteristics of weak leadership dynamism, making it a transactional leadership.

Empirical investigation shows that as a result of specific types of professional culture and styles of leadership, the changes introduced within the three administrations had different characters and magnitudes. Change in the Office of the High Commissioner ("Humanitarian Agenda") is considered transformation as it involved a dramatic shift in the mandate of the organization (**square I**). Change in the Secretariat of the WHO (Making a

Difference) was somewhat closer to transformation but, at the same time, fell short of a full-blown, comprehensive and radical change. It can be classified as a semi-transformation (**square III**). Finally, change in the Office of the ILO (Active Partnership Policy) was closer to accommodation since the process faced with a lot of obstacles that substantially altered its contents and mitigated its eventual outcome (**square IV**).

Below is a graphical presentation of the above-described empirical findings.

**Graphical presentation of different kinds of changes in the context of specific styles of leadership and types of professional cultures in the case studies**



#### *1.10 Analytical and empirical contribution of the book*

A number of researchers informed by the theoretical underpinnings of the sociology of organizations and organizational studies have recently shown a growing interest in the analysis of international administrations and their internal dynamics. At the same time, a

majority of the literature focuses on international financial and economic institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, the Secretariat of the World Trade Organization, the Secretariat of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development or the European Commission.<sup>58</sup> These types of studies are only the first steps to constructing analytical frameworks that could be suitable for explaining and understanding the workings of the international bureaucracies.<sup>59</sup> Generally, however, there is a dearth of analytical and empirical studies that consider the internal dynamics of international administrations in various institutional settings. Furthermore, not many past and current analyses have investigated change in IOs.<sup>60</sup> Still less have considered the organizational cultures or leadership inside international administrations as determinative factors of the change in organization.<sup>61</sup> In fact, to the best of the author's knowledge, up until now, no substantive study has been written on the interactions between different types of cultures and styles of leaderships and their combined formative impact on various kinds of changes inside international administrations.<sup>62</sup> The fundamental goal of this research is thus to fill in the research gap by looking at the inside dynamics of international administrations. This book presents two crucial internal organizational

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<sup>58</sup> Catherine Weaver and Ralf J. Leiteritz, "Our Poverty is a World Full of Dreams": The World Bank's Strategic Compact and the Tenacity of Organizational Culture, Unpublished paper. <http://www.isanet.org/noarchive/WeaverLeiteritzISA.html>; Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore, *Rules for the World. International Organizations in Global Politics*, Cornell University Press (Ithaca 2004): chapter on Expertise and Power at the International Monetary Fund; Antje Vetterlein, Change in International Organizations: Innovation or Adaptation? The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund - A Comparison of Organizational Cultures. Paper presented at the Workshop "Research Bank on the World Bank", Budapest, 1-2 April, 2005. [http://www.ceu.hu/cps/eve/eve\\_wbank\\_program.htm](http://www.ceu.hu/cps/eve/eve_wbank_program.htm); Xu Yi-Chong and Patrick Weller, International Civil Servants: Important but Uninvestigated, unpublished paper; Jarle Trondal, Martin Marcussen and Frode Veggeland, International Executives: Transformative Bureaucracies or Westphalian Orders? *European Integration online Papers*, vol.7, no.4 (2004): 1-16. A notable exception to the focus on international financial and economic institutions are the studies by Michael N. Barnett and Martha Finnemore which look at a general issue of the impact of organizational cultures on the work of the IOs, particularly the UN Secretariat and UNHCR. See Michael N. Barnett and Martha Finnemore, The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations, *International Organization*, vol. 53, no.4 (Autumn 1999): 699-732 and Barnett and Finnemore (2004).

<sup>59</sup> For example, Trondal, eds., (2004): 1.

<sup>60</sup> One exception, which, however, confirms a general observation about the scarcity of studies on change in the IOs, is the paper by Devesh Kapur, Processes of Change in International Organizations, August 2000, [www.wider.unu.edu/research](http://www.wider.unu.edu/research).

<sup>61</sup> A recently published book by Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore looks at the impact of organizational culture on the specific policy decisions rather than a major institutional change in an IO. See Barnett and Finnemore (2004).

<sup>62</sup> The study by Matthias Finger and Bernagere Magarions-Ruchat on transformation in the United Nations Conference in Trade and Development (UNCTAD) bears the closest resemblance in its analytical elaboration to the current research. The authors look at the nature of change in UNCTAD and present a complex model of transformation that includes various factors that include next to "external pressure" also "internal dynamics" of the organization such leadership and culture. In contrast to the current research, Finger and Ruchat's study with its multi-variable focus problematizes neither leadership nor culture and says nothing about their likely impact on different kinds of change in international administration. See: Matthias Finger and Bernagere Magarions-Ruchat, "The Transformation of International Public Organizations. The Case of UNCTAD," in Dennis Dijkzeul and Yves Beigbeder, *Rethinking International Organizations. Pathology and Promise*, Berghahn Books (New York 2003): 140-165.

elements, leaderships and cultures, in order to explain and understand their formative influence on change in international bureaucracies. As a result, this study answers a scholarly call for making greater efforts to better understand change in IOs' bureaucracies. The implementation of, the eventual outcome of, the resistance to change are all examined.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, this work makes an important empirical contribution to the gradually expanding knowledge on internal dynamics of international administrations by incorporating cases that until now have been under-investigated: the Office of the High Commissioner, the Secretariat of the WHO and the Office of the ILO.

### *1.11 Contending explanations*

The existing theoretical and empirical literature provides solid grounds for considering leadership and culture as the main variables for understanding change in international administrations of IOs. However, the international relations literature, including foreign policy analysis and partly the studies on the European Union, abound with alternative explanations that aim to account for the processes and outcomes of certain organizational actions in IOs. Therefore, in order to test and reinforce the relative explanatory power the two selected variables, a separate chapter (Chapter 5) was introduced to identify and rule out the main contending explanations.

### *1.12 Validity, methodology and empirical investigation*

This study is the outcome of a scientifically objective inquiry. Various methodological techniques were applied to enhance credibility and truthfulness of the research findings. In order to avoid a fundamental criticism of "anecdotalism" ("intuitivism" or "caricaturism"), as well as to enhance accuracy and reliability of the stated arguments, this research embarked on a validity test. While addressing the validity problem, the methodology of this research was considered and references to the practicalities of empirical investigation were also included.

#### *1.12.1 Validity test and research methods*

The validity test focuses on the questions: *whether the professional culture in analyzed IOs was indeed characterized by higher or lower rigidity, whether the leadership of the selected executive heads of the ILO, the WHO and UNHCR was indeed transactional, transformational or semi-transformational and whether a change filtered through a*

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<sup>63</sup> Barnett and Finnemore (2004): 9.

*specific types of professional culture and specific styles of leadership was indeed an accommodation, transformation or semi-transformation.*

For the above queries, a satisfying level of validity was reached based on a “methodological triangulation,”<sup>64</sup> which employed different methods of data collection. The methods involved a combination of open-ended interviews, author’s “ethnographic” observations within the administrations of ILO, WHO and UNHCR, his practical experience conducting empirical research on and within UN organizations, numerous face-to-face interactions with various current and former UN international civil servants and scholars of IOs, analysis of historical records and primary sources at the WHO, UNHCR, ILO archives and libraries, including memoirs of the international civil servants and former heads of the agencies and finally, consultations of secondary sources available mainly at the library of the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva. Wherever they were made available and seen as relevant, the conclusions from the staff surveys were included into the study to support the main arguments. This kind of complex triangulation aimed at minimizing the possibility of bias and increasing accuracy of the study’s conclusions.

In general, the written primary or even secondary sources on leadership and particularly on professional cultures in the analyzed organizations were relatively scarce if they exist at all. Therefore, a reliance on information from interviews was extensive. At the same time, data collected from interviews was corroborated with the author’s own practical experience in working inside the organizations for more than seven months. During this period (October 2003-June 2004) the author was involved in securing an authorization for his entrance to the organizations (ILO and WHO), contacting selected group of people, arranging interviews and, finally, meeting and interviewing officials. This practical experience was supplemented by the author’s field observations, based on his numerous visits to the headquarters of the analyzed organizations. These observations, among others, included an assessment of public accessibility of a given organization, physical structure of the building, arrangements of offices, dress code, informal communication, usual meeting places, etc. Both practical research experience and observations were subsequently used to validate several conclusions drawn out from the interviews, particularly in connection with the elements of professional cultures.

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<sup>64</sup> For more on triangulation see Seale (1999): 53-61.



Because interviews constituted a significant source of information about the professional cultures and leadership, the selection of the interviewed officials as well as the way the interviews were carried out were essential for increasing the accuracy of the collected data. Almost all interviewed former and current officials from all three organizations belong to the group of senior international civil servants from professional service.<sup>65</sup> Seniority of the interviewed officials was determined by their grades ranging from P4 and P5 to D1 and D2. The international civil servants who had these grades were considered to be the highest-ranking administrators recruited into international administration through the merit-based system. These grades indicated not only a high level of expertise in a given field but also considerable managerial responsibilities and likely long-term careers in the administration. Generally, the interviewees either had a very rich experience in working on various posts in different corners of the same organization (ILO and UNHCR) or each interviewed official represented different department or a division at the time of an interview (ILO, WHO and UNHCR). Diversity of the professional backgrounds of the interviewees ensured that the opinions were basically facilitated from a relatively large group of senior officials constituting a fairly representative sample of the organization.

Generally, most of the interviewed senior officials were the “organizational long-timers” who were deeply immersed within the institutional settings of a given organization. Their organizational experience was unique. It certainly allowed them to comprehend causal relationships between organizational change and a specific leadership and professional culture much better than any knowledgeable and informed outsider. Therefore, the data derived from interviews with the senior officials was viewed as the most reliable information on culture and leadership available on the “academic market”.

The goal of frequent and often extensive references to the quotations from interviews, which were included in the empirical chapters, was to “retain good access to the words of the subjects”<sup>66</sup> and not to rely merely on the author’s own summaries or interpretations that may have likely included a certain bias in favor of the already made assumptions. In other words, the author consciously favored quoting officials frequently and extensively instead of giving his own summaries and making his own paraphrases, which would inevitably increase likelihood of inserting into the text author’s subjective interpretation.

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<sup>65</sup> For the definition of and the difference between the professional and general service categories see paragraph 1.5.2.

<sup>66</sup> David Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research. A Practical Handbook*, SAGE Publications (London 2000):186.

Consequently, the original data from the interviews was used to a large extent as a means to strengthen credibility of the arguments. In general, application of original transcripts was done with the very purpose of using them as the arguments themselves, rather than mere background or illustrations for the arguments already made. Such a direct quotation approach, in turn, increased the objectivity and thus validity of the general study statements.

The arguments derived from interviews were supported, wherever possible, with the information gathered from written sources, as well as the author's observations of the IOs' "interiors" and his practical experience in conducting empirical investigation within the analyzed international administrations. In some places, limited quantifications were applied to illustrate the percentage of views considering, for example, a given leadership to be visionary or charismatic. More extensive data quantification was deemed as generating little additional value for better understanding of not easily quantifiable variables such as "rigidity of professional culture" or "leadership charisma." Indeed, author's interpretation of and reliance on original transcripts of the group of key-informants provide even higher confidence in the accuracy of the data and conclusions than the purely quantitative measurement. Often, more expanded quantitative methodology was simply not feasible due to the author's restricted access to the personnel of the international administrations.

The author conducted additional interviews with the international officials from other international administrations: two current officials from the WIPO and ITU, a former senior official of the WTO, an independent international management consultant who was also a former WHO and ILO senior staff member, and a NGO project manager. Overall, for the purpose of this research, the author conducted in total eighty-nine interviews, which took approximately 8800 minutes of recording (or around ninety 90-minutes tapes). A considerable length of recordings serves as a good indicator of the interviews' depth over a pure number of interviews. With the exception of five people all eighty-four people interviewed belonged to the professional category of the current or former international civil servants.

The conducted interviews should be seen as ethnographic interviews or, more precisely, "organographic" interviews because they took place or were always related to a specific institutional setting (the international administration of a given IO). More than 85% of the interview meetings took place outside the usual working place. Interviews were either

conducted in “talking rooms,” cafeterias and restaurants in the organizations’ headquarters or outside, in pizzerias, pubs and private houses where a very informal atmosphere was a dominating feature. This, in turn, allowed the interviewees to relax and feel relatively free and open in expressing their views. The remaining 15% of interviews were conducted in the offices of the officials (“behind closed doors”), or on the phone. Generally, the officials were very seldom reserved while venturing onto controversial issues. The time of interview was allocated flexibly depending solely on interviewees.

The accuracy of the findings derives not only from the form of interviews but eventually from their outcomes. Interviewees were essentially left on their own to explore a given topic, be it leadership style of a given executive head or their perception of professional culture and change. As a result, any convergence in their views was pure coincidence; the researcher was merely a listener rather than an implicated participant. The convergence of views, in turn, provided a strong basis for making certain generalizations about the features of the studied variables as well as for dealing successfully with the syndrome of a “disgruntled” or “contented” official.

The congruence of interviewees’ views is made evident by the lack of variation between the opinions of respondents regarding the features of professional culture in a given organization or the styles of leadership of particular leaders. For instance, if the dominant perception about a leadership was that it had been charismatic and visionary no single interviewee claimed that a leadership style of that person disheartened the staff or left them uninspired. In the same vein, if the leadership was viewed in more negative terms, as reclusive and lackluster, no single interviewed official claimed the opposite. Similarly, if the professional cultures were perceived as being relatively rigid, settled and slow or, on the contrary, agile and flexible no single interviewee emphasized entirely different characteristics such as action oriented nature of work (when culture was in fact rigid) or long term strategic planning (when culture was oriented on rapid actions and quick adaptations).

Therefore, the essence of the matter turned out not to be whether identified features of particular leadership or professional culture were or were not present and dominant, but rather *to what extent* certain characteristics were actually prevailing. Insignificant variation in the interviewees’ responses to the questions about professional culture and leadership has significantly reduced a possible factor of “disgruntled” and “contented” officials.

Disgruntled staff members tend to be highly dissatisfied with their work and see their job as well as leadership in a very critical light. The opposite image is that of ‘contented’ officials, who would overemphasize positive features of leadership or professional culture. The congruence of views on particular leaderships and features of professional culture characteristic for this research addressed the syndromes of “disgruntled” and “content” officials. Such congruence would have been highly unlikely, if possible at all, among randomly selected group of interviewees from different departments with a variety of organizational experience had it not been for certain objective reasons. In this situation, the congruence of the officials’ views about a given leadership or professional culture was possible not because the officials belong either to the disgruntled or contented groups but because leadership and culture look, indeed, as they were described. Overall, relatively small or almost nonexistent variation of views on particular leaderships and professional cultures served as a check of validity of introduced classifications and derived conclusions.

Although this study is built on a variable-oriented research, its methodology, as described above, suggests a strongly ethnographic character. Consequently, variable oriented research and ethnographic (“organographic”) studies are strongly intertwined in this work. However, far from creating a methodological contradiction, the latter complements the former. Given that the application of statistical methods proved impossible, the in-depth ethnographic inquiry has been used to derive a specific type of professional culture and leadership style of an executive head in an international administration. Consequently, an extensive exploration of the life of international administrations served the purpose of determining the main features of professional culture that influenced its lower or higher rigidity. Similarly, a detailed bibliographical research combined with an in-depth inquiry into the way a given executive head has led and managed a given international administration was crucial for evaluating the strength of their leadership dynamism. At the same time, the ethnographic inquiry and its findings provided a basis for embarking on a rigorous process-tracing<sup>67</sup> that enabled this study to discover the relationship between culture and leadership on the one hand, and the process and eventual outcome of the institutional change on the other hand.

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<sup>67</sup> On the usefulness of process-tracing method for identifying causal mechanisms in the small ‘n’ research see Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry. Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*, Princeton University Press, (New Jersey 1994):86. Process-tracing as a method of variable-oriented inquiry has been successfully applied, for example, in the study on the autonomy of the EU institutions. See Mark A. Pollack, *The Engines of Integration? Supranational Autonomy and Influence in the*

### 1.12.2 Practical problems in researching IOs

There are limits to the amount of data that any researcher is able to collect and analyze. This trivial truth is often disregarded when criticism is levied on specific research. Similarly, any critical view about this particular analysis should be balanced by the objective factors that place considerable limitations on any study that aims at investigating internal attributes of relatively closed and conservative entities such as UN organizations and their administrations. In fact, the administrations of the UN organizations are not the only examples of a limited access to outsiders. A similar case of restricted *entrée*, but this time concerning the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, was described by Walter Kemp, the OSCE Public Information Officer, who noted:

not only was there practically no public information; the activities of the CSCE/OSCE were all but out of bounds to those few journalists and academics who were interested in what was going on. The few people in the know were those like Radio Free Europe journalist Rollie Eggelston and Swiss professor of international studies Victor Yves Ghebali, who had inside contacts and access to information.<sup>68</sup>

Essentially, the empirical investigation concerning analyzed case studies could have brought much richer data (given the seventh-month period spent on collecting it) if had it not been for the “gatekeepers” inside the UN organizations, which have jealously guarded the access to the “palaces.” The gatekeepers are usually located within the legal departments of the UN organizations and their goal is to protect the interests of the organizations and their administrations. Unfortunately, they tend to interpret these interests narrowly, which limits or even shuts down possibilities for conducting much more comprehensive research on the workings of international administrations.

The WHO Secretariat is no exception (see also the chapter on the Office of the ILO). The author’s request to conduct research within the Secretariat of the WHO was declined by the legal department, which expressed its “serious reservations.” The author was subsequently informed that the grounds for such an opinion were the department’s concern for “inappropriate” use of the information gathered during such research. Furthermore, the department was worried that the study, if concluded, could be cited by other sources in a way that it could be detrimental to the WHO. Essentially, the legal department was

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European Union, in Wayne Sandholtz and Alec Stone Sweet *eds.*, *European Integration and Supranational Governance*, Oxford University Press, (Oxford 1998): 217-249.

<sup>68</sup> See Walter Kemp, Targeting its Constituency: Political Will, Public Relations, and the OSCE, in Gartner, Heinz; Hyde-Price, Adrian and Reiter, Erich, *Europe’s New Security Challenges*, Lynne Rienner, (London 2001):257.

concerned about a possible future criticism of the WHO as a result of this research. Indeed, the author was told that the legal department had a fresh memory of a recent event related to the fellowship program for journalists, which WHO had been running for almost three years. Journalists from all over the world were invited to the WHO Secretariat to do the internship in order to learn more about the organization and its work. As it happened, one of the fellows, after the internship, published a critical article about the organization in one of the major American newspapers. The legal department decided that the interests of the organization had been already harmed and might be damaged even further if the approval is granted for this kind of research.<sup>69</sup>

“Gatekeepers,” who work in the UN agencies, keep the UN staff insulated from the academic scrutiny. A restrictive entrance eliminates the possibility of truly comprehensive research on various attributes of international administrations, essentially keeping the academic world out of such entities. At the same time, the current as well as former (!) UN staff members are under obligation not to speak about matters that concern the organization without a special authorization from the head of the organization. This situation may be compared with the study on national administration, where a scholar is interested in interviewing a civil servant but needs first to secure the authorization of the prime minister. In an international administration, securing such authorization is impossible unless a person knows personally the head of the organization or his closest advisors or is an established public figure. Neither of these was readily available to this author.

#### *1.12.2.1 The case study of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees*

The study relies on the available literature and on the data collected from twenty-four interviews with the UNHCR senior professional staff members. All interviewed officials but one worked in UNHCR when the interviews took place. The length of interviews varied from forty-five minutes to three and a half hours. In two cases, the author met the same senior official on multiple occasions. The total recording time for all the interviews was approximately 2200 minutes, (more than twenty-four 90-minute tapes).

Availability of a considerable body of academic literature on UNHCR and particularly on its activities in the 1990s explains the relatively small number of interviewed officials from UNHCR in comparison with the number of interviewed officials from ILO and WHO. In addition the author used documents available in UNHCR archives and library and

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<sup>69</sup> A WHO contact person passed to this author the legal department's concerns verbally on the phone. 27

information gathered from a summary of a survey on the attributes of professional culture conducted during the training workshop for the senior managers.

#### *1.12.2.2 The case study of the Secretariat of the WHO*

This study relies equally on the information acquired from written primary and secondary sources as well as twenty-eight interviews with current and former senior officials, including four who held the positions of Assistant Director General or Executive Directors General. The length of interviews varied from forty five minutes to thirteen hours. Altogether, the recording time of all interviews with the WHO officials was approximately 3500 minutes (almost forty 90-minute tapes). Often the author met the same official two or three times.

Generally, there is no academic literature on the professional culture of the WHO although articles and books have been written about the historical development of the organization and its directors general. The author also relied on the collected documents and information from the WHO archives, on the data taken from the WHO staff survey conducted by the WHO staff association as well as on a few recordings of the "Oral History of the WHO." The findings from observations of the WHO Executive Board session in January 2004 constituted a final informative supplement.

#### *1.12.2.3 The case study of the Office of the ILO*

This study relies on the qualitative methods that consist of: a content analysis of various written materials and twenty-five open-ended interviews with selected current and former senior officials from the Office. In order to enhance reliability of the findings, the study also included interviews with a former Assistant Director General and a Deputy Director General, the highest political posts (below only the Director General), one junior professional official that occupied non-graded positions, one senior official from the general service staff, a representative from the ILO member states, as well as a representative of a social partner (workers' group). The length of the interviews varied from forty-five minutes to four hours. The total recording time of all ILO-related interviews was around 2600 minutes (around thirty 90-minute tapes). Furthermore, this study relies on the conclusions drawn from a passive observation of the November 2003 Governing Body (GB) sessions where the author examined interactions taking place in

various GB committees between the ILO social partners and the member states and Office officials.

To my knowledge there is no academic literature devoted to the workings and management of the Office of the ILO. In fact, there is not one academic text on the professional culture of the Office. The absence of such scientific texts means that empirical data about the work of the Office is actually quite limited. At the same time, the release of internal Office documentation, which could shed more light on the workings of the international administration, is governed by a thirty-five-year confidentiality rule applied in the ILO archives. In other words, a researcher investigating the culture of the Office is facing a major challenge in gaining access to the relevant information. Consequently, the author had to rely to a large extent on the data collected from the interviews with the staff of the Office.

#### *1.12.3 Conclusions on validity, methodology and empirical investigation*

Given existing constraints, this research went to great lengths in its methodological complexity to ensure an objective view of the work of international administrations, which would reflect the reality as closely as possible. By relying on “methodological triangulation” to ensure validity, the author aimed at conducting a genuinely critical exercise of the collected data. Such test addressed a possible problem of “anecdotalism” and defended the accuracy of the findings.

Credibility of research should not be, however, considered separately from the practical impediments to conducting this empirical investigation. These impediments placed a significant strain on the collection of more detailed data. Generally, the disclosure of internal aspects of one’s work is considered to be highly sensitive. This observation turned out to be even truer in highly political organizations such as international administrations of the UN organizations. The politically charged environment that surrounds these administrations makes their “gatekeepers” (legal departments), and to a certain extent international civil servants cautious and reserved. Such behavior, in turn, limits even further the access of these administrations to external researchers. The result of this limited access is a general scarcity of academic literature on the workings of international administrations. In this situation, any “inside” information gathered from interviews and from studies of internal (often confidential) documents proved extremely valuable for the kinds of issues that were analyzed in this study.



### *1.13 Structure of the book*

This book has a relatively straightforward structure. Three empirical chapters will follow the introduction, which identifies and describes all the necessary analytical, empirical and methodological tools of this inquiry. Each of the chapters introduces briefly an organization and stresses the autonomy of its executive leadership and administration. Only then, do the chapters move to explicate in detail the processes and outcomes of specific changes in a given international administration, starting with the Office of the High Commissioner, followed by the Secretariat of the WHO and ending on the Office of the ILO. In the concluding chapter, contending explanations are ruled out in order to reinforce the power of the leadership and culture-based inquiry.

## **Chapter 2. The Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees: its Professional Culture, Sadako Ogata's Leadership and Institutional Change**

### *2.1 Introduction*

This chapter focuses on the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (henceforth the Office or the Office of the High Commissioner or UNHCR), on the main characteristics of its professional culture, on Sadako Ogata's style of leadership and on the change identified as Humanitarian Agenda and initiated at the beginning of the 1990s. This chapter will show that a very low rigidity of the UNHCR professional culture (agile culture) and Ogata's unusually strong leadership dynamism (transformational leadership) determined the process of change and led to its radical outcome, which saw UNHCR moving away from a refugee-specific agency and turning into a fully-fledged humanitarian organization in the first half of the 1990s (humanitarian transformation).<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> This chapter does not judge whether the outcomes of that change had negative or positive influence on the organization and its refugee policy. This is clearly outside the scope of this study. Leaving aside such heavily value-oriented analysis, this enquiry focuses on shedding more light on how humanitarian transformation in UNHCR was implemented and explaining the role and impact of leadership and professional culture on the process and eventual outcome of this change.

The analysis of UNHCR constitutes an important critical case study. By emphasizing internal organizational features, this study departs from a popular view that stresses the importance of other determinants (e.g. the external forces) in the process of UNHCR's radical transformation. Consequently, by addressing alternate explanations, Chapter 5 will rebut their causal claims, opposed to the main assumptions of this study.

## *2.2 UNHCR and its executive leadership*

In December 1949, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution to establish the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees but with clearly limited, three-year, mandate to assist people displaced by the Second World War. Despite its envisaged impermanence the organization's mandate kept being extended every 5 years as a result of never-ending refugee crises in different parts of the world.

International (legal) protection of refugees and finding permanent solution to their problems have constituted the main mandate of UNHCR since its inception. Although UNHCR was established as an intergovernmental organizations answerable to the members states seated in the Executive Committee (ExCom) and indirectly to the UN General Assembly and the UN Secretary General, the UNHCR internal leadership has established over the years a considerable autonomy over practical interpretation and implementation of the organization's mandate. A high degree of the UNHCR autonomy vis-à-vis the member states is also a reflection of the funding fathers' desire to see a refugee organization that would fulfill its protection role free from political interference.<sup>71</sup>

The UNHCR leadership is associated with the post of the High Commissioner (HC) that is uniquely positioned in the organization. In the words of the senior UNHCR official, the refugee organization has always been the Office of the HC; an office of one person. Because the HC has been the main decision maker, running of the organization became essentially a one-man show. In practice, it means that HC takes credit or blame for whatever happens in and with the organization.<sup>72</sup> Consequently, the executive leader personalizes UNHCR to a much greater degree than the executive heads in other UN organization, which, like the ILO and the WHO, are owned by a collectivity of different shareholders and are not the offices of a single person. Directors General of the ILO or WHO are formally the heads of their secretariats and the leadership within these agencies is shared among the executive heads and political organs such as the ILO Governing Body

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<sup>71</sup> Guy S. Goodwni-Gill, Editorial, *International Journal of Refugee Law*, vol.5, no.1, (1993): 8.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 13 May 2004.

and Conference or the WHO Executive Board and Assembly. This is not the case in UNHCR, where ExCom performs merely advisory functions. The Note on International Protection prepared by the UNHCR administration and the High Commissioner's opening statement are the main tools that guide and influence programmatic agenda of the ExCom's meetings.<sup>73</sup> During such meetings, the HC not only summarizes activities of the last twelve months but he or she uses the opportunity to justify and seek an authorization for the already undertaken operations *ex post facto*.<sup>74</sup> As a result, the most important policy initiatives of the refugee agency are often issued first in the name of the High Commissioner and not the member governments.<sup>75</sup> In practice, the plenary debates in the ExCom are dominated by governments' response to the issues raised by UNHCR that gives the HC and its Office the power to set independently policy agenda within the organization.<sup>76</sup>

Relative autonomy and power of the HC and its Office vis-à-vis external actors allow for the development and nurturing in the UNHCR administration of a particular work culture that strongly reflects the professional character of its staff members.

### *2.3 Very low rigidity of professional culture in the Office of the High Commissioner*

Low rigidity (or high agility) of the professional culture is determined by the operational nature of the UNHCR's substantive work. Operationality, which is defined as hegemonic orientation of the Office's substantive work, shapes the organization's orientation towards action and results, enhances its preoccupation with short-term outcomes and quick responses, and highlights organizational flexibility, pragmatism and its field-driven type of work. Humanitarian values of the staff predispose them to dynamism, quick decisions and rapid actions. This chapter explores in greater detail all these agile elements of organizational culture, while looking at their origin and impact.

#### *2.3.1 The Office of the High Commissioner and its operational orientation*

UNHCR is an operational agency and, as a result, its professional culture is deeply embedded within an operational nature of the Office's substantive activities. Operationality

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<sup>73</sup> Tim Wichert, Seeking Refuge: Issues Arising from the 46<sup>th</sup> UNHCR Executive Committee Meeting (Geneva, 16-20 October 1995), *International Journal of Refugee Law*, vol.8, no.1/2 (1996): 221.

<sup>74</sup> Guy S. Goodwin-Gill, "Refugee Identity and Protection's Fading Prospect", in Frances Nicholson and Patrick Twomey, *Refugee Rights and Realities. Evolving International Concepts and Regimes*, Cambridge University Press (Cambridge 1999): 224.

<sup>75</sup> Leon Gordenker, Organizational Expansion and Limits in International Services for Refugees, *International Migration Review*, vol.15, no.1/2 (Spring-Summer 1981): 80.

of the Office is reflected in its emphasis on emergencies. Because of its engagement in operations the Office is said to have an “emergency bias”<sup>77</sup> and to operate with an “emergency mind set.”<sup>78</sup> Because of this emergency mind set, in the words of the High Commissioner, Ogata, the organization “would like to be as quick as possible”<sup>79</sup> in its responses to crises. The fact that the Office has made speed a priority is made evident by the existence of specific institutional mechanisms that allow rapid staff deployment to worldwide emergency locations.

A prevailing organizational discourse devoted to finding “durable solutions”<sup>80</sup> serves as an additional illustration of the Office’s operationality. Finding solutions, in fact, is regarded in the Office as a great organizational success. This is clearly depicted in the words of a UNHCR senior official who, when referring to the solution in the form of repatriation of refugees, noted:

Taking refugees back home is the success. Every senior manager, if you ask him, what is his achievement he will talk about his involvement in return operations. Repatriation is a ground achievement, a feather in your cap. You can talk to your grandchildren about it (...). There is still a good deal of focus on the process and making sure that it happens in safety and dignity and that minimum standards are maintain. But ultimately satisfaction comes from the achievement of having brought people back.<sup>81</sup>

Linking solutions with the organization success-stories increases the organization’s bias towards actions. These actions are undertaken in order to come up with specific results (solutions), be it asylum, resettlement, repatriation or reintegration. Consequently, people in the organization are focused on producing results, changing things on the ground, and often taking risks in order to find a solution. Solution thus generates greater emphasis on the results-oriented, operational nature of UNHCR work and less on political and bureaucratic technicalities according to which operational work is done. According to the senior UNHCR official:

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<sup>76</sup> Tim Wichert, Seeking Refuge in Geneva: Report on the 47<sup>th</sup> UNHCR Executive Committee Meeting (Geneva, 7-11 October 1996), *International Journal of Refugee Law*, vol. 9, no.1 (1997): 132 and 142.

<sup>77</sup> *Review of UNHCR’s Phase-Out Strategies: Case Studies in Selected Countries of Origin*, UNHCR Evaluation Reports, (1 February 1997):4.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with Sadako Ogata in Scott D. Berrie, Gerard E. Trimarco and Sonali Weerackody, The Evolution of UNHCR: Mrs. Sadako Ogata, U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, *Journal of International Affairs*, vol.47, no.2 (Winter 1994): 422.

<sup>80</sup> The word ‘solutions’ was used at least once in every interview by all UNHCR staff with whom this author met.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 28 May 2004.

Focusing on *how we are functioning* is always second seat to where we need to be next and where we get people from. We got to go out and respond.<sup>82</sup>

In general, operationality, with its focus on solutions, brings about an action-oriented and hands-on style of work within the Office. An emphasis on solutions generates an image of the “can-do” agency<sup>83</sup> or “go-getting” organizational thinking, as specified by one interviewee: “this is what needs to be done within the certain time, so let’s go and deliver.”<sup>84</sup> Thus, the perception has been that UNHCR can always deliver.<sup>85</sup>

Operationality of the Office is also set in the military-like (‘rapid reaction force’) discourse, thinking and planning, which reinforce action and a professional culture focused on results. UNHCR, for example, operates on *contingency plans*, and its staff categories consist of various senior and junior *officers*. One of the Office’s basic tasks related to the repatriation of refugees to their home countries has been described as a “*commando operation*” that is “limited in time and demands perfect *logistic* management (of) how to transport people, how to assure their safety (...), etc”<sup>86</sup> (emphases added). In some of its operations, like in the former Yugoslavia, the UNHCR not only cooperated closely with the military personnel but also relied on the recruitment of the professional soldiers who had recently retired from the armed forces and had appropriate logistical and operational skills.<sup>87</sup>

Because of the operational nature of the Office, as noted by the UNHCR senior policy officer, “work in UNHCR is much less demanding in terms of analytical abilities.”<sup>88</sup> In contrast to its technical (WHO) and normative (ILO) counterparts, whose role is to issue reports and generate substantive written analysis, UNHCR is not a publication or research-focused organization.<sup>89</sup> The need to respond immediately and on a continuing basis in various crises that occur simultaneously worldwide leaves little, if any, time for engaging in a thick, analytical, work. Therefore, the Office’s recent publication of three major

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<sup>82</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior officer, Staff Development Section, Geneva, 10 June 2004. Emphasis added.

<sup>83</sup> Interview with the UNHCR head of unit, Geneva, 12 May 2004 and a phone interview with the UNHCR senior policy officer, 28 May 2004.

<sup>84</sup> Phone interview with the UNHCR senior policy officer, 28 May 2004.

<sup>85</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior external affairs officer, Geneva, 1 June 2004.

<sup>86</sup> Marie-Angelique Savane, *Commando Operations or Lasting Solutions? Refugees*, no.87 (October 1991): 25-26.

<sup>87</sup> *Working in a War Zone: A Review of UNHCR’s Operations in Former Yugoslavia*, UNHCR Evaluation Reports, (1 April 1994):34.

<sup>88</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 28 May 2004.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 29 June 2004.

studies,<sup>90</sup> which provide a comprehensive analysis of UNHCR activities in the 1990s, amounted to an extraordinary event, which led to a considerable degree of satisfaction and pride among the staff members of UNHCR.<sup>91</sup> In any other UN organizations such as the WHO or the ILO, this type of study would be seen as a normal, almost routine, activity. For an operational organization like UNHCR, however, such publications have been something that had not been done before.

Because of a specific operational nature UNHCR tends to focus, according to the internal evaluation, “more on the achievement of immediate objectives than on the means whereby those goals are attained.”<sup>92</sup> In other words, operability of the Office makes the organization focus less on the rules and processes and more on end-results. Consequently, an implementation of the operational goals becomes more important than following right procedures and rules. The senior UNHCR official provides the following explanation for this phenomenon:

If we just apply rules and regulations and (demand) 100% compliance with them in a stubborn manner, we can close this shop. You work in Goma, there is absolutely no authorities, there is no banking system, the money is being brought by small planes in bags – forget your rules and regulations—you have to survive. That is why we are good; we have a lot of people who have the ability to say: I am a certified accountant and this is the rule and this is the reality of Goma and this is what we are going to do. I am putting it in writing. It would be recorded in the file and can be examined by the auditors later on.<sup>93</sup>

Operability of the Office ultimately places the operating environment and situational context above the rules and regulations. A practical illustration of this bias is a short extract taken from the review of one of the major operations, which the Office was involved in during the first half of the 1990s.

Millions of dollars were spent on procurement, for example, without the creation of a contracts committee. The absence of systems (...) to control resources meant that during the operation's early stages, a number of vehicles and computers simply disappeared. Hundreds of UNHCR employees functioned without job descriptions, and reconciling the staffing list with the people actually working for the organization was difficult, if not impossible.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> 1) *The State of the World's Refugees: The Challenge of Protection* from 1993, 2) *The State of the World's Refugees 1997-1998: A Humanitarian Agenda* from 1998 and 3) *The State of the World's Refugees: Fifty Years of Humanitarian Action* from 2000.

<sup>91</sup> This satisfaction and pride were clearly visible during the meetings when the UNHCR officials reminded the author about the publications.

<sup>92</sup> *Working in a War Zone* (1 April 1994): 28.

<sup>93</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 21 May 2004.

<sup>94</sup> *Working in a War Zone* (1 April 1994):33.

In any other business, such evaluation would be viewed as a damaging assessment of the program and would stand out as evidence of its failure. A critical evaluation like this would be seen as undermining the image and standing of the company and most likely, would raise calls for an immediate dismissal of people responsible for such a gross negligence. In fact, the above excerpt refers to the UNHCR operation in the former Yugoslavia, which is considered one of the organization's greatest successes. Because of that operation, according to the same review, UNHCR "enhanced (its) public reputation and boosted its credibility with donor states,"<sup>95</sup> while its externally recruited staff received permanent employment contracts as a form of recognition for their work in the former Yugoslavia.

The Office's emphasis on the outcomes rather than on the processes accounts for the situation in which apparent mismanagement is seen merely as a cost of operating in an extremely difficult environment rather than as a grave problem requiring harsh punishment. The UNHCR's operating environment bends its organizational rules and procedures towards practical needs. Thus, a particular situational (emergency) context in which UNHCR operates is oftentimes more important than the internal rules and regulations. In fact, the conclusion of the internal evaluation bluntly acknowledged that the UNHCR "staff are not particularly disciplined in following procedures."<sup>96</sup>

The consequence of a more lax institutional environment regarding following correct rules and procedures is greater administrative autonomy that the ordinary UNHCR staff members enjoy while conducting their daily fieldwork. Additionally, because there is not much repercussion for possible managerial failures, staff may be encouraged to take greater degree of risk in their activities.<sup>97</sup>

Operationality of the Office requires its staff to respond to a given situation in the most flexible manner possible. The closer the Office gets in its operational activities to its own beneficiaries (e.g. refugees and/or displaced people), the greater flexibility it requires from its staff.<sup>98</sup> Oftentimes, the staff is faced with circumstances that demand from them an instant and "out of the rule box" response in order to ensure the survival of the people in their care. Therefore, the Office's ultimate success in reacting to a given situation rests less on a correct application of the right rules and more on the most effective action possible in

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 4, paragraph 32.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior advisor, Geneva, 4 May 2004.

<sup>98</sup> Interview with the UNHCR external affairs officer, Geneva, 4 June 2004.

the given circumstances.<sup>99</sup> Agility of the Office rests on the unwritten tenet that the organization and its staff apply the administrative rules and procedures exclusively to the circumstances in which they work. An illustration of that style of work is given in the following stories:

In Africa I did things that I did not even tell the Office about. We had a war frontline, which was moving towards north and east of the country. Our colleagues in Kampala were cut off from the camps in south-western Uganda. I had carried programs for these refugee people for the last four years. I had therefore also the necessary resources. (Being in Rwanda) I decided to move food and mountain items: blankets and tents with convoys and monitor the situation of the people who returned to Uganda. The point is that it was unconventional to exit my own territory under my responsibility. I would normally have left the task of monitoring of what was happening in Uganda and the distribution of food and winter items to my colleagues in Kampala. However, they could not do that. My colleague from Kampala came by a little airplane (...), we had a discussion and we made a deal between ourselves – I do it and we will keep quiet about it. What we were doing was: I had resources that if I did not use would have been simply given to the host country government who would not necessary use it in the best way. Whereas we had the population that we had a ‘guardianship’ over, to whom we had certain responsibility still from a protection point of view, whom we supported in finding durable solutions by providing them with certain supplies. For me it made a lot of sense. So I did it (moved out of the area of direct responsibility and distributed unused resources earmarked for another operation-MB).<sup>100</sup>

At the end of 1980s we received from a donor a very big consignment of cereals and food for Sudan and we did not have time to distribute it to our camps. It had to be distributed within three months so we gave it to an NGO, which was doing cross border and delivering assistance in Eritrea at the time of a war with Ethiopia. This was probably not the standard way of doing it but we could not distribute the food for the purpose for which it was intended because it was basically going to expire within a very short period of time. We documented everything and we did it.<sup>101</sup>

There was a riot in one of the camps in Indonesia and they arrested a lot of Vietnamese, who they thought were behind it, they put them into prison on another island than the one we were in. Tuberculosis spread and the food was not really up to standards. I just took a decision. We went to a local market, we bought as much food as it was necessary and that was well beyond the standards that we were supposed to apply. WFP had a standard for the amount of calories a person should have per day and we were well beyond that. But I did not care because we needed it. When we bought extra food, we could charge it to travel, or we could charge it to some other budget line and get away with it.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 21 May 2004.

<sup>100</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 29 April 2004.

<sup>101</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 21 May 2004.

<sup>102</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior advisor, Geneva, 4 May 2004.



Internal flexibility, an illustration of the Office operationality, is enhanced by the UNHCR operational mandate, which, in itself, is seen as being “infinitely flexible”<sup>103</sup>. Flexibility of that mandate, widely acknowledged,<sup>104</sup> has provided the Office with the institutional capacity to adapt quickly to changing circumstances. Furthermore, operationality of the Office requires from the organization a considerable degree of pragmatism in carrying out its activities. According to a well-known refugee scholar, UNHCR pragmatism is reflected in the Office’s willingness to adopt “politically pragmatic approaches aimed at securing the ‘best bargain’ for refugees under the circumstances.”<sup>105</sup> The Office pragmatic and non-dogmatic style of work has weakened over the years the organization’s legal (non-flexible) protection thinking, which may eventually led the organization to promote forced rather than voluntary repatriations under less than strict legal conditions.<sup>106</sup>

### 2.3.2 *Office as an emergency agency*

The organization became an emergency agency due to the nature of its operational environment where refugee crises could not be predicted.<sup>107</sup> Consequently, the Office culture of work has been deeply embedded in crisis situations, which the organization has attempted to ameliorate during more than fifty years of its existence. The first impression of the Office emergency culture, which Thorvald Stoltenberg, a short-lived High Commissioner (1990), had “was a feeling of urgency.”<sup>108</sup> Similarly, in 1991, Douglas Stafford, the Deputy High Commissioner described his job as “a crisis manager’s delight.” Stafford explained that in the organization’s day-to-day work

(...) acute problems crop up all the time. My daily agenda, and that of the organization as a whole, is a reflection of the news that one hears on the radio. Today, for example, the BBC talked about 150.000 mothers and children in the Liberian capital of Monrovia, slowly starving to death (...) and

<sup>103</sup> Guy S. Goodwin-Gill, *Asylum: The Law and Politics of Change*, *International Journal of Refugee Law*, vol.7, no.1 (1995), reprinted in B.S. Chimni, *International Refugee Law*, Sage Publication (London 2000): 250.

<sup>104</sup> “Already in 1982 some states were emphasizing that UNHCR’s mandate was ‘sufficiently flexible and adaptable to changing requirements,’ that no change there or in the refugee definition was called for.” See: Guy S. Goodwin-Gill, *The Refugee in International Law*, 2<sup>nd</sup> eds, Clarendon Press (Oxford 1996): 26, footnote 117. “The inherent flexibility found in UNHCR’s statute allows the organization to adapt to emerging problems that were not foreseen by the statute’s drafters.” See: James Thomas Vargas, *Reducing Refugees’ Plights in the 1990s: UNHCR Targets Countries of Origin Through Repatriation and Preventive Measures*, *Memoire*, Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva, 1 November 1993: 22.

<sup>105</sup> Gil Loescher, “Protection and Humanitarian Action in the Post-Cold War Era” in Aristide R. Zolberg and Peter M. Benda, *Global Migrants, Global Refugees. Problems and Solutions*, Berghahn Books, (United States 2001): 174.

<sup>106</sup> Gil Loescher, “UNHCR at Fifty. Refugee Protection and World Politics,” in Niklaus Steiner, Mark Gibney, and Gil Loescher, *Problems of Protection. The UNHCR, Refugees, and Human Right*, Routledge (New York 2003):10. Some scholars have even suggested that the culture of ‘forced repatriations’ has developed in the Office. See Barnett and Finnemore (2004): 73-120.

<sup>107</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 8 June 2004.

<sup>108</sup> Interview with Thorvald Stoltenberg, the High Commissioner between 1990-1991 in *In Search of Security, Refugees*, no.73 (March 1990):7.

that the rebels in northern Rwanda had intensified their military campaign. UNHCR is at the center of such events.<sup>109</sup>

Rapidity of refugee crises requires an immediate response from UNHCR. The immediacy of UNHCR activities, needed to rescue the lives of refugees in danger, generates a “fire-brigade” mentality in the Office<sup>110</sup>; because of the refugee emergencies, as stated by one insider, the Office has to “respond very quickly and like a brigade put down a fire.”<sup>111</sup>

The style of work in a “fire-brigade” is based on a provision of relief assistance at a very short notice and during a relatively short operational lifespan that may vary from six months to a year depending on the circumstances<sup>112</sup>. The “fire-brigade” mode of operation is thus driven by brevity of planning and adhococracy of the deployed structures. UNHCR *modus operandi*, set on the impermanence (brevity and adhococracy) of its operations, has an important impact on the presence of temporal mindset within the Office. This temporal mindset, according to one interviewee, leads to:

(...) certain tensions between speed and sustainability. UNHCR primarily objective is speed. For example, within a space of 6-8 months 300/400 thousands refugees returned to their home country. There is clearly a pressure to do things quickly, to provide services, resources, infrastructure needed to sustain that kind of population. The main interest is in doing things speedily and not doing it in a sustainable manner. We may have used the language of sustainability but basically it is speed, which is important.<sup>113</sup>

A practical reflection of the quickness of doing things and a temporary operational mindset is the way the UNHCR manages and maintains refugee camps. UNHCR places a strong emphasis on temporariness of the refugee settlements. Such a short-term approach reinforces anticipation by the refugees of their imminent move. This, in turn, generates little incentives for refugees to use local environmental resources in sustainable and economical manners.<sup>114</sup> At the same time, UNHCR is preoccupied with the emergency programs that are focused more on a provision of food and clothing for the refugees in the camps and less on the programs that would provide refugees, for example, with farming equipment and schoolbooks.<sup>115</sup> A senior UNHCR official aptly summarized the persistence of the temporariness bias in the Office and the problems associated with it :

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<sup>109</sup> Interview with Douglas Stafford in *Managing the Crisis, Refugees*, no.80 (November 1990):41.

<sup>110</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 21 May 2004 and Interview with the UNHCR legal protection officer, Geneva, 16 June 2004.

<sup>111</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 21 May 2004.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Interview with a former UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 13 April 2004.

<sup>114</sup> Tienlon Ho, A New UNHCR: Helping the Desperate Choose Sustainability, *Environmental Policy*, vol.29, no.4 (1999): 166-168.

<sup>115</sup> Ho (1999): 167.

Because we are fast in and fast out we are not really looking at what is to take to make people self-sufficient. And we do not start thinking self-sufficiency fast enough. We think emergency relief. But we do not necessarily think about how can we help people to get on their feet. Instead we build dependencies. We did not have in the Office a unit for 'self-reliance and local integration.' We have been developing dependent programs, programs that fostered dependencies because of our short-term thinking. We come in, help, give aid, take care of people and then eventually we pull out. We cannot think in terms of self-reliance because we think we will not be there long enough. But this is the fallacy because the situations never resolve that quickly and we are often there for a long time.<sup>116</sup>

Brevity in the UNHCR manner of work is also reflected in its procedures and internal structure. UNHCR is, for example, the only UN organization that operates with an annual budget,<sup>117</sup> which means that the agency can only plan one year ahead and its whole operational horizon is limited to immediate developments.<sup>118</sup> In addition, brevity of the organization's work is even evident in its own mandate, which until 2003 had to be renewed every five years. Although, this requirement may have been relegated to a simple formality, in theory, the organization has had no permanent right to exist until just recently.<sup>119</sup> Finally, a short-term approach is also reflected in the fact that UNHCR does not have a unit or an office for strategic planning that is common for all other UN organizations. In the view of a senior official, the aforementioned procedural and structural features reinforce the idea of impermanence of UNHCR work and illustrate an ability to adapt quickly to the new realities without regard for more structured, long term, strategic thinking.<sup>120</sup> Another official shared the previous opinion and claimed that the organizational features of brevity and adhocism do not encourage people to develop long-term views necessary for going beyond short-term, humanitarian thinking regarding the adoption of a more development approach.<sup>121</sup>

Because of the emergency-driven work, as maintained by its staff, UNHCR is not a static organization;<sup>122</sup> the Office is flexible, quick and is able to adapt rapidly to a changing operational environment.<sup>123</sup> The example of such style of work was seen in the former

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<sup>116</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior officer, Staff Development Section, Geneva, 10 June 2004.

<sup>117</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 8 June 2004.

<sup>118</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 28 May 2004.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior external affairs officer, Geneva, 1 June 2004.

<sup>122</sup> Interview with the UNHCR external affairs officer, Geneva, 4 June 2004.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior external affairs officer, Geneva, 1 June 2004. See also *Working in a War Zone* (1 April 1994):39.

Yugoslavia (Bosnia). Within a year, UNHCR set up several offices and deployed 400 staff members who were implementing 300 million dollars budget.<sup>124</sup>

The emergency operations place the UNHCR staff in situations where they must do things they have never planned for or done before. While referring to the necessity to adapt during unexpected circumstances, the senior UNHCR officials noted:

We have to adapt to what we find (because) in the deep field, people do not have time for instructions on everything they do.<sup>125</sup>

When lots of things are happening around you and you cannot go back to the headquarters to ask for instructions, you just have to get on with your job. You have to use your common sense and do it.<sup>126</sup>

Rapid reactions, quick decisions, and a need for experimentation and innovation, all constitute specific characteristics of UNHCR work. To a certain extent, each of these features is exemplified in the following passage:

The other day I heard from people that the exodus from Rwanda just started. We were in Zaire that time. We had three staff in Goma on the border. And just within a few hours in one day, hundreds of thousands of people crossed the border and they crowded into a town and stuck there. You had a logjam behind them. People wanted to get across the border but they could not make it because other people in front of them stayed in the town. So the staff just took it on themselves: getting into their cars, with loud speakers, saying: follow us. Like cattle. They started leading lines of people out of the town, directing them to the airport, football stadium and elsewhere.<sup>127</sup>

### *2.3.3 Action oriented type of professional culture*

A senior official, when asked about the action-Office, answered: “UNHCR is not famous for planning, it is not famous for research, it is not famous for thinking before it acts, it is famous for acting.”<sup>128</sup> The Office’s action oriented manner of work is closely linked to its mandate to protect and assist refugees. Such mandate implies that the Office needs to reach out in practical ways to its beneficiaries- the refugees. As a result, in contrast to many other UN organizations, professional officials in UNHCR do not and cannot merely sit behind their desks.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 21 May 2004.

<sup>125</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of division, Geneva, 18 May 2004.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior advisor, Geneva, 4 May 2004.

<sup>128</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 13 May 2004.

<sup>129</sup> Helen Gibson and Ellen Wallace, Ogata’s Angels, *Time*, 23 October 1995.

The features of the action driven culture and hands-on style of work become particularly visible when UNHCR work is compared with the work of other UN organizations. Various UNHCR officials with professional experience from other UN agencies were of the opinion that UNHCR was in a clear lead over other UN organizations in its action and manner of work focused on results. The following are excerpts from interview respondents on this topic:

I was myself with another UN agency. I worked in UNIDO on abstract concepts of balance of payments, investment promotions but no link at all to the improvement of welfare of anybody. You can speculate that you are contributing to a greater good but other than your own intellectual stimulation you have very little to show for it. In UNHCR it is almost the opposite.<sup>130</sup>

OCHA<sup>131</sup> will put together a document or appeal but they will not go into practical parts of making that happen, whereas UNHCR will make that happen at the practical level, at the end-user level.<sup>132</sup>

The ILO is not as results-oriented as UNHCR is. They were oriented on processes, constantly meeting the demands of tripartite regime, constantly having to have consensus on whatever. I was working in the conditions of work branch, which was reviewing legislations and practices in various countries. It is useful exercise but does it help anybody directly?<sup>133</sup>

I worked for UNCTAD<sup>134</sup> and ILO. UNHCR is more hands-on. We write much less than in UNCTAD and ILO. Here is much less analyses, much less written studies. We have relatively more operations and hands-on approach.<sup>135</sup>

#### 2.3.4 UNHCR field orientation, its importance and consequences

UNHCR is a field-oriented organization, which maintains more than 250 field offices<sup>136</sup> in contrast with the WHO's 140 offices<sup>137</sup> and 43 field offices of the ILO.<sup>138</sup> UNHCR field-orientation is also reflected in the fact that around 80% of the UNHCR professional staff works outside its headquarters in the field<sup>139</sup>, while only 54% in the WHO<sup>140</sup> and 38% in

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<sup>130</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 28 May 2004.

<sup>131</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

<sup>132</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 15 June 2004.

<sup>133</sup> Interview with the UNHCR head of unit, Geneva, 9 June 2004.

<sup>134</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

<sup>135</sup> Interview with the UNHCR head of unit, Geneva, 9 June 2004.

<sup>136</sup> Sumihiro Kuyama, Louis-Dominique Ouedraogo and M. Deborah Wynes, *Review of Management and Administration in the Office of the United High Commissioner for Refugees*, Joint Inspection Unit, JIU/REP/2004/4: 6

<sup>137</sup> This number includes 105 WHO representative offices and 35 liaison offices. See *Review of the Management and Administration in the World Health Organization*, Joint Inspection Unit, JIU/REP/2001/5:10 and 16.

<sup>138</sup> This number includes 35 country offices, 13 subregional and 5 regional offices. See [www.ilo.org/public/english/sitemap.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/sitemap.htm). Accessed on 20 September 2004.

<sup>139</sup> Andrzej Abraszewski, Richard Hennes, Kahono Martohadinegoro, Khalil Issa Othman, *Accountability, Management Improvement and Oversight in the United Nations System. Part II- Comparative Tables*, Joint Inspection Unit, (Geneva 1995):2.

the ILO remain in the outside the office.<sup>141</sup> UNHCR field orientation is reinforced by the internal procedure of rotation, which stipulates that every few years all staff members have to rotate between headquarters and the field, as well as between different duty-field stations. The length of the stay in a given place, usually between two to four years, is determined by the hardship associated with living in a given place of operations (based on UNDP criteria). More strenuous living conditions warrant a shorter field assignment. Because of the policy of extremely high mobility, most if not all UNHCR professionals who work in the headquarters have field experience.<sup>142</sup> The field experience is not accumulated through short-term, weekly or monthly missions to the city capitals; in contrast to the usual practice of UN organizations, UNHCR field experience consists of long-term residence and work in various remote areas affected by refugee crises. As a result, an average UNHCR professional would work in five to seven different field locations during his or her fifteen-year long refugee-related career.<sup>143</sup>

While valued specialists in the WHO and ILO are those with specific scientific or academic knowledge, a seasoned UNHCR official is one who is familiar with all field practices. An official experienced in interacting with government officials, working with refugees, handling the crowds, and defusing potentially volatile situations. As a result, the UNHCR expert is the one who has been exposed to operational work, gained practical knowledge and almost intuitively knows the right way to go about despite a daily administrative and a physical hardship of the field operations.<sup>144</sup> In this context, the field experience is essentially equal to having a unique set of skills and knowledge. Therefore, the staff members, who have gained field experience in different operations all over the world, enjoy in the UNHCR an unusually high esteem and are seen as being highly authoritative. One interviewee provided an apt illustration of this:

Who have the hardest time here in Geneva, are those with limited field exposure: in terms of respect to start with and ultimately with human resource issues like promotions and assignments. (This is) because human resource policy is heavily slanted in favor of rewarding rotation, of rewarding hardship duty station service. All of that reinforces the notion that the field brings respect. Therefore, it is out there not here what really matters.

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<sup>140</sup> *Review of the Management* (JIU/REP/2001/5):29.

<sup>141</sup> The ILO Gender Audit Report, (2002): 108 and Programme, Financial and Administrative Committee, Governing Body, International Labour Office, GB. 283/PFA/11, 283<sup>rd</sup> Session, Geneva, March 2002.

<sup>142</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior advisor, Geneva, 4 May 2004.

<sup>143</sup> Interview with a former UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 6 April 2004.

<sup>144</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 28 May 2004.

if we were to meet in one duty station and I knew that you worked in five other countries before I would automatically assume and respect that you bring in a wealth of experience in your own right. I would never question that.<sup>145</sup>

The importance of the field-focus in UNHCR could be encapsulated in the notion that the field leads the organization rather than the headquarters. The belief that the field knows better is reflected not only in the enormous pride the staff members have in the fieldwork but also in the common staff perception that the field is a positive *alter ego* of the headquarters. The fieldwork is lean, quick, and efficient while the headquarters is bureaucratic, slow, remote, ineffective. According to a senior official with the experience of working both in the headquarters and in the field, at the refugee head office one cannot get a real feeling that he can make a real difference while in the field even the novice to the agency is sent to the emergency situation in a remote area and becomes suddenly responsible for thousands of refugees.<sup>146</sup>

Consequently, a prevailing belief is that the field experience enriches the staff. Working outside the headquarters gives them better understanding of the agency's mission, makes the organization more sensitive to what is happening on the outside,<sup>147</sup> and enables the staff to stay in touch with life problems rather than concentrating on paper work.<sup>148</sup> Because fieldwork allows the Office staff to be in touch with reality, in contrast to other agencies, UNHCR does not have a group of bureaucrats who have never been to the field sitting in Geneva.<sup>149</sup>

A greater sensitivity to developments on the ground, generated by the UNHCR field oriented style of work, ensures that the organization is capable of adjusting swiftly to the new situations.<sup>150</sup> Therefore, the Office must have a lot of organizational flexibility.<sup>151</sup> Furthermore, the field orientation strengthens a result-oriented style of work in UNHCR. The staff members, who work in the field, can see clearly and quickly the very immediate results of their efforts and know exactly what has been accomplished. For example, they have first-hand knowledge of the construction of refugee camps, health clinics, and water systems. They ensure an effective food distribution, a delivery of cloths or airlifts of tents

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior external affairs officer, Geneva, 1 June 2004.

<sup>147</sup> Interview with a former UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 6 April 2004.

<sup>148</sup> Hella Pick, Cool Hands and a Warm Heart, *The Guardian*, 28 June 1993.

<sup>149</sup> Interview with a former UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 6 April 2004.

<sup>150</sup> Kuyama eds., (JIU/REP/2004/4): 6

<sup>151</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior advisor, Geneva, 4 May 2004.

and blankets.<sup>152</sup> Consequently, the result-driven culture of the Office is strongly related to and reinforced by the UNHCR field-centered activities.

Finally, the richness of the field experience ensures that a UNHCR official is exposed to different and diverse tasks within the organization. Because of this exposure, the staff socialization within the Office is relatively strong. A senior member of the Office, after twenty years of working for UNHCR a professional staff member, has easily fulfilled ten to twelve different functions and has become very versatile within UNHCR.<sup>153</sup> Consequently, UNHCR officials identify strongly with what the organization does; officials derive identity from affiliation with UNHCR and over the years turn into “an UNHCR animal.”<sup>154</sup>

The particular level on which the operations are carried out characterizes the office work in the field. The ILO and the WHO, for example, function on the state level; therefore, their staffs are usually located in the states’ capitals, in the immediate proximity to the government ministries and not on the field frontlines.<sup>155</sup> In contrast, the UNHCR personnel work mostly outside the capital cities, in the field or, literally, in the bush. The ILO and WHO staff carry out their long-term developmental programs and technical assistance via the government structures. It is very rare to see any large WHO and ILO projects that would not work through the government institutions, which eventually take control of various technical cooperation funds.<sup>156</sup> Thus, more often than not, the ILO and WHO representatives are only responsible for planning and strategizing. The execution of programs is eventually left to the government or local authorities, which become operational arms of the international organizations.<sup>157</sup> As a result, the pace of the ILO and WHO work depends largely on the governments and their bureaucracies. UNHCR, in contrast, does not necessarily work through governmental structures. Because the governments may not be hospitable to the refugees that UNHCR tries to take care of, the relations between the organization and government can be often contentious and even adversarial.<sup>158</sup> Consequently, while UNHCR is interested in maintaining good relations with governments, the UNHCR staff needs to ensure that it is viewed as being separate from that government so the people would not fear seeking help from the agency

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<sup>152</sup> Interview with a former UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 6 April 2004 and Interview with the UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 28 May 2004.

<sup>153</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 28 May 2004.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Interview with a former UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 6 April 2004.

<sup>156</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior officer, Staff Development Section, Geneva, 10 June 2004.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Phone interview with the UNHCR senior policy officer, 28 May 2004.



personnel.<sup>159</sup> UNHCR may have more autonomy and more independent operational capacity in implementing its policies than other agencies because of the organization's greater distance from the governmental institutions.<sup>160</sup> Instead of working with the host governments, UNHCR oftent relies on close cooperation with major international NGOs like Oxfam, Medecins Sans Frontieres and the International Committee of the Red Cross, which are flexible and act quickly. These NGOs generates a style of work that is similar to UNHCR.<sup>161</sup>

### *2.3.5 UNHCR basic humanitarian values and its focus on individuals*

The UNHCR staff protects and assists people who are, more often than not, in a complete despair.<sup>162</sup> There is thus a strong desire in the Office to save other people, which is an enormously motivating factor for the refugee workers.<sup>163</sup> UNHCR's work, however, is not limited to the situations involving those who starve or freeze to death in the mountains. Even assistance in securing a refugee status or settling displaced people down in a second and third country are actions perceived to be part of the Office's objective of saving lives.<sup>164</sup> As observed by one official:

Even when you are adjudicating individual cases, if the decision is right or wrong, it could mean death for the person, who is forced to go back (...).<sup>165</sup>

As a result, UNHCR has been traditionally focused, as observed by the UNHCR analyst, on "the immediate needs of individuals, families and groups."<sup>166</sup> Providing food, shelter, warm cloths, blankets and even a refugee status determination are all urgent life rescue activities because time often decides life and death of the people.<sup>167</sup>

The consequences of working with people who are at the lowest point of humanity strengthen the results-oriented culture within the Office. The organization, which aims at addressing the acute physical and psychological problems of various kinds of victims, undertakes activities that have immediate, visible impact on the people the Office attempts

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<sup>159</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior officer, Staff Development Section, Geneva, 10 June 2004.

<sup>160</sup> Phone interview with the UNHCR senior policy officer, 28 May 2004.

<sup>161</sup> Interview with a former UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 6 April 2004.

<sup>162</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior advisor, Geneva, 4 May 2004; Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 15 June 2004; Interview with the UNHCR head of unit, Geneva, 9 June 2004.

<sup>163</sup> Interview with the UNHCR head of unit, Geneva, 9 June 2004; Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 15 June 2004.

<sup>164</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 15 June 2004; Interview with the UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 28 May 2004; Interview with the UNHCR chief of section, Geneva, 11 May 2004.

<sup>165</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior officer, Staff Development Section, Geneva, 10 June 2004.

<sup>166</sup> Jeffrey Crisp, *Mind the Gap! UNHCR, Humanitarian Assistance and the Development Process*, *International Migration Review*, vol.35, no.1 (Spring 2001): 180.

<sup>167</sup> Interview with the UNHCR head of unit, Geneva, 9 June 2004.

to help.<sup>168</sup> Because of the assistance provided directly to the victims, the refugee officials see that they are doing something meaningful and not just writing documents, which are then piled up somewhere in the library.<sup>169</sup> The UNHCR officials see helping people in need as a reflection of their genuine concern for destitute people and resulting from their desire to alleviate human suffering.<sup>170</sup> The concern about inherent dignity and worth of the human being, which constitutes the underlying value of the UNHCR humanitarian work, eventually determines the Office involvement and its actions.<sup>171</sup> The UNHCR staff is out in the field, meeting refugees every single day; they deal directly with individuals.<sup>172</sup> As the former High Commissioner Sadako Ogata emphasized: “my colleagues deal with people. We do deal with people directly.”<sup>173</sup> Others also saw the UNHCR uniqueness in the fact that the agency was

directly responsible for the protection and assistance of individuals and (for) dealing directly with individuals as clients, and as applicants for refugee status.<sup>174</sup>

The notion that an individual is an ultimate “end-user” of the UNHCR activities becomes especially clearly when the comparison is made between the refugee agency and two other organizations under study. The WHO scientific focus and technical activities against diseases are directed at local communities or the whole populations to ensure a general reduction in mortality and morbidity for a longer time. In the WHO, there is no focus on rescuing lives or alleviating suffering of single individuals by taking immediate action. The ILO, which focuses on the interests of workers and concentrates on the enforcement of labor standards and long-term development projects, stands at considerable distance from the pressing basic needs of individuals. Generally, the WHO, behind its veil of technicity, and the ILO, behind its veil of normativity are to a certain degree dissociated from their beneficiaries. UNHCR, on the other hand, with its humane concern at the essence of its operability, has far-reaching, personal contacts with their ultimate individual clients (refugees or displaced people).<sup>175</sup> Even in comparison with other, equally operational and field oriented organizations such as WFP or UNICEF, the refugee agency is closer in its

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<sup>168</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 29 April 2004; Interview with a former UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 6 April 2004.

<sup>169</sup> Interview with the UNHCR legal protection officer, Geneva, 16 June 2004.

<sup>170</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior advisor, Geneva, 4 May 2004; Interview with the UNHCR chief of section, Geneva, 11 May 2004; Interview with the UNHCR senior advisor, Geneva, 4 May 2004.

<sup>171</sup> Guy S. Goodwin-Gill, Editorial, *International Journal of Refugee Law*, vol.5, no.1, (1993): 11.

<sup>172</sup> Interview with a former UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 6 April 2004.

<sup>173</sup> *Conversations with History*. Interview with Sadako Ogata, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 1999. <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/UN/Ogata2/agata99-con0.htm> . Accessed on 20 June 2004.

<sup>174</sup> Michael Alexander, Refugee Status Determination Conducted by UNHCR, *International Journal of Refugee Law*, vol.11, no.2 (1999): 256.

<sup>175</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 15 June 2004.

operations to individuals than its relief-focused counterparts. Thus, despite the fact that WFP provides food to refugees, one never sees refugees in the WFP offices. Similarly, in the offices of UNICEF one does not see children.<sup>176</sup> In contrast, refugees come to UNHCR field offices and branch offices and are regular visitors at the UNHCR headquarters.<sup>177</sup>

The intimacy of interactions between UNHCR staff and their individual beneficiaries strengthens the sense of the Office humanitarian focus. The staff's commitment to their mission of saving people is reinforced. The Office's personal approach stipulates the organization and its personnel to take rapid actions and find specific solutions to ease human misery.

### *2.3.6 The identity of an UNHCR staff member*

Because the Office work evolves around such a strong feeling of compassion and charity for the victims of conflicts, the staff maintains a strong "anti-establishment" identity. This identity is based on the contrast between compassionate and involved UNHCR staff members and a popular image of the UN civil servants as reserved, elitist bureaucrats.<sup>178</sup> Even the UNHCR review of its operations referred to the fact that, in their experience in the former Yugoslavia, the UNHCR staff has avoided being perceived as UN bureaucrats.<sup>179</sup>

UNHCR thus has an image that is in opposition to that of the UN administration. The UN administration is often perceived as a "slow and bloated bureaucracy." In fact, the "anti-UN establishment" tone was stressed by different discussants who generally saw UNHCR as an agency that distinguished itself from the rest of the UN by its efficiency, speed and much leaner bureaucracy.<sup>180</sup> The contrast between UNHCR and the rest of the UN is particularly striking with the kind of people the refugee agency attracts. UNHCR has a disproportionate number of staff members, compared to other UN agencies. These staff members do not come to the organization with the expectation that they would sit down by their desks in Geneva, Vienna or New York for the next thirty years.<sup>181</sup> Unlike UN bureaucrats, the

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> *Working in a War Zone* (1 April 1994):40.

<sup>180</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of division, Geneva, 18 May 2004; Interview with the UNHCR senior advisor, Geneva, 4 May 2004; Interview with the UNHCR senior official, a member of the Executive Office of the HC, Geneva, 8 June 2004.

<sup>181</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 10 June 2004.

UNHCR staff is ready go out in the middle of nowhere, abandoning electricity and proper sanitary conditions, to work in increasingly dangerous situations.<sup>182</sup>

The officials, who are quoted below, provided an accurate and detailed description of the action-oriented people who tend to join UNHCR:

If you look at the profile of people who join UNHCR they have often totally different profile from those who join other UN organizations. They are people who are more adventurous, people who liked to be in bush places, far away, who liked to take the initiative (...).<sup>183</sup>

People in UNHCR tend to be more action oriented, want to be part of what is happening in the world. We see the rest of the UN as working with governments and much more oriented towards development in longer term. Whereas in UNHCR, we are very much today, this is the crisis today that we need to deal with.<sup>184</sup>

The people who we attract in UNHCR are highly intelligent people who hate to be asked to sit down to think because they are much happier if they are actually running from one action to the next. It is a temperamental thing. Temperamentally, that is the kind of people that the organization like UNHCR attracts. It attracts people who are action oriented—it is nothing to do with the intelligence, it is to do with a disposition. And that is fine, because UNHCR needs that kind of people to get things done on the ground, to be able to think on their feet. They are the kind of people who usually hate to actually sit down and remain stationary for an hour, a day or a week to actually prospectively plan what to do.<sup>185</sup>

In the operational environment, in which the UNHCR staff lives and works, the notion of being a UN international civil servant is merely a functioning “administrative reality.”<sup>186</sup> Because the UNHCR staff sees people as the center of their work, a prevailing self-image of the UNHCR professional personnel is less bureaucratically-charged (e.g. international civil servants) and more action-oriented (e.g. protection or operational officers, relief or humanitarian workers and UNHCR officials). In fact, more informal images of the staff that function in the Office are those of “cowboys” or “adrenaline junkies,” whose drive for greater involvement in crisis situations becomes almost an addiction. Several quotes from various UNHCR staff members provide a more detailed reflection of the existing images in the organization and their meanings.

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<sup>182</sup> Interview with the UNHCR chief of section, Geneva, 11 May 2004.

<sup>183</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of division, Geneva, 18 May 2004.

<sup>184</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior advisor, Geneva, 4 May 2004.

<sup>185</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 29 June 2004.

<sup>186</sup> Interview with the UNHCR chief of section, Geneva, 9 June 2004.

There is a cowboy image present in the organization. A cowboy image is an aspect of seizing opportunities.<sup>187</sup>

You get these people in the organization that you call 'cowboys,' that always want to be part of the action. You have cowboys who want to go out and just be part of the scene, in the middle of it.<sup>188</sup>

We have colleagues in the organization and they are cowboys. They take risks, they are adventurous for adventures' sake. But if people raise to the occasion and take the right decisions, do the job, get on with it that is the positive aspect.<sup>189</sup>

You have people in UNHCR who go from one crisis to another. They are adrenaline junkies, like people who take drugs. People that like emergencies, like crises. People are willing to go, people are willing to put themselves at risk.<sup>190</sup>

If you want to do it and do it well in UNHCR, you have to be emotionally sucked into it, it is like a drug. If a drunkard does not have his dose he starts shaking. UNHCR people for the most part are like that.<sup>191</sup>

They are a number of us, and I am not the worst offender in that sense, who have moved from one, to another and another and another emergencies for a decade. Many for shorter periods, some for longer. Some are so into this stuff that they cannot ever say goodbye to.<sup>192</sup>

Because of such a strong commitment to work, the UNHCR staff can easily place their lives in danger in order to protect other people.<sup>193</sup> In fact, the personal risks become an indispensable element of the UNHCR work<sup>194</sup> and the consequences of it are dire for the refugee workers. The studies conducted at the end of the 1980s and in the mid of the 1990s showed that in comparison with the personnel of other UN organizations, the UNHCR staff members have both the highest substance abuse rate and the highest divorce rate.<sup>195</sup> This study suggests that the UNHCR staff identifies themselves so strongly with their protection and assistance work that it is to their personal and physical detriment.<sup>196</sup> They tend to put

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<sup>187</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of division, Geneva, 18 May 2004.

<sup>188</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior advisor, Geneva, 4 May 2004.

<sup>189</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of division, Geneva, 18 May 2004.

<sup>190</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior advisor, Geneva, 4 May 2004.

<sup>191</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 15 June 2004.

<sup>192</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 29 April 2004.

<sup>193</sup> Chris Powell, A View from the Press Gallery, *Refugees*, no.87 (October 1991):39.

<sup>194</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 21 May 2004.

<sup>195</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior officer, Staff Development Section, Geneva, 10 June 2004.

The divorce rate in UNHCR among the professional staff is 5.4% compared with the United States 4.1% per 1000 population, which is one of the highest divorce rate in the world. *The State of UNHCR's Staff*, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, December 2000: 6.

<sup>196</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior officer, Staff Development Section, Geneva, 10 June 2004.

themselves in danger, whose level would be usually unacceptable in other UN organizations.

### *2.3.7 Inaction is not an option*

Because UNHCR is based on the imperative of immediate life saving actions<sup>197</sup>, the organization feels that it should always be involved in situations in which human lives are at stake. The UNHCR staff is comparable to the SWAT team,<sup>198</sup> and even if they often work against the odds, saying “no” is not an option. Goodwin-Gill, a known refugee scholar, writes about a specific doctrine of “negative responsibility” in the Office.<sup>199</sup> Such philosophy generates among the UNHCR staff a feeling that they are as much responsible for what they do as for what they do not do. In other words, the staff becomes obsessively concerned about inaction that, in their understanding, leads to greater harm and human suffering. This “negative responsibility” amplifies the feeling that UNHCR cannot afford to be passive under any circumstances and should be always involved. Consequently, according to Goodwin-Gill, the dominant attitude in UNHCR is that the organization must “do something about all that’s wrong in the world.”<sup>200</sup>

According to Goodwin-Gill, UNHCR’s embrace of every humanitarian operation, “in a vain effort to remedy wrongs that do or might give rise to flight,” seems, in practice, seemingly disproportionate to the UNHCR’s core responsibilities and organizational response towards the refugee crises.<sup>201</sup> The normative call to get involved and do something rather than watch passively the ongoing human disasters reverberates strongly among the ordinary UNHCR staff members and is clearly reflected in the words of the interviewee:

Among ourselves, I do not remember ever sitting around at the end of the day saying: should UNHCR be even doing this or should we just be interviewing individual cases? When you have two, three, four or five hundred thousands people coming across the border with the government who is receiving them that is not happy to have them, then who will intercede? Who else can intercede?<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> International Conference on the Protection Mandate of UNHCR. Final Report. Peace Palace, The Hague, The Netherlands, 18 September 1998, *International Journal of Refugee Law*, vol.11, no.2 (1999):404.

<sup>198</sup> Sylvana Foa, a spokeswoman for UNHCR cited by John Darnton, UN Faces Refugee Crisis that Never Ends, *The New York Times*, 8 August 1994.

<sup>199</sup> Guy S. Goodwin-Gill, “Refugee Identity and Protection’s Fading Prospect,” in Frances Nicholson and Patrick Twomey, *Refugee Rights and Realities. Evolving International Concepts and Regimes*, Cambridge University Press (Cambridge 1999): 240-241.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>202</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior officer, Staff Development Section, Geneva, 10 June 2004.

The conviction that often there is no one else to intercede in the crisis situations underlines the belief present inside the Office regarding its indispensable role in helping people. This belief is encapsulated in the often-heard saying “we are needed.”<sup>203</sup> This attitude stipulates the Office to act, often on a strong assumption that the victims would be left to fend for themselves.

The vocational calling to do something because there is no other organization to provide effective aid is a result of the confidence the agency derives from the belief in its unique expertise in the humanitarian field. The confidence in the UNHCR expertise and its impact on the organization’s willingness to get involved in various crises is evident in the following statement:

There is a strong sense in the organization that we have much to bring in terms of expertise when it comes to protection and promotion of solutions such as repatriation, local reintegration and resettlement. Because we have an expertise in these areas there is a very strong sense of and necessity for getting involved. UNHCR will never shy away from moving even into areas where the organization is not necessarily 100% competent.<sup>204</sup>

In general, the conviction of the extraordinary organizational capabilities leads to overconfidence and a simple exaggeration of the Office’s abilities to alleviate a particular problem on its own. As a result, the Office tends to overemphasize its own responsibilities and importance, including its indispensability. The illustration of this overreaction is the UNHCR’s emphasis on direct involvement in the insurance of physical safety of refugees and displaced people instead of stressing the role of states or non-governmental organization in providing such security. This situation led Michael Barutciski to conclude that the “UNHCR suffered from its own lack of modesty,”<sup>205</sup> which increased the organization’s own appetite to take on new tasks and expand.

There is also a rational reason for a strong hands-on approach and the organization’s willingness to get involved in the new crisis situations. The Office, like any other intergovernmental public entity, is sensitive to the state criticism, particularly if it is directed at its perceived inaction. In fact, according to one interviewee, there are a lot of examples when the Office acted late and was thus held responsible. In such situation, the states pay little attention to the fact that the reason for late action was the lack of money

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<sup>203</sup> Interview with the UNHCR external affairs officer, Geneva, 4 June 2004.

<sup>204</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 21 May 2004.

<sup>205</sup> Michael Barutciski, A Critical View on UNHCR’s Mandate Dilemmas, *International Journal of Refugee Law*, vol.14, no.2/3 (2002):379.

available in the budget. At the end of the day, as noted by the same official, the donors would say that the Office should have rung the alarm bell stronger and made greater efforts to gather international support.<sup>206</sup> In order to stem such criticism UNHCR assumes greater readiness for engagement. Consequently, the Office prefers to act before it gets blamed for either being late or inactive while the humanitarian disaster was rapidly advancing.

#### *2.3.8 Conclusion on the professional culture in the Office of the High Commissioner*

The professional culture of the Office has also been the subject of the Senior Management Learning Program organized for UNHCR senior officials. During the course, conducted more than four years ago, around twenty senior managers (P5, D1 and D2) were gathered and asked to identify the most important features of the UNHCR culture.<sup>207</sup> The summary of the workshop verifies the observation about the main characteristics of the professional culture in the Office. The managers, according to this summary, identified, among others, adhocracy, firefighting, pragmatism as well as action and result orientated modes of operations as the main attributes of the professional culture within the Office.<sup>208</sup> On the side of desirable organizational features, the managers indicated, among other things, strategic thinking. This finding serves as a validation of the argument included earlier in this study that impermanence, or brevity and adhocracy (no strategic planning), are predominant in the organization's way of doing things.

Generally, the professional culture in the Office is characterized by a high agility. The culture is first of all operational, which reinforces its adaptability and flexibility as well as action and result oriented nature. Because of the humanitarian ethos (the desire to save lives) the professional culture in the Office encourages innovations and the search for solutions. The organization displays a general proclivity towards reaching goals and generating specific outcomes.

#### *2.4 Contents of change: Humanitarian Agenda and its radicalism*

The label "Humanitarian Agenda," used as a title for the 1997 UNHCR flagship publication<sup>209</sup>, serves as the best description of the change that the Office embraced in the first half of the 1990s. In fact, it was the High Commissioner herself, who insisted on such a title of the book. According to the editor of the publication, by entitling the book *A*

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<sup>206</sup> Interview with the UNHCR chief of section, Geneva, 11 May 2004.

<sup>207</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior advisor, Geneva, 4 May 2004.

<sup>208</sup> Summary – Attributes of Organization Culture, Senior Management Learning Program, 1999: 1-2.

<sup>209</sup> *The State of the World's Refugees: A Humanitarian Agenda*, UNHCR, Oxford University Press (New York 1998).



*Humanitarian Agenda*. Ogata was saying that the organization had finally closed a specific chapter of its history based on the refugee-focused agenda and was now pursuing a completely new and much broader humanitarian agenda.<sup>210</sup> More precisely, the book summarized the already implemented contents of a new paradigm of responses to the refugee problems, which the Office embraced in the first half of the 1990s. This new paradigm was based on “proactive, homeland-oriented and holistic approach.”<sup>211</sup> The book *A Humanitarian Agenda* recapitulated and conceptualized in a concise manner the main features of the implemented change. Ogata had advanced the main parts of this change since the beginning of 1991 when her commissionership officially began. Therefore, although it was only the 1997 book, which labeled the implemented change “Humanitarian Agenda,” the contents of that change had already been implemented some years earlier.

The underlying goals of Humanitarian Agenda show that the proposed ideas of change constituted a radical departure from the Office’s *status quo* and its previous *modus operandi*. The proposed change aimed for a fundamental transformation of the Office’s approach to the refugee crises and for deeper and more expanded involvement in humanitarian emergencies. Therefore, the proposed change was identified as radical and transformational (see **Table 1** from the Introduction).

The contents of the proposed change, described in the 1997 UNHCR publication, was, in fact, spelled out in various speeches and interviews given by Ogata during her first years in the Office. In March 1991, just one month after taking her post, Ogata wrote an article in the UNHCR internal magazine *Refugees* in which she emphasized the need for the Office to accept a humanitarian approach that would direct the organization’s activities towards causes as much as towards effects. The new approach would also increase organizational efforts aimed at preventing population movements.<sup>212</sup> During one of the first interviews made shortly after assuming her Office, Ogata observed that the organization would have to find new ways to cope with the mass movements. She stressed that the UNHCR mandate, traditionally focused on protection of refugees, now had to be interpreted in the context of changing world needs.<sup>213</sup> The above statements essentially meant that the coming change was likely to question the UNHCR’s narrow, refugee-specific, mandate. Additionally, the High Commissioner expressed her intention to give UNHCR a high

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<sup>210</sup> Interview with a former UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 13 April 2004.

<sup>211</sup> *The State of The World's Refugees in Search of Solutions*, UNHCR, Oxford University Press (1995): 15, Chapter 1, (Source: RefWord 2003, CD One, Issue 11).

<sup>212</sup> Sadako Ogata, A Safer World, *Refugees*, no.83, March 1991:3.

<sup>213</sup> Interview with Sadako Ogata, A World of Changing Needs, *Refugees*, no.84, April 1991:35

public profile,<sup>214</sup> which, in turn, suggested that the organization would not shy away from getting involved in large-scale humanitarian emergencies that attract high publicity.

Ogata also talked openly about the classical distinction between those who left their countries (refugees) and those displaced within their own borders (internally displaced people) as being “illogical and impractical, if not inhumane.”<sup>215</sup> In her public statements made in the early years of her commissionership, Ogata justified the UNHCR expansion from a traditional focus on the country of asylum to the country of origin on the grounds of the organization’s growing concern with displaced persons. She also stressed the need to prevent displacement wherever possible.<sup>216</sup> Thus, in public, Ogata talked about the challenge faced by UNHCR to devise new methods to meet the security and protection concerns of individuals prior to their departure so as to obviate their need for flight.<sup>217</sup> Furthermore, Ogata saw UNHCR efforts in providing relief, protecting the displaced and promoting respect for human rights as an important contribution to the international peace and security.<sup>218</sup> By advocating such approach, Ogata was emphasizing the need to place refugee issues on the global peace and security agenda and in the wider human rights context.<sup>219</sup>

Consequently, the contents of the envisaged change that transpires from the early speeches and writings of the new High Commissioner calls for Office involvement in the prevention of massive displacement (proactive approach) in the countries of origin (homeland approach) and in providing assistance not only to refugees but also to completely new categories of victims, such as those internally displaced and otherwise affected by war (holistic approach). Such proposals of change corresponded with the inside of the 1997 publication, *A Humanitarian Agenda*, cited earlier in this study. In general, the change called for a fundamental transformation of the substantive activities of the Office. In clear opposition to the existing paradigm of the Office work (including “reactive, exile-oriented and refugee-specific” policies),<sup>220</sup> the proposed change advocated proactive, preventive, homeland-oriented and holistic approaches. Consequently, the advocated change, if

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<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>215</sup> “Refugees: A Multilateral Response to Humanitarian Crises,” Elberg Lecture on International Studies presented by Sadako Ogata, University of California, Berkeley, 1 April 1992.

<sup>216</sup> Talking Points for World Economic Forum. Speech by Sadako Ogata, Davos, 1 February 1992.

<sup>217</sup> Statement by Mrs. Sadako Ogata, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, at the ICRC/UNHCR meeting, Geneva, 19 February 1992

<sup>218</sup> High Commissioner’s Statement to the Informal Meeting of the Executive Committee, 24 January 1992.

<sup>219</sup> Ogata (March 1991):3 and Ogata’s Speech to the Trilateral Commission in Tokyo, *Refugees*, no.85, May 1991:38.

<sup>220</sup> *The State of The World’s Refugees* (1995): 8, Chapter 1.

implemented in its entirety, would alter radically the *status quo*, including the organization's mandate and its methods of work. For this reason the proposed change was identified as radical and transformational.

### *2.5 Outcome of Humanitarian Agenda: (humanitarian) transformation in UNHCR*

In the first half of the 1990s, UNHCR underwent a profound, transformational change in terms of its programmatic and policy focus.<sup>221</sup> It fully embraced a Humanitarian Agenda and undertook a number of non-traditional activities.<sup>222</sup> As a result, UNHCR was transformed “from a refugee organization into a more broadly-based humanitarian agency,” as it was bluntly acknowledged by the organization itself in one of its flagship publications.<sup>223</sup> Because of the embrace of the new humanitarian tasks and responsibilities on a scale not seen before, UNHCR was no longer viewed mainly as a protection agency, but primarily as an assistance provider.<sup>224</sup> In other words, during the process of change implementation in the 1990s the ideas that stood behind the Humanitarian Agenda had been realized to such an extent that it placed the organization on the path of humanitarian transformation and eventually turned UNHCR into a humanitarian emergency aid agency.<sup>225</sup>

The realization of the ideas associated with Humanitarian Agenda brought about significant changes in the benchmarks used by the organization to decide its ultimate involvement. These benchmarks became flexible and pragmatic more than legalistic, principled and permissible. Consequently, the organization moved away from its usual statistical preoccupation with categorization of refugees and simply began assisting anyone who needed help.<sup>226</sup> Thus, UNHCR's concept of protection in the 1990s ceased to distinguish between various legal categories of people who needed the organization's protection. The

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<sup>221</sup> The evidence presented in the section provide a sound argument against the claim that the change in UNHCR during the first half of the 1990s was not exceptional or even dramatic. See Erin D. Mooney, “In-Country Protection: Out of Bounds for UNHCR?,” in Frances Nicholson and Patrick Twomey, *Refugee Rights and Realities. Evolving International Concepts and Regimes*, Cambridge University Press (Cambridge 1999): 200-219.

<sup>222</sup> These non-traditional or non-statutory activities included, among others, “providing protection and assistance to besieged and war-affected populations; monitoring the protection needs of returnees and internally displaced people in their own country; establishing community-based rehabilitation programmes in returnee areas; and providing accurate information on migration opportunities to prospective asylum seekers.” *The State of The World's Refugees* (1995): 19, Chapter 1.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Goodwin-Gill (1999): 246.

<sup>225</sup> Michael Barutcsiki, “Introduction: Confusion about UNHCR's Role,” in Dennis McNamara and Guy Goodwin-Gill, *UNHCR and International Refugee Protection*, RSP Working Paper, no.2 (June 1999):3.

<sup>226</sup> Thomas G. Weiss and Amir Pasic, Reinventing UNHCR: Enterprising Humanitarians in the Former Yugoslavia, 1991-1995, *Global Governance*, no.3 (1997): 49.

Office's protection became much more *inclusive* than it was the case in the 1980s.<sup>227</sup> The transformation of UNHCR was seen as taking the organization away from the legalistic and doctrinarian focus.<sup>228</sup> This was confirmed in the conclusions to the analysis of the Office statements made between 1991 and 1997, which showed a disinclination of UNHCR administration to provide international legal protection, as stipulated by its statutory duty, in favor of its greater role in the humanitarian field of activities.<sup>229</sup>

The implementation of the Humanitarian Agenda was viewed by outsiders as a profound operational transformation that took the Office away from its traditional focus on assisting refugees outside their home countries and established a trend of providing aid before displacement took place.<sup>230</sup> The humanitarian transformation was also about a significant conceptual change in the Office's understanding of the nature of refugee crises and its role in addressing them.<sup>231</sup> In reference to these changes, a prominent refugee scholar and a former UNHCR practitioner acknowledged that "a radically transformed UNHCR (had) emerged in recent years."<sup>232</sup> Indeed, various other researchers saw the change in UNHCR as something so radical as the expansion of the organization's mandate.<sup>233</sup> Even the UNHCR's own internal study, which looked at the organization's engagement in the former Yugoslavia during the first half of the 1990s, noted that the consequences of the involvement led to "a wide-ranging reassessment of UNHCR's role and mandate (...)." <sup>234</sup> Regardless of whether UNHCR's mandate had changed, expanded, or been refined,<sup>235</sup> there is little doubt that humanitarian transformation of the Office led the organization to assume a range of humanitarian activities, which were inconsistent with its more traditional role of

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<sup>227</sup> B.S. Chimni, Globalization, Humanitarianism and the Erosion of Refugee Protection, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol.13, no.3 (September 2000): 254.

<sup>228</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 29 April 2004.

<sup>229</sup> Goodwin-Gill (1999): 224.

<sup>230</sup> Michael Barutciski, The Reinforcement of Non-Admission Policies and the Subversion of UNHCR: Displacement and Internal Assistance in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1994), *International Journal of Refugee Law*, vol.8, no.1/2 (1996): 80 and 108; Interview with the UNHCR head of unit, Geneva, 12 May 2004.

<sup>231</sup> Anne Hammerstad, Whose Security? UNHCR, Refugee Protection and State Security After the Cold War, *Security Dialogue*, vol.31, no.4 (2000): 391.

<sup>232</sup> Gil Loescher, The UNHCR and World Politics: State Interests vs. Institutional Autonomy, *International Migration Review*, vol.35, no.1 (Spring 2001):46.

<sup>233</sup> Weiss and Pasic (1997): 41-57; Barutciski (2002):366 and 368; Bill Clarence, Protective Structure, Strategy and Tactics: International Protection in Ethnic Conflicts, *International Journal of Refugee Law*, vol.5, no.4 (1993): 587; Guy S. Goodwin-Gill, Refugees: Challenges to Protection, *International Migration Review*, vol.35, no.1 (Spring 2001): 135; Chimni (September 2000): 252-253; Loescher (2001):49-50.

<sup>234</sup> *Working in a War Zone* (April 1994): 1.

<sup>235</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 28 May 2004.

a refugee protection agency.<sup>236</sup> Generally, humanitarian transformation was about a significant change in the UNHCR's philosophy and practice.

A concrete example of the UNHCR humanitarian transformation and the unprecedented extent of the change was the Office's involvement in the former Yugoslavia, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the former Yugoslavia, UNHCR became engaged in a conflict situation for the first time.<sup>237</sup> Its beneficiaries included refugees, internally displaced persons, and generally war-affected populations that were still living in their homes (and not undergoing displacement).<sup>238</sup> Consequently, the extraordinary feature of UNHCR actions in this region, as claimed by Weiss and Pasic, "was the expansion of its mission beyond refugees to aid all those with well-founded fear of prosecution."<sup>239</sup> The assistance to these categories of people was delivered during an ongoing conflict, which was, in addition, a "novel experience" for UNHCR.<sup>240</sup> Thus, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNHCR saw its tasks expanded in a way that went beyond traditional assistance. The new kind of assistance, as described by Cunliffe and Pugh, included: comprehensive relief efforts such as "logistics, transportation, food monitoring, domestic needs, shelter, community services, health, emergency transition activities in agriculture and income generation."<sup>241</sup> This assistance addressed a full range of needs of war-affected populations. In addition to its large operational and logistical engagement, UNHCR became involved in preventing ethnic cleansing and defending human rights.<sup>242</sup> For example, the organization published reports on the gross violations of human rights in the former Yugoslavia, including information about the Omarska prison camp in 1992.<sup>243</sup> The UNHCR senior official responsible for the organization's press service elaborated further on the issue:

A good part of my work (...) in Bosnia was discussing human rights issues. I was talking about human rights situation in Banja Luka where Muslims were treated as second-class citizens and about the siege of Sarajevo and its impact on the population.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> International Conference on the Protection Mandate of UNHCR. (1999):397 and *Working in a War Zone* (1994): para.52.

<sup>237</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of division, Geneva, 18 May 2004.

<sup>238</sup> A written UNHCR internal document (not available to the public) acknowledges: "in Bosnia and Herzegovina, *for the first time in its history*, UNHCR mounted a relief operation in the midst of an ongoing war to assist not only refugees, but also internally displaced and other war-affected populations (...).

<sup>239</sup> Weiss and Pasic (1997): 46.

<sup>240</sup> Alex Cunliffe and Michael Pugh, The UNHCR as Lead Agency in the Former Yugoslavia, *The Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, 3 June 2000, [www.jha.ac/articles/a008.htm](http://www.jha.ac/articles/a008.htm)

<sup>241</sup> Alex S. Cunliffe and Michael Pugh, "UNHCR as Leader in Humanitarian Assistance: A Triumph of Politics over Law?" in Frances Nicholson and Patrick Twomey, *Refugee Rights and Realities. Evolving International Concepts and Regimes*, Cambridge University Press (Cambridge 1999):187.

<sup>242</sup> *The State of the World's Refugees 1993. The Challenge of Protection*, UNHCR, Penguin Books (New York 1993):97.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 53, Box 3.1.

<sup>244</sup> Interview with the UNHCR head of unit, Geneva, 12 May 2004.

In the former Yugoslavia, UNHCR not only issued public statements that concerned human rights violations for the first time, but it also carried out specific investigations including allegations of rape.<sup>245</sup> This type of involvement occurred despite the fact that “human rights were not (UNHCR) traditional business.”<sup>246</sup> Involvement in human rights meant that UNHCR was including into its own agenda highly political issues, which contradicted the organization’s past emphasis on the non-political nature of its mandate.

UNHCR’s operation in the former Yugoslavia, which epitomizes its humanitarian transformation, was a symbol of the organization’s proactive, homeland and holistic approaches. In the former Yugoslavia, UNHCR clearly expanded beyond taking care of refugees as a legally defined category and accepted much broader view of the needs of people regardless of their legal identity.<sup>247</sup> In fact, in the former Yugoslavia, UNHCR clearly showed its readiness to engage in the typical ICRC work of assisting war-affected population in war zones<sup>248</sup> as well as in broader functions of monitoring human rights.<sup>249</sup>

Acceptance of the Humanitarian Agenda led UNHCR to engage in activities it had never done before. Apart from its venture into the field of human rights, UNHCR provided logistical and technical support for the delivery of local services such as water, gas, electricity and basic supplies such as bread and coal. These supplies were produced and distributed to the population of Sarajevo.<sup>250</sup> Despite the fact that, as stated by the Director of the International Protection Department in UNHCR, Dennis McNamara, that the refugee agency has no role in helping internally displaced when such displacement results from natural disasters,<sup>251</sup> the Office got in the 1990s involved in providing relief to people who became internally displaced as a result of natural disasters. For example, relief was provided after the earthquake in Turkey and the typhoon in El Salvador.<sup>252</sup> UNHCR also

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<sup>245</sup> Vargas (1 November 1993): 67.

<sup>246</sup> UNHCR official quoted in Roberta Cohen, *Human Rights and Humanitarian Action Go Hand-in-Hand, Refugees*, no.92 (April 1993):4. The interviewed UNHCR head of unit also stressed the fact that human rights ‘were not really UNHCR business.’ Geneva, 12 May 2004.

<sup>247</sup> Interview with a former UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 6 April 2004.

<sup>248</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 10 June 2004 and interview with the UNHCR head of unit, Geneva, 12 May 2004.

<sup>249</sup> “There was a genuine attempt by the organization to put human rights considerations more at the center of its work,” Interview with the UNHCR senior official, a member of the Executive Office of the HC, Geneva, 8 June 2004.

<sup>250</sup> *Working in a War Zone* (1 April 1994):22.

<sup>251</sup> Dennis McNamara, UNHCR’s Protection Mandate in Relation to Internally Displaced Persons, [http://www.nrc.no/global\\_idp\\_survey/rights\\_have\\_no\\_borders/mcnamara.htm](http://www.nrc.no/global_idp_survey/rights_have_no_borders/mcnamara.htm). Accessed on 15 November 2004.

<sup>252</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior officer, Staff Development Section, Geneva, 10 June 2004.

became responsible for de-mining activities in Ethiopia and Cambodia, which was justified by its general concern for a safe return of refugees to their places of living.<sup>253</sup> Because of its new involvement in providing assistance in war zones, UNHCR began cooperating closely with the military. The epitome of that cooperation was the establishment of the UNHCR liaison office in NATO headquarters in Brussels.<sup>254</sup> Transformation associated with the Humanitarian Agenda has also generated a new operational vocabulary in UNHCR, such as “preventive protection,” “right to remain in safety,” “right not to be displaced,” and “heavens of safety.” Such terms did not have equivalents in the earlier periods of the organization’s history.

Additionally, through its focus on the country of origin, humanitarian transformation brought about a new emphasis on returnee aid and development. Essentially, the Office took a radical step towards embracing a long-term developmental policy that included a “post-repatriation” stage of refugees’ reintegration into a society.<sup>255</sup> In 1991, for example, Special Advisor to the High Commissioner, Marie-Angelique Savane, was quite open about the fact that

knowledge and expertise in development are an unavoidable necessity within UNHCR (and that) UNHCR cannot do without development experts if it intends to master the voluntary repatriation process.<sup>256</sup>

The emphasis on more developmental involvement had practical impact illustrated by the UNHCR’s desire to remain in a country of origin even after the completion of repatriation. As specified by the UNHCR internal report, the stay in a country of origin was justified on the basis of “a general concern with the political and social stability more than specific needs of the returnee population”<sup>257</sup> and occurred despite the fact that “promoting political and social stability (was) not an intrinsic part of UNHCR’s Mandate.”<sup>258</sup> UNHCR’s eagerness to push towards greater involvement in development issues seemed to be strong enough to raise a note of caution in the internal UNHCR analytical study published in 1994. The study noted that “a certain modesty on UNHCR’s part would be advisable.”<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> Edward Epstein, United Nations’ Role Coping with Refugee Crisis, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, 6 April 1992.

<sup>254</sup> Cunliffe and Pugh (1999):188.

<sup>255</sup> *Returnee Aid and Development*, UNHCR Evaluation Reports, (1 May 1994): 7, Paragraph 45.

<sup>256</sup> Savane (October 1991):26.

<sup>257</sup> *Review of UNHCR’s Phase-Out Strategies* (1 February 1997):10.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> *Returnee Aid and Development* (1 May 1994): 7, Paragraph 50.

In reality, the most vivid representation of a profound transformation in UNHCR was its very tragic impact on the staff of the organization in the 1990s. Between 1990 and 1995, the death of twelve UNHCR field officers on duty was reported,<sup>260</sup> including six of them who died between 1990 and 1992.<sup>261</sup> Between 1996 and 1998, three more staff members were killed.<sup>262</sup> In contrast, no single UNHCR staff member had been killed in the course of carrying his/her duties between 1970 and 1989.<sup>263</sup> This dramatic increase in the casualties among UNHCR staff serves as a clear indication of the extent of transformation that the organization went through in the 1990s.

The extent of the Office's transformation becomes particularly striking when UNHCR of the 1990s is juxtaposed with UNHCR of the 1980s. In 1981, the High Commissioner Jean-Pierre Hocke insisted that UNHCR "cannot concern itself with the circumstances which have brought (refugees) into existence."<sup>264</sup> In other words, UNHCR was essentially ruling out its involvement in dealing with causes and prevention of new flows of refugee. This approach was justified on the grounds that UNHCR would compromise its non-political mandate. A decade later, however, UNHCR in its *Notes on International Protection*, sent to ExCom, pointed out its readiness to embark on the promotion of human rights and removing and reducing the factors that force displacement in countries of origin.<sup>265</sup>

In the 1980s, legal procedures for determination of refugee status were still at the forefront of UNHCR efforts to ensure legal/political protection for refugees, particularly in the form of asylum. In the same period, UNHCR "was seen by many as a non-operational and 'diplomatic' agency."<sup>266</sup> In the 1990s, UNHCR's responsibilities dramatically shifted toward large-scale humanitarian operations and the provision of relief for all war-affected persons (including internally displaced persons and refugees).<sup>267</sup> In 1990, the High Commissioner Stoltenberg, when asked whether placing refugees on the political agenda- the goal that the High Commissioner intended to implement- would mean a change in UNHCR's traditionally humanitarian and non-political mandate, replied:

No. It would clearly not be appropriate for UNHCR to extend its mandate, especially at a time when the organization is struggling to meet the demands made upon it.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Cunliffe and Pugh (3 June 2000).

<sup>261</sup> See *The State of the World's Refugees* (1993):76, box 4.4.

<sup>262</sup> Mark Cutts, Prime Targets, *The World Today*, (August/September 1998): 220.

<sup>263</sup> See *The State of the World's Refugees* (1993):76, box 4.4.

<sup>264</sup> *The State of The World's Refugees* (1995): 8, Chapter 1.

<sup>265</sup> Goodwin-Gill (1996): 286-287 and footnote 204.

<sup>266</sup> Goodwin-Gill (1993): 3.

<sup>267</sup> Hammerstad (2000): 391.

<sup>268</sup> Interview with Thorvald Stoltenber (March 1990):7.



Only three years later, UNHCR was engaged on recurring basis in helping war-affected population within the countries of origin in the most politicized conflicts.<sup>269</sup>

Finally, prior to the 1990s, UNHCR was only sporadically involved in providing assistance to people other than refugees. As one UNHCR official recalled, the organization's involvement with IDPs was on "a very ad-hoc basis, in limited situations and not on a large scale."<sup>270</sup> In the 1990s, however, the category of internally displaced people moved from being peripheral on the list of UNHCR priorities to a core area of the organization's work. In other words, early *ad hoc* and sporadic decisions to get involved with the provision of material assistance to refugees (and sometimes internally displaced people) turned in the 1990s into a firmly established practice of providing humanitarian relief in the form of physical/material protection to all victims of conflict situations.

### *2.5.1 Conclusion on transformation in UNHCR*

As shown above, the transformational outcome of change implementation in UNHCR corresponded with the earlier envisaged radical character of the proposed change. Radicalism of UNHCR humanitarian transformation was in a way confirmed by the numerous voices of concern regarding the direction of changes. Even within UNHCR there were critical views that had been raised about the ongoing process of change and its transformational outcome.<sup>271</sup> The former High Commissioner, Jean Pierre Hocke, who himself had an ICRC operational and humanitarian background, expressed his concerns about the way UNHCR was changing. According to him, the ongoing change weakened the "bases from which the organization derived its mandate and its fundamental added value in

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<sup>269</sup> Nicholas Bwakira, From Nansen to Ogata: UNHCR's Role in a Changing World, *International Migration Review*, vol.35, no.1 (Spring 2001):280.

<sup>270</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 10 June 2004.

<sup>271</sup> "(In the organization) there was a very real worry (because) a number of people felt that UNHCR was moving too much in a direction of becoming a humanitarian assistance organization and was in danger of losing its fundamental core"- Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 29 June 2004; "There were concerns in the organization that emphasis on the delivery of humanitarian relief was drawing away from the focus, which was needed to maintain protection of refugees" - Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 29 June 2004; "We got expanded too much and we are just losing clarity"- Interview with the UNHCR head of unit, Geneva, 9 June 2004; "In the organization there were concerns that we were getting in over our heads and that we were putting an office at risk"- Interview with the UNHCR senior advisor, Geneva, 4 May 2004; "The organization's protection mandate is becoming increasingly untenable, as UNHCR evolves into the humanitarian arm of the United Nations" - This quotation is taken from the anonymous advocacy paper (most likely written by a UNHCR protection official) distributed at the October 1996 meeting of the UNHCR Executive Committee and subsequently published in *International Journal of Refugee Law*. The paper expressed concerns about ongoing UNHCR humanitarian transformation and called for refocusing the organization's activities on the countries of asylum and on the 'persons of concern' who took refugee abroad. The fulfillment of such agenda, the paper argued, would bring the organization back in line with its traditional protectionist mandate. See: The UNHCR Note on International Protection You Won't See, *International Journal of Refugee Law*, vol.9, no.2 (1997): 267-272.

terms of refugee protection.”<sup>272</sup> Scholars also recognized the extent and significance of the ongoing transformational change when they criticized UNHCR for embracing “*instrumental humanitarianism* (driven) by empirical reality” (emphasis added)<sup>273</sup> and for becoming “an opportunistic agency,”<sup>274</sup> “international humanitarian czar”<sup>275</sup> and a “UN Humanitarian Organization for Casualties of War.”<sup>276</sup> State officials were also worried that there was a real danger of erosion of the UNHCR legal protection function because of the organization’s humanitarian transformation.<sup>277</sup> The interviewed officials also noted that UNHCR “became a big logistical operation”<sup>278</sup> and a “pseudo Red Cross,”<sup>279</sup> for which nothing was really beyond its concern.

The subsequent sections show that a specific transformational style of leadership provided by the High Commissioner Sadako Ogata and a highly agile type of professional culture present in the Office determined a fundamental, transformational, character of the process and outcome of change. As specified by both general and specific arguments presented in the Introduction, the evidences below confirm that stronger leadership dynamism (transformational leadership) and lower rigidity of professional culture (agility) results in a greater likelihood of transformation (symbolized by UNHCR humanitarian change). At the same time, the subsequent sections constitute an invitation for addressing an interesting empirical puzzle later on: how can such a fundamental change in UNHCR be accounted for while no other UN relief-oriented organizations had experienced it? This discussion will be developed in Chapter 5.

## 2.6 Sadako Ogata as the High Commissioner for Refugees: transformational leadership

Ogata’s leadership dynamism was very strong. Her leadership style included features such as high compassion, empathy and authority combined with a strong charisma and vision. Her leadership was inspirational, pragmatic and innovative. It enjoyed both internal (staff) and external (international) respect. Therefore, the kind of leadership that Ogata provided during her first five years in the Office is considered transformational in this study.

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<sup>272</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 29 June 2004.

<sup>273</sup> Myron Weiner, The Clash of Norms: Dilemmas in Refugee Policies, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol.11, no.4 (1998): 442.

<sup>274</sup> Michael Barutciski (2002):371.

<sup>275</sup> Loescher (Spring 2001): 50.

<sup>276</sup> Weiss and Pasic (1997): 49.

<sup>277</sup> Tim Wichert, Seeking Refuge in Geneva: Report on the 47<sup>th</sup> UNHCR Executive Committee Meeting (Geneva, 7-11 October 1996), *International Journal of Refugee Law*, vol. 9, no.1 (1997): 137.

<sup>278</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior official, a member of the Executive Office of the HC, Geneva, 8 June 2004.

### *2.6.1 Ogata's first five years in office*

Sadako Ogata, appointed by the UN Secretary General and elected by the members of the UN General Assembly, assumed her post as the High Commissioner for Refugees in January 1991. Her first term in office ended in 1993 and she was subsequently reelected for another four years. She eventually retired from the Office in 2001. This study considers leadership of Ogata during her first five years in the Office (1991-1995). Such period matches a typical length of a full term in office of the executive heads of the UN organizations. The portion of Ogata's term considered also corresponds analytically with the focus of the later two case studies, each of which considers the ILO and WHO Directors General during their first five years in office.

Ogata took up the post of the High Commissioner at a very difficult time for UNHCR and its administration. The organization had just been through a very traumatic period when its High Commissioner, Jean-Pierre Hocke, had to leave the Office suddenly because of the financial scandal over a UNHCR fund for education of refugee children. It has been discovered that this fund had been used to cover first class travel expenses of the High Commissioner and his spouse. This was a huge moral blow for the organization, whose top leader was expected to be ethically pure and above any suspicion of wrongdoing.<sup>280</sup> The subsequent commissionership of Thorvald Stoltenberg had not lasted even a year when the High Commissioner decided to leave the refugee agency in the hope, as viewed by many UNHCR staff, to become a prime minister of Norway.<sup>281</sup> As a result, the end of 1980s and the beginning of 1990 was a particularly frustrating period for UNHCR. The organization struggled with a problem of credibility and a lack of leadership.<sup>282</sup> When Ogata entered the Office, the organization was thus more ready than in any normal circumstances to accept any changes short of the Office's complete closure. It was, however, the responsibility of the new leader to decide on the extent and direction of change in the midst of an institutional context favorable for taking a more decisive action within organization.

### *2.6.2 Ogata's professional experience*

Sadako Ogata was brought up in Japan but educated in the United States where she obtained her doctorate in political science at the Berkley University. A major part of her

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<sup>279</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 13 May 2004.

<sup>280</sup> Interview with a former UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 6 April 2004.

<sup>281</sup> Stoltenberg left UNHCR "for purely egoistic, personal reasons. It was clear that he hoped to become a prime minister of Norway and there was such opportunity. In one minute he just left us. We felt like orphans. We felt really let down by the world." Interview with the UNHCR director of division, Geneva, 18 May 2004.

professional career was spent lecturing and conducting research in the field of international relations and diplomatic history. Before taking her post in UNHCR she was a dean of the foreign studies department at Sophia University in Tokyo. She also had practical experience with international diplomacy, although it was much shorter than her academic career. In the second half of the 1970s she worked as Japan's minister plenipotentiary at the permanent mission of the UN for two years. In the 1980s she was a representative of Japan to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Finally in 1990, she was appointed an independent expert from that Commission on the situation of human rights in Myanmar.<sup>283</sup>

### *2.6.3 Ogata's academic experience*

Despite her practical diplomatic exposure, Ogata has always remained an academic. As described by the UNHCR official, who has worked closely with her, Ogata

is definitely an academic. She likes to be an academic, she likes to teach, likes to research. She has all the qualities of an academic.<sup>284</sup>

Ogata's academic background was quite unusual for the organization, whose previous High Commissioners were either experienced politicians (e.g. Stoltenberg), diplomats (e.g. Aga Khan) or international administrators (e.g. Hocke). However, more than twenty years of a professional career in academia turned out to be an extremely important to Ogata's leadership style. This academic leadership concurred well with the UNHCR's nature of work, which was in a strong symbiosis with the international political environment in which the organization has functioned. In fact, according to a colleague of Ogata's, her strength as the head of the agency was associated with her status as "a very good political analyst, who could understand what was the external environment in which UNHCR operated."<sup>285</sup> In the opinion of different officials, being a professor of political science and international relations with unusually effective analytical capabilities allowed Ogata to understand the international political developments in which the agency operated very quickly and clearly. Ogata's background also enabled her to distill crowded policy agenda and steer the organization safely around the riffs of the changing refugee and humanitarian

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<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> More expanded bibliography of Sadako Ogata is available at <http://www.un.org/News/dh/hlpanel/ogata-bio.htm>.

<sup>284</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of division, Geneva, 18 May 2004.

<sup>285</sup> Phone interview with the UNHCR senior policy officer, 28 May 2004.

crises<sup>286</sup>. In other words, her academic training and skills helped Ogata to comprehend a rapidly changing political environment as well as position the organization in such way that it was able to design appropriate institutional policies and respond effectively to new challenges and opportunities.

#### *2.6.4 Ogata's diplomatic skills*

Ogata's academic experience was supplemented by her practical knowledge of the multilateral world of diplomacy. She understood very well the need for establishing a wide network of diplomatic contacts that would facilitate lobbying efforts for programs and funds. Ogata was quite successful in expanding political contacts that helped her in leading the organization and assisted the Office in carrying out its activities. For example, the High Commissioner established and cultivated close contacts with a diplomatic community in Geneva, particularly with the ambassadors. If Ogata needed political support she was able to secure that support through her relations with the ambassadors.<sup>287</sup>

#### *2.6.5 Ogata's pragmatism*

UNHCR staff recognized Ogata as a very practical person.<sup>288</sup> Ogata described herself as “a pragmatist, open to change.”<sup>289</sup> Ogata's pragmatism was set on the expectation that the organization should be able to deliver effective response to the crises situations.<sup>290</sup> It also allowed her to seize emerging opportunities and find policy areas where the organization could still make a contribution and remain relevant.<sup>291</sup> Consequently, her pragmatism strengthened the result and action-oriented manner of work in the organization. This kind of pragmatic approach was depicted well by one of the senior officials, who worked in UNHCR throughout her leadership:

She did not tolerate fools and speechifying. She wanted to get to the point quickly and do something. She has been trained in the US (she graduated from Berkley university) and she had an American directness to her.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of division, Geneva, 18 May 2004; Interview with the UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 28 May 2004; Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 29 June 2004; Phone interview with the UNHCR senior policy officer, 28 May 2004.

<sup>287</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 8 June 2004.

<sup>288</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of division, Geneva, 18 May 2004, interview with the UNHCR chief of section, Geneva, 11 May 2004, interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 29 June 2004, interview with the UNHCR director of division, Geneva, 18 May 2004 and interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 8 June 2004.

<sup>289</sup> Ogata quoted in Pick (28 June 1993).

<sup>290</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 29 June 2004.

<sup>291</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of division, Geneva, 18 May 2004.

<sup>292</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 13 May 2004.

Because of her academic and, more specifically, political science and international relations background, Ogata showed a strong interest in politics more than, for example, in law. She actually perceived the latter in a very utilitarian and pragmatic manner. Law, for Ogata, was an instrument, rather than a good in itself that might not have been essential for the effective implementation of UNHCR policies. She thus took a very pragmatic approach to the established legal refugee principles. Such unprincipled and pragmatic thinking was illustrated in the story told by the UNHCR senior official:

Mrs. Ogata is much more philosopher and political scientist than a lawyer. Mrs. Ogata who believes just as much as anybody else in UNHCR in *non-refoulment*<sup>293</sup> would say that *non-refoulment* is not a principle. And you would say: Mrs. Ogata, what is it? She would say: it is a rule. Rule is different from the principle. So then what is a principle? She would say: if I have to think what is a principle I would say: life is precious that is a principle. *Non-refoulment* is a rule, which is being put in place by international law. It is not a principle.<sup>294</sup>

Because of Ogata's pragmatism and an instrumental approach to certain refugee principles, the organizational top priorities were defined in terms of meeting the needs of the victims regardless of whether they were refugees or other groups affected by the ongoing conflicts.<sup>295</sup> In order to respond to the needs of victims effectively, Ogata looked at the institution's structure and rules in a pragmatic manner. For her, regulations served as a means to the end of helping the war-affected population. If the rules, procedures or structures were either inadequate or insufficient to achieve objectives it was enough to justify, if necessary radical, institutional changes.<sup>296</sup> Such a pragmatic attitude foreshadowed the introduction of important changes in an organization that had been traditionally very legalistic, driven by international legal principles of refugee law and focused on a narrowly-defined beneficiary (refugees).

#### 2.6.6 Ogata's emotive leadership

Ogata has been described as aloof and reserved, or, as noted by the interviewed officials, even an "ice princess"<sup>297</sup> or "cold fish."<sup>298</sup> However, despite characteristics that were

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<sup>293</sup> A recognized international legal 'principle,' which basically means that "no refugee should be returned to any country where he or she is likely to face persecution or torture." See B.S. Chimni, *International Refugee Law*, Sage Publication (London 2000): 85-88.

<sup>294</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 29 June 2004.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> Phone interview with the UNHCR senior policy officer, 28 May 2004.

<sup>297</sup> Interview with the UNHCR external affairs officer, Geneva, 4 June 2004.

<sup>298</sup> Interview with the UNHCR head of unit, Geneva, 12 May 2004.

oftentimes associated with her Japanese heritage and conservative (Catholic) upbringing<sup>299</sup>, Ogata provided a very emotional and compassionate leadership.

This emotive leadership, according to the UNHCR senior official, was strongly rooted in Ogata's "very empathetic and genuine concern with the plight of the refugees."<sup>300</sup> Indeed, when speaking in public about the victims, who the Office was taking care of, Ogata was able to transfer emotions and compassion.<sup>301</sup> An example is her portrayal of "the horrendous suffering" seen on the faces of the displaced people she visited in the camps in Iran and Iraq in 1991.<sup>302</sup>

Ogata's empathy was also reflected in her commitment to work. Despite her age (she was 63 when she was appointed a High Commissioner) Ogata had an amazing amount of energy. "There were very few people in the organization who could keep up with her," noted one official.<sup>303</sup> Ogata herself admitted that she was deriving this energy from a compassion for people in need.

People always ask me where I draw my energy from. And I think of all the refugees whom I have met in camps, in villages, in reception centers, in shanty towns- well, I believe that what has kept me going is our collective effort to turn the terror and pain that I saw in too many eyes into the relief of safety, and into the exhilarating joy of returning home. It has been a worthwhile effort.<sup>304</sup>

Far from being perceived as some sort of selfish politician, a cold diplomat or an indifferent international bureaucrat, Ogata was seen as a caring human individual, who was deeply familiar with human suffering, misery and grief.<sup>305</sup> As stated by one official, who worked under her commissionership, Ogata

saw herself as *the* High Commissioner for refugees, as a person who was responsible for all these people and responsible for finding solutions.<sup>306</sup>

Her compassionate leadership gave her immense credibility among the UNHCR staff members as well as recognition by the international community.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior advisor, Geneva, 4 May 2004 and interview with the UNHCR head of unit, Geneva, 12 May 2004.

<sup>300</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 15 June 2004.

<sup>301</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 8 June 2004.

<sup>302</sup> The Challenge of the 1990s, *Refugees*, no. 85 (May 1991):38.

<sup>303</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 13 May 2004.

<sup>304</sup> Sadako Ogata is First to Receive New ICN Award for Health and Human Rights, *International Nursing Review*, vol.48 (2001):73.

<sup>305</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 28 May 2004.

<sup>306</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 8 June 2004.

<sup>307</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 28 May 2004.

An exceptionally vivid illustration of the emotive leadership that Ogata exercised in the UNHCR was “Ogata’s Angels,”<sup>308</sup> a phrase coined by the international press. Eventually, “Ogata’s Angels” reflected the self-image of the organization.<sup>309</sup> In essence, the expression elevated Ogata to a divine status<sup>310</sup> of absolute selflessness and a complete integrity<sup>311</sup> while her leadership acquired angelic features of utter purity, charity and benevolence. Her leadership thus became a symbol of a deep devotion to the calling to alleviate human suffering and save lives.

#### *2.6.7 Ogata’s authoritative leadership*

When Ogata first arrived to the Office, the staff saw an older, unfamiliar lady who seemed to come out of nowhere.<sup>312</sup> Despite being a novice to the organization Ogata was able to assume an authority quickly; there was no doubt among the staff who the real leader of the agency was.<sup>313</sup> “When she stood up and spoke people felt that we had a leader” one of the officials emphasized.<sup>314</sup>

Similarly, during the senior management meetings, Ogata would throw an issue on a table, allow the time for discussion to seek a consensus, then would wrap up the meeting and make a final decision.<sup>315</sup> In general, Ogata assumed an unquestioned authority among the staff members, which stemmed equally from her unweaving personal and professional commitment to helping war victims and from her steadfastness and resoluteness. Ogata’s steadfast character was depicted in the comparison of Ogata to the fist of the organization or to Margaret Thatcher.<sup>316</sup>

Her determination in getting things done, combined with her decisiveness, became all the more conspicuous when juxtaposed with Ogata’s tiny physical appearance. Some interviewees observed the contrast between the latter and the former in the following way:

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<sup>308</sup> Gibson and Wallace (23 October 1995).

<sup>309</sup> Interview with a former UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 6 April 2004. Half of the interviewees mentioned ‘Ogata’s Angels’ even though the author had not inquired directly about it.

<sup>310</sup> Interview with the UNHCR head of unit, Geneva, 12 May 2004.

<sup>311</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior external affairs officer, Geneva, 1 June 2004.

<sup>312</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 8 June 2004; Interview with the UNHCR director of division, Geneva, 18 May 2004.

<sup>313</sup> Interview with the UNHCR head of unit, Geneva, 9 June 2004.

<sup>314</sup> Interview with UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 15 June 2004.

<sup>315</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 8 June 2004.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid., and Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 15 June 2004.



I found it striking: she is a lady of very small stature and yet she had the authority to command very senior UN civil servants, who constituted her senior management at that time and put those boys in the spot. So she had a very strong sense of authority.<sup>317</sup>

To be small and she is very small, she is not even 5 feet tall, it is very easy to be ignored, to be pushed aside but she was able to assert herself. She put all the men on their place.<sup>318</sup>

She is a giant. Very diminutive in terms of (physical) size but she spoke with conviction.<sup>319</sup>

Even the press picked up the contrast between her physical stature and the authority she commanded. For example, after Ogata's visit to Iran in 1991 to negotiate UNHCR involvement in running the refugee camps, the Teheran Times described Ogata as "the Diminutive Giant," which was recalled by several of her senior staff "with considerable approval."<sup>320</sup>

Despite her being seen as authoritarian or even ruthless<sup>321</sup> she was able to cloth this firmness enough for many to compare her to a grandmother who motivates or reprimands, if necessary, her grandchildren.<sup>322</sup> As a result, people accepted orders from her that they would not have accepted from somebody else.<sup>323</sup> Generally, her authoritative leadership ensured her ability to provide UNHCR with a unity and coherence particularly important, although difficult to achieve in the times of profound political changes outside the organization. According to the UNHCR officials, Ogata knew how create a sense of unity<sup>324</sup>. Outside observers also recognized Ogata's extraordinary abilities to unite the organization behind her policies. It was, for example, noted that Ogata "has won their (senior staff) respect, and their cooperation, to a degree that is highly unusual in any part of the United Nations and its specialized agencies."<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>317</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 28 May 2004.

<sup>318</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 13 May 2004.

<sup>319</sup> Interview with the UNHCR head of unit, Geneva, 9 June 2004.

<sup>320</sup> Pick (28 June 1993).

<sup>321</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior official, a member of the Executive Office of the HC, Geneva, 14 May 2004.

<sup>322</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 29 April 2004.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> Interview with UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 15 June 2004; Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 8 June 2004.

<sup>325</sup> Pick (28 June 1993).

### 2.6.8 Visionary leadership

It would be wrong to assume that Ogata came to the Office with a specific agenda in mind<sup>326</sup>. As already noted by the former High Commissioner Stoltenberg: “As far as priorities are concerned, it is difficult to set out a grand plan (because) in the field of refugees, priorities are to some extent decided by events.”<sup>327</sup> Thus, UNHCR has not usually operated with ready-made strategic concepts.<sup>328</sup> Despite this fact, Ogata’s leadership managed to instill into the work of the organization an overarching vision of where the Office should go in times of profound geopolitical changes.<sup>329</sup>

This vision indispensably relates to Ogata herself, who was seen as a symbol of “a directly humanitarian approach.”<sup>330</sup> The High Commissioner was convinced that there were people who were constantly in need of international support and whose plight UNHCR could not ignore.<sup>331</sup> In this situation, UNHCR had to act effectively to provide specific solutions such as protection, which could be offered to all general war victims, even if they were not displaced or under refugee status.<sup>332</sup> This was essentially Ogata’s “humanitarian vision,” which stipulated that the organization act in humanitarian emergencies in order to ensure that the security needs of the war-affected population would be met. In other words, Ogata’s vision required broadening the focus of UNHCR protection to cover the issue of personal safety. Ogata’s plan demanded an extension beyond the traditional organizational focus on legal issues of refugee protection.

### 2.6.9 Charismatic leadership

All interviewees but one saw Ogata as charismatic person in her own right. Her charismatic appeal was particularly visible during her first five years in the Office when UNHCR underwent the most profound changes.<sup>333</sup> It was during that time that Ogata made people proud to work for UNHCR,<sup>334</sup> and the phrase “Ogata’s Angels” was coined and internalized by the staff. Despite her perceived roughness,<sup>335</sup> Ogata did have a charismatic

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<sup>326</sup> Interview with the UNHCR chief of section, Geneva, 11 May 2004.

<sup>327</sup> Interview with Thorvald Stoltenberg (March 1990):7.

<sup>328</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior external affairs officer, Geneva, 1 June 2004.

<sup>329</sup> Interview with the UNHCR head of unit, Geneva, 9 June 2004, interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 29 June 2004, interview with the UNHCR senior advisor, Geneva, 4 May 2004, interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 8 June 2004, Interview with the UNHCR director of division, Geneva, 18 May 2004.

<sup>330</sup> Flora Lewis, Vicious Circle Spreads, *Seattle Post*, 1 May 1991.

<sup>331</sup> Interview with the UNHCR chief of section, Geneva, 9 June 2004.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid., and interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 29 June 2004.

<sup>333</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of division, Geneva, 18 May 2004.

<sup>334</sup> Interview with the UNHCR external affairs officer, Geneva, 4 June 2004.

<sup>335</sup> Interview with the UNHCR head of unit, Geneva, 12 May 2004; Interview with the UNHCR senior advisor, Geneva, 4 May 2004.

attraction<sup>336</sup> that helped her to rally people around her and her “Humanitarian Agenda.”<sup>337</sup> People generally saw her as a charismatic leader because of her unconditional commitment to helping others. In spite of her age, Ogata was always up-to-date and constantly active, which motivated the UNHCR staff.<sup>338</sup> With her dedication Ogata had also maintained an unshakable principle (strengthened, paradoxically, by her pragmatism) and integrity in assisting the war victims.<sup>339</sup>

Ogata’s charismatic drive was illustrated clearly in her willingness to go to the field, to meet refugees, to commit to her own staff, to be personally engaged and not to shy away from danger.<sup>340</sup> Indeed, while talking about Ogata’s charisma various UNHCR officials referred to the importance of Ogata’s field presence and her work with the refugees as shown in the extracts below.

She was a brave person. We would travel with her to the frontline, she would go there, bombs were falling there, we would be there. There is even a famous picture of her in Sarajevo—where she is trying to climb into a land cruiser, with her flak jacket and helmet with bullet holes.... Mrs. Ogata in worn-torn Sarajevo.<sup>341</sup>

There were times when staff perceived her a bit more distant (particularly in the HQ). There were other times when she was right there with us. For one thing, she never shied away from being right out there, in the most difficult situations and showing flag with the rest of UNHCR and showing her concern. (Ogata’s field-driven commitment and her willingness) to listen to anyone out in the field was read more highly in the organization like ours. (She) made sure that (she) got to hear what her colleagues had to say irrespective of rank when she was out there, in the field, where it really matters.<sup>342</sup>

For the worker in the field, when she would come to the country office and spend sometime with the staff and meet with the refugees she was a symbol of what they were doing. So it became like a symbol of our work. She was like a general coming to her soldiers at the front line. And the fact that the president or general took the time to actually come out and visit your site and actually talk to few of you, was highly appreciated. I think people still see her as a model because she did get out to some of the worst places and she did spend time talking to refugees.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> Interview with UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 15 June 2004.

<sup>337</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior advisor, Geneva, 4 May 2004.

<sup>338</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior external affairs officer, Geneva, 1 June 2004.

<sup>339</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 29 June 2004.

<sup>340</sup> Interview with the UNHCR chief of section, Geneva, 9 June 2004.

<sup>341</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of division, Geneva, 18 May 2004.

<sup>342</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 28 May 2004.

<sup>343</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior officer, Staff Development Section, Geneva, 10 June 2004.

She would go in there and walk in there in the camps and make the staff very proud that they were there and that they were doing things. To that extent I think that she was a very good leader.<sup>344</sup>

She was a very charismatic leadership because of her own commitment. She led a number of staff not only by telling them what to do but also by doing things herself. And she was often very much at the forefront of things.<sup>345</sup>

Ogata's charisma was also recognized in the outcomes of the workshop organized by the Staff Development Section in 2004, during which the UNHCR staff members were asked to identify their heroes in the organization. Next to particular members of the UNHCR staff, who sacrificed their lives while helping the victims, one of the repeatedly mentioned heroes was the former High Commissioner Ogata. According to the survey manager in the organization there is a perception of Ogata as a hero or model for the UNHCR staff.<sup>346</sup> Finally, an international community has also recognized Ogata's charismatic passion for her work. For instance, during the 1995 Felix Houphouet-Boigny Peace Prize award ceremony, the vice-president of the Jury, Jean Foyer, when addressing the High Commissioner Ogata, acknowledged:

Madam, at the risk of embarrassing you, let me say that your action arouses worldwide admiration. You direct operations and you give of yourself, never flinching from travelling to organize aid, even under hostile fire.<sup>347</sup>

#### *2.6.10 Internal and external signs of respect for Ogata's leadership*

Ogata has enjoyed many compliments. The High Commissioner has been described as the following: an "enterprising executive head,"<sup>348</sup> "savvy,"<sup>349</sup> a "forward looking woman with excellent ideas and good analysis of political situation,"<sup>350</sup> "a great communicator,"<sup>351</sup> "so non-Japanese,"<sup>352</sup> and a "wise, cool-headed woman, fully "internationalized."<sup>353</sup> In 1993, *the Guardian* wrote that UNHCR staff

is full of detailed stories to illustrate that Ogata is uncommonly energetic, has an admirably-trained analytical mind; knows how to delegate, doesn't waffle, takes clear decisions and communicates them well.<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>344</sup> Interview with UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 15 June 2004.

<sup>345</sup> Phone interview with the UNHCR senior policy advisor, 28 May 2004.

<sup>346</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior officer, Staff Development Section, Geneva, 10 June 2004.

<sup>347</sup> Address by Jean Foyer, [www.unesco.org/prixfhboigny/le\\_prix/laureats/1995/ang/foyer.htm](http://www.unesco.org/prixfhboigny/le_prix/laureats/1995/ang/foyer.htm). Accessed on 10 November 2004.

<sup>348</sup> Weiss and Pasic (1997): 51.

<sup>349</sup> Interview with the UNHCR external affairs officer, Geneva, 4 June 2004.

<sup>350</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior policy officer, Geneva, 10 May 2004.

<sup>351</sup> Interview with the UNHCR chief of section, Geneva, 11 May 2004.

<sup>352</sup> Pick (28 June 1993).

<sup>353</sup> Sadako Ogata quoted by Epstein (6 April 1992).

<sup>354</sup> Pick (28 June 1993).

The evidence of international recognition of Ogata's leadership could be found in the way a world press was portraying the High Commissioner. Thus, for instance, *Time* wrote about "Ogata's Angels," *The Economist* mentioned a "Lady of Last Resort," *The Guardian* talked about "Cool Hands and a Warm Heart"<sup>355</sup> and *Vogue* called Ogata "The Chief Surgeon in the World's Emergency Room."<sup>356</sup> An excerpt from *The Economist* serves as a representative view about Ogata that was prevailing in the press in the first half of the 1990s:

The UN's fiercely independent High Commissioner for Refugees (Sadako Ogata) is not afraid of making enemies but, as it happens, has few. She speaks in a quite, unfailingly courteous voice underpinned with a steely note of conviction. She is outspoken and almost entirely unflappable.<sup>357</sup>

Finally, Ogata's international recognition was conveyed in various international political forums. Among the world policy makers, she became an "iconic figure."<sup>358</sup> Because of that recognition Ogata was invited by the UN Secretary General to head the UN commission on human security after her retirement from UNHCR.

### *2.7 Impact of transformational leadership on humanitarian change within the Office*

Because of its powers the High Commissioner exercises more control over changes and the direction of activities within the Office than any other actor inside or outside the organization. As a result, there is little doubt that the leadership of the High Commissioner played a crucial role in the Office's humanitarian transformation of the 1990s. Several others have also acknowledged this fact.<sup>359</sup> Although the importance of Ogata's leadership

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid.

<sup>356</sup> Mrs Ogata: The Chief Surgeon in the World's Emergency Room, *Vague* quoted by Loescher (2001): 291.

<sup>357</sup> The Lady of Last Resort, *The Economist*, 8 June 1994.

<sup>358</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 15 June 2004.

<sup>359</sup> "(...) The organization's willingness to assume an inappropriate (humanitarian) role is once again remarkable. One gets the distinct impression that since High Commissioner Ogata took office, UNHCR has been more absorbed by protection concerns dealt with in the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, than by those in the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. (As a result, UNHCR has resorted) to almost any type of relief activity" See Barutciski (1996): 106.

"As late as 1986, the report of a Group of Government Experts on International Cooperation to Avert New Flows of Refugees made no specific reference to UNHCR playing a role (...) with respect to (relief/assistance) prevention. (...) By the 1990s, however, UNHCR's participation in prevention activities had been established and the High Commissioner herself gave prominence to this role." See Susan F. Martin, Forced Migration and the Evolving Humanitarian Regime, *New Issues in Refugee Research*, Working Paper no.20 (July 2000):12.

"Under the leadership of a new High Commissioner, Sadako Ogata, who was prepared to exercise her mandate in a liberal and even expansionist manner, reintegration activities in countries of origin were no longer out of bounds for the organization. Indeed, they became a central feature of UNHCR's new strategy of 'prevention, preparedness and solutions.'" See Crisp (2001): 175.

"UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata had (...) expanded the operational concept of protection to include the expectation that UNHCR officers in the field would not only observe human rights

in the implementation of humanitarian change in the Office has been recognized, how change and leadership were exactly intertwined with each other must still be explained. The issues of specific leadership features and their contribution to the Office humanitarian transformation have not been thoroughly discussed and problematized. This section highlights the fact that a very specific type of leadership contributed to a particular kind of change in the Office. More precisely, it was the transformational leadership of Sadako Ogata that enthusiastically pushed for the Humanitarian Agenda at the beginning of the 1990s and directed the Office towards a profound humanitarian transformation in the first half of the 1990s.

### *2.7.1 Impact of Ogata's vision and compassion on humanitarian transformation*

Ogata's flexible approach towards the legal principles and rules were paradoxically driven by a very principled vision she adhered to. This vision was essentially about saving lives while everything else, including legal protection, was subordinated to it. This subordination was illustrated when Ogata famously stated that the organization cannot protect dead people<sup>360</sup>. For Ogata, the basic needs of people should be have physical rather than legalistic dimension.<sup>361</sup> Thus, she actively promoted the idea of a physical protection of people, which included ensuring safety and providing food, shelter, sanitation and even education,<sup>362</sup> over a traditionally dominant concept of legal protection of refugees.<sup>363</sup> This approach, which marginalized the notion of a legal protection of refugees within the Office, allowed UNHCR to endorse the "Humanitarian Agenda." The agenda implemented a broader focus on human security,<sup>364</sup> reinforced the organization's drive to go beyond refugee-specific crises and led it to embrace operational involvements in humanitarian emergencies. Furthermore, Ogata's notion of savings lives went beyond an established focus of the organization on refugees. Her speech to the UN Third Committee in November 1992, for example, discussed the

UNHCR's direct engagement in situations of acute crisis or open conflict, (and the need for) extending protection and assistance to internally displaced and other victims of conflict (...).<sup>365</sup>

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violations but report on them and seek remedial action from appropriate authorities." See Cunliffe and Pugh (1999): 183.

<sup>360</sup> Ogata quoted in UNHCR internal written source and in interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 8 June 2004.

<sup>361</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 8 June 2004.

<sup>362</sup> Conversations with History. Interview with Sadako Ogata (1999).

<sup>363</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 8 June 2004.

<sup>364</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 29 June 2004.

<sup>365</sup> Quoted in Goodwin-Gill (1996): 213, footnote 37.

In Ogata's eyes, the organization was supposed to be "the defense for the defenseless"<sup>366</sup> and thus responsible for assisting not only refugees as authorized by the mandate but also other victims of conflicts. Ogata essentially felt that failing to look at the UNHCR mandate more broadly would leave hundreds of thousands of people in extremely vulnerable situations.<sup>367</sup> She thus perceived UNHCR as an organization that should act on behalf of the victims and not merely refugees.<sup>368</sup> Because of Ogata's genuine commitment to help victims, the organization was pushed to embrace a much broader definition for the concept of refugees. According to Ogata herself, the definition of refugees under her leadership changed and its scope broadened.

(Refugees) used to be people forced outside their country's borders. But now it covers those within as well. It's no use waiting for people to leave in desperation.<sup>369</sup>

The result of the expanded meaning of refugees was an introduction of completely new categories of people who suddenly became of interest to UNHCR and a shift in emphasis from the consequences of refugee flights and countries of asylum to the sources of these flights and the countries of origin. Such changes obviously followed Ogata's own philosophy:

I believe there should be less waiting for the [outpouring] of refugees for action to be taken. (Thus), refugee work in the 1990s should focus on the countries of origin to promote prevention.<sup>370</sup>

For Ogata, the most important thing was to protect people regardless of whether they crossed the borders or not.<sup>371</sup> She strongly believed that UNHCR, as she put it, "should not be an organization dealing only with consequences"<sup>372</sup> and that "an effective and humanitarian approach to the refugee issue must focus on causes as much as effects."<sup>373</sup> Because of Ogata's leadership based on "fiber and vision,"<sup>374</sup> the question of humanitarian intervention and organizational expansion into the humanitarian field was no longer "why me?" but "why not?"<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior officer, Staff Development Section, Geneva, 10 June 2004.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

<sup>368</sup> Conversations with History. Interview with Sadako Ogata, (1999).

<sup>369</sup> Ogata quoted by Epstein (6 April 1992).

<sup>370</sup> Interview with Sadako Ogata (Winter 1994): 419.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid., 420.

<sup>372</sup> Interview with the UNHCR chief of section, Geneva, 9 June 2004

<sup>373</sup> Ogata (March 1991):3.

<sup>374</sup> Opinion expressed by Arthur E. Dewey, UNHCR and the New World Order, *Refugees*, no.87 (October 1991): 28.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid., 28.

In practice, Ogata's vision aimed to equip UNHCR with certain capabilities so it would be able to respond to the needs of victims.<sup>376</sup> She thus looked at the organization as an tool that, if oiled correctly, would help to realize her vision. Generally, Ogata's vision required the Office to deliver material aid for various people in need rather than just to provide traditional legal assistance. If that, in practice, meant turning UNHCR into "a big Godzilla type of humanitarian organization,"<sup>377</sup> that was the consequence she was more than willing to accept. As a result, the organizational efforts concentrated on the expansion of human and financial resources. This expansion was necessary to meet operational demands for effective distribution of material relief to different victims in the growing numbers of humanitarian crises in which the Office became engaged. From 1991 to 1995, the number of staff expanded from 2371 to 5467<sup>378</sup> and the budget increased from 544 million dollars in 1990 to more than 1.1 billion dollars in 1995.<sup>379</sup>

### *2.7.2 Impact of Ogata's flexibility and pragmatism on humanitarian transformation*

Ogata's leadership was based on pragmatic, flexible approaches towards the issue of UNHCR interventions in humanitarian crises. As Ogata herself pointed out in the context of the Office's strategy to deal with the ongoing geopolitical changes: "we do not have to redefine anything; we just have to deal flexibly with new situations."<sup>380</sup> Similarly, on the issue of the UNHCR involvement in the country of origin, Ogata stressed:

I take rather pragmatic approach (...). I would negotiate (...) with the government to allow certain protection of a limited sort (...) like getting humanitarian corridors or zones of tranquility (...).<sup>381</sup>

Because Ogata was a pragmatist, she focused the organizational efforts on delivering specific solutions. For Ogata, one of the solutions was an effective policy that would address the root causes of displacement and would eventually reduce its scope. In order to implement this policy, Ogata started pushing the organization towards more preventive activities in the countries of origin. She believed that prevention provided a much more proactive approach to dealing with refugee outflows<sup>382</sup>. Ogata thus established preventive protection as the Office main policy objective during the first years of her tenure.<sup>383</sup>

<sup>376</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 29 June 2004.

<sup>377</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior policy officer, Geneva, 10 May 2004.

<sup>378</sup> UNHCR statistics from 31 December 1990 and 31 December 1995.

<sup>379</sup> Expenditures of Special Organs: 1971-1995, [www.globalpolicy/finance/tables/finogran.htm](http://www.globalpolicy/finance/tables/finogran.htm). Accessed on 5 February 2004.

<sup>380</sup> Interview with Sadako Ogata (Winter 1994): 420.

<sup>381</sup> Refugees: A Multilateral Approach to Humanitarian Crises. Conversation with Sadako Ogata, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 1 April 1992. Institute of International Studies, UC Berkley, <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/Elberg/Ogata/agatacon1.htm>. Accessed on 20 June 2004.

<sup>382</sup> Interview with Sadako Ogata (Winter 1994): 423.

<sup>383</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 8 June 2004.



UNHCR's endorsement of prevention as its main strategy allowed the organization to focus on helping refugees before they were even displaced, rather than assisting refugees outside their country of origin.<sup>384</sup> A common reason for displacement was concern for one's own immediate physical security and personal safety. Therefore, the organization had to expand its emergency presence on the ground in order to protect, as Ogata put it, "the right of people to remain in safety in their homes."<sup>385</sup> The overall consequence of the endorsement of prevention was the Office's increasing engagement in large humanitarian operations as well as the sidestepping of its traditional focus on legal protection of refugees.<sup>386</sup>

The pragmatism and flexibility of the High Commissioner encouraged the organization to believe that UNHCR policies should be determined more by the circumstances on the ground and less by the legal protection principles.<sup>387</sup> Ogata often perceived the legal bases of refugee protection as a confinement for the Office involvement in the new crisis situations of the 1990s. Thus, she sincerely believed, as observed by one scholar, that the Office "can contribute effectively to humanitarian crises by being pragmatic rather than basing its actions on traditional principles."<sup>388</sup> As a result, she saw pragmatism and flexibility in Office responses as necessary factors for carrying out effective efforts in meeting the needs of victims of displacement.<sup>389</sup> This attitude reflected Ogata's belief that meeting basic needs of the people affected by conflicts was more important than rigid adherence to the organization's traditional mandate and legal principles. In one of the first interviews given by Ogata as a new High Commissioner, she clearly expressed her pragmatic policy preferences:

UNHCR has its traditional mandate: to protect refugees and find durable solutions to their plight. But that mandate has to be interpreted in the context of changing word needs.<sup>390</sup>

The consequences of Ogata's pragmatism and flexibility were clearly displayed during her first weeks in the Office, when the High Commissioner faced the refugee crisis in Iraq. Despite the fact that her Director of International Protection argued that the UNHCR should only assist those Kurds who crossed the Turkish-Iraqi border, Ogata brought the

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<sup>384</sup> Michael Barutciski (1996): 56 and interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 8 June 2004.

<sup>385</sup> Sadako Ogata, Speech to the Commission on Human Rights, 3 March 1993. In *The Right to Remain, Refugees*, no.92 (April 1993):11.

<sup>386</sup> Goodwni-Gill (1993): 5.

<sup>387</sup> Barutciski (1996): 108.

<sup>388</sup> Barutciski (1999):3.

<sup>389</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 29 June 2004.

<sup>390</sup> A World of Changing Needs, Interview with Sadako Ogata (April 1991): 35.

Office into a direct provision of aid to Iraqi Kurds inside the Iraqi borders.<sup>391</sup> This was the very first evidence of Ogata's pragmatism and flexibility. Her decision reflected her willingness to intervene in the countries of origin rather than to wait for refugees to cross international borders.

It was its Ogata's leadership, which eventually freed the Office from restrictive observance of the organization's legal mandate. If supported by a more rigid and principled type of leadership, the legal mandate could have hindered and even prevented the organization from expanding into a new humanitarian field. In general, Ogata's loose interpretation of the rules led, as noted by the scholars of UNHCR, to more and more flexible and pragmatic approaches to refugee problems, which began to take precedence over protection based on international refugee law and principles.<sup>392</sup>

#### *2.7.2 Ogata's authoritative leadership and weakening of protectionists*

The UNHCR was originally established as a lawyers' organization. The lawyers were generally located in the International Protection Department (formerly the Division) and therefore called "protectionists." Protectionists were described by some of the UNHCR staff as "ayatollahs,"<sup>393</sup> "fundamentalists,"<sup>394</sup> or "high priests"<sup>395</sup> who were seen as holding rigid views about the way the agency should perform its refugee mandate. The protectionists' main concern had been to ensure that UNHCR remained focused on refugee protection and did not get involved in other, non-refugee-related, activities.<sup>396</sup> Such a non-refugee involvement was seen as a threat to the UNHCR core mandate. Going beyond traditional UNHCR activities meant following a dangerous path that would eventually lead to a weakening of refugee principles, such as the right to seek and enjoy asylum. Straying from traditional responsibilities could also weaken the agency's determination to stand against governments that break their legal obligations under the 1951 refugee convention.

Despite their relatively small numbers at the beginning of the 1990s, there were between thirty to forty protectionists out of two thousand UNHCR staff members; protectionists exercised considerable influence in the organization and on its activities. "They kind of

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<sup>391</sup> Gil Loescher, *The UNHCR and World Politics. A Perilous Path*, Oxford University Press, (Oxford 2001):288.

<sup>392</sup> Goodwin-Gill (1999): 235 and Barutciski (1996): 108.

<sup>393</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of division, Geneva, 18 May 2004.

<sup>394</sup> Interview with a former UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 6 April 2004.

<sup>395</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior official, a member of the Executive Office of the HC, Geneva, 8 June 2004.

captured the soul of the organization in a way,”<sup>397</sup> noted one official. When recalling UNHCR’s involvement at the beginning of the 1990s in providing food convoys and Open Relief Centers in Sri Lanka, a former UNHCR staff member observed that even a modest relief project caused a great deal of opposition among UNHCR protection-oriented officials. The protectionists essentially saw even a limited emergency relief activity as an “extra-mandatory commitment.” This internal opposition towards UNHCR relief efforts essentially criticized the liberal interpretation of the mandate.<sup>398</sup>

The protectionists maintained their strong stance within the Office despite being weakened by the organizational reforms introduced by the High Commissioner Jean-Pierre Hocke in the second half of the 1980s.<sup>399</sup> In fact, the protectionists’ opposition towards changes became even stronger once Ogata had come to the Office. The apparent willingness of the new High Commissioner to see the Office getting involved in broader humanitarian activities led, according to eye-witnesses, to heated debates within the house. Many argued that Ogata was weakening legal protection<sup>400</sup> and undermining the organization’s traditional focus on the right to seek asylum in the third countries.<sup>401</sup> The strength of the legal protection officers in the Office at the beginning of the 1990s was thus still considerable. Under these circumstances, the UNHCR humanitarian transformation of the 1990s would have been either unlikely or its scope and pace significantly less radical, had the protectionists remained so influential within the organization. Consequently, the position of the new High Commissioner towards the institutional power and the influence of protectionists were crucial to humanitarian change in the Office. On this particular issue, Ogata’s academic background turned out to be of outmost importance. Ogata’s attitude towards protectionists was clearly shown during one of her interviews:

I am not a lawyer – lawyers are always behind times. I am a political scientist, and political scientists are always with the times. In fact, they are people who think ahead.<sup>402</sup>

Ogata’s considerably disinterest in or even contempt for the legal profession in the Office was also noted by insiders who observed that the High Commissioner did not find briefs written by lawyers useful, did not agree with legal reasoning if she could find a practical

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<sup>396</sup> Interview with a former UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 6 April 2004 and Interview with the UNHCR director of division, Geneva, 18 May 2004.

<sup>397</sup> Interview with a former UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 6 April 2004.

<sup>398</sup> Clarence (1993): 587.

<sup>399</sup> Loescher (2001):249-251. Barnett and Finnemore (2004): 102-103.

<sup>400</sup> Phone interview with the UNHCR senior policy officer, 28 May 2004 and Interview with the UNHCR senior external affairs officer, Geneva, 1 June 2004.

<sup>401</sup> Kristen Young, UNHCR and ICRC in the Former Yugoslavia: Bosnia and Herzegovina, *IRRC*, vol.83, no.843 (September 2001): 796.

solution for a given problem and was generally irritated by lawyers, who repeatedly warned her against greater expansion.<sup>403</sup> Even the senior legal officials observed that a protection officer has to be, by definition, a “*spielverderber*,” or “spoiler of the game,” who oftent interferes with previous decisions or established structures and advocates delays because, from the legal perspective, things have to be done in a particular way.<sup>404</sup> On the whole, Ogata’s impatience with protectionists related to her action-oriented and pragmatic way of dealing with problems. In the “can-do” environment that Ogata felt comfortable with protectionists became suddenly an obstacle<sup>405</sup> and hindered realization of Ogata’s vision of helping people. Ogata was thus very determined to weaken protectionists’ opposition against more a pragmatic approach and greater humanitarian engagement of the Office.

Ogata indirectly weakened the protectionists when she focused her efforts on boosting the organization’s humanitarian response mechanisms instead of the usual focus on work related to legal protection of refugees, establishment of norms, or monitoring of international refugee standards.<sup>406</sup> She then de-emphasized the institutional influence of the International Protection Department (IPD) by sidelining the IPD director and paying less attention to the IPD during the senior management meetings.<sup>407</sup> Such policies raised considerable concerns within IPD that were clearly illustrated by the anonymous voice of criticism (most likely coming from the senior official within the IPD) published in *International Journal of Refugee Law*. The anonymous official openly complained about the erosion of the authority and influence of the IPD to such an extent that its advice was now sought only *post-factum*, after the policy and program staff had already made a decision, in order to find retrospective legal justification for UNHCR actions.<sup>408</sup> Goodwin-Gill in his analysis of the final report prepared by the UNHCR Change Management Group in 1996 also complained about a considerable marginalization of the IPD in the organization. He, for example, noted that protection officers were not even included in the list of the support staff for the program managers in charge of the improvement of the implementation and impact of operational activities.<sup>409</sup> Chimni, another refugee scholar,

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<sup>402</sup> Ogata quoted in Pick (28 June 1993).

<sup>403</sup> Interview with the UNHCR chief of section, Geneva, 11 May 2004 and Interview with the UNHCR senior protection officer, Geneva, 11 May 2004.

<sup>404</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior protection officer, Geneva, 11 May 2004 and Interview with the UNHCR legal protection officer, Geneva, 16 June 2004.

<sup>405</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior protection officer, Geneva, 11 May 2004.

<sup>406</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 29 June 2004.

<sup>407</sup> Interview with the UNHCR chief of section, Geneva, 11 May 2004.

<sup>408</sup> The UNHCR Note on International Protection (1997): 272.

<sup>409</sup> Goodwin-Gill in Nicholson and Twomey (1999): 237.

held a similar opinion and acknowledged that the IDP was considerably sidelined in the process of humanitarian transformation.<sup>410</sup>

Finally, Ogata weakened protectionists by emphasizing that the protection should no longer be the portfolio that belonged only to protection officers.<sup>411</sup> Her overriding view was that anything the UNHCR staff does was, by definition, protection. As a result, every UNHCR staff member became a protection officer;<sup>412</sup> every employee from a driver to a UNHCR representative was now perceived as a protection officer, whose duty was to provide international protection for refugees.<sup>413</sup> This entirely new conceptual approach meant that the ownership of a very fundamental notion constituting the basis of UNHCR work was broadened and removed from its traditional conservative guardians, the protectionists and shared with more flexible and less ‘principled’ operational people. With the leadership strongly in support, the concept of legal protection of refugees shifted from a purely legal assistance for refugees towards a physical protection of war victims. Eventually, the impact of leadership on broadening the meaning of protection provided a strong ideological and practical basis for even deeper humanitarian transformation in the Office.<sup>414</sup>

The High Commissioner’s considerable authoritative leadership was made evident by her confrontation of protectionists, for a long time viewed as untouchable “ayatollahs.” It took a lot of authority and leadership strength to challenge protectionists and the Office’s fundamental principles and maintain, at the same time, unquestionable leadership that was able to prevent a serious schism in the organization. In fact, there was a relative unity under Ogata’s leadership that could account for the organization’s readiness to get involved in the emergency crises and be relatively effective in addressing the needs of the UNHCR beneficiaries in the first half of the 1990s.

This kind of organizational unity during the time when internally controversial decisions had to be made would have been difficult, if no impossible, had the Commissioner been weak and had the staff showed little respect for her, as the example of the previous High

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<sup>410</sup> B. S. Chimni, Reforming the International Refugee Regime: A Dialogic Model, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol.14, no.2 (2001):161.

<sup>411</sup> Interview with the UNHCR head of the unit, Geneva, 9 June 2004.

<sup>412</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 28 May 2004.

<sup>413</sup> Interview with the UNHCR head of the unit, Geneva, 9 June 2004.

<sup>414</sup> Even though Ogata undermined the power of the protectionists, it would be wrong to assume that they completely lost their influence within the Office. Indeed, according to a refugee researcher Robert Muggah, there is still “a vocal camp within the agency that continues to call for a narrow focus on legal protection and (opposes) an exclusively political engagement with governments that abrogate their obligations under the

Commissioner, Jean-Pierre Hocke (1986-1989) illustrates. Within the organization, Hocke was perceived as being unable to exercise strong authority and lacking the charisma needed to pull the organization together.<sup>415</sup> During his commissionership, some of his senior staff asked for reassignments and the governments began to hear an increasing number of staff complaints regarding internal administration and management issues.<sup>416</sup> The UNHCR senior official who worked under the previous High Commissioner Jean-Pierre Hocke (1986-1989), and thus had a certain historical perspective on leadership, was of the opinion that had Hocke stayed as a head of the agency during the 1990s, he

would have led a very divided and probably increasingly divided organization, which would have continued to break down in two clans (protectionists/operational people) that would have probably been aggravated over time.<sup>417</sup>

In contrast, there was little sign of open divisiveness among the senior managers and among the rank-and-file officials under Ogata's leadership in the first half of the 1990s. Ogata's authoritative leadership managed to keep the organization together despite internal voices of concern about a perceived weakening of legal protection and provided the unity necessary to bring the Office into a new era of expanded humanitarian activities.

### *2.7.3 Impact of Ogata's leadership on institutional readiness*

In order to implement her general vision and make the organizational mechanisms more compatible with the requirements of the effective humanitarian operations, Ogata decided to augment UNHCR institutional capacity to respond to the humanitarian crises. In February 1992, Ogata established the Emergency Preparedness and Response Section within UNHCR with a core of five Emergency Preparedness and Response Officers, whose job was to monitor development of situations in the field, design contingency plans and deploy needs-assessment missions and emergency teams.<sup>418</sup> The section was also responsible for preparing a roster of UNHCR staff members who would be trained and ready for a rapid deployment. The staff could be sent to any point on the globe as an emergency team, completely operational and self-sufficient, on a 72-hour notice for up to six months.<sup>419</sup> The organization began stockpiling relief goods, including "field survival

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1951 Convention." Robert Muggah, *Distinguishing Means and Ends: The Counterintuitive Effects of UNHCR's Community Development Approach in Nepal*, Draft, October 2003: 3.

<sup>415</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 29 June 2004 and Loescher (2001):250-251.

<sup>416</sup> Loescher (2001):251.

<sup>417</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 29 June 2004.

<sup>418</sup> G.Hiram, A. Ruiz, *Emergencies: International Response to Refugee Flows and Complex Emergencies*, *International Journal of Refugee Law* (Special Issue 1995), reprinted in Chimni (2000): 254.

<sup>419</sup> *The State of the World's Refugees* (1993): 97.

kits” such as communication equipments, computers, office materials, vehicles.<sup>420</sup> The Office entered into agreements with several government disaster units and non-governmental personnel involved in emergency operations.<sup>421</sup> Stand-by arrangements were made with the Swedish Rescue Board for organizing a fully operational UNHCR office during an emergency, “including airlifting, accommodation and supply.”<sup>422</sup> Ogata also increased UNHCR emergency fund from its 10 million-dollar base at the end of 1980s to 25 million dollars in the 1990s.<sup>423</sup> Generally, with the creation of fast-moving mechanisms to address fast changing realities, Ogata strengthened the Office’s internal emergency preparedness and response capacity. As a result, the UNHCR became better prepared for involvement in emergency humanitarian crises.

#### *2.7.4 Impact of Ogata’s field-based charisma on humanitarian transformation*

The Office’s humanitarian transformation involved greater engagement in field operations. Therefore, the High Commissioner’s attitude towards field activities mattered. As far as Ogata was concerned, field involvement was the main and crucial function of the Office. A common story within the Office was that Ogata served as a desk officer for Bosnia and Rwanda, which were traditionally positions for low ranking UNHCR official.<sup>424</sup>

The joke in the organization was that she became a desk officer for the former Yugoslavia and even for Rwanda. She knew the files and issues often much better than the people who were supposed to be in charge of these activities. When there were big operations, she got very much involved in the issues and in what needs to be done. She went very often to the field to get a field view, she got involved in actual operations, in the policy formulation process.<sup>425</sup>

It is thus not an exaggeration to assert that Ogata’s personal interest in the field was unusually high. In the words of one high-ranking official Ogata essentially took the field operations close to her heart.<sup>426</sup> In practice, the High Commissioner wanted the agency to get closer to the realities on the ground and leave its legal ivory-tower confinement.<sup>427</sup> The process and the outcome of the Humanitarian Agenda were seen as serving exactly this purpose. The humanitarian transformation certainly led to the increase of the Office’s

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<sup>420</sup> Towards a Comprehensive Regional Policy Approach: The Case for Closer Inter-Agency Co-operation. IOM and UNHCR, *International Journal of Refugee Law*, vol.5, no.3 (1993): 379.

<sup>421</sup> Sadako Ogata, Statement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to the UNICEF Executive Board, New York, 15 June 1992.

<sup>422</sup> Towards a Comprehensive Regional Policy Approach (1993): 379.

<sup>423</sup> *The State of the World’s Refugees* (1993):90; Hiram and Ruiz in Chimni (2000): 253.

<sup>424</sup> For example, interview with a former UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 13 April 2004, interview with the UNHCR director of division, Geneva, 18 May 2004, interview with the UNHCR director of division, Geneva, 18 May 2004, phone interview with the UNHCR senior policy officer, 28 May 2004.

<sup>425</sup> Phone interview with the UNHCR senior policy officer, 28 May 2004.

<sup>426</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of division, Geneva, 18 May 2004.

presence in the field. At the beginning of the 1991, a mere 65% of the total number of UNHCR staff members worked in the field, while four years later almost 80% of UNHCR personnel was directly involved in field operations.<sup>428</sup> Therefore, the fact that Ogata was a strongly field-oriented and not a headquarters-oriented High Commissioner played a very significant role in pushing the organization through the humanitarian transformation.

#### *2.7.5 Impact of Ogata's emotive and visionary leadership on expansionism on humanitarian transformation*

Ogata's emotional link with the vision of saving people's lives allowed her to push the organization and its staff to their limits in order to assist victims, despite legal and personal safety concerns. In other words, it was her compassion that moved her in the direction of the organizational expansion. The strong link between Ogata's leadership based on empathy for the victims and the expansion of the Office in terms of its human and financial resources and greater involvement in new humanitarian missions has been accurately presented in the comments of the high-ranking UNHCR official, who observed:

Ogata was clearly a person who had very strong beliefs in what she was doing. She was somebody who travelled a lot, had a lot of contacts with refugees and governments, NGOs. Through these contacts she associated herself with the problems of refugees and in a sense took a personal commitment, personal mission to do whatever is in her power to solve the problems. And if that required increasing her power she would do it. What was seen as an expansionist approach was more the actions of a person who believed that something had to be done, who believed that not enough was being done.<sup>429</sup>

Ogata clearly wanted UNHCR to remain a predominant organization in the times of profound changes<sup>430</sup> and believed that this relevance required a more comprehensive approach to the refugee problems than before.<sup>431</sup> In this context, organizational expansion was needed to meet increasing humanitarian needs and thus, to prove the Office's importance in the changing global political environment.<sup>432</sup> According to a former UNHCR official, who was in position to observe the work of the High Commissioner, Ogata

wanted UNHCR to become a big humanitarian agency, she wanted to transform UNHCR into something that would have a real impact on the world and would play a part in world politics.<sup>433</sup>

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<sup>427</sup> Interview with the UNHCR chief of section, Geneva, 9 June 2004.

<sup>428</sup> UNHCR statistics from 31 December 1990 and 31 December 1995.

<sup>429</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 8 June 2004.

<sup>430</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of division, Geneva, 18 May 2004.

<sup>431</sup> UNHCR internal source.

<sup>432</sup> Interview with a former UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 13 April 2004.

<sup>433</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior advisor, Geneva, 4 May 2004.



Finally, Ogata's expansionism was associated with her desire to champion the world's humanitarian agenda. As noted by one interviewee, Ogata eventually "became a sort of uncrowned queen of humanitarian world."<sup>434</sup> Her desire to lead the international humanitarian agenda reached its peak in the second half of the 1990s when Ogata made an effort to take over the control of OCHA and to become a humanitarian coordinator for the whole UN system. This effort reflected her vision of being holistic and not refugee specific.<sup>435</sup> Eventually, the idea had to be abandoned when other UN organizations, particularly WFP and UNICEF, raised a strong opposition against what they saw as a growing expansion of UNHCR and a sort of authoritarianism on Ogata's part.<sup>436</sup>

#### *2.7.6 Ogata's focus on human rights and its impact on humanitarian transformation*

Ogata has always been strongly interested in human rights. In the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, she was a member of the UN Commission on Human Rights and as a Commission expert she was dealing with the human rights situation in Myanmar. Because of this background, supported by her academic openness and a visionary approach to addressing refugee problems, Ogata was actually the first High Commissioner for Refugees, who fully appreciated the need for stronger links between refugee rights and human rights<sup>437</sup>. Indeed, shortly after entering the Office Ogata began underlining that

the dimensions of today's refugee issue demand that it be placed in the mainstream of the international agenda and in the wider context of human rights. Violations of human rights are a major cause of refugee movements. (...) And the restoration of acceptable human rights standards in countries of origin can be the key to the resolution of refugee situations.<sup>438</sup>

And later stressed that the

issue of human rights and the problems of refugees are so inextricably linked that it is hardly possible to discuss one without referring to the other.<sup>439</sup>

Because of Ogata's constant emphasis on linking refugee rights with human rights, UNHCR had become directly engaged in human rights activities such as data collection, human rights monitoring or physical protection of ethnic minorities by the end of 1993.<sup>440</sup> Broadening the Office viewpoint, traditionally limited to refugees, by including also human rights was a radical change for UNHCR. The 1990s was a decade of human rights, which had a visible impact on the work of other UN agencies, such as the WHO and the ILO,

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<sup>434</sup> Interview with the UNHCR head of unit, Geneva, 12 May 2004.

<sup>435</sup> Interview with a former UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 13 April 2004.

<sup>436</sup> Ibid.

<sup>437</sup> Cohen (April 1993):6.

<sup>438</sup> Ogata (March 1991):3.

<sup>439</sup> Ogata (April 1993):11.

<sup>440</sup> Vargas (1 November 1993): 64.

which linked health and labor rights with human rights. However, UNHCR involvement in protection and promotion of human rights was hardly inevitable or supported by all. An embracement of human rights was a major change for the organization, whose traditional mandate was set on the constitutional principle that “the work of the High Commissioner shall be of an entirely non-political character.”<sup>441</sup> Because the issue of human rights was an inherently political subject, the Office engagement in the human rights activities was a real breakthrough for UNHCR, much more than for other UN agencies.

By connecting refugee issues with human rights and humanitarian language, Ogata managed to link the former with international security. This reflected her strong belief that the mass population movements and their consequences constitute a major threat to international peace and security.<sup>442</sup> The link between new humanitarian crises, human rights and maintenance of international peace and security, according to Chimni, led to changes in UNHCR’s mandate and practices.<sup>443</sup> Ogata’s frequent addresses to the Security Council illustrated UNHCR’s shift from a relatively non-political engagement with refugees to involvement in helping various victims of highly political internal conflicts. No other High Commissioner had ever addressed the Security Council, while during the 1990s Ogata was in and out of the Security Council meetings almost on a permanent basis.<sup>444</sup>

In general, Ogata’s leadership, set on a specific humanitarian vision and empathy for all victims of conflict, moved UNHCR beyond its mandated focus. This type of leadership encouraged the organization to embrace new, often politicized, tasks. As the High Commissioner herself specified, these tasks were associated with general provisions of human rights, implementation of humanitarian law and carrying out *ad hoc* operational arrangements.<sup>445</sup>

#### *2.7.7 Impact of Ogata’s leadership on the UNHCR involvement in Northern Iraq and the former Yugoslavia*

Already, during Ogata’s first major operation, helping internally displaced people in Northern Iraq in 1991, the new High Commissioner showed her resolve in leading the organization toward humanitarian emergencies. According to the UNHCR senior official, the senior managers were very surprised when Ogata decided to involve the Office in a

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<sup>441</sup> The Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Article 2.

<sup>442</sup> The Challenge of the 1990s (May 1991):38.

<sup>443</sup> Chimni (September 2000): 252-253.

<sup>444</sup> Interview with a former UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 6 April 2004.

<sup>445</sup> Ogata (April 1993):11.

large emergency, only few weeks after she assumed her position, essentially without consulting anybody. “She basically took that decision on her own as a brand new High Commissioner, who hardly knew what this organization was about,”<sup>446</sup> noted a senior official. The Iraqi operation turned out to be Ogata’s defining moment,<sup>447</sup> its relative success legitimated and strengthened her humanitarian drive that called on UNHCR to adopt increasingly innovative and pragmatic responses to population movement in order to be able to response effectively towards other emergencies.<sup>448</sup>

UNHCR’s operation in the former Yugoslavia is the symbol of the Office humanitarian transformation. Consequently, the role of leadership in this operation constitutes an important subject of inquiry. Ogata’s leadership played an important role in maintaining the Office’s involvement in the former Yugoslavia. Ogata appointed the UNHCR Special Envoy for the former Yugoslavia, Jose-Maria di Menduluce. She also established an office in Sarajevo<sup>449</sup> in the summer of 1991. These actions took place a few months before the UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar sent an official request letter, dated 25 October 1991, asking UNHCR to lead humanitarian efforts in the region. UNHCR’s involvement in former Yugoslavia without prior official UN authorization indicated Ogata’s determination to prepare the organization for operational engagements and move it into a zone of conflict even before the Office was officially asked to do so. In such circumstances, the UN request letter was merely a rubber stamp that was needed for the official endorsement of the Office’s ongoing engagement in the former Yugoslavia and for a possible future expansion of its operations in the region.

Ogata’s firm commitment to move UNHCR into the field of humanitarian aid in the former Yugoslavia was equal only to her determination to keep the organization engaged in this region despite all the difficulties. This sort of determination was clearly reflected in the comments included in the evaluation report on the UNHCR operations in the former Yugoslavia. The report noted:

In contrast to past operations, UNHCR did not attempt to withdraw when the war broke out in Bosnia and Herzegovina. While operational conditions became increasingly difficult and dangerous, decisions were continually made to intervene and save lives.<sup>450</sup>

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<sup>446</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 29 April 2004.

<sup>447</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of division, Geneva, 18 May 2004.

<sup>448</sup> *Working in a War Zone* (1 April 1994):2.

<sup>449</sup> Alex Cunliffe and Michael Pugh, The Politicization of UNHCR in the Former Yugoslavia, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol.10, no.2 (1997):136.

<sup>450</sup> *Working in a War Zone* (1 April 1994):3.

At the same time, Ogata's endorsement of the Humanitarian Agenda encouraged the organization to accept the responsibility for carrying out activities in the former Yugoslavia that other actors, such as governmental agencies, ICRC or the UN military could have performed more effectively because, in contrast to UNCHR, these operational tasks were part of their mandates.<sup>451</sup>

The extent of the UNHCR leadership's commitment to humanitarian transformation is illustrated by the UNHCR's involvement in the Sarajevo airlift that started in July 1992. Despite the fact that some western governments were willing to take on the responsibility for the airlift, according to the UNHCR internal evaluation, the UNHCR leadership itself "was eager to demonstrate its effectiveness, and worked hard to secure responsibility for this aspect of the relief effort."<sup>452</sup> Eventually, the Sarajevo airlift contributed to the significant increase in UNHCR international profile. This finally silenced skeptical voices inside the organization still questioning the need for the presence of the organization in the former Yugoslavia.<sup>453</sup>

#### *2.7.8 Ogata's leadership, media and humanitarian transformation*

Being a visionary leader, Ogata did not shy away from implementing new ideas that had important consequences for the Office and its transformation. One of such original ideas was the new media policy. Ogata appreciated the importance of media for raising UNHCR's public profile<sup>454</sup>, which was clearly illustrated in her own statements:

I think the media play a very important role (...). I would like to take the media with me everywhere so that the plight of refugees would be reported widely.<sup>455</sup>

UNHCR needs the sustained support of governments. And the only way to get sustained help from governments is to have strong public backing for our cause. So we have to interest the public in the plight of refugees, reinforcing their commitment and mobilizing their energy. (This demands) public information and public relations.<sup>456</sup>

Because Ogata, early on during her commissionership, recognized the significance of media for the work of the agency, she made an important decision to allow UNHCR officials to speak freely with media about subjects in which they were informed.<sup>457</sup> As

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<sup>451</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>454</sup> A World of Changing Needs, Interview with Sadako Ogata (April 1991): 37.

<sup>455</sup> Conversation with Sadako Ogata, (1 April 1992).

<sup>456</sup> A World of Changing Needs, Interview with Sadako Ogata (April 1991): 37.

<sup>457</sup> *Working in a War Zone* (1 April 1994):40.

recalled by one official, Ogata let officials talk to the press.<sup>458</sup> This policy overruled previous circulars that banned the staff from talking to press unless given High Commissioner's specific authorization<sup>459</sup>. In other words, Ogata with her new policy of media openness in practice gave the staff a *carte blanche* for their contacts with media.

At that particular time the new media policy of the Office was a highly innovative idea not only in terms of the UNHCR standards but also in terms of the standards of the UN and its agencies. Generally, the UN organizations tended to be (and some still are) very cautious about releasing any information regarding the organizations and their activities. They preferred to maintain centralized control over the agencies' communication with the public, often relying on a quiet or secret manner of work. The following excerpts show the extent of the originality of Ogata's new media policy and her political courage in defending her staff, who were implementing this policy.

Our spokeswoman, Sylvana Foa was constantly in trouble with various people especially in the UN bureaucracy in New York. They see this woman, everyday on CNN or BBC saying outrageous things (about atrocities and governments' inactions). When I traveled with Ogata in Bosnia, she was getting a phone call every half an hour, someone complaining about too aggressive UNHCR press statements, mostly from the UN bureaucracy in New York. Ogata ignored that pretty much.<sup>460</sup>

I had a problem once, after the war in Bosnia. I spoke to the New York Times about the first elections in Bosnia where OSCE, which organized it, basically allowed the radical parties that really came from the war to run in the elections and dominate the elections. And I said, this was as if we had allowed NSDAP to participate in the elections in the post-war Germany with the SS being in charge of security of voting process. And I was quoted by name by the New York Times correspondent, which got me into trouble quite a bit, to the extent that the Russian ambassador on the Security Council (voiced his strong criticism). But Ogata was protective and supportive of aggressive press life.<sup>461</sup>

Generally, Ogata's openness to the media considerably empowered the field officials, whose open contacts with media often placed significant pressure on the Office to act and increase its already considerable involvement in the new humanitarian activities. The staff in the field, for example, made frequent press statements warning that if the food were not delivered to a certain area within a few days, people would go hungry. Such statements

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<sup>458</sup> Interview with the UNHCR head of unit, Geneva, 12 May 2004.

<sup>459</sup> Ibid.

In the context of the UNHCR involvement in the former Yugoslavia, Young, also noted that "in a departure from previous institutional practice, all staff at every level were encouraged to speak to the media." See Young (September 2001): 802.

<sup>460</sup> Interview with the UNHCR head of unit, Geneva, 12 May 2004.

<sup>461</sup> Ibid.

were bringing considerable pressure upon UNHCR and its headquarters to come up with an immediate solution and act.<sup>462</sup> Due to Ogata's leadership and its openness for greater innovation, the agency was able to implement a more assertive media policy. Because of this new media policy, UNHCR underwent a profound change from a quiet and little known legal and refugee protection organization in the 1970s and the 1980s into an agency with a high international profile that suddenly found itself at the center of all major humanitarian emergencies in the 1990s.

#### *2.7.9 Conclusion on the impact of Ogata's transformational leadership on humanitarian transformation in the Office*

Ogata's transformational leadership was driven by her considerable authority, vision, charisma, empathy, flexibility, pragmatism and innovation. Ogata's leadership qualities made a decisive difference in the kind of change that was eventually implemented. Transformational leadership played an important role in ensuring that the ideas that stood behind the Humanitarian Agenda were fully put into practice. Subsequently, the Office was directed towards a profound change in the form of humanitarian transformation.

#### *2.8 Impact of the professional culture on UNHCR's humanitarian transformation*

The UNHCR professional culture, with its relatively low rigidity, had a significant impact on change within the organization. The nature of professional culture not only facilitated the radical process of change in UNHCR but also contributed greatly to its eventual transformational outcome.

##### *2.8.1 Impact of the Office operationality on humanitarian transformation*

The operational feature (operationality) of the professional culture links the Office with its external political developments. In other words, because of the UNHCR's high degree of operationality, any external changes in the international environment inevitably influenced the work of the Office. UNHCR was thus indispensably linked with a new geopolitical reality of the 1990s because of its operational permeability. The Office was influenced by its external forces, including the donor states, and by the changing concept of sovereignty that provided a favorable climate for the implementation of the ideas behind the Humanitarian Agenda.

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<sup>462</sup> *Working in a War Zone* (1 April 1994):43.

Chimni provided a concrete example of the importance of the Office's operational permeability for UNHCR transformation when he analyzed UNHCR research and policy functions in the first half of the 1990s. Chimni discovered that the organization's new policy and research agenda placed a strong emphasis on the operational side of UNHCR and its comparative advantage in emergencies and relief operations. He then determined that the organization's preference for humanitarian activities over legal protection resulted from the fact that UNHCR was "inextricably linked to the new realities (of) the post-Cold War era, (which) control and define the agenda of (UNHCR) research and policy."<sup>463</sup> It was thus the specific feature of the professional culture, its operability, which enabled the external forces in support of the Office new Humanitarian Agenda, to influence the UNHCR in a much more profound way than it could have otherwise. Consequently, the Office operational permeability made it easier for the organization to implement the contents of Humanitarian Agenda and proceed faster with its humanitarian transformation.

#### *2.8.2 Impact of the Office results-oriented style of work on humanitarian transformation*

Why was the UNHCR ready to embark so promptly on new tasks that went beyond its traditional mandate? One Office official was of the opinion that there seemed to be a hidden energy in the Office that was suddenly released.<sup>464</sup> This study sees this "hidden energy" as embedded within specific aspects of the organization's culture and, more precisely, in the agency's result-oriented style of work. The organization's energy was rapidly unleashed simply because the nature of the humanitarian transformation fit neatly the underlying philosophy of the Office operational work. The Humanitarian Agenda of the 1990s required a specific operational attitude. Fortunately, UNHCR could easily offer a focus on tangible results and practical solutions, despite its previous legal underpinnings.

With its dominant can-do philosophy, the Office felt comfortable with the engagement in expanded humanitarian work that demanded a "go-getter" attitude. The Office's style of work that focused on bringing tangible results was particularly necessary for effective delivery functions in the new humanitarian emergencies of the 1990s (the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda etc).<sup>465</sup> UNHCR did not shy away from these challenges. In fact, the organization, due to its operational style of work, saw a unique opportunity for greater humanitarian involvement. This was because the UNCHR officials could determine the

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<sup>463</sup> B.S. Chimni, The Geopolitics of Refugee Studies: A View from the South, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol.11, no.4 (1998): 367.

<sup>464</sup> Interview with a former UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 13 April 2004.

<sup>465</sup> *Working in a War Zone* (1 April 1994):18.

outcomes of its involvement in emergency operations easily, whereas its traditional refugee protection work depended largely on government involvement. Governments were responsible for the implementation of the 1951 refugee convention. While doing its refugee protection work, the Office could only remind the states about their legal obligations to ensure protection for those who fled across the borders but had no power to enforce anything whatsoever. For that very reason, the results of the protection work essentially depended on the will of the governments. The results were often intangible and hidden in complex bureaucratic and judicial procedures.<sup>466</sup> Frequently, it took a long time to see the protection work accomplished or its results known. In contrast, involvement in humanitarian operations supplied the Office with more control over its activities and their eventual outcomes. Moreover, operational involvement allowed the staff to see the results of their humanitarian work immediately. The immediacy of the impact of the Office's actions on the ground corresponded well with the Office's desire to bring practical solutions to people who were displaced within their own countries, exiled populations who have just returned to their homes or, to the communities who were at risk of being uprooted.<sup>467</sup>

Consequently, the Office's result-oriented style of work made it much easier for the organization to become involved in the operational activities of saving people's lives because the officials could feel that they exercised control over their own activities and the impact of their work was immediately visible.<sup>468</sup> Because the contents of the Humanitarian Agenda turned out to be extremely useful for delivery of concrete results and practical solutions, the Office extremely willing to implement it.

### *2.8.3 Impact of the Office's emergency tradition on humanitarian transformation*

The ideas of the Humanitarian Agenda regarded the agency's involvement in relief emergencies and corresponded well with UNHCR's propensity to operate on emergency basis. Accordingly, the Office's emergency orientation explains the view of the humanitarian transformation as a fairly natural transition in the agency.<sup>469</sup>

The existence of the emergency bias in the Office required a degree of flexibility from the staff in order to adapt to the changing conditions on the ground. Such flexibility and

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<sup>466</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior protection officer, Geneva, 11 May 2004.

<sup>467</sup> *The State of The World's Refugees* (1995): 21, Chapter 1.

<sup>468</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior protection officer, Geneva, 11 May 2004.

<sup>469</sup> Interview with a former UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 13 April 2004.



adaptability are characteristic elements of the emergency style of work present in the Office. Indeed, the staff was able to adapt to the new circumstances related to the humanitarian crises quickly. In addition, the fact that the new humanitarian operations were more about the internally displaced persons (IDPs) and not refugees made no difference to the people who were on the frontline helping others to survive. For them, helping refugees and aiding IDPs meant exactly the same thing; in both situations they were engaged in emergencies.<sup>470</sup> Consequently, if the new emergencies were IDP emergencies rather than refugee emergencies most of the UNHCR officials had no problem doing the 'new' kind of work.<sup>471</sup>

#### *2.8.4 Impact of the UNHCR culture of compassion on humanitarian transformation*

The sense of empathy within the Office is based on a belief that the staff cannot prioritize human suffering, which has a universal dimension. This belief means that the staff is inclined to assist people in need regardless of their legal status or geographical location. In the view of one of the senior officials, UNHCR and its staff could not say to someone who was dying of hunger that they were not able to help him because he could not be categorized as a refugee.<sup>472</sup> Furthermore, the plight of people who were displaced within their own countries was often seen as being as bad as or even worse than that of refugees.<sup>473</sup>

It was against the existing feeling of compassion to differentiate between various legal categories of victims or between the organization's mandated and non-mandated geographical areas of involvement. Thus, a prevailing attitude in UNHCR was that its staff was responsible for taking care of suffering people regardless of whether they crossed international borders, whether they were on the move within their own countries or whether they were still in their homes. These people were all victims who needed assistance. If this assistance meant the provision of material and physical help more than legal protection, the UNHCR staff was more than ready to provide it. The immense desire to help people was present both in the headquarters and in the field.<sup>474</sup> This desire was a powerful force that was pushing the Office through the path of humanitarian transformation towards the organization's greater involvement in the relief efforts. Consequently, a push toward full and rapid implementation of the Humanitarian Agenda was based on a strong sense of

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<sup>470</sup> Ibid.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid.

<sup>472</sup> Interview with Douglas Stafford (November 1990):42.

<sup>473</sup> *The State of The World's Refugees* (1995): 6.

<sup>474</sup> Interview with a NGO project manager, Geneva, 20 April 2004.

moral obligation to meet the needs of a suffering population. Indeed, according to Roberts, a moral drive to meet the needs of victims constituted “the real and strong pressure to take action to assist potential refugees before they leave their country of origin.”<sup>475</sup> This kind of morality overshadowed legal considerations that traditionally limited UNHCR involvement and, at the same time, put a powerful pressure on the Office to act.

As a result, UNHCR humanitarian transformation was strongly driven by a normative force of the Office professional culture, which called for the assistance to all victims regardless of their location (within or outside their home country borders) or legal categorization. The UNHCR interest in expansion did not come, however, from General Assembly resolutions or decisions by the ExCom as one could expect. This expansion, according to Goodwin Gill, came from UNHCR and its own practice in Rwanda, Zaire, Northern Iraq, Somalia and former Yugoslavia.<sup>476</sup>

In all of these emergencies, the organization’s practice was driven by the staff’s compassion for all victims and desire to alleviate human suffering and assist people using material aid rather than just legal protection. Because neither suffering nor a want for basic needs were limited to refugees, but existed among war-affected populations at large, the organization ultimately directed itself to identify new victims and expanded its list of persons of concern. The Office eagerly embraced the broader categories of people because their humanitarian needs were immediate and basic. Thus, their needs were compatible with the organization’s propensities toward humanitarian emergencies and delivering material relief rather than merely legal assistance.

The UNHCR’s humanitarian transformation was also determined by the UNHCR staff’s strong belief that the suffering people would be left to fend for themselves if the organization did not step in. “We must go because we have to be there. If we do not go there is nobody else capable of doing it” was the commonly expressed opinion.<sup>477</sup> This concern, a reflection of the empathy of the Office staff for victims placed considerable pressure on the organization to become more hands-on, less cautious, and ready to carry out emergency operations to save people’s lives regardless of various political and legal conditions.

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<sup>475</sup> Adam Roberts, More Refugees, Less Asylum: A Regime in Transformation, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol.11, no.2 (1998): 382.

<sup>476</sup> Goodwin-Gill (1996): 15.

<sup>477</sup> Interview with the UNHCR head of unit, Geneva, 9 June 2004.

The result of a specific empathetic culture present in the Office is illustrated by UNHCR's own determination to continue involvement in the former Yugoslavia despite the deteriorating security situation. This determination was driven by the staff's commitment to help alleviate people's suffering regardless of the dangerous conditions.<sup>478</sup> The prevailing belief was that the refugee agency had no option but to be active in the country of origin<sup>479</sup> and that the UNHCR staff members, who went to the former Yugoslavia, did all they humanly could to save lives.<sup>480</sup> Thus, non-involvement of UNHCR in the former Yugoslavia had never been seriously contemplated.<sup>481</sup> In fact, in the former Yugoslavia, the staff's sense of moral obligation to help the victims was translated into the organization's operational objectives "defined either in broader terms of saving lives by maximizing the supply of relief (...), or in the narrow terms of the monthly logistics plan."<sup>482</sup> In other words, the organization's goals in the former Yugoslavia were the reflection of a combination of charity-driven culture and the Office emergency-bias in delivery of relief services. Humanitarian compassion also led the organization to expand its focus, and embrace human rights, particularly in its operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which were clearly outside the organization's core mandate.

The reasons for the staff's commitment to the risky operations in the former Yugoslavia could be associated equally with their compassion to help victims as well as their adventurism. The evaluation of the UNHCR involvement in the region quoted the following motivations behind the staff's decisions to go in: "the excitement of being involved in a thrilling operation"<sup>483</sup> and "learning about yourself as you are pushed to your personal limits."<sup>484</sup> This sort of "cowboyism" generated a genuine enthusiasm among the Office staff members for humanitarian operations. "UNHCR was part of the game and we were part of the action," recalled one of the senior officials with satisfaction.<sup>485</sup> The staff's curiosity and pioneer spirit drove UNHCR to establish its presence in the field<sup>486</sup> and placed the Office in a position to endorse and push forward the Humanitarian Agenda that took the organization beyond a traditional field of responsibilities.

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<sup>478</sup> *Working in a War Zone* (1 April 1994):6.

<sup>479</sup> Nicholas Morris, Protection Dilemmas and UNHCR's Response: A Personal View from Within UNHCR, *International Journal of Refugee Law*, vol.9, no.3 (1997): 496.

<sup>480</sup> *Working in a War Zone* (1 April 1994):38.

<sup>481</sup> Morris (1997): 496.

<sup>482</sup> *Working in a War Zone* (1 April 1994):22.

<sup>483</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>484</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>485</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior advisor, Geneva, 4 May 2004.

<sup>486</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior external affairs officer, Geneva, 1 June 2004.

A strong degree of empathy endorsed a specific action-oriented attitude and led the UNHCR staff to acknowledge that “if you sit and wait until something happens you are too late, (but) there are number of things you can do before the crisis ensues.”<sup>487</sup> As a result, at the beginning of the 1990s, prevention became a prominent concept in the Office activities. Prevention implied that the Office should act before a massive human displacement or refugee outflow take place. The organization realized that it could not wait for people to cross the border; the staff should get involved in the countries of origin before people were displaced. The shift towards an emphasis on prevention of displacement not only encouraged UNHCR to remain engaged in the former Yugoslavia but also drove the organization to provide relief on a large scale.<sup>488</sup> In general, humanitarian transformation required precisely the adaptability and commitment, which UNHCR staff members were ready to make and the kind of compassion for all victims of conflict that was present in the Office.

#### *2.8.5 Fear of criticism, push to act and humanitarian transformation*

An essential part of the work culture of all UN organizations is a considerable fear of criticism. UNHCR is no exception; like every international public administration it is concerned about being criticized by governmental and non-governmental actors. However, if a fear of being criticized makes the administrations of other UN organizations (e.g. the Office of the ILO) more cautious, risk averse and generally reserved in taking more independent initiatives and risks, UNHCR serves as an interesting counter-example.

As noticed by one official, if the Office staff fails to act or acts too late, the organization will be attacked by the press and will eventually lose its face.<sup>489</sup> Another professional followed a similar line of argumentation with the rhetorical question:

Can you imagine what would happen if UNHCR says that there is a refugee influx into Chad but we are not going to deal with it because it is not on our list of priorities? We would be dead as an organization. We cannot say like this.<sup>490</sup>

The fear of being criticized, far from making the organization inert and afraid of taking action, pushes the Office to act. In the given circumstances, inaction is really the least desirable option for the Office.

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<sup>487</sup> Phone interview with the UNHCR senior policy officer, 28 May 2004.

<sup>488</sup> *Working in a War Zone*, (1 April 1994):3.

<sup>489</sup> Interview with the UNHCR head of unit, Geneva, 9 June 2004.

<sup>490</sup> Interview with the UNHCR director of bureau, Geneva, 29 June 2004.

The concern about possible criticism for inaction served as additional incentive for the Office to be engaged in the emergency crises of the 1990s. Although such engagement presented the Office with possible risks, it was even more risky to remain non-involved and thus expose itself to criticism.<sup>491</sup> UNHCR also quickly learned this lesson from its first humanitarian involvement in Iraq in 1991. The organization, despite its recognized successes and generally positive outcomes,<sup>492</sup> was criticized for a slow response to help the Kurdish population<sup>493</sup>. As a consequence, the next operational involvement in the former Yugoslavia was swift. Generally, the fear of criticism played an important role in encouraging, if not compelling, the Office to carry out an expanded humanitarian role that consequently transformed the organization.

#### *2.8.6 Impact of the Office overconfidence in its hands-on capabilities on humanitarian transformation*

There is a strong belief among the staff members in their certain superiority over other agencies as far as effective responses to emergencies are concerned. The dominant discourse within the Office regards their constant position in the forefront of UN organizations. The staff sees itself as being a *lead* and *sole* agency for carrying out various humanitarian tasks.<sup>494</sup> As summarized by the UNHCR staff member, “Obviously we feel that we are the best to address emergency situations and that many of the others are less able.”<sup>495</sup>

This view of indispensability in helping people has led the UNHCR staff to exaggerate their capabilities and, as a result, to seize many opportunities and embark on tasks that could have been performed by other organizations. This over-confident hands-on approach was, for example, reflected in a general reluctance of the UNHCR staff to share operational responsibilities with others in the former Yugoslavia. According to the report that evaluated UNHCR activities in the region:

UNHCR personnel questioned the benefits that could be gained by devolving an ongoing activity to another organization, pointing to the time and energy which had to be invested in the handover process as well as the operational difficulties which arose as the other agency came up to speed.<sup>496</sup>

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<sup>491</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior advisor, Geneva, 4 May 2004.

<sup>492</sup> The report on UNHCR engagement in Iraq recognized, for example, that “by demonstrating its expertise in launching such a large-scale relief programme, the organization has gained a greatly enhanced public reputation and boosted its credibility with donor states. Staff members have also developed a new degree of pride and self-confidence in UNHCR’s operational abilities.” See *Working in a War Zone* (1 April 1994):4.

<sup>493</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior advisor, Geneva, 4 May 2004.

<sup>494</sup> *Working in a War Zone* (1 April 1994): 28.

<sup>495</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior external affairs officer, Geneva, 1 June 2004.

<sup>496</sup> *Working in a War Zone* (1 April 1994): 27.

Another internal UNHCR evaluation report acknowledged that difficulties in the inter-agency cooperation were found in the UNHCR “too self-centered” working style.<sup>497</sup> This over-confidence is particularly striking in the light of the conclusion included in the same report. The report observed that UNHCR’s relief efforts became overstretched because the organization was not able to realize the potential contributions of other humanitarian organizations.<sup>498</sup> The staff’s over-confidence, or even arrogance, seemed to contribute significantly to the pace and scope of the humanitarian transformation of the organization.

#### *2.8.7 Impact of the Office pragmatism and a lack of dogmatism on humanitarian transformation*

Because of its operational and emergency-oriented nature, the Office is a pragmatic organization. It chooses to assist victims based on practical rather than legal considerations. In practice, pragmatism of the Office means that the organization rejects a legal dogmatism that would set specific limits on the extent of its relief engagements. Additionally, the Office no longer follows its traditional principle that assistance should be delivered only if it is safe and when the needs of the refugees can be evaluated and the organization’s efforts effectively monitored.<sup>499</sup>

Because of its pragmatism in helping the victims of conflict the Office carried the activities in the 1990s, which actually fitted the mandate of ICRC and went beyond UNHCR traditional responsibilities. Sometimes, UNHCR maintained its presence, like in Sarajevo in 1993, even when ICRC decided to leave because of the security concerns. Generally, the view was that in the former Yugoslavia, UNHCR carried out its activities no matter how difficult or dangerous the situation.<sup>500</sup> In other words, the Office’s pragmatism and its practical humanitarian approach led the organization to engage in new emergencies and remain in the field despite serious security considerations.

The Office’s pragmatism was based on the assessment of desirable humanitarian objectives can be achieved or not.<sup>501</sup> Naturally, the prime objective of the Office was to be present on the ground, otherwise no single humanitarian objectives connected with assisting the

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<sup>497</sup> Review of UNHCR’s Phase-Out Strategies: Case Studies in Selected Countries of Origin, UNHCR Evaluation Reports, (1 February 1997):11.

<sup>498</sup> *Working in a War Zone* (1 April 1994): 26.

<sup>499</sup> Young (September 2001): 790.

<sup>500</sup> *Ibid.*, 790.

<sup>501</sup> Loescher in Zolberg and Benda (2001): 174.

victims in their own countries could be attained. In its involvement in the former Yugoslavia, for example, the Office

(...) believed that dogmatic insistence on other principles, such as the right to free and safe passage, non-inspection of humanitarian convoys, and monitoring, would have brought the operation to a grinding halt.<sup>502</sup>

Because of highly pragmatic and non-dogmatic approach the Office engaged in new types of humanitarian crises and became the key actor in implementing the global humanitarian agenda in the first half of the 1990s. It was also noted that “as UNHCR’s humanitarianism has extended, its ‘pragmatism’ has deepened.”<sup>503</sup> Once pragmatism deepened, the Office became increasingly non-doctrinal in its humanitarian expansionism.<sup>504</sup> The organization was all the more willing to enlarge the scope of its humanitarian activities, which generated an even stronger force for humanitarian change in UNHCR traditional refugee mandate.

#### *2.8.8 Conclusion of the impact of professional culture on the UNHCR humanitarian change*

The professional culture and its particular elements played an important role in the process of transformation discussed above, which eventually changed the Office from a refugee-based agency into a humanitarian organization. Prevailing organizational features played a significant role in the implementation of the Humanitarian Agenda. The organization’s qualities included its operability, results-oriented and emergency style of work, and its hands-on, pragmatic approach. These features were driven by the qualities of the Office’s staff. The staff possessed empathy for victims and compassion combined with a specific organizational nonchalance and overconfidence in the abilities to help. More specifically, the above-mentioned organizational features encouraged the agency to expand its involvement and remain engaged in larger humanitarian operations that went beyond a refugee-specific concerns. The professional culture with its operational elements fit the requirements placed on the organization by the humanitarian crises. Hence, the professional culture in UNHCR could reinforce the process of change in the Office, increasing its scope and accelerating its pace.

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<sup>502</sup> Young (September 2001): 790-791.

<sup>503</sup> Michael Barnett, Humanitarianism with a Sovereign Face: UNHCR in the Global Undertow, *International Migration Review*, vol.35, no.1 (Spring 2001): 246.

<sup>504</sup> Interview with a former UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 6 April 2004.

## *2.9 Conclusion of the chapter*

The study of the change labeled as the Humanitarian Agenda showed that both the process and outcome of change were radical and led to the transformation of UNHCR in the first half of the 1990s. This chapter showed that a specific transformational style of leadership of the High Commissioner, Sadako Ogata, and the agile elements of the Office professional culture were instrumental in turning UNHCR into less refugee-specific and more humanitarian agency.

Ogata's leadership based on charisma, vision, authority and a deep concern for victims combined with the operational, action-oriented, results-driven and flexible professional culture constituted powerful and determinative force that moved the organization away from its mandated activities towards greater humanitarian involvement. This chapter illustrated how exactly a specific style of leadership and a particular type of professional culture mattered for the radical process of change and for its transformational outcome that took place in UNHCR at the beginning of the 1990s.

Chapter 5 reinforces the above conclusion when it studies UNICEF and WFP, which are classified, similarly to UNHCR, as operational agencies. The chapter demonstrates that transformational change in the refugee agency had not been inevitable and could have been hindered had there been different kinds of leadership and culture.

## **Chapter 3. Secretariat of the World Health Organization: its Professional Culture, Gro Harlem Brundtland's Leadership and Institutional Change**

### *3.1 Introduction*

This chapter concentrates on the Secretariat of the World Health Organization (also referred to as the WHO Secretariat, the WHO headquarters or the WHO administration). The chapter examines the main characteristics of its professional culture, Gro Harlem Brundtland's style of leadership and, finally, changes that were brought about when the Making a Difference initiative was introduced in 1998. This chapter shows that a less rigid



professional culture along with Brundtland's relatively strong leadership dynamism (although not fully transformational) determined a radical pace and substantial scope of the process of change and shaped its eventual outcome that was radical but with some important limits. Consequently, the WHO was brought into a global spotlight within a relatively short time but some concrete proposals and goals of Making a Difference initiative were either not implemented or modified (hence semi-transformation).

### *3.2 WHO and its executive leadership*

The WHO was established during the first meeting of the World Health Assembly in June 1948 that brought together fifty-three member states. The WHO has been given a broad mandate according to which the organization's activities must aim at the "attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health."<sup>505</sup> Because of this broad mandate, WHO performs several functions, ranging from setting guidelines, codes, issuing recommendation and regulations, fighting with communicable and non-communicable diseases, providing technical assistance and conducting research focused on health-related topics.<sup>506</sup>

The WHO is an intergovernmental organization where the WHO Executive Board and the WHO Assembly are policy-making arenas for the member states. The WHO has a confederal system of governance that consists of six regional offices headed by the regional directors and the WHO Secretariat with the Director General at its center. The leadership of the WHO Director General has always been important for the organization and its overall performance. It was, indeed, recognized that the position of the WHO executive heads is especially powerful and significant in the WHO.<sup>507</sup> Once, the incumbent DG, Dr. Marcolino Candau, had practically selected his successor despite the fact that the election of executive heads of the UN agencies is one of the most politically sensitive processes that is usually entirely under the control of the (most powerful) member states. Candau

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<sup>505</sup> Article 1, WHO Constitution.

<sup>506</sup> For more information on the tasks performed by WHO see Maciej Bartkowski, World Health Organization, in Ashish K. Vaidya, *Globalization. Encyclopedia of Trade, Labor, and Politics*, ABC CLIO, (Oxford 2006): 696-697.

<sup>507</sup> Harold K. Jacobson, "WHO: Medicine, Regionalism, and Managed Politics", in Robert W. Cox and Harold K. Jacobson, ed., *The Anatomy of Influence. Decision Making in International Organization*, Yale University Press (New Haven 1974): 198-199.

essentially designated Dr. Mahler as his successor by offering the latter the functions of the Director of Project System Analysis and the post of Assistant Director General while lobbying actively the member states to accept his choice.<sup>508</sup> The influence of the WHO DG and its leadership on the organization becomes all the more obvious when the DG is perceived as being ineffective and its leadership generally absent. Such situation was evident in the 1990s when many observers viewed the directorship of Dr. Nakajima as lacking effective leadership. This perception was powerful enough to shaken the organization, decrease donors' interest in its programs and dramatically reduce the status of the WHO in global health.

A relative autonomy and power of the WHO Director General vis-à-vis external actors strengthen the Secretariat and allow for the development and nurturing in the WHO administration of a particular work culture that is shaped by the professional character of the staff members and fairly insulated from the outside environment.

### *3.3 Low rigidity of professional culture in the Secretariat of the WHO*

The professional culture in the WHO Secretariat is characterized by a relatively low rigidity. Technicity, identified as a hegemonic orientation of the WHO Secretariat substantive work, determines its global, outward-oriented outlook, its “deterministic” philosophy of work and the verticality of its programmatic approaches. These factors stipulate a result-driven style of work. The professional culture is predominantly medical, technocratic and disease-oriented. This culture reinforces the focus on short term, visible goals and measurable outcomes that are achieved by applying the newest biomedical technologies. Furthermore, the WHO Secretariat's professional medical culture often succumbs to hubris, generates a can-do attitude and a military-like, target-oriented style of work. It also facilitates experimentation and encourages going beyond established rules in order to achieve specific goals.

#### *3.3.1 The WHO Secretariat and its technical orientation*

The WHO Executive Board has repeatedly stated that the WHO is a “technical health agency.”<sup>509</sup> Despite greatly decentralized structures, which include the Secretariat and six

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<sup>508</sup> Socrates Litsios, The Long and Difficult Road to Alma Ata: A Personal Reflection, *International Journal of Health Services*, vol.32, no.4 (2002). Interview with a former WHO senior administrative professional, Geneva, 2 December 2003 and Interview with a former WHO and ILO senior official, Geneva, 2 December 2003.

<sup>509</sup> Stenson and Sterky (1994):246.

highly autonomous regional offices headed by the elected regional directors, the core of the WHO technical expertise remains firmly in the WHO headquarters. Because the Geneva-based office of the WHO has a much larger body of technical staff than other regions<sup>510</sup>, the member states, the WHO field staff and the WHO regional offices rely heavily on the technical advice and expertise from the WHO Secretariat.

The technicity of the WHO, concentrated in its headquarters, is depicted by the ratio of the general service staff to professional staff in the WHO Secretariat<sup>511</sup>, which is estimated to be 1.07 to 1 respectively. In the ILO, this figure is 1.37 to 1 and in UNHCR 2.4 to 1.<sup>512</sup> The WHO Secretariat has thus the largest number of professional staff in proportion to the general service cadre among the analyzed organizations. The WHO Secretariat's ratio of professionals to general service staff is also higher than in the strongly specialized Food Agriculture Organization, where the ratio is 1.59 general service personnel to 1 professional.<sup>513</sup> The WHO Secretariat also has a very large accumulation of specialists involved in conducting substantive, technical policies directly relevant to the organization's mandate. In the WHO headquarters less than 27% of the professional staff is involved in support services such as personnel, budget and finance. The remaining 73% of the professional staff deal with substantive, technical policy matters<sup>514</sup>. In comparison, the number of the professional staff involved in the substantive policy issues in the ILO is 66%<sup>515</sup> and in UNHCR only 36%<sup>516</sup>. Consequently, the WHO Secretariat is seen as the central repository of highly specialized technical knowledge within the WHO confederal system.

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<sup>510</sup> See Annex 7. Organizational Study on the Interrelationship Between the Central Technical Services of WHO and Programmes of Direct Assistance to Member States. Extract from Official Record of the World Health Organization, No.223, EB55/WP/3-28 January 1975: 92.

<sup>511</sup> For the definition of and the difference between the professional and general service categories see paragraph 1.5.2.

<sup>512</sup> The WHO and the ILO figures come from *Review of Management and Administration in the World Health Organization*, (JIU/REP/2001/5):24, table 5. The UNHCR figure was compiled based on data from *The State of UNHCR's Staff*. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, December 2000.

<sup>513</sup> *Review of Management and Administration in the World Health Organization* (2001/5): table 5, p.8.

<sup>514</sup> See Human Resources: Annual Report. Staffing Profile, WHO Executive Board 113<sup>th</sup> Session, EB113/17, 18 December 2003: 27, Table 12.

<sup>515</sup> Data compiled based on the information about the distribution of the professional staff on contracts without limit of time by sector see: Composition and Structure of the Staff, Program, Financial and Administrative Committee, GB.286/PFA/12, Geneva, March 2003: 15-17, Table IX.

<sup>516</sup> Data compiled based on the number of professionals in the programme, programme support and management and administration services. See UNHCR Annual Programme Budget 2004, Fifty-Four Session, Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, A/AC.96/979, 25 August 2003: 34, Table I.9 and 85, Table III.4.

The technicity of the WHO Secretariat is closely connected with the whole gamut of health technologies, equipment, methods and procedures<sup>517</sup> available at the headquarters that serve the purpose of increasing efficiency and accuracy when dealing with health problems. The existence of technologies and other health-related instruments necessitates knowledge of how and when to use them. This explains the presence in the WHO Secretariat of a wide spectrum of professions with background in medicine, physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics, engineering and economics.<sup>518</sup> Relying on one WHO study, the technicity of the WHO secretariat is reflected in the abundance of technical knowledge in the organization and can be described as the:

concentration at headquarters of a core of scientists with adequate knowledge and experience to synthesize and interpret correctly scientific information emanating from a large variety of research activities throughout the world in biology, medicine and public health practice, and to identify trends and advise on appropriate action that should follow the results of research in these areas.<sup>519</sup>

Because of the highly specialized cadre of scientists working in the WHO administration there is a strong scientific ethos present.<sup>520</sup> The scientists who work in the WHO Secretariat are usually recruited at the peak of their professional career and are more often than not internationally recognized experts in specific areas of health.<sup>521</sup> The venerated status of the WHO professionals determines, in turn, the agency's reputation as a highly technical agency.<sup>522</sup> Additionally, the post of the Director General reinforces the technicity of the WHO Secretariat. The WHO is the only UN specialized agency whose constitution explicitly states that the Director General as the executive head of the WHO is not only the chief administrative officer but also the *chief technical officer* of the agency.<sup>523</sup> As a result, all Directors General were also technicians who held medical degrees.

The high level of technicity concentrated within the WHO Secretariat leads to a global action-oriented outlook rather than a more country-specific focus. In other words, the WHO headquarters' technical interest is placed on the global level rather than the regional or country levels. This interest is, in practice, illustrated in the WHO Secretariat's desire to

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<sup>517</sup> Joshua Cohen, "Health Policy, Management, and Economics" in Thomas A. Lambo and Stacey B. Day, *Issues in Contemporary International Health*, Plenum Medical Book (London 1990):21.

<sup>518</sup> Martin Kaplan, Science's Role in the World Health Organization, *Science*, vol.180 (8 June 1973): 1028.

<sup>519</sup> Annex 7. Organizational Study on the Interrelationship Between the Central Technical Services of WHO and Programmes of Direct Assistance to Member States (28 January 1975): 78.

<sup>520</sup> *Tomorrow's Global Health Organization: Ideas and Options*, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 1998: 77.

<sup>521</sup> In fact, it is even claimed that the organization has "the best brains in the world." See G. J. V. Nossal, WHO and Health Research- Some Personal Reflections, *World Health Forum*, vol.19, (1998): 376.

<sup>522</sup> Gill Walt, *Health Policy: An Introduction to Process and Power*, Witwatersrand University Press, (London 1994):142.

<sup>523</sup> See, the WHO constitution, article 31.

design global programs as well as in the WHO administration's inclination to manage their implementation directly from the headquarters. While referring to the Secretariat's obvious domination in the global programs, the UN Joint Inspection Unit was of the opinion that the implementation of the global programs should be left to the WHO regional and country offices.<sup>524</sup>

In addition to its global focus, the highly technical professional culture at the WHO headquarters has a strong propensity to promote vertical programs. The vertical focus of the WHO Secretariat is reflected in the single purpose and self-contained programs in which control is centralized in the hands of the Secretariat's experts. Additionally, in vertical programs, support mechanisms are designed for the implementation of specific tasks rather than for building or strengthening infrastructure to sustain the programs' outcomes and objectives. The strategies are short-term, targets are quantifiable, inputs and outputs are measurable and solutions are based on available technology.

The technicity of the WHO headquarters stipulates a much more deterministic philosophy of work than in other non-technical environments. According to that philosophy, only the activities with clear, feasible goals, including measurable progress and quantifiable results, are pursued and implemented. Consequently, a deterministic approach supports the core features of the vertical programs.

As a result of the headquarters' global outlook, vertical approach and deterministic philosophy of work, the WHO Secretariat tends to favor short-term, highly visible, problem-specific, result-oriented and technology-driven global campaigns. Such campaigns generally concentrate on finding narrow technical or scientific solutions to specific health problems. The WHO Secretariat seems to be relatively less interested in non-technocratic programs, which tend to be long-term and multi-purposeful. The WHO Secretariat tends to avoid programs that include qualitative goals or hard-to-measure progress and evaluation indicators. Consequently, the technocratic professional culture in the WHO Secretariat has difficulties in relating its work to more horizontal approaches. These horizontal approaches consider building and strengthening health system infrastructure through the application of socio-cultural, institutional, or managerial instruments rather than the use of disease-centered, vertical approaches. Next to purely medical problems, the horizontal approach

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<sup>524</sup> Eric-Irene A. Daes and Adib Daudy, *Decentralization of the Organizations within the United Nations System. Part III: the World Health Organization*, Joint Inspection Unit, (Geneva 1993):33.

also identifies economic, social or cultural factors that often underline the emergence and persistence of general and specific health problems.

The Secretariat's technical propensity to opt for vertical rather than horizontal approaches is perpetually reinforced by the administration's global focus and a considerable degree of scientific authority bestowed upon the WHO professionals and the WHO vertical programs. The authority of vertical approaches comes from their "perceived efficacy and short-term measurable benefits,"<sup>525</sup> which, in turn, appeal to the organizational mindset of the highly technical WHO staff. As a result, it is difficult to change such types of technocratic interventions from their present verticality into more horizontal-based programs. Subsequently, the Secretariat remains involved in the implementation of global programs that take the organization's financial and human resources away from the activities that could be designed to strengthen health service infrastructure on a country level.

### *3.3.2 Medical dominance of the WHO Secretariat's professional culture*

The WHO was not established as a World Medical Organization, but often behaved as if it had been. Indeed, it is frequently recognized that the WHO is predominantly a medical organization despite the phrase "health" in its name.<sup>526</sup> The 1991 Danida report concluded that medical experts, rather than a specialist with an institutional orientation, dominated the WHO technical assistance. Its expertise in providing medical and technical assistance clearly dominated over health management and capacity building competence.<sup>527</sup> The WHO's main research focus, which is indicative of the Secretariat's main fields of interest, has also been seen as predominantly targeting biomedical aspects of health.<sup>528</sup> The WHO Secretariat's research programs, such as TDR<sup>529</sup> and HRP,<sup>530</sup> have been seen as having been driven by biomedical and clinical approaches that provide largely medical solutions.<sup>531</sup>

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<sup>525</sup> Meri Koivusalo and Eeva Ollila, *International Organizations and Health Policies*, Stakes/Hedec, (Helsinki 1996): 120.

<sup>526</sup> Interview with the WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 26 March 2004. Interview with the WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 5 April 2004. See also Koivusalo and Ollila (1996): 127 and Meri Koivusalo and Eeva Ollila, *Making a Healthy World. Agencies, Actors and Policies in International Health*, Zed Books Ltd (London 1997):125.

<sup>527</sup> Effectiveness of Multilateral Agencies at Country Level. WHO in Kenya, Nepal, Sudan and Thailand, Danida. 1991: ii, iii and iv.

<sup>528</sup> Koivusalo and Ollila (1996):22.

<sup>529</sup> WHO Special Program for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases.

<sup>530</sup> WHO/UNDP/UNFPA Special Program of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction.

<sup>531</sup> Koivusalo and Ollila (1997):16.

The medical focus of the WHO Secretariat is strongly rooted in its technical staff, whose dominant training is in medicine. Because of their common clinical training to become physicians, the WHO professionals constitute a remarkably homogenous, medically-oriented work force.<sup>532</sup> Despite the fact that many of the WHO staff have experience in public health, their medical background usually includes seven years of basic training and at least few additional years of medical practice and further medical specialization. This type of academic and practical training remains influential in their professional work for the WHO.<sup>533</sup> A high administrative status that is bestowed on the medical specialists in the WHO administration reinforces the dominance of the medical profession in the WHO Secretariat. As stated in the report prepared by the UN Joint Inspection Unit, the WHO Secretariat “gives pride of place and status to medical doctors, who are rarely recruited below P-5 level in the technical programs.”<sup>534</sup> The interviewees confirmed this observation. It was, for example, observed that specialists with medical qualifications are recruited at minimum P4 or P5 levels<sup>535</sup> and there are usually no medical doctors at the P3 not to mention the P2 or P1 levels.<sup>536</sup> Senior medical doctors could even be appointed directly into the directorial positions of D1 or D2.<sup>537</sup>

In the Secretariat, professional staff members with other specialties, such as engineering, economics, statistics or public health administration, are recruited at lower positions of P2 and P3 and, as observed by the JIU report, are “relatively few and generally marginalized.”<sup>538</sup> According to Foster, who studied the workings of the WHO, disciplines other than medicine are rarely appreciated in the Secretariat.<sup>539</sup> Indeed, one former WHO senior non-medical professionals recalled:

We believed that the WHO was medical organization run by doctors and then doctors were higher up than us poor administrators. We were to do as ordered or as told to do and we knew we were not at the same level.<sup>540</sup>

In WHO, we were taught to think that way: we support technical (medical) people.<sup>541</sup>

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<sup>532</sup> John W. Peabody, An Organizational Analysis of the World Health Organization: Narrowing the Gap Between Promise and Performance, *Social Science and Medicine*, vol.40, no. 6 (1995): 734.

<sup>533</sup> Interview with the WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 21 April 2004.

<sup>534</sup> Daes and Daudy (1993):41.

<sup>535</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior administrative official, Geneva, 4 February 2004.

<sup>536</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior legal official, Geneva, 27 January 2004 and Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 19 February 2004.

<sup>537</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 19 February 2004.

<sup>538</sup> Daes and Daudy (Geneva 1993):41.

<sup>539</sup> George M. Foster, World Health Organization Behavioral science Research: Problems and Prospects, *Social Science and Medicine*, vol.24, no.9 (1987):710.

In the WHO Secretariat, as observed by Foster, “few of the really powerful positions are filled by non-medical personnel.”<sup>542</sup> In fact, the members of staff with MD degrees (Doctor of Medicine) occupy around 90% of all directorial (D1 and D2) positions in the Secretariat.<sup>543</sup> According to Holleran Constance, a Senior Fellow at the School of Nursing in the University of Pennsylvania, “until quite recently, almost every position at WHO required an MD degree (and thus), blocked many areas of needed expertise including economics, informatics and nursing.”<sup>544</sup>

A consequence of a strong position of the medical profession in the Secretariat is its dominance within the internal organizational structures and decision-making processes. This dominance is sometimes implicit like in the following example of Milton Siegel, now the former WHO Assistant Director General in charge of administration and finance. Referring to his appointment, Siegel noted that Dr. Stampar, the chairman of the Interim Commission, was very reluctant to appoint a non-physician to the WHO at a salary that, in his view, was somehow excessive. According to Siegel, Dr. Stampar could not understand why someone who was not a physician would be offered such level of salary in the WHO administration.<sup>545</sup> Other examples show that the medical profession in the Secretariat can leave an even more visible imprint of its dominance and institutional power. One interviewee with more than thirty years of experience in the WHO observed that he did not know of any medical officer from the WHO Secretariat that had been fired while he knew many non-medical staff members who had been asked to leave the organization.<sup>546</sup> He went on to explain:

If a country takes a dislike of a social scientist, who is working in a program in a given region that social scientist is finished. There is no other place for him. Generally, there are not so many places that social scientists could work. The same thing (country’s criticism –MB) happens to medical officers and they do not lose their jobs in that way. I know instances of medical officers who have challenged and the countries dished them out but they were not fired. They are moved to some other places.<sup>547</sup>

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<sup>540</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior administrative official, Geneva, 4 February 2004

<sup>541</sup> Interview with a former ILO and WHO senior human resources official, Geneva, 23 February 2004.

<sup>542</sup> Foster (1987):711.

<sup>543</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 8 April 2004.

<sup>544</sup> Constance Holleran, New Leader from Norway for the World Health Organization, *Health Policy*, vol.30, no.2 (1998): 113.

<sup>545</sup> Oral History Program of the WHO, WHO Radio Studio, Geneva, 15 November 1982.

<sup>546</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 19 February 2004.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid.



According to another social science researcher, the professional inequality between the medical personnel and other non-medical specialists has been quite evident in the Secretariat's field teams, particularly those staffed by the medical specialists and behaviorists. The role of the latter, as noted by the researcher, was often reduced to carrying out the instructions of their medical teammates.<sup>548</sup> This situation is reminiscent of the words of *Medical Nemesis*, which observed in a general reference about medical profession that medical doctors are "thought to lord over health care and reduce their assistants to ancillary roles."<sup>549</sup>

The official presence of the WHO in a country has to be negotiated with the Ministries of Health (MoH).<sup>550</sup> For this reason, the WHO Secretariat has traditionally maintained very close relations with the government and with the MoH in particular. The close contact of the WHO Secretariat with the MoH tends to foster the importance of the medical officers and leads to even greater suppression of the voices of the non-medical officials in the WHO administration. There is an implicit view that non-medical specialists are not in a position to deliver a very credible health advice to a minister of health (who is a physician himself).<sup>551</sup> In fact, the health ministries themselves are also known as medically oriented "ministries of disease."<sup>552</sup>

Consequently, in the majority of cases, WHO country representatives, who are often physically situated in the building of the MoH, must have medical degrees.<sup>553</sup> Often, the WHO Secretariat employs medical staff from the MoH to help execute programs,<sup>554</sup> which can explain why the WHO administration is often viewed as being "captured" by the MoH.<sup>555</sup> Some even claimed that the WHO became, in fact, the World Health Ministries Organization instead of the World Health Organization.<sup>556</sup> The intimate relations between the WHO administration and the MoH based on a common belief about what medical

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<sup>548</sup> George M. Foster, World Health Organization Behavioral Science Research: Problems and Prospects, *Social Science and Medicine*, vol.24, no.9 (1987):712.

<sup>549</sup> Ivan Illich, *Medical Nemesis. The Expropriation of Health*, Marion Boyars, (London 1975):76.

<sup>550</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 19 February 2004.

<sup>551</sup> Interview with the WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 26 March 2004.

<sup>552</sup> *Sector Policies. Health*, Danida, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (January 1995):11.

<sup>553</sup> Phone interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 30 January 2004. See also A. Lucas, S. Mogedal, G. Walt, S. Hodne Steen, S.E. Kruse, K. Lee, L. Hawken, *Cooperation for Health Development. The World Health Organisation's Support to Programmes at Country Level*. Norway Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (Oslo 1997):24 (Selection and Recruitment of WRs).

<sup>554</sup> Effectiveness of Multilateral Agencies (1991): 36, see footnote 2.

<sup>555</sup> Lucas eds., (1997):21.

<sup>556</sup> Koivusalo and Ollila (1997):21

science and good health are<sup>557</sup> tend to reinforce the medical rule in both institutions and jeopardize those remaining non-medical voices that somehow survived in the higher levels of the WHO Secretariat's hierarchy.

When the Director General (DG), Hafdan Mahler, took his post in 1973, he pronounced the end of the rule of "medical mafia." He believed that the Secretariat's projects embedded in medical interventions were often self-glorifying and needed to be changed.<sup>558</sup> At the beginning of his directorship, Mahler came up with the initiative Primary Health Care (PHC), which was an instrument to achieve the vision of Health for All by 2000. This vision was spelled out in the 1978 Alma-Ata Declaration. The PHC, in fact, served as the antistudy of the WHO Secretariat's medical way of thinking. It called for horizontal, integrated and community-based (or bottom-up) approaches designed to strengthen and develop countries' health service infrastructures. From the beginning, the medical entrenchment of the WHO Secretariat hindered the realization of the PHC goals. A former program leader of the PHC, for example, clearly remembered strong pressure to appoint a senior medical officer to head the PHC unit in the WHO Secretariat, which was supposed to change the medical thinking in the administration (sic). Eventually, the division responsible for implementing PHC was given neither sound leadership nor the internal support needed to integrate activities in the WHO Secretariat and the WHO as a whole.<sup>559</sup> Generally, the Mahlerian shift from the medical to the broader concept of health encountered considerable opposition within the WHO itself.<sup>560</sup> Despite considerable efforts to promote the PHC and bring other non-medical disciplines into the Secretariat, the administration's medical core remained hegemonic and the Secretariat has essentially retained its medical technicity.<sup>561</sup> Fiona Godlee, an analyst of the WHO and its leadership who has published articles in *British Medical Journal*, explicitly claimed that a large part of the WHO administration and its programs remained tied to the medical intervention approach<sup>562</sup> and that the WHO Secretariat did not in practice manage to abandon its hold on

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<sup>557</sup> F. M. Mburu, Non-Government Organizations in the Health Field: Collaboration, Integration and Contrasting Aims in Africa, *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 29, no.5 (1989): 593.

<sup>558</sup> See Socrates Litsios, The Long and Difficult Road to Alma Ata: A Personal Reflection, *International Journal of Health Services*, vol.32, no.4 (2002).

<sup>559</sup> Gill Walt, WHO Under Stress: Implications for Health Policy, *Health Policy*, vol.24 (1993):138. The administrative weakness of the group that was made responsible for implementing the 'anti-medical' policies was also confirmed during the interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 19 February 2004.

<sup>560</sup> Stenson and Sterky (1994):251-252.

<sup>561</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 8 April 2004.

<sup>562</sup> Fiona Godlee, WHO's Special Programmes: Undermining From Above, *British Medical Journal*, vol.310 (1995): 180.

the traditional medical model of health.<sup>563</sup> Fiona Godlee asserted that despite multisectoral and horizontal rhetoric, the current professional profile of the WHO staff is far from reflecting the WHO mandated approach to health as a broad social issue. The WHO administration, in her view, has generally failed to recruit more economists, sociologists or anthropologists; these posts in the organization remain by and large occupied by doctors.<sup>564</sup>

Undoubtedly, the medical profession has dominated and shaped the WHO Secretariat and its professional culture. Its position in the administration, although challenged during the Mahlerian period remained strong. This medical presence strengthens the technicity of the WHO Secretariat and the verticality of its programs, promoting biomedical solutions to health problems over horizontal and socio-economic approaches. Various WHO professionals confirm this influence and the subsequent narrow focus on single purpose disease-oriented programs, which the medical profession tends to regard as being technically more sound than integrated and horizontal solutions.<sup>565</sup>

Another consequence of the Secretariat's medical focus on short-term, visible outcomes is that it tends to locate more human and financial resources into countries institutionally better equipped to implement the WHO programs. This programmatic bias is reflected in the misfit between the WHO administration's official guidelines to support the most needed countries and its involvement on the country level that often shows little consideration for the real needs of the countries. The 1997 report on medicinal drugs, immunization and malaria control programs showed that the organization's financial and human resources used to implement these "tracer" programs were largely channeled to countries with the strongest institutional and managerial capacities while the medium-capacity countries received the weakest support.<sup>566</sup> WHO was also found to be very active as an executing agency in some high capacity countries<sup>567</sup> while maintaining the smallest offices in some of the poorest countries.<sup>568</sup> At the same time, the WHO Secretariat has been offering equally high or even greater financial and technical assistance to more and not less

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<sup>563</sup> Fiona Godlee, WHO in Retreat: Is It Losing its Influence? *British Medical Journal*, vol. 309, (3 December 1994): 1494.

<sup>564</sup> Ibid.

<sup>565</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 8 April 2004. Other interviewees were also in the opinion that "the lead programs in the WHO are oriented towards medical solutions of problems"- Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 30 March 2004 and that the "substance of the Secretariat work is towards more medically oriented interventions even though the interest is broader"- Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Rolle, 24 March 2004.

<sup>566</sup> *Cooperation for Health Development. WHO's Support to Programmes at Country Level. Summary Report*, Norway Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (Oslo 1997):11-12.

<sup>567</sup> Ibid., 13 and 15.

<sup>568</sup> Ibid., 7.

institutionally developed countries. Such a paradox exists because the WHO wants to show tangible results and, according to the report, grater probability of a WHO program being successfully implemented is in higher rather than in lower-capacity countries.<sup>569</sup> In other words, the administration's focus on more developed countries (from the group of developing states) is often driven by a bureaucratic desire to see quick results and greater achievements, which can be gained faster and easier in countries with better institutional capacities.

The dominant medical thinking in the WHO Secretariat, whose focus is on quick results and tangible changes, weakens the administration's interest in building certain structures and institutional mechanisms. The WHO senior legal official, who had had the chance to observe the doctors' work over three decades, noted that medical professionals think in terms of money and programs and they have little interest in establishing structures and mechanisms.<sup>570</sup> The general reluctance of the WHO Secretariat to build certain institutional structures and mechanisms is reflected in its doctors' ambivalence towards a possibility of creating international legal mechanisms and international legal structures under article 19 of the WHO constitution.<sup>571</sup> Traditionally, medical officials in the WHO Secretariat have seen efforts to create legal procedures and structures as a distraction from their more practical, short-term and result-oriented activities. Additionally, the WHO is very weak on evaluation mechanisms.<sup>572</sup> As late as the 1990s, it still did not have a system of evaluation and monitoring, which would cover all activities funded from regular and extra-budgetary sources as well as establish common principles and practice.<sup>573</sup> A general disinterest on the part of the WHO Secretariat's professional culture in creating mechanisms and structures is one important reason for this, as indifference seems to hinder designing and setting up effective evaluation mechanisms. A former WHO senior technical manager confirmed the above observation:

The WHO has been the only major UN agency that did not have formalized evaluation procedure (...). It is the result of a lack of a high-level interest in actually doing project evaluations. The [management] has just ignored it.<sup>574</sup>

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<sup>569</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>570</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior legal official, Geneva, 27 January 2004.

<sup>571</sup> Allyn Taylor, Making the World Health Organization Work: A Legal Framework for Universal Access to the Conditions for Health, *American Journal of Law and Medicine*, vol.18 (1992): 301-346. The only exception is the recently adopted Anti-Tobacco Treaty.

<sup>572</sup> Phone interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 30 January 2004.

<sup>573</sup> Lucas, eds., (1997):42.

<sup>574</sup> Phone interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 30 January 2004.

### 3.3.3 *The WHO Secretariat's professional culture and its disease-dominated approach to health*<sup>575</sup>

At its first session in 1948, the World Health Assembly (WHA- the main WHO political organ) acknowledged that “health was not merely a technical matter but had socioeconomic, cultural and political dimensions.”<sup>576</sup> The WHA resolution implies that the WHO Secretariat’s focus should encompass socio-economic, as well as purely medical, aspects of health. Such an expanded approach to health would require, for example, that the administration, which now conducts research on a vaccine to protect against bacteria that causes diarrhea, (a leading cause of death among children in developing states) focuses also on building infrastructure for clean water supplies as a means to prevent diarrhea.<sup>577</sup> The latter, however, has never been a priority of the WHO Secretariat while disease-oriented approach based on a vaccine development has always been considered the most appropriate tool.<sup>578</sup> Generally, despite a broad health rhetoric stipulated by the WHO constitution and the WHA resolutions, the WHO seems to ignore the need for a greater attention to socio-economic aspects of health.<sup>579</sup> The disease-oriented approach remains prevalent within the WHO Secretariat. This narrow medical approach is driven by the WHO Secretariat’s professional (medical) culture that shapes the Secretariat’s understanding of health mainly through a disease perspective and disease as a technical problem that can be handled by rational (coordinated and purposeful) actions of the WHO staff.<sup>580</sup>

Furthermore, the high technicity of the professional culture leaves little room for questioning medically driven theoretical possibilities of achieving eradication, elimination or control of a disease. This may explain why there is such strong pressure to take practical steps to deal with diseases as well as why the administration usually chooses to fight disease using biomedical interventions. In general, due to its medical professional culture the Secretariat has supported vertical programs and focused on time-limited and target-

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<sup>575</sup> For the purpose of this study, the disease-oriented approach within the WHO Secretariat is understood broadly and includes: the disease control, disease elimination and disease eradication campaigns and disease-related activities such as medical research, vaccination, curative treatments for major diseases.

<sup>576</sup> Glen Williams, WHO- the Days of the Mass Campaigns, *World Health Forum*, vol. 9 (1988):11.

<sup>577</sup> Building clean water infrastructure is, in fact, considered as cost effective in terms of generating better long-range outcomes than vaccines. Interview with the WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 26 March 2005.

<sup>578</sup> Ibid.

<sup>579</sup> Antia and Uplekar saw WHO as pushing for biomedical solutions while the needs of the developing countries called for considering socio-economic basis of health. See Ilona Kickbusch and Kent Buse, *Global Influences and Global Responses: International Health at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century*, in Michael H. Merson; Anne J. Mills and Robert E. Black, *International Public Health. Diseases, Programs, Systems, and Policies*, Aspen Publishers, (Maryland 2001): 714.

<sup>580</sup> Peabody (1995): 734.

oriented disease eradication programs<sup>581</sup> implemented based on direct technical (biomedical) interventions in the form of vaccines.<sup>582</sup>

Because the organization was established to fight diseases, a medical cure and treatment approach has traditionally played an important role in the WHO. However, it is the nature of the disease-related activities that has a special appeal for the WHO professional culture. The disease programs, in contrast to other health initiatives, have the potential to deliver tangible results, which are usually visible in a relatively short time-span. According to one interviewee, the disease-focused programs

have always shown results because they are essentially managed as projects, meaning time-limited and focused, where technology, at least implicitly, seems to be effective.<sup>583</sup>

Because of their result-driven nature and high chances for visible progress the disease programs prove that public health officials are doing something meaningful with a tangible impact on the ground.<sup>584</sup>

Programs aimed at fighting diseases are usually seen as exciting and an inherently noble (who would deny the virtue of taking on deadly diseases?); they also have greater political and psychological appeal.<sup>585</sup> Because of their glamour, the WHO disease programs can mobilize much greater financial resources than other public health initiatives such as those to strengthen health services.<sup>586</sup> Eventually, the Secretariat's authority and international recognition derive from the disease programs.<sup>587</sup> Consequently, the disease programs have a high profile in the WHO administration;<sup>588</sup> the organization spends the largest part of its budget on communicable and noncommunicable diseases and on disease-related programs such as medical technologies or evidence-based research.<sup>589</sup> Similarly, the WHO

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<sup>581</sup> Jean-Pierre Unger and James R. Kilingsworth, Selective Primary Health Care: A Critical Review of Methods and Results, *Social Science and Medicine*, vol.22, no.10 (1986) :1001.

<sup>582</sup> Peabody (1995): 737.

<sup>583</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 8 April 2004.

<sup>584</sup> Lisa Schlein, World Health Organization: Hunting Down the Last of the Poliovirus, *Science*, vol.279, issue 5348 (9 January 1998):168.

<sup>585</sup> The Malaria Campaign- Why Not Eradication? Forum Interview with M.A. Farid, *World Health Forum*, vol. 19 (1998): 420.

<sup>586</sup> Eilif Liisberg in The Malaria Campaign- Why Not Eradication? (1998): 423. And Patrick J. Vaughan, Sigrum Mogedal, Stein-Erik Krause, Kelley Lee, Gill Walt, Koen de Wilde, Financing the World Health Organisation: Global Importance of Extrabudgetary Funds, *Health Policy*, vol.35 (1996):239 and 240.

<sup>587</sup> Koivusalo and Ollila (1997):21, Koivusalo and Ollila (1996):27 and 120 and Lucas, eds., (1997):141.

<sup>588</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior administrative official, Geneva, 12 February 2004.

<sup>589</sup> In contrast to the extrabudgetary resources, the allocation of resources from the regular budget is decided entirely by the WHO administration and its leadership, reflecting their (rather than the states) preferences and programmatic interests. In the 2000-2001 regular budget, the Secretariat allocated around 63% of all financial resources for technical programs (that exclude general management and other administrative expenditures) to disease (communicable and non-communicable) or disease-related (medical technology and evidence-based research) programs. At the same time, only around 37% of the remaining funds on technical programs were allocated to broader health issues such as health systems, environmental and mental health. My own

extrabudgetary resources are biased towards diseases and disease-oriented programs.<sup>590</sup> The WHO's regular and extrabudgetary spending serves as a practical indication of the organization's highly medicalized and single-disease-campaign approach to health.<sup>591</sup> In other words, the WHO's strategy for improving health has been narrowed down to medical, disease-oriented interventions.

The profile of diseases within the WHO Secretariat is buttressed by an existing myth in the WHO administration. This myth is reflected in two popular organizational stories about the success of smallpox eradication and the failure of malaria eradication. Both stories are the examples of the Secretariat's traditional enthusiasm in confronting deadly diseases. The story about the eradication of smallpox is set in the talk of "a crowning glory,"<sup>592</sup> or "victory of the WHO and its Secretariat,"<sup>593</sup> which was achieved at the end of the 1970s and still celebrated today.

A practical consequence of the myth concerning the success of the eradication of smallpox is reflected in strengthening 'eradicationitis' within the WHO Secretariat. The myth reinforces the organization's disease-oriented focus and growing willingness to take on new diseases with even stronger resolve.<sup>594</sup> For example, the administration's eagerness to follow on the success with smallpox eradication is quite evident in other disease eradication programs.<sup>595</sup> Even the failures to achieve eradication, elimination or control of a disease, such as malaria or TB, were not discouraging to the Secretariat. Such unsuccessful attempts only strengthened the Secretariat's resolve to return to fight a disease as soon as opportunities emerged in the form of new technological advances. The existing organizational stories based on fighting deadly diseases have been recently reinforced in the WHO Secretariat with the successful campaign against SARS.<sup>596</sup> When SARS broke

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estimations based on data from the 2000-2001 WHO regular budget included in Leonard Lerer and Richard Matzopoulos, "The Worst of Both Worlds": The Management Reform of the World Health Organization, *International Journal of Health Services*, vol. 31, no.2 (2001): 418-419, Table 2.

<sup>590</sup> The disease and disease-oriented programs funded by donors accounted for 60% of all the extrabudgetary resources spent on the WHO technical programs in 2000-2001. Data were compiled based on the estimation of the 2000-2001 WHO extrabudgetary sources included in Lerer and Matzopoulos (2001): 418-419, Table 2. Since it is commonly assumed that the donors are the main actors that push for the disease programs, this figure is surprisingly low, particularly if compared with 63% of the resources spent on disease and disease oriented programs from the WHO regular (technical) budget. This suggests that the WHO Secretariat has even stronger preference towards concentration of its financial and human resources on narrowly defined (medical) areas of health than the donors themselves.

<sup>591</sup> Williams (1988):11.

<sup>592</sup> Rodney W. Nichols, Rx for WHO, *Science*, vol.281, i.5380 (21 August 1998).

<sup>593</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 8 April 2004.

<sup>594</sup> Godlee (1995): 181.

<sup>595</sup> Ibid.

<sup>596</sup> Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome.

out in 2003, the WHO Secretariat quickly positioned itself as an "action agency" and received international recognition for being able to take on the lethal epidemic.<sup>597</sup> During the battle with the disease, one of the WHO staff members died of infection. The heroic efforts that led to the successful containment of the disease added additional legitimacy to the already strong disease-oriented worldview of the Secretariat and its professional medical culture. In general, a living memory of both, failures and successes in the fight against particular diseases plays an important role in redoubling or maintaining (but never giving up on) the WHO's commitment to the disease programs, which are vertical, short-term, and result-oriented.

The disease-oriented outlook often overwhelms other health areas in the Secretariat. According to Glen Williams, the specialist commenting on the WHO activities, non-disease programs in the WHO become subordinated to the disease-oriented approach. For example, maternal and child health (MCH), which Williams claimed warranted a high priority status, was eventually suppressed by the dominant disease-oriented approach in the WHO administration.<sup>598</sup> The MCH was low on the list of the Secretariat's priorities simply because "MCH was not a disease."<sup>599</sup> In 1995, a respected medical journal *Lancet* noted in an editorial that the WHO remains dominated by a biomedical and clinically based approach to health that concentrates on disease and premature death. In this approach, there is no place for mental and societal aspects of health.<sup>600</sup>

The disease-focused professional culture of the WHO Secretariat tends to depreciate the importance of one of its main constitutional functions: strengthening health systems of its member states. At its first session held in 1948, the WHA reaffirmed that the organization's priority should be "strengthening of national health administration."<sup>601</sup> Thus, from its inception, the WHO and its administration were envisaged as an international "health cooperative" that was mandated to help the member states develop and improve their own systems of health care.<sup>602</sup> Despite this mandate, the WHO Secretariat preferred instead to concentrate on the control and eradication of diseases more than on the promotion of health or building health systems.<sup>603</sup>

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<sup>597</sup> See for example, Donald G. McNeil and Lawrence K. Altman, Health Agency Took Swift Action Against SARS, *New York Times*, 4 May 2003.

<sup>598</sup> Williams (1988):19.

<sup>599</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>600</sup> Editorial, *The Lancet*, vol.345, no.8944 (28 January 1995):203.

<sup>601</sup> Williams (1988):22.

<sup>602</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>603</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.



Because of its proclivity for high-tech, target-oriented, result-specific, vertical and technology based disease programs, the Secretariat generally disregards its mandated role to pursue longer-term, more complex programs, often with vague goals, that aim at health system development. For example, the independent review of WHO activities in selected countries published in 1997 named the strength in technical and vertical disease interventions as a cause of the organization's weak support for health systems development. Subsequently, the faults of the WHO Secretariat's policies, according to the report, were in the area of promoting and protecting health<sup>604</sup>. According to Fulop and Roemer, recognized specialists on the WHO programs, the Secretariat assigned

very high priority to campaigns on specific diseases in developing countries, such as malaria or tuberculosis, at the expense of support for the general organization of health services.<sup>605</sup>

Another report on the WHO activities concluded that the WHO Secretariat's emphasis on vertical programs with bio-medical components made it more difficult for the organization to recognize the changing needs of developing countries. The report noted that developing countries have dramatically improved the level of medical know-how and required assistance in strengthening institutional and health management capacities. Thus, the most urgent need of the aided countries was not in developing medical skills, which was the focus of the current programs but in institutional capacity-building.<sup>606</sup> One more independent evaluation report on the polio eradication campaign published in 1999 concluded that the WHO Secretariat had underdeveloped guidelines for strengthening of health systems and lacked appropriate support strategies for their implementation.<sup>607</sup>

The above evidence indicates that the more involved the Secretariat became in vertical disease and vaccination campaigns, the stronger its dedication to its dominant medical programs and the weaker its commitment to improving health systems. A high degree of support towards the disease-oriented approaches, which is generated by the WHO Secretariat's professional medical culture, becomes particularly striking when one realizes

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<sup>604</sup> A. Lucas, S. Mogedal, G. Walt, S. Hodne Steen, S.E. Kruse, K. Lee, L. Hawken, *Cooperation for Health Development. The World Health Organisation's Support to Programmes at Country Level*. Norway Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (Oslo 1997):140-141.

<sup>605</sup> Tomas Fulop and Milton Roemer, *International Development of Health Manpower Policy*, WHO Offset Publication, 61, Geneva (1982): 16.

<sup>606</sup> Effectiveness of Multilateral Agencies (1991): particularly ii.

<sup>607</sup> Sigrun Mogedal and Bo Stenson, *Disease Eradication: Friend or Foe to the Health System?* Synstudy report from field studies on the Polio Eradication Initiative in Tanzania, Nepal and the Lao People's Democratic Republic World Health Organization, 2000: X

that the biggest killer in the world is not a disease but actually poverty.<sup>608</sup> Despite this fact, the WHO Secretariat, in comparison with its involvement in the disease programs, does much less for poverty reduction (e.g. through its greater focus on building and strengthening health infrastructure) than for curing and treating disease. The organization also seems to overlook the need for improving general hygiene, environmental health or health education. As a result, the non-vertical (horizontal), and non-disease (health-system) approaches remain in the shadow, dominated by the biomedical disease-oriented interventions. Consequently, the bias towards disease, determines the Secretariat's prevailing view, according to which the health problems are not so much about weak infrastructure of the systems of health care but about specific diseases against which mass campaigns should be launched.<sup>609</sup>

#### *3.3.4 Medical professional culture and its proclivity for action*

Dominance of the medical profession and disease-oriented approach sets the WHO Secretariat's professional culture into action-oriented mode of work. This work style is reflected in the words of the WHO Director General, Lee Jong-Wook, in "the sense of urgency, clear goal-setting, (...), do-what-it-takes mindset."<sup>610</sup> Karl Evang, the delegate to the first World Health Assembly, described the mood of the organization, which is still present today, in the following manner:

We know that action is needed, and we know that we cannot convince anybody unless we take action (emphasis added).<sup>611</sup>

Overall, the professional culture in the WHO Secretariat leans towards acting and delivering quick and specific results. A practical example of the WHO Secretariat's action-oriented style of work is the size of its operational activities, which are largely medical, short-term and target-centered. Indeed, the WHO Secretariat has the highest level of spending on operational technical programs among all UN organizations. For example, at the beginning of the 1990s, the WHO spent around 75.4% of its regular budget on technical cooperation<sup>612</sup> while other specialized agencies did not even reach 30%.<sup>613</sup>

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<sup>608</sup> Kickbusch and Buse (2001):711.

<sup>609</sup> Fulop and Roemer (1982): 17.

<sup>610</sup> Lee Jong-Wook, Global Health Improvement and WHO: Shaping the Future, *The Lancet*, vol.362, i.9401 (20 December 2003).

<sup>611</sup> Dr Karl Evang at the first World Health Assembly, July 1948 cited in WHO at Fifty. Highlights of the Early Years until 1960, *World Health Forum*, vol. 19 (1998): 23.

<sup>612</sup> Estimation provided by the Development Assistance Committee of OECD and quoted in G. Edgren and B. Moller, *The Agencies at Crossroads: the Role of the United Nations' Specialized Agencies*, in Nordic UN Project, *The United Nations: Issues and Options*, Almqvist och Wiksell (Stockholm 1991):138.

<sup>613</sup> Stenson and Sterky (1994):238.

Because of its action-driven work style, the medical profession in the WHO Secretariat has often viewed the administrative procedures and their administrators as obstacles in their work. A former WHO senior administrative official characterized the medical attitude towards the administrative side of the WHO in these words: “let’s do what is necessary and not bother us about these rules and regulations.”<sup>614</sup> Consequently, in the action-driven climate the aims often justify the means. The story of smallpox eradication, which is told and retold in the headquarters, is the most illustrative case of the action-driven philosophy of work that underpins the WHO Secretariat’s professional culture.<sup>615</sup> The head of the smallpox eradication campaign, Doctor Henderson, symbolized the action-oriented nature of the WHO Secretariat’s work and his work, as mentioned by the WHO senior official, sets the example that only the sky is the limit.<sup>616</sup> According to a former WHO senior official:

Henderson took absolutely no notice of the WHO rules and procedures at all. For example, for procurement, there was a body called the Contract Review Committee and he was supposed to ask for bids, for tenders and these would be reviewed and would proceed to the lowest acceptable tender. Henderson did not do any of that. He just went out and gave contracts to all kinds of people. Things like helicopters—he just chose a helicopter company and gave them the money.<sup>617</sup>

Henderson also broke rules concerning appointments. According to one observer of Henderson’s work, the doctor fired and hired local staff with a total disregard for staff regulations.<sup>618</sup> Another former senior Secretariat official while referring to Henderson and the work of his team noted that every rule that could have been broken had been broken so as to achieve the goal of eradicating dangerous disease.<sup>619</sup> The person who worked closely with Henderson admitted that the smallpox team had, indeed, made “exceptions to the rules” in order to eradicate the disease.<sup>620</sup> As observed by one interviewee, the Secretariat’s technicity gave the medical profession an aura of “sanctity,”<sup>621</sup> which provided it with a certain degree of protection for the action-oriented style of work and greater administrative tolerance for possible lapses in following established rules. A former WHO staff member

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<sup>614</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior administrative official, Geneva, 4 February 2004

<sup>615</sup> All the interviewees mentioned the smallpox eradication when asked about the great successes of the WHO.

<sup>616</sup> Interview with the WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 5 April 2004.

<sup>617</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior legal official, Geneva, 27 January 2004.

<sup>618</sup> Ibid.

<sup>619</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 18 February 2004.

<sup>620</sup> Interview with the WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 5 April 2004.

<sup>621</sup> “People in the WHO always said that the WHO is a technical organization and by saying the WHO is a technical organization they kind of glorified it, made it sacred and holy. The WHO became a sort of sacred

was, for example, of the opinion that Henderson could carry out the program in the manner he did “because he was doing a huge, wonderful, world public health thing, saving humans.”<sup>622</sup> As a result, the Secretariat has been allowed to do things that the other international administrations would be hesitant to consider in the first place.<sup>623</sup> Overall, the smallpox eradication serves as the vivid example of the proclivity of the professional culture towards the action-oriented and result-driven style of work that, if necessary, stretches the existing rules and procedures to achieve goals.

Part of the action-oriented mode of work promoted by the WHO Secretariat’s professional culture is a drive for quick results. It was, for example, noted that a specific medical understanding of the tasks led many professionals in the Secretariat to define

their roles as providing solution to a specific problem. They evaluated their success by the completion of a plan and by their ability to demonstrate results for monies spent.<sup>624</sup>

The WHO Secretariat’s proclivity towards reaching results is reinforced by medical doctors who tend to see themselves as the most competent professionals for fighting epidemics. As one of the interviewees observed: “All medical doctors that I met believe that they are qualified epidemiologists.”<sup>625</sup> In turn, epidemiologists are seen as “activists (who) want to see results,”<sup>626</sup> and the epidemiological activity symbolizes decisive, swift action and responses.

### *3.3.5 Medical professional culture and technological interventions*

Technology is an indispensable weapon of the medical profession. In his book about the dangers of medicalization, Ivan Illich, referred to “miracle cures” and “high technology medicine,” which, according to the author, were “the most solemn element(s) in a ritual celebrating and reinforcing the myth that doctors struggle heroically against death.”<sup>627</sup> Rifkin and Walt also talked about the obsession of the medical profession with “magic bullets” that “can be shot into countries to solve specific problems.”<sup>628</sup> Similarly strong

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enterprise. Health, mothers, children (...), everything you do is sort of blessed.” Interview with a former WHO senior legal official, Geneva, 27 January 2004.

<sup>622</sup> Ibid.

<sup>623</sup> Ibid.

<sup>624</sup> Judith Justice, The Bureaucratic Context of International Health: A Social Scientist’s View, *Social Science and Medicine*, vol.25, no.12 (1987): 1304.

<sup>625</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 19 February 2004.

<sup>626</sup> The Malaria Campaign- Why Not Eradication? (1998): 423.

<sup>627</sup> Illich (1975): 52.

<sup>628</sup> Susan B. Rifkin and Gill Walt, Why Health Improves; Defining the Issues Concerning ‘Comprehensive Primary Health Care’ and ‘Selective Primary Health Care,’ *Social Science and Medicine*, vol.23, no.6 (1986): 564.

attachment to medical technologies transpires from the Secretariat's professional, medical culture. In fact, it was the medical "wonder tools" (or "miracle cures") such as DDT and penicillin that laid foundation for the establishment of the WHO after the Second World War.<sup>629</sup> Consequently, the WHO Secretariat's professional culture is characterized by deeply rooted confidence in the effectiveness of medical technological interventions. According to the scholars writing on the WHO and its activities, there is a strong belief within the organization that a technological fix (such as vaccine or a drug) can combat an illness, while the fact that the disease origin can be deeply rooted in social and economic inequalities receives little recognition in the administration.<sup>630</sup> An illustration of the WHO staff's confidence in medical technologies is given by Foege and Henderson, who, at the end of the 1980s, expressed optimism that

because the number of vaccines will continue to grow opportunities exist to control many of major infectious diseases over the next two decades (malaria, leprosy, rotavirus etc.).<sup>631</sup>

The fixation on technologies such as vaccines is clearly illustrated by the WHO Secretariat's apparent dismissal of the role played by dirty needles in spreading HIV. It was concluded that the Secretariat was generally unwilling to recognize that the unsafe injections may have been as (if not more) important channels for spreading the epidemic as sexual transmission. The reason for the Secretariat's behavior was the fear that the WHO Secretariat's vertical programs based on biomedical technologies such as vaccines would be undermined if they acknowledged the risk of injections.<sup>632</sup> The fear of a possible negative impact of the technocratic instruments (vaccines) is rooted in the dominant medical professional culture, which remains fixated with medical technologies.

Because the WHO programs have a very large biomedical bias, new scientific advances in biomedical technology only perpetuate the WHO Secretariat's fixation with techno-medical solutions. The organization is thus given another opportunity to take action and apply newly available biomedical technologies on a large scale (e.g. disease control or eradication campaigns). The medical domination of the Secretariat's programs maintains the administration's immersion in technologies. "Wonder drugs" or "wonder tools" are thus indispensable images imbedded within the WHO Secretariat's professional culture that, in

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<sup>629</sup> Javed Siddiqi, *World Health and World Politics. The World Health Organization and the UN System*, Hurst and Company (London 1995): 56.

<sup>630</sup> Koivusalo and Ollila (1997):129.

<sup>631</sup> Quoted in Kenneth S. Warren, The Evolution of Selective Primary Health Care, *Social Science and Medicine*, vol.26, no.9 (1988): 893.

turn, reinforce its technical and biomedical culture. Fiona Godlee, who evaluated the WHO work over the last ten years, observed:

Developments in medical technology- drugs, pesticides, and vaccines- brought a sense of optimism and purpose and strengthened the technical consensus within the organization.<sup>633</sup>

Furthermore, among the WHO medical professionals, there is a strong belief that delays in taking a concrete action give disease an advantage over the existing technology. The medical view is that the current technologies may not be effective tomorrow. This mentality creates a sense of urgency and a demand for immediate action. In the case of malaria eradication in the 1950s and 1960s, the WHO Secretariat rushed through eradication because of a fear that the mosquitoes carrying the disease would develop resistance to DDT.<sup>634</sup> Similarly, today's justification for the WHO Secretariat's prompt actions in dealing with AIDS, malaria (at the end of the 1990s), TB and measles rests on the very same foundation, which is illustrated by the statement of the WHO's Executive Director for Communicable Diseases, David Heymann:

we have the necessary tools. In the short term there is great urgency to use these tools to the maximum. Existing drugs are gradually becoming ineffective as antimicrobial resistance spreads. We face a situation of great urgency to do the job now (...).<sup>635</sup>

The fervent embrace of medical technologies by the Secretariat's medical professional culture places pressure on the administration to address health problems directly and to take specific actions. The confidence in medical technologies combined with the fear of antimicrobial resistance lead the Secretariat to embark on prompt and decisive action, usually in the form of control, elimination or eradication campaigns involving technological solutions such as vaccines. Such policy dominates the WHO health strategies despite the fact that the focus on global vaccination campaigns may, paradoxically, increase the chances for antimicrobial resistance, which can render drugs and vaccines ineffective. Even worse, the vaccines may cause adverse reactions and even death of young patients.<sup>636</sup> Moreover, the drive to take immediate action to deal with a specific disease often leaves the WHO with little time for proper economic, social and geographical

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<sup>632</sup> James Randerson, WHO Accused of Huge HIV Blunder: By Downplaying the Role of Dirty Needles in Spreading HIV, Has the WHO Missed the Chance to Curb the Epidemic? *New Scientist*, vol.180, no.2424 (6 December 2003):8

<sup>633</sup> Godlee (3 December 1994): 1491.

<sup>634</sup> Siddiqi (1995):147 and 163.

<sup>635</sup> Treat Now – While We Have Drugs. Interview with David Heymann, the WHO's Executive Director for Communicable Diseases, *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, vol.80, no.3 (2000): 253.

<sup>636</sup> Wright, for example, writes about the potential harmful effect of the measles vaccine on the infants, particularly female recipients. See Peter F. Wright, Global Immunization- A Medical Perspective, *Social Science and Medicine*, vol.41, no.5 (1995): 612.

planning.<sup>637</sup> It was, for example, noted that the WHO administration tends to suppress the critical opinion that the global vaccination campaigns eventually divert the scarce resources from the programs designed to strengthen health infrastructure.<sup>638</sup>

### 3.3.6 *Hubris of medical professional culture*

Hubris, understood here as an exaggerated pride or overconfident behavior, is particularly common for homogenous professions that enjoy a high social status. The medical profession has a common (usually Western) training, dominated by technocratic approach to health problems, and enjoys one of the highest social statuses worldwide. Thus, the profession is particularly susceptible to hubris. A former WHO senior official describes hubris of medical profession as an attitude according to which:

we know better than anybody else. We have been trained to [know and do very technical and specialized things]. We have control over life and death. There is a feeling that we are above ordinary people.<sup>639</sup>

Furthermore, the value of saving people's lives that medical science stands for helps the medical profession to shield itself from the outside criticism as well as strengthen the belief in its exceptionality and importance. Not only does the medical profession in the WHO Secretariat acquires hubris of the general medical profession but also reinforces hubris through its elitism and established long-term medical career. Prior to their appointment to the WHO Secretariat, these medical professionals have already established a solid reputation in their field of expertise. As observed by a former member staff of the WHO:

Once you are appointed for a specific technical position in the WHO Secretariat at least at the time of your appointment you are one of the best in the world in your specialty.<sup>640</sup>

Consequently, the WHO Secretariat is staffed by medical professionals who are highly confident in their training and highly specialized knowledge and have a strong propensity to an individualistic<sup>641</sup> and competitive style of work combined with professional and social elitism. These characteristics constitute a fertile ground for the development of strong hubris in the WHO Secretariat's medical professional culture. Such a culture is

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<sup>637</sup> Siddiqi (1995):147 and 163.

<sup>638</sup> Mark Nichter, Vaccinations in the Third World: A Consideration of Community Demand, *Social Science and Medicine*, vol.41, no.5 (1995): 619.

<sup>639</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 18 February 2004.

<sup>640</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Tanny, 14 February 2004.

<sup>641</sup> According to the WHO senior legal officials: "Always, doctors are individuals, not really used to work in large organizations. They call themselves experts; head of cancers, head of this, head of that." Interview with a former WHO senior legal official, Geneva, 27 January 2004.

generally incompatible with harmonious, uncompetitive and non-dominated working relations with the outside groups.

Hubris of the professional medical encourages the WHO Secretariat to embark on "impossible" missions and reinforces a belief that the organization is able to achieve something that was previously unthinkable. The eradication of smallpox at the end of the 1970s was at the time considered unachievable. The accomplishment of the task reinforced the Secretariat's hubris. A practical illustration of this hubris and doing the unthinkable was the objective (eventually unfulfilled) of Health for All by 2000. This objective was pronounced in the 1978 Alma Ata Declaration and was on a scale "unparalleled by any other global strategy within the UN system."<sup>642</sup> It was, as described in Fiona's article, "an impossible concept."<sup>643</sup>

The WHO Secretariat is often criticized for setting its goals too high.<sup>644</sup> The hubris of the professional medical culture contributes to the WHO Secretariat's inclination to play up possible successes in the fight and control of other disease. A good example is the case of leprosy<sup>645</sup>. In this particular case, the WHO Secretariat was seen as placing too much emphasis on short-term results and drug treatment in controlling leprosy to the detriment of a longer-term strategy to prevent nerve damage and rehabilitate patients.<sup>646</sup> As for the case of polio, since 1998 the internal discourse within the WHO Secretariat has increasingly focused on the policy options for post eradication vaccination<sup>647</sup> that demonstrates clearly the confidence of the medical profession in imminent eradication of this disease. Two years had passed since the talk about a post-eradication phase and cases of polio were still occurring. Nevertheless, in January 2000, the Director General, Gro Harlem Brundtland confidently declared:

The WHO is entering the final year of the polio eradication campaign. We are committed to let polio join smallpox in the history books.<sup>648</sup>

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<sup>642</sup> Daes and Daudy (Geneva 1993):7.

<sup>643</sup> Dr Mirosław Wysocki, the head of health information at the WHO's South East Asia Regional Office cited in Godlee (3 December 1994): 1492.

<sup>644</sup> Williams (1988):17.

<sup>645</sup> Godlee (1995): 181.

<sup>646</sup> The opinion of Diana Lockwood, a specialist in leprosy at the Hospital for Tropical Diseases in London, referred to by Godlee (1995): 181.

<sup>647</sup> David Heymann, Polio Eradication: Finishing the Job and Protecting the Investment, *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, vol.82, no.1 (January 2004):1.

<sup>648</sup> Towards a Strategic Agenda for the WHO Secretariat, Statement by the Director General to the Executive Board at its 105<sup>th</sup> Session, 24 January 2000.



For five years the WHO Secretariat has continued to announce the imminent eradication of polio only to see its reemergence in some regions and countries. Made out of its professional hubris, the WHO Secretariat's pronouncements led the administration to set short-term, over-ambitious goals and make exaggerated statements about positive outcomes of its efforts to eradicate polio. Furthermore, repeated announcements of imminent eradication, while the disease persisted, generated additional pressure on the administration to utilize vertical and bio-medical interventions to achieve its stated objectives. In *Science*, Lisa Schlein observed that a strong confidence in the immanent eradication of polio increased the Secretariat's interest in launching other vertical programs.<sup>649</sup> Overall, the impact of overconfident medical professional culture has brought the Secretariat even further away from horizontal strategies, socio-economic aspects of health and the support for development of health system infrastructure and increased their immersion in vertical programs and short-term biomedical interventions.

### *3.3.7 Ethos of the international public health official vis-à-vis the identity of the international civil service*

The core professional staff of the WHO Secretariat is composed of international public health experts with different health-related specializations. Their identification is first with their health-related specialties and less so with more heterogeneous occupational vocation such as the international civil service. In other words, the identity of an international public health official is intuitively seen as conferring prestige and authority greater than, for example, an international civil servant. Gill Walt, for example, saw the WHO administration's authority as

derived from its professional core of medical doctors. Not only does the medical profession have high status among other professions but also it serves as an internationally cohesive group. Doctors have common professional bonds, and common global standards.<sup>650</sup>

According to Pendleton and King, medical specialties also have long and outstanding professional histories that include rich traditions and standards.<sup>651</sup> Furthermore, since it is not possible to become a health expert without extensive study and a lengthy professional career, there is much pride in medical specialization within the WHO.<sup>652</sup> In other UN organizations, as observed by the person who spent his professional career in the top

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<sup>649</sup> Schlein noted: "Buoyed by their anticipated success, WHO and its collaborators have started planning a new campaign to eliminate measles (...)." Schlein (9 January 1998):168.

<sup>650</sup> Walt (1994):134.

<sup>651</sup> David Pendleton and Jennifer King, Values and Leadership, *British Medical Journal*, vol. 325, (7 December 2002): 1354.

managerial posts in the ILO and the WHO, it is possible to become an expert by merely living and working in the agencies.<sup>653</sup> As a result, the source of authority, inspiration and code of conduct of the technical professionals who work in the WHO Secretariat is outside the organization, namely from the specialized medical occupation and not from the ethos of the international civil service. The WHO Secretariat's professional staff's ethos is thus primarily based on the externally-derived professional medical standards.<sup>654</sup>

In the WHO Secretariat, health service consciousness dominates civil service consciousness. Stronger medical and health affiliation of the WHO technical officials and their weaker identification with the international civil service is reflected in the publishing outlets. These publications analyze the management reforms, programmatic changes and leadership changes that occur in the WHO. The most important articles on the WHO managerial and leadership issues are available exclusively in respected medical and health journals such as *Lancet*, *British Medical Journal*, *Science and Medicine* or *International Journal of Health Services*, which have little in common with the UN international civil service.

The affinity of the technical staff for the medical profession has an important impact on the way people in the WHO administration go about their work. Identification with public health or medical vocation conveys a particular image about a style of work. This image is essentially about the commitment to a hands-on approach, getting into the spotlight, being assertive, and achieving positive outcomes quickly. This stands in contrast with the image of an international civil servant who prefers "silent" work, shies away from public attention, and shields himself from political pressure and criticism while taking more cautious attitude towards outside actors.

Because the emphasis is placed on the application of specialized competence and scientific knowledge more than neutrality and independence, the WHO Secretariat is less sensitive about a possible violation or weakening of independence or neutrality of its staff members than it is the case with other UN organizations. Consequently, the WHO can situate its WHO country representatives inside the most political entities such as the Ministries of Health and still be certain about effective performance of scientific work. In contrast, the ethos of the international civil service requires the officials to maintain a considerable

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<sup>652</sup> Interview with a former ILO and WHO senior official, Geneva, 2 December 2003.

<sup>653</sup> Ibid.

<sup>654</sup> Peabody (1995): 734.

distance from the governments and their ministries in order to preserve independence, impartiality or anonymity. In the case of the WHO public health officials, close relations with the member states ensure that the WHO Secretariat's knowledge and expertise is shared and applied.

In contrast to the inward looking nature of the international civil service, the nature of the public health work is oriented outward. Taking risks that are against certain inside or outside forces is acceptable and often necessary in order to preserve the value of technical advice and effectively promote health of the international community. The health-advocacy mandate, which the WHO staff is associated with, becomes a moral imperative that is very difficult to be neutral about.<sup>655</sup> This mandate imposes on the WHO staff an ethical duty as well as a right to act in case the health of others is jeopardized. Action-oriented behavior dominates over the principles of international civil service such as anonymity or limited political involvement. In practice, public health identity of the WHO staff provides them with confidence and enables them to expand their political involvement. For example, during the interview for the WHO oral history, Milton Siegal, the former Assistant Director General, and Norman Howard-Jones, the WHO historian, observed that by the common usage it has been accepted that the Director General's proposals to the Executive Board (EB) were considered as original which determined the voting sequence on the amendments to these proposals.<sup>656</sup>

The practice of considering the DG proposals as original allowed for a predominant status of those proposals. The WHO administration could, for example, come up with a budgetary initiative on behalf of its executive head that automatically gained the status of an original proposal. In such situation, the proposals that came from the member states were considered amendments to the original draft of the legislation. This was a remarkable development given the fact that the early idea of the DG serving as a formal member of the Executive Board was rejected and, in theory, the DG had no legal right to put forward a formal proposal of any kind that would require a vote of the EB.<sup>657</sup> In his conclusion, Howard-Jones noted that usually the international civil servants had never been considered originators of any legislation; it was an extraordinary step for the international legislative

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<sup>655</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 21 January 2004.

<sup>656</sup> See Milton Segeal, Oral History Program of the WHO, WHO Radio Studio, Geneva, 15 November 1982. In the opinion of Norman Howard-Jones such procedure has been characteristic only for the WHO. See Norman Howard-Jones, Oral History Program of the WHO, WHO Radio Studio, Geneva, 15 November 1982.

<sup>657</sup> Ibid.

body to allow the transfer of the part of its legislative privilege to the international bureaucracy.<sup>658</sup> A delegation of certain legislative competence to the international administration becomes, however, less perplexing when one sees the WHO Secretariat as a technically driven organization whose staff members are considered top-level health experts. Because of their recognized professional status, the WHO political organs see the politico-legislative involvement of the Secretariat's officials as a necessary and useful element of the decision-making process.

A strong identification with a highly organized and homogeneous occupational group that functions independently from the framework of the international administration has an important impact on the work of the WHO administration. The WHO public health officials are generally less socialized within the Secretariat than their international civil service counterparts in other UN organizations. Their loyalty to the WHO as a whole is weaker. Public health officials are attached less to the organization and more to their individual technical programs, which eventually determine their status as health experts in their professional medical community. Working within their specialty programs provides the technical professionals in the WHO Secretariat with the opportunity to publish and build their CVs.<sup>659</sup> They will thus, exert great efforts to obtain concrete results out of the programs they pursue, but will pay less attention to the performance of the organization as a whole. This attitude corresponds more with the medical culture that encourages individualistic thinking and independent action rather than the tradition of international civil service, which is based on a collective and integrated manner of work.

In contrast to the usual permanence of the international civil service, the WHO Secretariat has a very high turnover of its professional staff. It is estimated that almost 25% of the professional staff in the WHO leaves the organization within five years of appointment.<sup>660</sup> This turnover reflects the reality that temporary appointments of technical personnel are common. Many of the WHO Secretariat's staff members under temporary contracts are, in fact, merely on sabbatical from their academic and research institutions or national laboratories. These employees return to their previous jobs once their contracts with the Secretariat end. According to an experienced worker in human resources management of international administrations, the prevalence of short term appointments ensure that fresh

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<sup>658</sup> Ibid.

<sup>659</sup> Interview with the WHO medical official, Geneva 4 March 2004.

<sup>660</sup> Human Resources: Annual Report, World Health Organization, Executive Board, 105<sup>th</sup> Session, 5 January 2000: 2.

blood comes into the organization. The new employees keep the organization up to date on the latest developments in the scientific community.<sup>661</sup> Professionals “on loan” and not yet groomed within the WHO Secretariat’s bureaucratic system are more open to experimentation of all kinds, particularly if they know that the current position is only temporary and, at the same time, gives a unique opportunity to establish or strengthen their international scientific recognition.

### *3.3.8 Professional culture of the WHO Secretariat and its diplomatic correctness*

Over years of interaction with the member states (e.g. various representatives from the national health ministries) the professional culture of the Secretariat has attained a high degree of diplomacy. Diplomatic correctness of the WHO Secretariat is reflected more in the mode of its work rather than in outcomes that can go against the interests of particular states. In practice, diplomatic correctness means that the process of health policy-making in the organization is consultative-based, inclusive and participatory. This ensures a substantial technical involvement of the national representatives, including various national medical laboratories and health centers.

Additionally, the leadership of the WHO Secretariat has also endorsed a high degree of diplomatic politeness in the process of policy making. For example, the political tradition under a long and energetic leadership of Hafdan Mahler (1973-1989) was to say that the member states were the masters and the DG had the honor of being their obedient servant.<sup>662</sup> This was important recognition of the significance of the health ministers in the work of the WHO. This verbal recognition of the position of the member states within the organization did not imply that the WHO administration’s independence vis-à-vis the member states was somehow compromised. On the contrary, the Secretariat and its Directors General have generally maintained a high degree of independence and autonomy vis-à-vis the states under the veil of mutual respect and a customary diplomatic courtesy. Such respect, however, has not prevented the Secretariat from taking a firmer stance if the situation required protecting and promoting its true public health functions.<sup>663</sup>

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<sup>661</sup> Interview with a former WHO and ILO senior human resources official, Geneva, 23 February 2004.

<sup>662</sup> Mahler was known to use in his letters directed to the WHO member states by now a famous formula: “I have the honour to be, Sir, Your obedient servant.”

<sup>663</sup> Phone interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 30 January 2004.

More often than not, the leadership of the WHO administration combined an iron hand, equipped with the scientific knowledge and technical competence, with a velvet glove of diplomatic correctness, courtesy and consultations to push its specific health (or medical) agenda forward. Both technical and diplomatic approaches have been indispensable to the Secretariat's effective performance, particularly in situations in which, as Mburu claims, the WHO's achievements are the result of technical persuasion and camaraderie rather than resource input.<sup>664</sup>

### *3.3.9 Medical and disease-oriented culture and the military way of work*

Medical doctors have been closely affiliated with the military establishment. It was the military that originally had a strong interest in public health. Health was seen as a necessary precondition for building and maintaining strong and effective armies. As a result, throughout the nineteenth century, the military monopolized the area of public health to an unprecedented degree. More than a century later, military presence in health is still strongly felt. Strong ties between medical personnel and the military have had an important impact on the former. Military culture left a visible mark on the work of the medical profession, influencing its system of ranks, hierarchy, dress code, language and behavior.

The WHO was established just after the end of the second world war and many people who came to the Secretariat at the time were military medics with extensive experience in armies and their bureaucracies. According to a former WHO senior official, the impact of the people who came to the WHO from the military was particularly visible in the organization's uniform, rank structure and its system of command, control and reporting.<sup>665</sup> The first recruitments to the WHO bureaucracy were mainly among the French and British colonial medical officers, with military ranks and experience in successful epidemiological campaigns. In fact, the first Director General (DG) of the WHO, Dr. Chisholm, had held various medical posts in the Canadian military service. He ended his national career in the rank of Major General and on the post of the Director General of the Canadian Army Medical Service.

Military logic was crucial in designing and implementing WHO vertical programs, which were traditionally organized along military lines based on singular operational units. These units have had their own budgets and administrative functions apart from larger health care

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<sup>664</sup> Mburu (1989): 593.

structures.<sup>666</sup> The WHO programs specializing in fighting infectious diseases such as malaria, small pox and tuberculosis were organized and managed like military campaigns.<sup>667</sup> It was, for example, acknowledged that the smallpox program had, in fact, many similarities of a military operation: “ring containment, bounties for identification of cases, and vaccination teams rounding up unvaccinated renegades.”<sup>668</sup> The polio eradication program has also been conducted like a ‘total’ war with mass immunization campaigns and repeated exposure to vaccine.<sup>669</sup> Moreover, the organization managed its “interventionist” programs through a military-like centralized approach to disease control and surveillance.<sup>670</sup> More precisely, the WHO strategies to fight diseases was established on quantitative targets with clear divisions of responsibility and authority between various organizational units that only increased administrative rigidity and left little room for needed regional variations.<sup>671</sup>

The military-like efficiency and organizational rigidity required to deal with particular diseases was reinforced by the WHO reliance on vector control. According to Dr. Farid, who was responsible for carrying out the WHO program to eradicate malaria in the 1960s, the malaria campaign with its vector control was a military-like operation and constituted the military part of public health.<sup>672</sup> His further recollection about the WHO administration’s fight with malaria shows clearly the military thinking behind the WHO campaigns. For example, while describing the campaign Dr. Farid referred to the people who “were standing like an army with their spraying equipment, and everybody knew where to go and what to do.”<sup>673</sup> It is thus no coincidence that the WHO officials involved in the disease eradication saw themselves as the “WHO’s foot soldiers.”<sup>674</sup>

A martial work style played an important role in directing the WHO administration’s medical mindset, which focused on medical interventions aimed at “eliminating” specific disease problems. A military-like style of work, visible in the disease-driven approach, buttressed the image of the WHO administration as an action agency, whose medical personnel were willing to initiate activities that were challenging and risky.

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<sup>665</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 8 April 2004.

<sup>666</sup> Unger and Killingsworth (1986): 1007.

<sup>667</sup> Sjaak Van Der Geest, Johan D. Speckmann and Pieter H. Streefland, Primary Health Care in a Multilevel Perspective: Towards a Research Agenda, *Social Science and Medicine*, vol.30, no.9 (1990): 1031.

<sup>668</sup> Wright (1995): 609.

<sup>669</sup> Ibid., 611.

<sup>670</sup> Interview with former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 8 April 2004.

<sup>671</sup> Van Der Geest ed. (1990): 1031.

<sup>672</sup> The Malaria Campaign- Why Not Eradication? (1998): 420.

<sup>673</sup> Ibid.

### 3.3.10 Conclusion on the professional culture in the Secretariat of the WHO

The professional culture in the Secretariat is identified as having a relatively low rigidity. The technicity of the WHO administration promotes the Secretariat's focus on short-term, highly visible, problem-specific and result-oriented vertical programs. The WHO administration's fixation on biomedical technologies generates a strong incentive to try out new "wonder tools." In practice, this involves addressing the health problem head on in the form of eradication campaigns directed against specific diseases. The professional culture in the WHO is based on the public health ethos, which, although surrounded by the diplomatic environment of the international agency, still allows for considerable freedom and independence of medical actions.

### 3.4. Contents of Change: Making a Difference and its radicalism

The main contents of Making a Difference initiative was presented in a 1999 World Health Report entitled *Making a Difference*. The report considered various initiatives proposed by the new Director General, Gro Harlem Brundtland, in the field of the WHO technical programs and its administrative structures.

A contents of change included in Making a Difference initiative envisaged a radical departure from the Secretariat's *status quo* and its previous *modus operandi*. More precisely, the proposed change aimed for a fundamental transformation of the Secretariat's approach to dealing with health problems and a radical reinvention of its internal administrative structures. Therefore, this study identified proposed change as radical and transformational (see **Table 1** in the Introduction).

In terms of technical programs and policy-oriented changes, Making a Difference aimed to establish the WHO's global leadership in health and lift health to the top of the international political agenda. The practical projects that would enable the WHO to gain its global status included launching so called "pathfinders," such as Roll Back Malaria (RBM) and the Tobacco Free Initiative (TFI). RBM was seen as an entirely new campaign, with new tools and new methods. The report emphasized that RBM was different from all previous WHO attempts to fight malaria because it relied on new technologies as well as a new strategy of strengthening health systems.<sup>675</sup> The report thus pronounced that malaria control in the

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<sup>674</sup> Schlein (9 January 1998):168.

<sup>675</sup> The World Health Report. *Making a Difference*, World Health Organization (1999):62.



twenty first century be approached by strengthening infrastructures of health systems.<sup>676</sup> Indeed, one of the main goals of Making a Difference was to build up the countries' health systems in order to create sound structures for health improvement. RBM was seen as an instrument for facilitating the development of health systems, which, in turn, would further increase RBM effectiveness. TFI, another "pathfinder," was also seen as a new undertaking for the WHO. The WHO anti-tobacco campaign, for the first time in the WHO history, was aimed at pushing forward a treaty-making process with the end-goal of enacting a Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. Furthermore, the report emphasized the necessity to create new mechanisms of cooperation between the WHO, other agencies and business community in the form of Public-Private Partnerships (PPP). These partnerships are based on strategic alliances of the WHO with private sector and other international agencies. Such partnerships could then become institutionalized and permanent. The WHO's interactions with external actors would constitute a radical opening of the previously inaccessible WHO administration to business. Finally, the report implicitly embraced Brundtland's plan of the WHO becoming a hub for the best research and technical excellence<sup>677</sup> when it indicated that the WHO would promote a new rationale for its work based on sound scientific evidence.

In addition to its technical and policy recommendations, the Making a Difference initiative included administrative and management-related proposals for change. These proposals were formulated in various DG speeches and elaborated in Brundtland's autobiography. Essentially, upon taking the WHO directorship, Brundtland saw the WHO as a "nonaligned organization" consisting of seven different WHOs (headquarters and six regional offices) and over fifty individual programs lacking a senior management structure to set priorities in an orderly fashion.<sup>678</sup> The renewal of the WHO administration, according to Brundtland, would begin from creating a new structure of the cabinet of executive directors. Each of the executive directors would head a consolidated cluster within the Secretariat. The executive directors were to act in more coordinated way, share the responsibilities for the whole agency rather than particular departments and defend the decisions made collectively in the cabinet. This structure was modeled after the government ministries in a parliamentary system.<sup>679</sup> This was seen as a way to re-align the organization and create "One WHO."

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<sup>676</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>677</sup> Gro Harlem Brundtland, *Madam Prime Minister. A Life in Power and Politics*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (New York 2002): 455.

<sup>678</sup> Ibid., 451.

<sup>679</sup> Ibid.

Making a Difference aimed for a radical departure from the *status quo* in the WHO Secretariat. This observation corresponds to the opinion of the new Director General, who, in her autobiography, acknowledged that from her very first day in the WHO she wanted to demonstrate a radically different style of working.<sup>680</sup> Indeed, the contents of the proposed change reflected the DG intention to fundamentally transform the health agency and revitalize its manner of work. The proposals of change, both in the technical and administrative fields, show clearly the far-reaching nature of the reforms, particularly considering the situation in which the WHO was upon the arrival of the new Director General. Consequently, the proposed change was considered radical and transformational.

### *3.5 Outcome of Making a Difference initiative: semi-transformation*

On one hand, the outcome of Making a Difference indicates that the change had a transformational character. Under Brundtland's directorship the WHO's profile was raised considerably and its global leadership in health was restored. In the first year after the launch of the Making a Difference initiative, Brundtland's chief of cabinet, David Nabarro, summarized the changes:

We've got more public interest in health than ever before ... more countries up to date with assessed contributions ... more partnerships for health such as Roll Back Malaria, Stop TB, and the vaccine initiative. (...) WHO in terms of public profile (...) is an astounding organization.<sup>681</sup>

Another WHO senior staff member more critical of Brundtland's years in the WHO did however acknowledge that a radical change had indeed taken place and Brundtland's leadership had managed to place health as the central piece of the developmental work.<sup>682</sup> The organization gained a greater reputation in certain areas while gaining considerable global attention and respect.<sup>683</sup> Finally, as noted by a former WHO official, the WHO reestablished its global leadership and the World Bank agreed that the WHO would take over some functions that the Bank had taken in health assessment.<sup>684</sup> This was a visible change of perspectives in comparison with the first half of the 1990s when the World Bank managed to take the initiative from the WHO in health matters and was leading the discussion on health reforms while the WHO had passively watched the developments

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<sup>680</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>681</sup> Kapp Clare, WHO Staff Members Express Concerns Over Internal Restructuring, *The Lancet*, vol.355 (3 June 2000):1978.

<sup>682</sup> Interview with the WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 21 April 2004.

<sup>683</sup> Phone interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 30 January 2004.

<sup>684</sup> Interview a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 8 April 2004.

from a distance.<sup>685</sup> According to another opinion, during Brundtland's years in office, the WHO, which had not been central before, turned into an organization that could no longer be ignored.<sup>686</sup>

Outside observers expressed similar opinions. A well-known analyst of WHO activities, Gavin Yamey, asserted that the WHO under Brundtland had been taken out of the doldrums and given back some of its former international credibility.<sup>687</sup> Others argued that during Brundtland's directorship, the WHO had successfully placed the subject of health back into the international arena.<sup>688</sup> At this point, it would be unthinkable to organize important meetings on global health without the WHO's participation.<sup>689</sup> In the headline to its article on the WHO, *The Washington Post*, not known for being particularly fond of UN bureaucracies, noted that Brundtland's term is marked by the agency's ascendancy in global health. The *Post* summarized her legacy in the following way:

As a head of the World Health Organization, (Brundtland) is credited with leading (it) into a role of unprecedented influence and importance in global health matters.<sup>690</sup>

Nils Daulaire, a former official of the US Agency for International Development and the current head of the Global Health Council, said: "WHO is very much back in the thick of not only health, but international relations."<sup>691</sup>

The above comments indicate that the WHO went through a radical transformation during five years of Brundtland's directorship. On the other hand, a more careful analysis of change initiated by the former Norwegian prime minister provides a bit less optimistic view about the WHO transformation. The idea of "One WHO" has never been realized; the administrative changes were implemented too hastily and decisions were oftentimes pushed forward in an almost authoritarian manner: the WHO staff members, apart from those working closely with Brundtland on pathfinder projects, were often left uninspired, uninvolved and puzzled by the ongoing transformation. At the same time, reaching out to the prime ministers and presidents alienated the traditional WHO interlocutors: health

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<sup>685</sup> L.M. Nath, Dean of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Delhi cited in Godlee (3 December 1994): 1494 and Gill Walt, Global Cooperation in International Public Health, in Michael H. Merson; Anne J. Mills and Robert E. Black, *International Public Health. Diseases, Programs, Systems, and Policies*, Aspen Publishers, (Maryland 2001): 684.

<sup>686</sup> Interview with the WHO Assistant Director General, Geneva, 29 April 2004.

<sup>687</sup> Comment by Gavin Yamey, Interview with Gro Brundtland, *British Medical Journal*, vol.325 (7 December 2002):1358.

<sup>688</sup> Michael A. Reid and E. Jim Pearce, Wither the World Health Organization? *Medical Journal of Australia*, vol.178 (6 January 2003): 9 and Yamey (7 December 2002):1357.

<sup>689</sup> Yamey (7 December 2002):1358.

<sup>690</sup> David Brown, Brundtland Leaves as Head of WHO; Term Is Marked by Agency's Ascendancy in Global Health, *The Washington Post*, July 20, 2003.

ministers, and ranking the health systems led to a major backlash in the organization and weakened the position of the DG. Strengthening the national health infrastructure was quickly replaced by a technocratic-based medical agenda. New WHO partnerships with other agencies and businesses became medically driven and concentrated on medical technologies and quick fixes. Meanwhile, the hubris of the medical profession dominated supposedly equal partnerships. Finally, Roll Back Malaria, one of the new “pathfinder”, turned out to be purely vertical project with a strong focus on a global level and short-term results despite the rhetoric of sector-wide approach to building and strengthening health systems on the country level.

### *3.5.1 Conclusion on semi-transformation in WHO*

The result of changes in the WHO corresponded to a certain extent to the earlier envisaged radical character of Making a Difference. Although implementing a process of change led to transformation in specific areas, it diverged from the original agenda and led to unanticipated outcomes in other areas. As a result, notwithstanding apparent successes, transformation in the WHO had its limits and setbacks, hence semi-transformation.

As specified by both general and specific arguments presented in the Introduction, the evidence included in the subsequent sections confirm that the organization went through semi-transformation because of the relatively weaker than transformational leadership dynamism (semi-transformational) and the lower rigidity of professional culture (agility). At the same time, the sections below address the empirical puzzle of accounting for the nearly but not quite fundamental as earlier planned process and outcome of change. It will be shown specifically that under Brundtland the WHO went through a semi-transformational rather than a radical, transformational change due to the impact of her specific style of leadership and the particular professional culture of the Secretariat. Brundtland’s semi-transformational leadership and a relatively agile WHO professional culture facilitated radical change while, at the same time, hampered its full implementation and moderated its eventual outcome.

### *3.6 Gro Harlem Brundtland as the Director General of the WHO: Semi-transformational Leadership*

Brundtland’s leadership dynamism was relatively strong. He was energetic, innovative, authoritative and visionary. At the same time, however, certain important features such as

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<sup>691</sup> Ibid.

compassion and charisma were either weak or missing. As a result, Brundtland's style of leadership can be categorized as semi-transformational.

### *3.6.1 Brundtland's political (ministerial) leadership*

Before taking the post of WHO Director-General, Gro Harlem Brundtland had extensive experience in the Norwegian government. She was the Minister for Environmental Affairs from 1974 until 1979 and the Prime Minister in 1981, between 1986-1989 and finally from 1990 till 1996.<sup>692</sup> Thus she had had a career in the government for more than 15 years, including 10 years as Prime Minister. She was an experienced politician who led three labor governments effectively. Since most of the time these were minority governments, increased emphasis was placed on pragmatism and loyalty to the leader in order to maintain cohesiveness of the cabinet and the party. In general, her leadership style was characterized by a domestic and often confrontational mode of political decision-making. Brundtland's extensive experience in national politics also meant that she was deeply immersed in the political culture of power struggle to reach electoral and parliamentary victories, which had an important impact on shaping her political decisiveness and toughness. It meant also that Brundtland operated within tight political schedules to deliver specific results. She was thus concerned with taking decisive action so as to reach a number of objectives in a given, usually limited, timeframe. One of her former senior policy advisors described Brundtland's political leadership in the following manner:

She has fantastic capacities to analyze documents and form an opinion. She is a very careful thinker (...). She thinks very carefully about how to win a battle. She is a person focused on challenge of a given time and moment, she does not consider how these battles, victories will influence longer term agenda. She has never had a long-term agenda. That is not what she does. But if you ask her how to deal with a battle with a government or with any entities, she would define extremely clearly options for interactions and processes. In that sense, she was a strategist.<sup>693</sup>

### *3.6.2 Brundtland's international leadership*

Brundtland's long career as prime minister of Norway allowed her to develop close contacts with other heads of states and governments and meant that she was operating on the highest levels of national and international politics. She was thus less preoccupied with lower bureaucratic and policy-making levels. Her practical international experience consisted of a chairmanship of the World Commission on Environment and Development since 1983. In 1987, the Commission published a report (known as the "Brundtland report"), which dealt with the concept of sustainable development. The work of the

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<sup>692</sup> <http://www.who.int/dg/brundtland/brundtland/en/>

Commission constituted the basis for the Earth Summit discussions held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and was seen as bringing environmental concerns out of a relative obscurity and onto the global agenda. Despite her international experience, Brundtland was not a diplomat but a career national politician with an international outlook. She had relatively little exposure to international diplomacy and its *savoir-vivre*: prolonged consultations, compromises and consensus-seeking endeavors.

### *3.6.3 Brundtland's rational and evidence-based mode of work*

Brundtland has been driven by the decision-making culture based on “applied” economics. In her work in the World Commission on Environment and Development, Brundtland clearly saw the power of scientific evidence as a tool for advancing the Commission’s specific political agenda related to the environment and catching world attention. As Brundtland acknowledged, her success in bringing the environmental issue to the international stage was largely due to the scientific facts that she marshaled together to help convince prime ministers, presidents and other governmental members about the dangers of environmental degradations.<sup>694</sup> As a consequence, Brundtland strongly believed that scientific evidence was the way to get to the top decision-makers around the world.<sup>695</sup> Her experience in both government and international politics determined Brundtland’s embrace of a scientifically rigorous and economically rational approach to the decision making process as a whole as well as to specific sectors such as oil, environment and health. Brundtland’s background and consequent mode of work had an important impact on the way the former prime minister led and managed the WHO.

### *3.6.4 Brundtland's authoritative, assertive and innovative leadership*

Brundtland’s authority was located not in the soft concepts of ideas and vision but more in the hard notions of strength, power, struggle, assertiveness, and coarseness. When she was elected as the DG of the WHO, outsiders saw Brundtland as an “energetic blend of doctor, manager, politician and international activist,”<sup>696</sup> as being “media savvy,”<sup>697</sup> “a straight talker”<sup>698</sup> and a “gutsy, outspoken politician.”<sup>699</sup>

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<sup>693</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior policy advisor to the Director General, Geneva, 1 April 2004.

<sup>694</sup> Gro Harlem Brundtland, WHO- The Way Ahead, Geneva, 25 January 1999.

<sup>695</sup> Gro Harlem Brundtland, Speech to the Fifty-First World Health Assembly, Geneva 13 May 1998:5.

<sup>696</sup> A. Mach, The "New WHO" Commits to Making a Difference, *British Medical Journal*, vol.317 (1998):302.

<sup>697</sup> Martin Enserink, A Global Fire Brigade Responds to Disease Outbreaks, *Science*, vol.303, (12 March 2004):1606.

<sup>698</sup> Holleran (1998): 113.

The former and the current WHO senior officials were usually impressed by her intelligence, ability to make decisions, common sense and generally good judgments.<sup>700</sup> Brundtland was quick in thinking and acting, and therefore decisive as well as impatient to see things done. In the words of a former WHO senior official, Brundtland came to the organization and declared, “this is where I want to be in four years.”<sup>701</sup> The same interviewee noted that Brundtland was very abrupt and business-like.<sup>702</sup> A senior WHO legal official described Brundtland as abrasive, strong and not a compromiser.<sup>703</sup> Other current and former WHO senior officials, who had had the chance to observe her leadership from inside and outside the house, viewed Brundtland as an “ostensive leader,” who sought to have unlimited control, power and authority, who was reticent and distant.<sup>704</sup> Her leadership was sometimes regarded as bullying, authoritarian or autocratic, favoring unilateral executive decision rather than painstaking compromise.<sup>705</sup> Fiona Fleck saw Brundtland’s assertive leadership as a positive element that contributed to the restoration of the agency’s credibility after years of mismanagement and corruption.<sup>706</sup>

Brundtland’s leadership thus reflected the manner of work of an experienced politician who was used to political struggles. In the WHO she presented herself as a “heavy weight fighter” ready to take on powerful actors and willing to fight political battles. Indeed, as noted by one of her former policy advisors, such aggressiveness was Brundtland’s way of doing things and suited her leadership style.<sup>707</sup> An example of one such global battle is the WHO’s response to the outbreak of SARS. Brundtland did not hesitate to use global alerts for the first time to warn about SARS as a public health threat, despite the fact that the WHO Secretariat’s authority to use such alert was in fact not very clear.<sup>708</sup> She was also outspokenly critical about how powerful WHO member states such as Canada and China

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<sup>699</sup> *Science*, vol.279, no.5351, (30 January 1998): 645.

<sup>700</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Rolle, 24 March 2004.

<sup>701</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 8 April 2004.

<sup>702</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>703</sup> Interview with the WHO senior legal official, Geneva, 23 March 2004.

<sup>704</sup> Interview with the WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 26 March 2004 and Interview with the WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 5 April 2004.

<sup>705</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 18 February 2004; Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 21 January 2004; Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Rolle, 24 March 2004; Jong-Wook (20 December 2003): 2087.

<sup>706</sup> Fiona Fleck, South Korean WHO Veteran Has Tough Act to Follow, *British Medical Journal*, vol. 327 (30 August 2003): 468.

<sup>707</sup> Interview with the WHO director, Geneva, 11 June 2004.

<sup>708</sup> This observation was made by David Fidler, a long-time scholar of the WHO involvement in legalization of international public health, in *Developments Involving SARS, International Law, and Infectious Disease Control at the Fifty-Sixth Meeting of the World Health Assembly, ASIL Insights*, (June 2003). [www.asil.org/insights/insight108.htm](http://www.asil.org/insights/insight108.htm), Accessed on 20 November 2004.

handled the spread of the disease.<sup>709</sup> Thus, Brundtland did not shy away from taking risks and favored doing things differently even if it meant going against established political and bureaucratic interests. Because of her “business-like” approach, dynamism and forcefulness, Brundtland was relatively open to experimentation, innovation and testing new ground.

### *3.6.5 Brundtland’s vision-driven leadership*

Most of the officials who were interviewed for this project pointed out that Brundtland had a specific vision that undergirded her leadership. Some officials, however, did not consider her a visionary who would think ahead of her times and consider a long-term perspective on what public health should be.<sup>710</sup> Essentially, Brundtland’s vision for the WHO, as they described it, closely resembled her vision for the World Commission on Environment and Development. Brundtland aimed to elevate health (similarly like the environment earlier) to the global agenda. Indeed, when Brundtland took over the WHO Directorship General the expectation was that she would do for health as she had done earlier for environment. As one of the interviewees noted

Her vision was to alleviate WHO and to make WHO be seen as a major player when it comes to not just health, but development. [Her] vision was to alleviate not just the organization but the whole health.<sup>711</sup>

Another senior WHO official specified that Brundtland’s vision was to “make the WHO relevant not only among doctors but also among policy makers.”<sup>712</sup> Finally, Brundtland herself pointed out that the vision behind her directorship was “to anchor health firmly on the political and development agenda.”<sup>713</sup>

### *3.6.6 Brundtland’s weak emotive and inspirational leadership*

Due to her authoritative leadership style blended with a degree of authoritarianism, the WHO staff generally perceived Brundtland as “not approachable and extremely isolated from everybody except her cabinet members.”<sup>714</sup> Brundtland’s former policy advisor admitted that interacting with her every day was not easy because “she was not a warm person and she did not have much sensitivity for individuals.”<sup>715</sup> Another official who

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<sup>709</sup> See, for example, China Under Fire From WHO as SARS Toll Hits 53, *Hong Kong AFP in English*, (7 April 2003) and WHO adamant over Canada SARS, *BBC*, (25 April 2003).

<sup>710</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Rolle, 24 March 2004 and Interview with a former WHO senior policy advisor to the Director General, Geneva, 1 April 2004.

<sup>711</sup> Interview with the WHO Assistant Director General, Geneva, 29 April 2004.

<sup>712</sup> Interview with the WHO senior legal official, Geneva, 23 March 2004.

<sup>713</sup> Yamey (7 December 2002):1355.

<sup>714</sup> Interview with the WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 26 March 2004.

<sup>715</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior policy advisor to the Director General, Geneva, 1 April 2004.



worked with Brundtland acknowledged that people inside the organization “did not see her as... a mother(ly) figure.”<sup>716</sup> Because of a general lack of compassion and empathy in her leadership style, the staff did not perceive Brundtland as particularly charismatic or inspirational.<sup>717</sup> In the highly-esteemed *British Medical Journal*, Kamran Abbasi recognized Brundtland for raising WHO's profile and its credibility but also stated that “she didn't do enough for staff morale.”<sup>718</sup> This opinion corresponded with the view of a former WHO senior official who noted that Brundtland was rather “de-motivating.”<sup>719</sup> A former policy advisor to Brundtland shed more light on the DG's approach to the staff when he observed:

The problem was that for her management did not mean people, for her management meant systems, structures. And she never realized that WHO was unique because it is the organization that has nothing but people and she missed that. She felt that this was the organization that most of its strength came from the fact that it was a structure, a constitution, a network of governments. So she went on ignoring the people.<sup>720</sup>

### *3.6.7 Conclusion on Brundtland's style of leadership*

Particular elements of Brundtland's leadership that indicate a robust leadership include assertiveness, authoritative behavior, creativity, innovation, vision, openness towards new ways of doing things and certain boldness of action. As a result, Brundtland's leadership dynamism scores very high for its vitality and forcefulness. At the same time, a few indispensable elements of truly strong leadership dynamism such as compassion, affection and charisma were either weak or missing, which can also explain why her commanding behavior was seen as particularly abrasive and almost authoritarian. Therefore Brundtland's style of leadership is classified as semi-transformational leadership.

### *3.7 Impact of semi-transformation leadership on change in the WHO*

There is little doubt that Brundtland, as the sole initiator of change, exercised considerable influence on the process of change and its eventual outcome. Her style of leadership is thus crucial for understanding the process of changing the form of the Making a Difference initiative and explaining its eventual outcome. An analysis of her leadership also accounts for some unintended consequences of that change.

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<sup>716</sup> Interview with the WHO Assistant Director General, Geneva, 29 April 2004.

<sup>717</sup> Also, none of the interviewed officials talked explicitly about her charisma.

<sup>718</sup> Kamran Abbasi, Champions and Betrayers of Public Health, *British Medical Journal*, vol.327 (30 August 2003).

<sup>719</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Rolle, 24 March 2004.

<sup>720</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior policy advisor to the Director General, Geneva, 1 April 2004.

### 3.7.1 Impact of Brundtland's political leadership on the administrative changes

Brundtland was elected by the WHO Executive Board from among five contenders and saw this as a kind of electoral victory. Therefore, Brundtland felt strongly that the voters (here governments) had given her a clear mandate to make the tough choices necessary to change the WHO.<sup>721</sup> While changing the WHO Secretariat, Brundtland relied heavily on her governmental experience and political leadership and, as a result, initiated a “political transition” within the organization.<sup>722</sup> The new DG established administrative structures within the WHO Secretariat that closely resembled the ministerial setting with which she was familiar from her experience as prime minister of Norway. Brundtland abolished the political layer of Assistant Directors General (ADGs), who traditionally came from the five permanent members of the Security Council. In their place, she created the cabinet and appointed Executive Directors General (EDGs) who owed their loyalty to the DG. She saw them as ‘her’ ministers. Subsequently, 50 departments in the WHO Secretariat were merged into 37 and grouped into nine clusters (which resembled ministries), each headed by the EDGs. As a result, Brundtland turned the WHO Secretariat into a technocratic government, which she commanded and controlled.<sup>723</sup>

While referring to the implemented administrative reforms, Brundtland said that she had “opted for determined and fast change.”<sup>724</sup> Quick changes reflected Brundtland's political leadership style, operating within the governmental mode of decision-making and expecting to see the results quickly. Following her political and governmental experience she issued a report on her first one hundred days in office describing the changes she had already undertaken and implemented.<sup>725</sup> The extraordinary pace with which these were carried out stood in clear contrast to a typically slow process of administrative changes, bringing about unintended and sometimes unfavorable consequences. As the Joint Inspection Unit noted in its 2001 report on the WHO that the administrative reorganization “may have been carried out too hastily and has not, so far, changed administrative processes radically but simply displaced them.”<sup>726</sup>

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<sup>721</sup> Gro Harlem Brundtland, Address to the Geneva Group- UN Directors. Change at WHO, Geneva, 2 March 1999.

<sup>722</sup> Karen Birmingham, Brundtland Makes Waves in Her First Six Months at the WHO, *Nature Medicine*, vol.5, no.3 (March 1999):249.

<sup>723</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 8 April 2004.

<sup>724</sup> Brundtland, Address to the Geneva Group- UN Directors (2 March 1999).

<sup>725</sup> See: A Progress Report on a Hundred Days of Change, World Health Organization.

<sup>726</sup> *Review of the Management and Administration* (2001/5): V.

As for the new top management, in contrast to former, political ADGs, the appointed EDGs were now charged with technical matters that had been previously left to the directors of the departments. Although the idea of de-politicizing and “technocratizing” the top administrative layer of the WHO Secretariat seemed to be an appropriate step to take in order to reinforce independence and expertise of the international administration, it was distorted when the DG selected people to the posts of EDGs who, as it turned out, were not very technically proficient. The fast pace of change did not give Brundtland enough time to carefully vet her ministerial (EDGs) appointees. Out of nine appointed EDGs, only two were experts in their fields, and they happened to come from inside the organization. Other people were brought in due to their nationality, home continent or sex.<sup>727</sup> Consequently, over the period of five years, most of the cabinet members were removed on account of their lack of competence rather than what they stood for.<sup>728</sup> Needless to say, this high turnover did not strengthen the WHO’s top administrative machinery.

The appointment of EDGs who owed their loyalty to the DG and not to the organization as a whole made them more likely to agree rather than disagree with their boss. EDGs thus were generally reluctant to oppose the DG even if they felt that her decisions could be wrong or harmful to the organization. This view corresponds to an observation by one of the participants of the cabinet meetings:

Because a lot of these people were her appointees they could not tell her: this was wrong. If it had been ADGs system, people would say this is wrong. Now, because everybody she appointed could be sacked by her there was a limit to how people could criticize her at meetings.<sup>729</sup>

As a result, the top bureaucratic echelon of appointed EDGs had limited ability to criticize the chief and consequently failed to voice stronger warnings against releasing in 2000 a highly controversial report on the health system performance, which the next section takes up in some detail.

Another element of administrative change was the establishment of “One WHO.” Brundtland adamantly believed that the “WHO must be one.”<sup>730</sup> In Norway, the prime minister is the most powerful political actor in a unitary system of governance. The Norwegian leader clearly wanted to have the same unchallenged position in the WHO. While referring to the WHO as highly decentralized, seen by many as a feudal system of governance, she insisted on the concept of One WHO, which meant not seven WHOs: the

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<sup>727</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior policy advisor to the Director General, Geneva, 1 April 2004.

<sup>728</sup> Ibid.

<sup>729</sup> Interview with the WHO Assistant Director General, Geneva, 29 April 2004.

<sup>730</sup> Brundtland (13 May 1998):3.

Geneva headquarters and the six Regional Offices.<sup>731</sup> By addressing the need to establish a more unitary system of governance, she essentially followed a Norwegian political tradition and disregarded the WHO's own tradition of governance based on a confederation of regions.<sup>732</sup> Brundtland's strong internalization of her ministerial leadership convinced her that she could now rule and wield her power not only over the Secretariat but over the whole WHO, including the elected regional directors. As a result, she attempted to curb the authority of the regional directors, including the selection of the WHO country representatives.<sup>733</sup> In the end, Brundtland was not successful in establishing "One WHO." She failed to recognize the extent of the opposition to change as well as the difference between leading a country and an intergovernmental organization such as WHO. As a result, she alienated the regional directors, stirred up tensions between the headquarters and the WHO regions and lost time and energy on trying to build "One WHO," which was something completely strange for the WHO itself. Her former policy advisor acknowledges that Brundtland had never really cultivated the regions-headquarters relations in the way the WHO had been used to;<sup>734</sup> after she left the WHO the perception stayed that "she didn't do enough for (...) relations between headquarters and the regions."<sup>735</sup>

### *3.7.2 Brundtland's political leadership, struggle for power and attempts to raise the WHO profile*

Brundtland's political leadership, driven by a constant power struggle and worldwide attention, clearly influenced her directorship. Nowhere was this more evident than in the 2000 WHO Report, *Health Systems: Improving Performance*, which made a highly controversial ranking of the states' health systems. The person who worked closely with Brundtland described her attention-grabbing strategy in the context of the report:

She was willing to run the risk of getting the displeasure of the member states on the ranking. And we asked her: why did you go ahead with the ranking knowing—and she knew-- that this would cause a great distrust among the member states. And the answer was very interesting: she said that she agrees with many methodological concerns that raised and ethical concerns but she believes very strongly that you needed to attract the attention of the heads of states and governments and the only way to do it was to do something like ranking them. And she did attract them.<sup>736</sup>

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<sup>731</sup> Gro Harlem Brundtland, Global Meeting of WHO Representatives and Liaison Officers. Making a Difference Where it Matters, Geneva, 22 February 1999.

<sup>732</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Tanny, 14 February 2004.

<sup>733</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior policy advisor to the Director General, Geneva, 1 April 2004.

<sup>734</sup> Interview with the WHO Assistant Director General, Geneva, 29 April 2004.

<sup>735</sup> Abbasi (30 August 2003):1136.

<sup>736</sup> Interview with a former WHO Executive Director General, Geneva, 23 March 2004.

According to one of her executive directors, the DG expected that criticism, and many people warned her that it was too risky to publish the report. However, she was convinced that the report was one way of opening up the debate that allowed the WHO to bring health into the global forum.<sup>737</sup> Reflecting upon the events, Brundtland confirmed that she “knew before the report came out that there would be a lot of turbulence around it.”<sup>738</sup> However, her strategy to place health on the global agenda required her to take risks. Brundtland wanted to capture political and media attention worldwide, which would not have happened without ranking the states.<sup>739</sup> According to her former policy advisor, she thought that the ranking would be good for the WHO and the member states, that it would stimulate competition among the countries to improve their health systems and, more importantly, that it would lead to greater efforts to collect better data.<sup>740</sup>

Brundtland’s political leadership, hardened by the experience of Norwegian domestic political conflicts, tended to regard the position of the WHO in terms of competition and political struggle for the organization’s survival, prestige and international recognition. This stance was particularly visible during the debates within the Secretariat, which preceded publication of the 2000 report on health systems. During these internal debates the World Bank was construed as the principal rival of the WHO. The WHO’s top management essentially saw the World Bank as a grave threat to the prestige and influence of the agency, whose work on health was challenged and dominated by the Bank during the 1990s.

The discussions, according to one of Brundtland’s executive directors, thus focused on the question:

how can we in a short term do something to take the world attention from the World Bank to us. Can we publish something that would begin to make the world see that the WHO is taking health systems seriously (as the World Bank did in 1993)?<sup>741</sup>

Eventually, the idea to publish a document that would analyze health system performance globally, as well as rank the national health systems in order to galvanize public debate, was formed. As the same interviewed official noted the problem was that:

we had not enough data and we would need to wait two or three years to collect that data or do it now. She thought if we are going to wait two or three years to get a right data by that time, the Bank would have taken over this, we would have been taken over. What happened is that we got data from

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<sup>737</sup> Interview with the WHO Assistant Director General, Geneva, 29 April 2004.

<sup>738</sup> Yamey (7 December 2002):1357.

<sup>739</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior policy advisor to the Director General, Geneva, 1 April 2004.

<sup>740</sup> Ibid.

<sup>741</sup> Interview with the WHO Assistant Director General, Geneva, 29 April 2004.

some countries and extrapolated it based on what we needed. That is what gave us a lot of flaw. But we decided, let's take this, let's create controversy and out of that controversy things would improve.<sup>742</sup>

Because of Brundtland's immersion in political conflict, she essentially disregarded the possible negative consequences of her actions. The consequences materialized when the report on the ranking of the countries' health systems was eventually published. The political upheaval was so drastic that the Executive Board (EB) demanded to review and authorize every document that the Secretariat planned to publish that contained national data.<sup>743</sup> According to one WHO insider, if this threat had become a reality, it would have paralyzed the work of the Secretariat.<sup>744</sup> Brundtland was strongly against it and warned that in given circumstances she could no longer carry out her duties.<sup>745</sup> The states backed down, but the DG was nevertheless forced to agree to the establishment of a "small advisory group" with the EB members to monitor the WHO Secretariat's work on the assessment of the health system performance.<sup>746</sup>

### *3.7.3 Impact of Brundtland's short-term and result-focused political leadership on change*

Brundtland's political leadership was shaped by the Norwegian political culture of effectiveness. Consequently, once in the WHO she focused on programs that promised to deliver quick results.<sup>747</sup> Brundtland thus had a short-term perspective on change, and her leadership was predisposed to support operational activities that aimed to produce relatively quick and tangible results. Furthermore, as a political animal and pragmatist, the new DG felt a need to show that something had indeed happened over a relatively short span of time.<sup>748</sup> After her nomination in January 1998, Brundtland set up a transition team, which started its work before her candidature had been approved by the WHA in June 1998. From the beginning, Brundtland directed her transition team to "search for high profile 'success stories.'"<sup>749</sup> She wanted to focus on something that would be very visible or something that could show the results quickly and would succeed in her term. The new vocabulary of success stories or "flagship goals" reflected her pragmatism and focus on quick spectacular results that would dramatically increase the profile of the organization.

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<sup>742</sup> Ibid.

<sup>743</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior policy advisor to the Director General, Geneva, 1 April 2004.

<sup>744</sup> Ibid.

<sup>745</sup> Ibid.

<sup>746</sup> Gro Harlem Brundtland, Statement by the Director General to the Executive Board, 107th Session, 15 January 2001.

<sup>747</sup> Interview with the WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 21 April 2004.

<sup>748</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 15 March 2004.

<sup>749</sup> Lerer and Matzopoulos (2001): 415.

Consequently, Brundtland used a “project-oriented approach” to push for change in the organization.<sup>750</sup> She selected projects that were disease-oriented like malaria and polio, or highly visible “killer” industries like tobacco, all of which could be easily presented as terrible things.<sup>751</sup> Indeed, they were projects that could strike the imagination of politicians. Her agenda was to bring up some of these “battle horses” (projects) and push them at the highest levels of international community.<sup>752</sup>

#### *3.7.4 Impact of Brundtland’s vision and its realization on change*

Brundtland’s vision to place health at the forefront of the global agenda and raise the profile of the WHO was realized through her prime-ministerial experience. She recognized very quickly that because of the weak position of health ministers in most governments, she would not be able to advance her vision unless her partners were heads of states and governments. Few weeks before assuming the office of the WHO Director General, Brundtland pledged:

WHO will remind presidents, prime ministers, finance ministers, and science ministers that they are health ministers themselves (...).<sup>753</sup>

She thus focused her energy and attention on the highest political levels (prime ministers and presidents) where there were resources and real power.<sup>754</sup> Such approach corresponded with her political experience and skills connected with her previous political engagements on the highest levels of international politics as prime minister of Norway. Because of that experience, she knew heads of states personally and, according to a former WHO senior official, was “in a position to pick up the phone and call any heads of state on any issue she wanted.”<sup>755</sup>

Indeed, several WHO officials recognized that Brundtland was not paying much attention to health ministers.<sup>756</sup> By claiming that health is a global issue she was indirectly saying that health was not a (health) ministry but rather a state issue.<sup>757</sup> Consequently, as observed by another official, she did not deal very much with health ministers; given her experience in government, she thought that they were somehow below her.<sup>758</sup> This approach constituted a clear break with the existing tradition of the WHO Secretariat according to

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<sup>750</sup> Ibid., 421.

<sup>751</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Rolle, 24 March 2004.

<sup>752</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 8 April 2004.

<sup>753</sup> Gro Harlem Brundtland, Reaching Out For World Health, *Science*, vol.280, i.5372, (26 June 1998): 2027.

<sup>754</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 8 April 2004.

<sup>755</sup> Ibid.

<sup>756</sup> Interview with the WHO senior legal official, Geneva, 23 March 2004.

<sup>757</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 8 April 2004.

<sup>758</sup> Interview with the WHO Assistant Director General, Geneva, 29 April 2004.

which the main political partners of the WHO Director General had always been health ministers. By bypassing traditional channels of communication, Brundtland managed to implement her vision. However, by working with the presidents and prime ministers and ignoring the health ministers, Brundtland offended the main WHO political constituent. She essentially jeopardized the relations with the health ministers of the member states, which the WHO Secretariat has so carefully cultivated during its fifty years of existence.

Brundtland's vision turned out to be a "one-man show," which did not call for an active involvement of the WHO staff. Implementation of the vision was firmly in the hands of the DG and supported only by a relatively small group of trusted people involved in carrying out the DG "pet projects". In fact, Brundtland's *modus operandi* on the global political level implied her lack of interest in talking to health ministers and lower administrative levels within the WHO Secretariat. Brundtland was seen as being more comfortable with participating in the meetings with the heads of states and governments than with holding a staff meeting and discussing internal issues. As a result, a part of the WHO staff felt excluded. This was clearly expressed by the chairman of the WHO staff association, who quipped: "Maybe she (Brundtland) is a visionary far ahead of us. But she needs to share the vision more with us."<sup>759</sup> Brundtland's weak emotive leadership was illustrated in the WHO staff's survey where morale and job satisfaction among the WHO staff were rated particularly low.<sup>760</sup> This finding led the WHO staff representative to state bluntly that the staff members were "losing their sense of loyalty and feeling of ownership."<sup>761</sup>

### *3.7.5 Impact of Brundtland's innovative and "boundary-breaking" leadership on change*

Brundtland used her Making a Difference initiative to emphasize imagination, innovation, greater openness for experimentation and trials and greater freedom to question established procedure within the organization. As the first DG that came to the WHO from the outside, Brundtland was more willing to push for bold and original reforms. One of Brundtland's innovations was greater openness of the organization to the public and press coverage.<sup>762</sup> She allowed a few technical chiefs who were driving her "battle horses," to speak more freely to the public and give their testimonies to the press. Such policy, for example, clearly

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<sup>759</sup> Clare (3 June 2000):1978.

<sup>760</sup> Job Satisfaction Survey: The Results. WHO Staff Association, No.11 (8 May 2001).

<sup>761</sup> Statement by the Representative of the WHO Staff Association on Matters Concerning Personnel Policy and Conditions of Service, 108<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Board, 23 May 2001.

<sup>762</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 21 January 2004.



contrasted the past experience under the previous DG, Dr. Nakajima. Earlier, everything had to be done in the name of the DG or by the DG himself.<sup>763</sup>

Another of Brundtland's pioneering ideas was to use the WHO to reach out to others.<sup>764</sup> To realize this, the new DG began promoting energetically the new Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), which would bring the WHO and its Secretariat closer to civil society and business. As recalled by the WHO senior official, this initiative was a radical departure from what the WHO did previously. Before, none of the WHO technical meetings included industries as participants and the WHO legal system did not allow for it. The feeling was that if the industry were present, it would lobby and influence the WHO technical experts.<sup>765</sup> Brundtland proposed changes, later approved by the EB, which opened the organization to the outside non-state actors. As a result of Brundtland's initiative, the internal rules were amended to accept the industry's involvement in the discussions (although not in the final recommendations) at the meetings of the WHO technical committees provided that all possible conflicts of interest were declared.<sup>766</sup> Brundtland thus shifted the WHO to a more outward-looking mode of operandi.

Brundtland expected the staff, particularly those she brought in with her, to go beyond the borders of what had been previously established. One interviewee who worked with Brundtland still remembered the work climate that the DG created for the realization of her main program objectives. Essentially, the DG insisted that the newly-launched programs be "pathfinders" and were to show how people can work differently in the WHO<sup>767</sup>. One of Brundtland's original projects was the Tobacco Free Initiative, which aimed to conclude a legally binding treaty. As others have suggested a legally binding treaty was a completely alien undertaking for the medical profession of the WHO Secretariat<sup>768</sup>. Therefore work on that specific initiative had to be implemented in an original way to be successful. The official from the Secretariat, who was responsible for the implementation of this project, described the new approach taken by the organization as follows:

What did we do? Within two-three years we have been employing more lawyers than the WHO office of the legal counsel and probably the rest of the WHO combined. (...) I recognized in the early on, we needed to get on the top of what is happening on the litigation side so we brought some of the best litigators from the court cases that won billions of dollars in the US from tobacco industry, trying to understand how they won the cases, what was in the documents that they managed

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<sup>763</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior administrative official, Geneva, 4 February 2004.

<sup>764</sup> Brundtland (13 May 1998).

<sup>765</sup> Interview with the WHO Assistant Director General, Geneva, 29 April 2004.

<sup>766</sup> Ibid.

<sup>767</sup> Interview with a former WHO Executive Director General, Geneva, 23 March 2004.

<sup>768</sup> See Taylor (1992): 301-346.

to get to the public domain so we could understand the thinking process in the tobacco industry. We had international trade lawyers on top, we had people from the university of Geneva, the international legal people that worked on conventions and treaties, some of the best people in the UN system (...).<sup>769</sup>

Brundtland gave all the necessary support to the new pathfinder. The same WHO senior official recalled his discussion with the DG in which he stressed that things would need to be done differently to implement the new project that he was responsible for. The answer he received was, “you must do what it takes”<sup>770</sup> (emphasis added). Brundtland’s “can-do” leadership was a significant factor in facilitating the administrative process of anti-tobacco treaty-making as illustrated in the citation below:

We never had enough money for any (anti-tobacco treaty-making) meetings until actually a couple of days before (a meeting). (The part of administration responsible for financing) used a threat of money (that could) delay a start up of the whole process. And I would have to use the counter threat of going straight to Brundtland. She always overruled them and said you find the money. Always. She never ever backed away from what we needed to do.<sup>771</sup>

With the successful outcome of the Tobacco Free Initiative in the form of anti-tobacco convention, Brundtland opened the organization for the involvement in norm creation beyond a purely medical field. The anti-tobacco campaign initiated by Brundtland changed the organization and the way the industries perceived it. According to the WHO senior official, when the WHO staff members now talk to the executives of the food companies, they are quite aware of the fact that the organization is willing to go head to head with the industry if it has to.<sup>772</sup> Overall, Brundtland’s fight against tobacco dramatically increased the profile of the WHO. The program established the organization’s more assertive image vis-à-vis external non-state actors. “A year ago, you wouldn’t have had the food companies coming to the WHO to talk about fat, salt and sugar,”<sup>773</sup> explains the WHO official.

### *3.7.6 Impact of authoritative leadership on enforcing the process of change*

Brundtland’s authoritative leadership was characterized by its decisiveness and firmness. The DG, as observed by the WHO senior official, was not shy and prepared to go to battle if necessary.<sup>774</sup> This was very unusual behavior for someone who operated in the UN’s

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<sup>769</sup> Interview with a former WHO Executive Director General, Geneva, 23 March 2004.

<sup>770</sup> Ibid.

<sup>771</sup> Ibid.

<sup>772</sup> Ibid.

<sup>773</sup> WHO source cited by Stephen Clapp, WHO Tells Stakeholders that Food Is Not Tobacco, *Food Chemical News*, vol.45, issue 15, (26 May 2003): 16.

<sup>774</sup> Interview with the WHO senior legal official, Geneva, 23 March 2004.

cautious environment. Christopher Murray, the head of the Evidence and Information for Policy cluster, referred to this peculiar UN environment when he talked about Brundtland's leadership:

When you hang around the UN community, you realize that sort of courage in the face of pressure from powerful governments is very unusual. It is just so much easier to give in, and (Brundtland) just wouldn't.<sup>775</sup>

Brundtland's authoritative leadership also contrasted sharply with the WHO Secretariat's tradition of dealing with the member states and health ministers in a diplomatically polite manner. According to the WHO senior official, Brundtland

would not hide her feeling if some health minister said something that did not make sense. She would say: It does not make sense. When the tradition has been: What you are saying is good idea but can we look at it that way.<sup>776</sup>

The contrast between Brundtland's authoritative leadership style and the style of leadership of previous WHO DGs is conspicuous. The previous DGs tended to indicate that the member states were the masters of the organization and the Secretariat followed their wishes. Brundtland, according to the interviewees, had a much rougher approach.<sup>777</sup> She would go to the states with messages such as "I have decided to do this"<sup>778</sup> and "this is what we have, take it."<sup>779</sup> Brundtland's authoritative leadership ignored the traditional view of the WHO that the international administration and its leader should not antagonize the member states.<sup>780</sup>

The most visible example of Brundtland's authoritative leadership style was the manner in which the 2000 Health Report, *Health Systems: Improving Performance* was produced under Brundtland's leadership. Despite an inclusion of the ranking of the national health systems in the report, Brundtland had not engaged in any consultations on the contents of the report with the countries' health ministries prior to publication.<sup>781</sup> The states eventually found out about the contents of the report only after it was published and the results were made public. The countries saw the ranking of health systems, generated in a non-consultative method, as patronizing and paternalistic. The ranking system was viewed as a great affront to the WHO member states.<sup>782</sup> As noted by the WHO official, because the

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<sup>775</sup> Cited by Brown (July 20, 2003).

<sup>776</sup> Interview with the WHO Assistant Director General, Geneva, 29 April 2004.

<sup>777</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 15 March 2004.

<sup>778</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 21 January 2004.

<sup>779</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 15 March 2004.

<sup>780</sup> Interview with the WHO Assistant Director General, Geneva, 29 April 2004.

<sup>781</sup> Interview with the WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 21 April 2004.

<sup>782</sup> Ibid.

WHO is constituted of member states, the administration at least owed them the courtesy of notifying them beforehand about what it is going to say in public.<sup>783</sup> As a result of Brundtland's authoritative leadership the feeling among the governments was that the Secretariat was becoming arrogant.<sup>784</sup>

The whole procedure according to which the report was prepared contrasted sharply with the established in-house tradition of mutual consultations and sharing information with the member states. While describing that tradition in greater detail using the example of the WHO Global Program on AIDS, the WHO senior official explained:

When the WHO Global Program on AIDS was doing the estimates on HIV (at the beginning of the 1990s), we had negotiation and consultation processes going back and forth for three years. We were sending all the scientific background, all the data and we were saying to the states: we suggest you look at this and if you are in disagreement you tell us why and if we do not manage to come to an agreement, we will publish two columns: an estimate by WHO/UN and an estimate by the country. No country ended up wanting that. We ended up with a single column. We have consulted 190 countries. We have had very serious discussions and controversies. For example, India was not ready to admit that in the early 1990s they had almost 3 million people infected with HIV. They did not want to hear about it. At the end they did agree because of the consultations.<sup>785</sup>

After an open rift with the states, Brundtland conceded that her strategy was too offensive for the member states. She promised expanded consultations and rigorous peer-review of the data indicators and methodology.<sup>786</sup> She also pledged that she would “ensure that Member States receive WHO's compilation before they could be made available to the general public.”<sup>787</sup> The reputation of the WHO Secretariat's leadership was, however, already damaged. The controversy over the ranking led the DG to be more cautious with other initiatives such as linking health with human rights.<sup>788</sup> This proposal that was eventually dropped had the chance of anchoring the issue of health firmly in the global security discourse but was viewed by the DG as a too risky project at the particular moment.

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<sup>783</sup> Interview with the WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 26 March 2004.

<sup>784</sup> Interview with the WHO Assistant Director General, Geneva, 29 April 2004.

<sup>785</sup> Interview with the WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 21 April 2004.

<sup>786</sup> Gro Harlem Brundtland, Statement by the Director General to the Executive Board, 107th Session, 15 January 2001 and Gro Harlem Brundtland, Bridging the Health Divide: The Way Forward, Address to the Fifty Fourth World Health Assembly, 14 May 2001.

<sup>787</sup> Gro Harlem Brundtland, Statement by the Director General to the Executive Board, 107th Session, 15 January 2001.

<sup>788</sup> Interview with the WHO Assistant Director General, Geneva, 29 April 2004.

Brundtland's authoritative leadership had not been shaped through any exposure to the diplomatic work culture of international organizations. Her leadership, therefore, failed to show a greater sensitivity for a political consensus, as well as certain diplomatic tactfulness, which characterized interactions between the WHO bureaucracy and its member states. Her authoritative leadership style, whose dynamism pushed the health agenda onto the world stage, was seen within the WHO as a breach of the unwritten diplomatic code of conduct on international level.

### *3.7.7 Impact of Brundtland's science-driven and evidence-based rational leadership on change*

The new DG clearly believed, using her own words, that "stronger evidence is key to the success of (WHO) advocacy."<sup>789</sup> Brundtland also declared confidently that she believed in science and evidence,<sup>790</sup> and that they should serve as guidelines for actions and policies.<sup>791</sup> Brundtland essentially saw science-driven and rational decision-making as an indication of organizational credibility.<sup>792</sup>

The DG's technocratic approach to decision making led to the establishment of a separate cluster (department) within the WHO Secretariat, the Evidence and Information for Policy (EIP). The DG brought in more than one hundred health economists, including the authors of the 1993 World Bank report and Investing in Health and Harvard university researchers who studied global burden of diseases.<sup>793</sup> The EIP cluster staffed by the economists was Brundtland's instrument to place the WHO back into the global power seat. As noted by one interviewee, Brundtland used somebody who could make politicians listen: "only people who could translate science and technology to political realities were the economists."<sup>794</sup>

The establishment of a quantitatively and statistically driven powerhouse in the WHO Secretariat strengthened its technical position vis-à-vis the member states. According to a WHO senior staff member, prior to Brundtland, the WHO Secretariat asked the countries for data and often published it with little verification. The data was thus unreliable and had

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<sup>789</sup> Gro Harlem Brundtland, WHO- The Way Ahead, Geneva, 25 January 1999.

<sup>790</sup> Brundtland (13 May 1998):7.

<sup>791</sup> Brundtland (15 January 2001).

<sup>792</sup> Gro Harlem Brundtland, Director General's Address to WHO staff, Geneva, 8 January 2001.

<sup>793</sup> Kelley Lee and Hilary Goodman, "Global Policy Networks: The Propagation of Health Care Financing Reform Since the 1980s," in Kelley Lee, Kent Buse and Suzanne Fustukian, *Health Policy in a Globalising World*, Cambridge University Press (Cambridge 2002): 110.

<sup>794</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 8 April 2004.

little value. To address this problem, Brundtland made a decision that any papers providing official WHO estimates had to be cleared first by the EIP.<sup>795</sup> As a result, under Brundtland's leadership, the WHO made a strong point to go after consistent, verifiable and reasonable estimates of mortality and morbidity.<sup>796</sup>

### *3.6.8 Conclusion on the impact of Brundtland's semi-transformational leadership on the Making a Difference change*

Brundtland's semi-transformational leadership was decisive, innovative and visionary, but was also weak on emotive and charismatic features. Brundtland managed to implement specific elements of Making a Difference, which turned a poorly visible and generally passive organization into a global leader in health. At the same time, Brundtland's leadership, not fully transformational, generated certain opposition among the WHO political constituents, alienated some of the WHO staff members and contributed to the emergence of significant obstacles that hindered the implementation of Making a Difference and mitigated the impact of its contents.

### *3.8 Impact of the professional culture on change in the WHO*

This section will demonstrate that the impact of the professional culture in the WHO Secretariat refocused the Making a Difference initiative from its implicitly horizontal and multidisciplinary approach toward more vertical, result-oriented, short-term and single issue-area programs, which contributed paradoxically to the heightened WHO profile and placement of health on the global agenda.

#### *3.8.1 Impact of the professional medical culture on Making a Difference*

In Brundtland's transition team, according to one of its top members, there was a strong emphasis on the horizontal approaches towards the health systems.<sup>797</sup> Brundtland expressed her unreserved support for the integrated, comprehensive, health-system-oriented dimension of her Making a Difference initiative. In the introduction of her first World Health Report, Brundtland maintained that one of the essential themes of the WHO work under her directorship would be adequate support for health systems development.<sup>798</sup>

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<sup>795</sup> Interview with the WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 26 March 2004.

<sup>796</sup> Ibid.

<sup>797</sup> Interview with the WHO Assistant Director General, Geneva, 29 April 2004.

<sup>798</sup> The World Health Report. *Making a Difference*, World Health Organization (1999):XI.

The reality, however, diverged considerably from the stated objectives of Making a Difference. For example, during the implementation of Brundtland's initiative, the programs that required long-term planning and more complex (horizontal and interdisciplinary) approaches, such as child health, adolescent health, and environmental health, became secondary priorities.<sup>799</sup> Severe financial and staff reductions undermined the environmental health program, which was responsible for water infrastructure (including water sanitation).<sup>800</sup> This was particularly surprising in view of the Making a Difference initiative and its central program, Roll Back Malaria (RBM). Roll Back Malaria claimed to adopt a comprehensive and horizontal approach to fighting malaria, meaning that expertise on water sanitation should have constituted one of the essential components of any comprehensive approach to contain malaria. Thus, raised a paradox; the Making a Difference initiative promoted comprehensive and horizontal approaches to health while, in reality, departments that were crucial for maintaining that horizontality and comprehensiveness were, in organizational terms, considerably undermined.

This apparent contradiction between the proposed and the actual changes has been the consequence of the WHO's professional medical culture. Because of its impact, a practical articulation of the horizontally-oriented rhetoric regarding the health systems included in Making a Difference initiative became very weak and quickly faded away. In fact, according to the observers of WHO activities, during the time of Making a Difference implementation, the organization has become

(...) imbued by an ever-increasing focus on disease eradication to the detriment of health promotion, environment health, standards setting and country capacity-building.<sup>801</sup>

Others, who led detailed analyses of changes that took place under Brundtland's directorship, were also in the opinion that the WHO had in fact given up on dealing with difficult issues such as the provision of global primary health care.<sup>802</sup>

Under the influence of the WHO Secretariat's dominant medical culture, the Making a Difference initiative eventually became a technocratic-oriented medical agenda. The initiative, in practice, promoted short-term, vertical projects focused on a single-disease with measurable and appealing goals. These projects overshadowed more complex, long-term, horizontal and interdisciplinary health programs.

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<sup>799</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior policy advisor to the Director General, Geneva, 1 April 2004.

<sup>800</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 8 April 2004.

<sup>801</sup> Reid and Pearce (6 January 2003): 9.

The contents of *Making a Difference* or, more precisely, its rhetorical emphasis on horizontal approaches and comprehensive solutions for the health systems' problems had been relatively quickly overtaken by the push for vertical and single disease-oriented, medical practices. This happened because of a strong bias of the WHO's medical culture and its professionals towards vertical, interventionist and result-oriented activities. The WHO's top manager, who had the chance to observe his colleagues at work during Brundtland's directorship, recalls:

For me it was shocking to see a lack of commitment to horizontal approach in the Secretariat. The infectious disease people believe very strongly in vertical programs, the malaria people believe in Roll Back Malaria that was a vertical program. Stop TB [tuberculosis] program was also very vertical program. Polio was even more vertical than ever before. They kept making the point that they are going to strengthen vaccine programs instead of health systems.<sup>803</sup>

Many of these specialists had been part of a very strong professional network developed in the 1970s for the eradication of smallpox. According to the same WHO senior official, the professionals shaped by the smallpox eradication campaign (now in their 50s and 60s) still played a very significant role in the international public health policy. For example, under Brundtland directorship, the head of communicable diseases cluster came out of the smallpox eradication team. Their basic belief, as noted by the official, was that they could use simple technologies to treat diseases quickly.<sup>804</sup>

Another reason for the modification of the *Making a Difference* initiative during its implementation lies in the deterministic philosophy of work that is characteristic for the professional medical culture in the WHO headquarters. According to that philosophy, only something that seems feasible with measurable progress should be pursued. Because vertical, disease-oriented activities are relatively simple and their goals and results easy to quantify, the professional culture favors these kinds of programs. As a result, the professional culture filtered the technical projects promoted by the *Making a Difference* initiative in such a way that they became vertical and single disease-oriented projects that could generate concrete, quantifiable goals and results. The programmatic call for the consolidation of health systems based on long-term, horizontal and comprehensive approaches found itself outside of the deterministic framework of the medically-oriented professional culture of the WHO Secretariat. As a consequence of the impact of the professional medical culture supposedly horizontal and comprehensive elements of *Making*

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<sup>802</sup> Lerer and Matzopoulos (2001): 433.

<sup>803</sup> Interview with a former WHO Executive Director General, Geneva, 23 March 2004.



a Difference turned during process into deterministic interventions during the implementation process. According to a former senior official, such deterministic interventions are still used today.<sup>805</sup>

The strong impact of the WHO professional culture was particularly visible in the technical programs (more than administrative changes) that constituted a crucial part of the Making a Difference initiative. The influence of the professional culture of the Secretariat was especially strong on the programs under the Public Private Partnerships framework, including Roll Back Malaria, which, next to Tobacco Free Initiative, was the top priority pathfinder project of Making a Difference initiative.

### *3.8.2 Impact of the WHO Secretariat's professional culture on the WHO Public-Private Partnerships*

One of the Making a Difference proposals was to open the organization to new cooperative ventures known as the Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). The most important and well-known PPPs launched during the period of Brundtland's directorship included: the Global Alliance to Eliminate Leprosy (GAEL, 1999), the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis (GAELF, 2000), the Roll Back Malaria Global Partnership (RBM, 1998), the Global Partnership to Stop TB (Stop TB, 1999), the Global Alliance for Vaccine and Immunization (2001, GAVI) and the WHO's Programme to Eliminate Sleeping Sickness (2001, WPESS).

The majority of PPPs, which, next to WHO, involved also other international organizations as well as state institutions and private companies, have been given technical and scientific programmatic agendas determined, eventually, by the WHO Secretariat. As a result, the Secretariat has exercised a particularly influential role in PPPs as far as their technical focus and scientific approaches are concerned. A more careful study shows that the impact of the Secretariat's medical culture on the technical programmatic agenda of the new PPPs has, indeed, been striking. It is not a coincidence that out of sixteen PPPs that WHO has been involved in,<sup>806</sup> only one focused on building or strengthening health systems.<sup>807</sup> The

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<sup>804</sup> Ibid.

<sup>805</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 8 April 2004.

<sup>806</sup> European Partnership Project on Tobacco Dependence, Global Alliance for TB Drug Development, Global Alliance to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis, Global Alliance to Eliminate Leprosy, Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, Global Elimination of Blinding Trachoma, Global Fire Fighting Partnership, Global Partnerships for Healthy Aging, Global Polio Eradication Initiative, Global School Health Initiative, Multilateral Initiative on Malaria, Medicines for Malaria Venture, Partnership for Parasite Control, Roll Back Malaria, Stop TB Initiative, UNAIDS/Industry Drug Access Initiative. See Michael R. Reich, ed., *Public-*

majority of PPPs are programs that concentrate on infectious disease prevention and control through the development of drugs and vaccines. Therefore, concerns were raised that the WHO partnerships perpetuate vertical programs and do not take advantage of opportunities to strengthen health systems.<sup>808</sup> According to Buse and Walt, the evaluators of various WHO programs, the focus of the WHO PPPs on narrow problems and solutions such as drugs or vaccines for malaria or TB diseases means that insufficient attention is given to more complex and long term programs directed at strengthening of health service delivery systems.<sup>809</sup> Generally, the WHO Secretariat's partnerships usually have short term, high profile goals. According to Yamey from the British Medical Journal, they tend to "pick up the low hanging fruit (because) they concentrate their efforts on getting quick results."<sup>810</sup> Such focus is particularly surprising given that various independent evaluations of the WHO's PPPs stressed the necessity to concentrate on long-term strategies of health system development and on building wider systems of health delivery.<sup>811</sup>

It has been discovered that the new PPPs were generally biased towards working with countries that had a strong public sector.<sup>812</sup> This bias is closely related to the tendency of the professionals in the WHO Secretariat to favor cooperation with countries that have a greater chance of success and can deliver tangible results in a relatively limited-time frame. Only the countries with stronger health infrastructure can generate such tangible and quick results. This explains the WHO Secretariat's bias towards assisting the countries that have stronger public health sector, which is, by extension, reflected in PPPs dominated by the WHO administration.<sup>813</sup>

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*Private Partnerships for Public Health*, Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies, (2002): 5-6 and table 1.2. <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/hcpds/booksonline.html>

<sup>807</sup> The Multilateral Initiative on Malaria is the only WHO partnership that directly addresses the strengthening of health services. See Sania Nishtar, Public – Private 'Partnerships' in Health – a Global Call to Action, *Health Research Policy Systems*, vol.2, no.5 (28 July 2004): table1.

<http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?tool=pubmed&pubmedid=15282025#B11>.

<sup>808</sup> Mark Pearson, Economic and Financial Aspects of the Global Health Partnerships, Global Health Partnerships: Assessing the Impact. DFID Study Paper 2, (2004): 67.

<sup>809</sup> Kent Buse and Gill Walt, "The World Health Organization and Global Public-Private Health Partnerships: In Search of 'Good' Global Health Governance," in Michael R. Reich, ed., *Public-Private Partnerships for Public Health*, Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies, (2002):188.

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/hcpds/booksonline.html>

<sup>810</sup> Gavin Yamey, WHO in 2002. Faltering Steps Towards Partnerships, *British Medical Journal*, vol.325, (23 November 2002):1238.

<sup>811</sup> Nel Druce and Andrew Harmer, *The Determinants of Effectiveness: Partnerships that Deliver Review of the GHP and 'Business' Literature*. Global Health Partnerships: Assessing the Impact. DFID Study Paper 6 (2004): 22.

<sup>812</sup> Kent Buse and Gill Walt, Global Public Private Health Partnership: Part II. What are the Issues for Global Governance, *Bulletin of the World Health Organisation*, vol.78, no.5, (2000): 704.

<sup>813</sup> This bias was discovered and described in the independent report of the WHO activities at the country level. See *Cooperation for Health Development. WHO's Support to Programmes at Country Level. Summary Report* (Oslo 1997):13-15.

It was also observed that under the leadership of the WHO, common interests and goals drove the partnerships rather than the common values.<sup>814</sup> These interests and goals reflect the focus of the Secretariat's professional culture on the delivery of vaccines, reduction in the disease prevalence and quick, decisive improvements in mortality and morbidity rates. At the same time, there is a general disregard for the value of long-term efforts focused on building health infrastructures essential to the sustainable impact of the short-term and quick result-oriented projects.

Generally, the agendas of the WHO partnerships consist of specific solutions that are stipulated by the dominant professional culture of the WHO Secretariat. The WHO professional culture determines the overall nature of the WHO partnerships, which are designed generally as campaigns driven by specific, quantifiable goals and measurable results. These campaigns eventually generate considerable publicity and international attention. Such positive publicity, in turn, removes the pressure on the WHO professional culture to refocus itself and embrace long-term and a more complex programs that could address failures and weaknesses of the health system (e.g. high infant and maternal mortality) or inadequate infrastructure for sustainable and routine immunization.<sup>815</sup>

Upon closer examination of selected WHO partnerships, the impact of the WHO professional culture on the design of PPPs becomes obvious. In the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations (GAVI), set in 2001, the WHO Secretariat is responsible for development of global policies and strategies for immunization and the Secretariat's Biological Department is the "operational arm" of GAVI.<sup>816</sup> In general, the WHO Secretariat is the dominant technical actor in GAVI; the impact of its professional culture has been visible since the inception of this PPP. It was observed that GAVI encouraged the use of the newly developed DTP-hepatitis B vaccine. Such unwavering reliance on DTP is a reflection of the medical profession's fixation on new "wonder tools" or "miracle cures." According to Hardon who analyzed GAVI partnership, the WHO Secretariat's emphasis on the new and under-used vaccines showed the Secretariat's bias towards technological innovation and disease eradication and thus also its disregard for a goal of equitable and

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<sup>814</sup> Buse and Walt (2000): 704.

<sup>815</sup> Møgedal and Stenson (2000):14.

<sup>816</sup> Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI). Available at the WHO official web-site: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs169/en/>

universal vaccination based on traditional vaccines in the countries that have weak immunization programs.<sup>817</sup>

The WHO Secretariat also exercises strong control over the Stop TB initiative. The Executive Secretary of Stop TB is appointed by the WHO's Director General and is a WHO staff member.<sup>818</sup> Consequently, the WHO Secretariat's technical guidelines are central for the Stop TB initiative. The influence of the WHO Secretariat is reflected in the initiative's strong reliance on specific technological interventions. They include, for example, DOTS technology, which consists of "directly observed short-term treatment, regular drug supplies and monitoring system(s)."<sup>819</sup> Because of the confidence of the medical profession in new technologies and new drugs, long-term social and economic solutions related to fighting with TB tend to be overlooked. A prevailing view of the medical profession is that the WHO now has the right technology to use against disease to generate quick results.<sup>820</sup>

The impact of the professional culture of the WHO Secretariat on the Global Alliance to Eliminate Leprosy (GAEL) was also considerable. The evaluation of the work of the Alliance suggests that the WHO Secretariat prioritized drug treatment over providing care and support.<sup>821</sup> The Alliance encouraged multi-drug therapy even if the circumstances were inappropriate for it. In addition, the Alliance pushed for an exclusive focus on targets for elimination.<sup>822</sup>

The hubris of the professional culture of the WHO Secretariat has also left its imprint on the operation of the partnerships. In several cases, the WHO Secretariat has been criticized for not behaving as a genuine partner that treats other participants as equals. In fact, WHO Secretariat was perceived as too dominant in the partnerships, which relied heavily on the Secretariat's technical input, especially in RBM and GAEL.<sup>823</sup> The RBM evaluation report

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<sup>817</sup> Anita Hardon, *Immunisation for All? A Critical Look at the First GAVI Partners Meeting. The Road to GAVI*, March 2001. [www.haiweb.org/pubs/hailights/mar2001/HAILightsMar2001\\_1.doc](http://www.haiweb.org/pubs/hailights/mar2001/HAILightsMar2001_1.doc). Accessed 15 February 2005. See also, Buse and Walt in Reich, eds., (2002):184.

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/hcpds/booksonline.html>

<sup>818</sup> Kent Buse, *Governing Public-Private Infectious Disease Partnerships*, *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, vol. X, no.2 (Winter/Spring 2004): 235-236.

<sup>819</sup> Yves Beigbeder, *International Public Health. Patients' Rights vs. the Protection of Patients*, Ashgate (Burlington, USA 2004):111.

<sup>820</sup> Interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 8 April 2004.

<sup>821</sup> Druce and Harmer (2004):18.

<sup>822</sup> Karen Caines, *Global Health Partnerships and Neglected Diseases*. *Global Health Partnerships: Assessing the Impact*. GHP Study Paper 4, (2004): 23.

<sup>823</sup> Karen Caines and Kent Buse; Cindy Carlson; Rose-Marie de Loor; Nel Druce; Cheri Grace; Mark Pearson; Jennifer Sancho and Rajeev Sadanandan. *Assessing The Impact Of Global Health Partnerships*.

stated that RBM is “like a WHO programme with friends rather than a true partnership of equals.” The report added that the WHO Secretariat’s dominance in RBM created a situation in which decisions are often made without consultation and on the basis of ‘going it alone.’<sup>824</sup> Another independent review of the WHO Secretariat’s partnerships discovered that the WHO’s specific practices were limiting effective partnerships.<sup>825</sup> The problems with the WHO Secretariat’s partnering cited by the report included: technical arrogance (professional superiority complex), poor dialogue, and a lack of consultative consensus.<sup>826</sup> These constitute a very important part of hubris of the professional culture in the WHO Secretariat.

### *3.8.3 Impact of the WHO Secretariat’s professional culture on the pathfinder of Making a Difference, Roll Back Malaria*

Among all the WHO partnerships, Roll Back Malaria (RBM) had a very unique position in the Making a Difference initiative. It is thus justifiable to examine it as an independent case separate from all the other WHO partnerships. RBM was a flagship project of Brundtland’s cabinet and next to the tobacco initiative, the engine behind the technical part of Making a Difference. RBM, like the other PPPs, has also been dominated by the WHO Secretariat and its managerial and technical inputs. This dominance has existed despite the fact that RBM was established as an equal partnership of states, non-governmental organizations, multilateral funding agencies, private sectors and academia.<sup>827</sup>

The inclusion of malaria into the Making a Difference initiative demonstrated a new organizational confidence in the WHO Secretariat’s capability to contain a disease. This new confidence emerged despite vivid memories of failure and “institutional death” of the WHO’s malaria eradication program at the end of the 1960s. Consequently, the renewed organizational prominence bestowed upon the campaign against malaria reflected a never-ending drive to test new technological wonders and cost-effective interventions. Indeed, as others observed, there was a firm belief that RBM could make significant global advances because of the availability of new cost effective interventions,<sup>828</sup> including long-lasting insecticide-impregnated mosquito bed nets. The DG too, said “I knew that low-cost and

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*Synstudy of findings from the 2004 DFID Studies. Global Health Partnerships: Assessing the Impact (2004):12.*

<sup>824</sup> Final Report of the External Evaluation of Roll Back Malaria. Achieving Impact: Roll Back Malaria in the Next Phase, November 2002: 17.

<sup>825</sup> Druce and Harmer (2004): 16.

<sup>826</sup> Ibid.

<sup>827</sup> The WHO dominance over RBM was clearly depicted in the Final Report of the External Evaluation of Roll Back Malaria (November 2002): 17 as well as described by Karen, eds., (2004):12.

effective approaches to malaria prevention and treatment were available, and that more were under development.”<sup>829</sup> The “can-do” medical attitude, combined with the element of hubris that is omnipresent within the professional culture, played an important role in launching the program and determining its ambitious goals. The RBM project, for example, set a target of reducing malaria mortality by 50% by the year 2010, which some experts considered infeasible from the very beginning.<sup>830</sup>

When Brundtland introduced RBM, she saw it “not as a revamped vertical program” but as “a new health sector-wide approach to combat the disease at global, regional and country and local levels.”<sup>831</sup> The comprehensive and horizontal approach would show that WHO, indeed, had begun working differently.<sup>832</sup> Professional culture within the WHO Secretariat, however, modified RBM and strengthened its vertical drive for quick results. Consequently, despite the leadership’s verbal rhetoric about comprehensiveness of RBM in terms of involvement of other actors as well as its emphasis on strengthening health services of affected populations,<sup>833</sup> RBM remained vertical, interventionist and concentrated only on a global level.

The impact of the WHO professional culture as well as the degree of verticality of the RBM were both reflected in the assumption of the WHO medical specialists that health systems could be strengthened by the fight with a single disease such as malaria and the deployment of simple cost-effective technologies like bed-nets. In practice, the strategy to fight malaria under the framework of RBM remained vertical in nature and based on available medical technologies. The WHO did not, for example, get involved in working with countries’ ministries for rural development or agriculture in order to control water and irrigation systems or to develop strategies for intragovernmental actions on those issues.<sup>834</sup> Despite the emphasis on the horizontal approach, RBM remained medically and vertically driven; it focused on achieving quick results and pursued global rather than country-level implementation.

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<sup>828</sup> Lerer and Matzopoulos (2001): 420.

<sup>829</sup> Gro Harlem Brundtland, Foreword, in Final Report of the External Evaluation of Roll Back Malaria. Achieving Impact: Roll Back Malaria in the Next Phase, November 2002.

<sup>830</sup> As Pierre Druilhe, the head of Biomedical Parasitology Unit in the Institute Pasteur, noted “RBM’s claim that it can halve the malaria burden in the medium term is reminiscent of the claim made (...) in 1976 that it could develop a malaria vaccine within 5 years,” which has never realized. Rolling Back Malaria: Action or Rhetoric. Round Table Discussion, *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, v.78, no.2, (2000):1454. See also Mach (1998):302.

<sup>831</sup> Brundtland (13 May 1998):6.

<sup>832</sup> Interview with a former WHO Executive Director General, Geneva, 23 March 2004.

<sup>833</sup> Beigbeder (2004):106.

<sup>834</sup> Interview with the WHO technical official, Geneva, 26 March 2004.

Strengthening of health services, as maintained by the WHO's RBM medical experts, would automatically come about once malaria was under control. "Since malaria is one of the greatest health problems faced by communities, effective action to roll it back will strengthen frail health systems,"<sup>835</sup> argued the WHO managers. This opinion is remarkably similar to the statement made more than 30 years earlier by the WHO medical professional involved in the WHO malaria eradication program:

In countries where the public health service is not well developed, the development of an eradication (malaria) service will be a pattern of an efficient service and will serve as a nucleus around which the public health service could be built.<sup>836</sup>

Part of the medical thinking in the WHO Secretariat has been the belief in an inevitable link between the fight against a single disease (e.g. malaria) and the consolidation of health systems. This belief has remained unchanged and surprisingly strong since the heyday of the medically-driven and vertically-oriented eradication programs of the 1950s and the 1960s. This medical conviction has, in fact, never materialized. This failure confirms the view that the medical emphasis on consolidating health systems through narrow interventions in chronic and infectious diseases has never reflected the essence of health promotion.<sup>837</sup>

The implementation of RBM through a purely vertical, single-disease approach rather than via direct efforts to strengthen health systems is particularly striking in the face of reasons identified for the failure of malaria eradication in the 1960s. The analysis of the fiasco of malaria program in the 1960s emphasized that despite various technical reasons, the predominant cause of failure of malaria eradication was the lack of effective health service infrastructure to ensure that the campaign reached every household and remained in place for some time.<sup>838</sup> Yet, forty years later, RBM, dominated by the medical interventionist focus, failed to include more horizontal programs designed for the improvement of health systems.

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<sup>835</sup> David Nabarro and Kamini Mendis, Rolling Back Malaria: Action or Rhetoric. Round Table Discussion, *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, v.78, no.2, (2000):1455.

<sup>836</sup> Weeks, Chief, Planning and Programme Division of Malaria Eradication Program, 12 September 1967 quoted by Siddiqi (1995): 137.

<sup>837</sup> Mexico Conference on Health Promotion: Open Letter to WHO Director General, Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, *Health Promotion International*, vol.16, no.1 (2001):3.

<sup>838</sup> Kenneth W. Newell, Selective Primary Health Care: The Counter Revolution, *Social Science and Medicine*, vol.26, no.9 (1988): 903

RBM was envisaged as a 5-year plan<sup>839</sup> and consequently, implemented as a short-term project oriented on quick results. At the beginning, RBM was a cabinet project, and its manager reported directly to the Director General rather than through a cluster in the HQ or a regional office.<sup>840</sup> Four years later, the institutional status of RBM was weakened when the RBM manager began to report to the Executive Director of the cluster rather than to the DG directly. The decision to de-emphasize RBM within the Secretariat was a practical consequence of the initial emphasis on short-term results of RBM (a 5-year plan). The brevity of the project based on vertical interventions was a practical illustration of the power of the medical culture to try to concentrate on tangible and quantifiable medical outcomes gained in a short period of time rather than on much more vaguely defined, long-term notions of improving health care and strengthening health systems.

RBM was mainly concerned with global efforts to build worldwide technical consensus on priority interventions and “vector-control” technologies. The RBM global focus clearly followed the dominant technocratic and medical tradition of effective implementation of common global functions rather than country-specific functions.<sup>841</sup> It also corresponded well with the Secretariat’s established practice of pursuing global disease control programs that were bringing more tangible results than the activities on a country-based level.<sup>842</sup> Indeed, during the first phase of RBM (1998 to 2002), according to the external evaluation of RBM, the project yielded important achievements. The external evaluators of RBM wrote:

A strategy of global advocacy has resulted in greater attention to the problem of malaria than ever before. International expenditures on malaria control have doubled. There is a widespread agreement on the set of priority interventions that are required to make progress in area of malaria control and prevention. It is possible that without RBM we would not now have a Global Fund for AIDS, Malaria and TB (the Global Fund), (and) that malaria would not have been included as one of the three diseases targeted by the Global Fund.<sup>843</sup>

Generally, the main achievements of the RBM, according to the final report on this partnership, were the enhancement of commitment to fight malaria, the development of a strategic and technical consensus and the mobilization of needed resources.<sup>844</sup> Despite this, during the first years of RBM, the successes of malaria control on the country level have

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<sup>839</sup> Roll Back Malaria: Executive Summary, RBM/Draft/1, WHO internal document, August 1998.

<sup>840</sup> Final Report of the External Evaluation of Roll Back Malaria (November 2002): 17.

<sup>841</sup> Effectiveness of Multilateral Agencies (1991):i and Lucas, eds., (1997).

<sup>842</sup> Stenson and Sterky (1994):238.

<sup>843</sup> Final Report of the External Evaluation of Roll Back Malaria (November 2002): 1 and 11.

<sup>844</sup> Ibid., 11.



been limited.<sup>845</sup> Essentially, the RBM achievements were partial and generally limited to the global level, having little, if any, impact on the country level. This outcome clearly reflected the bias of the WHO medical culture toward common global functions rather than country-specific functions.

#### *3.8.4 Tobacco Free Initiative and the result-oriented and action-driven professional culture in the WHO Secretariat*

The Tobacco Free Initiative (TFI) was, next to RBM, another important pathfinder project included in the Making a Difference agenda. The TFI pushed forward the idea of designing, negotiating and eventually adopting an anti-tobacco treaty as a legally binding international instrument. Despite the suggestion that the professional culture in the WHO Secretariat has been generally indifferent to adoption of legally binding treaties,<sup>846</sup> the anti-tobacco initiative had a surprisingly strong appeal to the medical profession in the headquarters. The TFI had every characteristic of an action-driven and a result-oriented project that was also taking on a powerful industry. It therefore suited the professional culture well, dominated by the hands-on, result-driven and action-oriented mindset of the WHO medical group. As a result, the medical profession, traditionally disinterested in the idea of building legal structures turned around and endorsed it. In fact, the initiative inspired a genuine enthusiasm among the majority of the professional staff, which saw an unexpected chance to apply legal instruments to other health areas. According to an official involved in its implementation, the idea of the anti-tobacco treaty:

was not a hard sell internally. The campaign had a spirit. We were not shy about what we were doing. It was always visible. The staff liked to see it. It made them feel good about the organization that we were finally getting on and doing something visible. We were active in the media, we had a story every single week. Through the three, four years we were out there, putting the name of the WHO on the topic that people felt very much that we should be far more vocal on. I think that they liked the nature of the fact that we got into the fight with industry and that we won in some sense. They could see that we landed up calling industry on our terms. People from infectious diseases (...) really thought that it was great. Pharmaceutical people just saw the great opportunities because they thought that this was going to open the door to greater support for them using legal approaches.<sup>847</sup>

#### *3.8.5 Impact of WHO professional culture and the report on health system performance*

The motive behind the report *Health Systems: Improving Performance* published in 2000 was to raise the WHO's profile and to get health and health systems on the global agenda.

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<sup>845</sup> Ibid.

<sup>846</sup> See Taylor (1992): 301-346.

<sup>847</sup> Interview with a former WHO Executive Director General, Geneva, 23 March 2004.

Thus, the report could be viewed as a particular strategy for implementing certain provisions of the Making a Difference initiative. As it turned out the contents of the report has been in reality strongly influenced by the WHO professional culture.

According to international public health scholars, Eeva Ollila and Meri Koivusalo, the report strayed from the idea of primary health care, community-based and horizontal approaches.<sup>848</sup> Furthermore, it implicitly encouraged development of medically-oriented, selective, vertical interventions over more integrated and comprehensive approaches to health care.<sup>849</sup> According to another public health researcher, Vincente Navarro, the report, in fact, reflected a prevailing medical culture within the Secretariat. It emphasized the role of medicine in reducing mortality and morbidity rates at the expense of social, cultural, economic and political causes of diseases and other health issues.<sup>850</sup>

### *3.8.6 Conclusion of the impact of professional culture on the Making a Difference initiative*

Despite the fact that The Making a Difference initiative placed health on the global agenda, the promotion of “health” was narrow and limited to global vertical campaigns against diseases. This global focus allowed the WHO and its new leadership to catch the attention of media and donors. Because the stress was on measurable, visible and quick results, the long-term, comprehensive and more complex efforts to build and strengthen health systems were de-emphasized. This occurred due to the impact of the WHO Secretariat’s professional culture, which generally favored vertical programs and quick fixes based on technical interventions and new technologies while paying little attention to more complex, long-term horizontal (multidisciplinary) solutions.

### *3.9 Conclusion of the chapter*

The WHO is viewed as a technical agency. Its technicity is based on specialized work that requires a high caliber of expertise. Medical specialists dominate the WHO administration; they identify more with public health workers than with international civil servants and are influenced by army medical tradition. All these features determine the WHO’s professional culture that is action-oriented and results-driven rather than process-focus and input-

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<sup>848</sup> Eeva Ollila and Meri Koivusalo, The World Health Report 2000: World Health Organization Health Policy Steering Off Course- Change Values, Poor Evidence, And Lack of Accountability, *International Journal of Health Services*, vol.32, no.3 (2002):506.

<sup>849</sup> Ibid.

<sup>850</sup> Vincente Navarro, The New Conventional Wisdom: An Evaluation of the WHO Report Health Systems: Improving Performance, *International Journal of Health Services*, vol.31, no.1 (2001):26.

centered. Thus, the professional culture is characterized by a relatively low rigidity and has greater propensity to facilitate transformation.

Brundtland's leadership dynamism was relatively strong. Some transformational traits of Brundtland's leadership were, however, either weak or missing. Brundtland led leadership that was authoritative, decisive, innovative and visionary. At the same time, Brundtland's leadership, firmly set in her ministerial, pragmatic and rational modes of work, generally lacked compassion. As a result, her leadership was inspirational to a limited number of people and was generally weak on emotive features and charisma. The kind of leadership Brundtland provided as the head of the WHO was transformational; it was creative, bold and path-breaking. It showed, however, weakness in emotive, charismatic and inspirational traits. Therefore, Brundtland's leadership was viewed as semi-transformational.

The Making a Difference initiative launched by Brundtland took the organization out of relative obscurity and into the global spotlight within a relatively short period of time. At the same time, some unfulfilled goals and modified strategies indicated that Making a Difference had not been implemented in its entirety or exactly according to its initial proposals. These kinds of alterations occurred due to the impact of a specific semi-transformational leadership style of the DG Brundtland and the relatively low rigidity of the WHO professional culture. Generally, the change implemented by Making a Difference was fast and vast but also revealed certain limits. Hence, the change resulted in semi-transformation.

## **Chapter 4. The Office of the International Labor Organization: its Professional Culture, Director General's Leadership and Institutional Change**

### *4.1 Introduction*

This chapter looks at the Office of the International Labor Organization (hence, the Office or the ILO administration), considers the main features of its professional culture, the

leadership style of Michel Hansenne and the institutional change known as Active Partnership Policy (APP) launched in 1993. The analysis shows that a highly rigid (static) professional culture and Hansenne's weak leadership dynamism (transactional) determined the specific process of APP implementation and shaped its limited outcomes and meager impact (accommodation) that fell short of what was initially anticipated.

#### 4.2 ILO and its executive leadership

The ILO is one of the oldest intergovernmental organizations, which was established by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 and joined the UN family of organizations in 1946. Its mandate stipulates that the organization promotes social justice and the workers' rights. Its main functions include the adoption of binding international labor conventions and recommendations, and provision of technical assistance to its constituents in various labor-relevant sectors. Within the UN system, the ILO has a unique tripartite structure that brings together employers, workers and governments in the ILO governing bodies to set general policies.

The ILO has a rich tradition of strong leadership provided by its Directors General, which are heading the influential Office of the ILO. Leadership of the first DGs such as Albert Thomas, Harold Butler, John Winant and Edward Phelan established independence and a prevailing *esprit de corps* of the ILO international civil service that ensured its integrity and loyalty to the organization and not to particular member states.<sup>851</sup> Despite the cold war tensions that generated powerful waves of politicization pressure on the ILO, the DGs successfully defended the independence of the Office.<sup>852</sup>

The power of the ILO administration is considerable if hidden. The DG and its Office set the policy agenda of the meetings of the Governing Body and its committees and wield a substantial influence in the range of policy choices that are presented to the constituents

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<sup>851</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, IPEC, Geneva, 6 November 2003. Langrod 1963:145 and 311; Maciej Bartkowski, *Image IV Institutionalized in the Directorship General of the International Labor Organization*, International Forum of Electronic Publications, Rubikon ISSN 1505-1161, <http://venus.ci.uw.edu.pl/~rubikon>, September 2003; Victor-Yves Ghebali, *The International Labour Organisation. A Case Study on the Evolution of U.N. Specialised Agencies*, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers (London 1989): 19.

<sup>852</sup> Antoinette Beguin, The ILO Under David Morse, *Friends Newsletter*, No.11, 1 May 1991:59; George Thullen, *Friends Newsletter*, No.11, 1 May 1991:72. Thullen also recalls a meeting in 1969, during which he was also present, when David Morse hosted in his office the Czech and Polish ambassadors who "tried to discredit certain ILO staff members by repeatedly insinuating that he should replace them with 'worthier' representatives from their respective countries. (...) David Morse stood his ground"; Interview with a former ILO and WHO senior official, Geneva, 2 December 2003. See also, Warren W. Furth, *Friends Newsletter*, No.11, 1 May 1991:38;

and eventually in the selection of a given policy. By acting from the position of authority and expertise, the DG and the Office staff members exercise effective power of persuasion in the debates with the constituents.

During the history of the ILO the energetic leadership of particular executive heads strengthened the position of the DG vis-à-vis other bureaucratic actors. Interesting is the fact that the written reports of the GB committees tend to refer to a particular Office official as “*the representative of the Director General*” and *not* the representative of the Office. This happens although it is the Office and not the DG that the ILO constitution sees as one of three (next to the ILO Conference and Governing Body) constitutional organs of the ILO (Article 2). The DG authority, in practice supersedes that of the Office, which, in turn, enhances the stance of the DG in the ILO structures.

A relative autonomy and power of the ILO Director General and the Office vis-à-vis external actors allow for the development and nurturing of a particular work culture in the ILO administration that is specific for the professional character of its staff members and independent (fairly insulated) from the outside environment.

#### *4.3 High rigidity of professional culture in the Office of the ILO*

The professional culture of the ILO Office has a relatively high degree of rigidity. Normativity, or a hegemonic orientation of the administration’s substantive work, determines its focus on processes, procedures, established rules and routine ways of doing things. With a normative orientation, the appropriate policy format or policy input receives greater emphasis than policy results. Furthermore, the ILO’s professional culture is characterized and shaped by permanence and generalist nature of the ILO international civil service, a strong socialization, centralization, the unionization and “juridicalization” of the Office. These all reinforce the predominantly cautious and risk-averse nature of the ILO professional culture. Additionally, a focus on avoiding failures, a tripartite environment and the peculiar history of the ILO, formed by the organization’s constant struggle for its own survival, increase the Office’s already heightened sensitivity about any kind of criticism and generate a work environment where “upsetting constituents should be avoided at all possible costs.”

#### *4.3.1 The Office of the ILO and its normative orientation*

The ILO is an organization whose work is driven by social values.<sup>853</sup> The current Director General, Juan Somavia, asserted that the ILO is a value-based institution whose roots are traced to its constitution.<sup>854</sup> Since the nature of the Office essentially matches the value-oriented ILO constitution, the ‘standards-making’ functions have historically dominated the Office’s work. This value-laden orientation is the essence of the normative orientation of the Office and the cornerstone for its involvement in setting international labor standards. An ILO senior official explained that the ILO is a value-based organization because it adopts conventions that enshrine the values shared by the entire international community.<sup>855</sup>

Throughout its history, the Office has been involved in setting international labor standards, such as legally binding conventions and more declaratory or political recommendations, that constituted the *raison d'être* for the establishment of the ILO and its eighty-five plus years of existence. Driven by its expertise in labor law situated in the International Labor Standards Department, the Office became indispensable in the formulation, adoption, implementation, monitoring and enforcing of international labor standards.

Over one hundred and eighty conventions and an even greater number of recommendations have formed and reinforced the Office’s normativity. As a result, not only has the Office played a significant role in facilitating and executing normative functions of the organization but also, over the years, has become a norm-initiator in its own right. For example, despite the fact that the constitutional right of legislative initiative rests exclusively in the hands of the ILO’s tripartite constituents (government representatives, workers’ and employers’ groups), the Office successfully acquired the informal right to initiate legislation and has been willing to use it when it believed that the proposals reflected the real needs of given labor groups and had a fair chance of being approved by the ILO constituents.<sup>856</sup> Legal tasks and normative engagement have continuously dominated the Office’s activities even after the 1960’s, when the labor-related technical cooperation programs began to expand. In reality, greater Office involvement in technical cooperation projects came to be viewed as merely a supporting function to its main

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<sup>853</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Budapest, 26 February 2002.

<sup>854</sup> Director General’s Address to the Staff, 23 January 2002:10.

<sup>855</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 20 October 2003.

<sup>856</sup> Bolesław Paździor, *Wpływ Międzynarodowego Biura Pracy na Konwencje i Zalecenia Międzynarodowej Organizacji Pracy*, (Influence of the International Labor Bureau on the Conventions and Recommendations

normative focus. Accordingly, the provision of technical assistance has been regarded as an instrument for helping the countries adopt and implement labor conventions and recommendations. This hierarchical positioning of normative competence over technical functions reflects the Office's belief that its credibility and identity depended on the idea of a norm-setting labor organization rather than a technical agency specializing in labor matters. Consequently, the prime focus of the Office has been the adoption and application of legally binding international labor standards (norm-setting function) while a delivery of certain technical results (labor policies) came only second. The Office's confidence in addressing labor-related problems is largely based on normative elements rather than specific technical solutions. As observed by a former ILO senior staff member, the Office officials work from the ILO standards and always keep them in mind even if giving practical (technical) advice to countries.<sup>857</sup>

This specific attitude reinforces the Office's focus on the processes used to generate legal rules as opposed to the actions of technical cooperation. Since normative orientation determines the Office's credibility and prestige, it essentially captures the 'soul' of the administration and elevates the norm-setting functions to its leading 'mantra.' In practice, this is reflected in the Office's conviction that its normative work is the most appropriate and effective way to reach a constitutionally enshrined objective of social justice. This belief remains unshaken despite visible problems with the enforcement of labor standards, particularly during the 1990's.<sup>858</sup> The unusually strong normative orientation of the Office is reflected in its particular fixation on legally binding standards namely, labor conventions. This is most visible in the Office's biannual budgets, which enumerate specific targets and indicators for each of the ILO's four broad objectives: labor standards, employment, social protection and social dialogue. In each case, the indicators and targets tend to focus either on the number of expected ratifications of relevant conventions or on general supervisory work concerning improvements in the application of ratified conventions.<sup>859</sup> A recently retired ILO senior official presented a vivid example of the overzealous emphasis on ratified conventions:

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of the International Labor Organization), Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, (Wrocław 1975):38-43 and 155.

<sup>857</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 10 November 2003.

<sup>858</sup> Pearson and Seyfang, for example, noted that in the last decade "adverse judgments from the ILO were increasingly unenforced and unenforceable and so for some years the prevailing mood (among the states) was one of ever-increasing liberalization and lower standards," Ruth Pearson and Gill Seyfang, *New Hope or False Dawn? Voluntary Codes of Conduct, Labour Regulation and Social Policy in a Globalizing World*, *Global Social Policy*, vol. 1, no.1 (2001): 52.

<sup>859</sup> See the ILO Programme and Budget for the Biennium 2002-2003.

We have a number of sectoral type conventions: health and safety of mining, labor conditions in constructions, working conditions in hotel, resting for nursing personnel, which were our (department's) responsibility. (In order to show the final result) we listed them all. Sometimes when we were decent enough not to list ratifications because we knew that we have not done anything to help the countries, it was program (department), which put it nonetheless on. Lebanon ratified the safety and mines convention but it does not have any mines and we were never involved [in working on this subject]. Nonetheless it was listed as a successful outcome of an ILO action. (Listing ratifications) became very mechanistic.<sup>860</sup>

This fixation on legal standards as a measure of the organizational success shows not only the extent of the administration's normative orientation but also its dominant focus on input. With an emphasis on how many conventions are ratified and how many recommendations are enacted, the adoption of standards became the goal in itself.

A prevalence of input thinking (the number of ratifications) overshadows more output-oriented (what is exactly the impact of a convention?) and outcome-driven modes of work (how precisely does a convention with its given impact bring the ILO closer to meeting its objective of social justice?). In other words, the Office normative orientation, with its strong input-oriented thinking, does not generally promote results-oriented method of work but in essence reinforces a traditional policy approach based on the quantity of the ILO's work and not on its impact. Thus, in the words of the ILO top manager from the Bureau of Programming and Management, the "core culture of the ILO is inward looking."<sup>861</sup>

The Office's normativity is rooted not only in the promulgation of "grand" labor legislation such as conventions and recommendations but also in the Office's immersion in the ILO tripartite structure. This immersion is reflected in two permanent liaison offices: the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) and the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACTEMP) situated in the Office administrative structures. With the aim to ensure that tripartite democracy functions properly, these bureaus pressure the Office to follow correct procedures and appropriate formulas for cooperation, consultations and negotiations with the workers' and employers' representatives. Additionally, the Office is a heavily rule-oriented entity where a thick web of administrative regulations, specifying the duties and responsibilities of officials, forms an important part of the Office normativity.

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<sup>860</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 10 November 2003.

<sup>861</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 30 October 2003.



The ILO Administrative Tribunal (ILOAT) that hears the complaints of the personnel from a number of international organizations has played a particularly significant role in shaping and raising a specific rule-based awareness within the Office. Despite the current internal calls for significant reforms of the ILOAT, the Office recognizes the “very great prestige” of the tribunal, whose judgments influenced other administrative tribunals and drew considerable attention from specialized journals that deal with administrative and international law.<sup>862</sup> The long-standing tradition of the ILOAT presence within the ILO structures, in combination with its substantial jurisprudence, has helped to establish and reinforce a particular sensitivity to the proper application of rules and procedures.<sup>863</sup> The ILOAT has strengthened the security of employment, emphasized duties and responsibilities as well as rights and privileges of the international officials, while promoting the idea of independent international civil service.<sup>864</sup> A former ILO senior human resource manager stated:

The ILO staff, at most, know the tradition and the history of the ILO, [including the fact that] the ILO tribunal was created by the ILO. [As a result], the staff are often dealing with the questions of what are the *privileges and immunities of the civil servants* and what are their obligations and duties. So the ILO staff members are quite tuned in to this.<sup>865</sup>

Consequently, the ILOAT decisions have, over many years of the ILO existence, guided development and guarded the tradition of international civil service in the Office, which reinforced the normativity of the ILO administration. Generally, normativity has increased the Office’s sensitivity towards legal mechanisms and processes and directed attention away from the technical substance of the labor policies and its impact and results.<sup>866</sup> Internal consultations led at the beginning of the 1990’s by the then Director General, Michel Hansenne, showed the senior officials’ inclination to focus on processes and structures and little on issues and substance.<sup>867</sup> Concentrating on normative functions makes the Office particularly attentive toward the forms (right processes and correct procedures) to carry out its main tasks. Since its philosophy of work rests on the idea that “actions follow processes and procedures” rather than vice versa, the Office places greater importance on how things are done (processes and policy formats) than on the results

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<sup>862</sup> Quoted in Frank Gutteridge, “The ILO Administrative Tribunal,” in Chris de Cooker eds., *International Administration : Law and Management Practices in International Organisations*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, (Dordrecht 1990):2-3.

<sup>863</sup> Yves Beigbeder, *Management Problems in United Nations Organizations. Reform or Decline?* Frances Printer (London 1987):121.

<sup>864</sup> Ibid., 121-122.

<sup>865</sup> Interview with a former WHO and ILO senior human resources official, Geneva, 23 February 2004.

Emphasis added.

<sup>866</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 27 November 2003.

produced. According to one interviewee, whose experience included working as a legal officer in the ILO and later in UNHCR, the Office staff members are generally oriented more toward processes and forms in the sense of a proper manner of decision-making in order to reach tripartite consensus.<sup>868</sup> Another interviewee that had worked in different UN organizations confirmed that the work in the Office is process oriented with the focus on how the things are done.<sup>869</sup> A dominating style of work where the actions and results are subordinate to the right formats and accurate processes reinforces the Office inward-looking focus and its emphasis on internal procedures.

Because of its normativity, the Office does not deal with individuals directly.<sup>870</sup> Its focus is rather on legal mechanisms, processes and structures, on reviewing legislations and practices in different jurisdictions and building or strengthening institutional capacities so as to help countries adopt and follow relevant labor standards. Therefore, the Office is engaged in creating and sustaining legal and social structures more than meeting immediate needs of particular groups, as is the case with UNHCR, or fighting a particular disease like the WHO. In contrast to the WHO Secretariat and the Office of the High Commissioner, both of which adopted a more problem-solving mode of work, the normativity of the ILO Office is largely based on a problem-elaboration manner of work with a greater longitudinal and analytical focus. As an ILO senior official observed, in the ILO people begin their studies and in-depth reviews today but finish them only in three to six months because the needs that the Office addresses are not urgent and allow for a long-term perspective.<sup>871</sup> The Office pursues a long-term, developmental type of work, which is by nature more static, rigid and focused on rules and procedures. This makes the Office less flexible and further weakens its perspective on tangible results and immediate outcomes.

This problem has been vividly demonstrated in the comments made by one of the ILO senior officials:

We are busy all day long and we think that this is already the result in itself but when it comes to saying how many people have benefited from our being busy twelve hours a day then it gets difficult.<sup>872</sup>

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<sup>867</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 26 January 2004.

<sup>868</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior legal officer, Geneva, 9 June 2004.

<sup>869</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 14 May 2004.

<sup>870</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior legal officer, Geneva, 9 June 2004.

<sup>871</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 14 May 2004.

<sup>872</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 13 October 2003.

The intangibility of results can also be associated with the Office's main normative preoccupation, namely the ratifications of the ILO conventions. A former ILO senior official was, for example, of the opinion that one of the easiest ways for the organization to report on progress was to concentrate on a ratification of certain conventions. An act of ratification, however, is only one element, and ultimately a relatively small one, of a more strenuous, time-consuming and complex process leading to ratification. Eventually, more energy and resources are spent on getting parliamentary committees to draft legislation and discuss a possibility of its ratification than on the end result.<sup>873</sup> In that sense, as the same official highlighted, the success of the lengthy steps leading to ratification can be less evident:

Progress of the Office work on ratification is often intangible. You cannot define it by purely saying we have ratification or we do not have. In fact, to judge whether you have had progress, very often you have to then really look behind the scenes, whether ratification process was lasting, whether ratification was real or it was a Potemkin village.<sup>874</sup>

Not only is the Office's normative work difficult to measure in terms of concrete results, but also the results of its activities are oftentimes more about the processes of conducting normative work than about their eventual outcomes, which can frequently be obscured by external forces. As a result, the Office's normative orientation is strongly inclined to focus on processes that, if properly designed, would then lead to a desirable outcome. Normativity increases the Office's fixation on the right processes as well as the appropriate forms according to which the Office should work to achieve its goals. In other words, it leads to a greater emphasis on a political correctness of format. Adherence to the established rules and procedures dominates result- and outcome-driven approaches. Consequently, the Office's normativity shapes a highly static professional culture, reinforces its largely cautious attitude towards overstepping existing rules and generates a usually guarded approach towards new ways of doing things.

#### *4.3.2 Seniority of age and seniority of grade and their significance*

The financial crisis related to withholding the US funds to the ILO between 1970-73 and an eventual US withdrawal from the organization in 1977 led to the situation in which the Office was not able to rejuvenate its staff structure<sup>875</sup>; the consequences of which are felt even today. Nowadays, the Office faces serious problems related to the seniority factor, and the overstaffing of top positions within in the organization. It is estimated that 51% of the

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<sup>873</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 10 November 2003.

<sup>874</sup> Ibid.

professional staff members are expected to retire by 2010.<sup>876</sup> These projected retirements give a chance for the Office management to hire new staff; it does not, however, change the current reality in which “old-timers” run the things.<sup>877</sup> This situation, in turn, has an important impact on the formation of a specific type of professional culture in the ILO administration.

The reasons for this seniority system are rooted not only in the Office’s recent history, but also in its present policies. Currently, few young people are being recruited by the ILO and, of those recruits, tenure is typically short-term. This process of attenuation is noted by the ILO staff union, who warns the organization about talented officials who choose to leave the ILO instead of pursuing a career in the organization.<sup>878</sup> When the current DG, Juan Somaiva took over the directorship, he was also surprised by the high number of young people who wanted to leave the ILO.<sup>879</sup> The reason for leaving, as Somavia concluded, amounted to something as trivial as it was serious: “because nobody gives a damn about me.”<sup>880</sup> Meanwhile, the younger generation of ILO employees faces the administrative hurdles common to ageism in the workplace. The merits upon which their tenure and continuing success is based are not sufficient for promotion- their youth alone puts them at a disadvantage.<sup>881</sup> Thus, age bias prevents the young from climbing the corporate ladder. Eventually, those who do not leave the organization early in their careers serve long terms<sup>882</sup> that have become a characteristic feature of the Office demographic since its inception. This phenomenon has produced a tradition of long and stable careers of the ILO international civil servants.

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<sup>875</sup> Report of the Director General, part II, International Labor Conference, 1979: 96.

<sup>876</sup> Francesco Mezzalama, *Young Professionals in Selected Organizations of the United Nations System: Recruitment, Management and Retention*, Joint Inspection Unit, JIU/REP/2000/7: 3, Table 1.

<sup>877</sup> A similar observation about the “old-timers” running international administration could be also made about the WHO Secretariat. However, the age of the WHO professionals is naturally high because they enter the Secretariat only after a long health/medical training and practice that made them internationally recognized scientists in their specialized fields. Because of its more generalist nature, the ILO civil service can rely more on younger people as soon as they graduate from the college (or even earlier) and educate or train them while they work in the Office (which is impossible to do in the specialized health areas of the WHO). Therefore, it is surprising to discover that the average age of the professional staff in the Office of the ILO is very close to the average age of the professionals in the WHO Secretariat: 48 and 48.5 respectively and far above 44 years in the Office of the High Commissioner. Similarly, the projected retirements for the coming 10 years, were estimated in 2000 to be almost the same for ILO and WHO: 51% and 52.7% respectively while in UNHCR they were merely on the level of 25.2%. See The WHO and the ILO figures come from *Review of Management and Administration in the World Health Organization* (JIU/REP/2001/5):23, Table 4; *The State of UNHCR’s Staff*. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, December 2000:5 and Mezzalama (JIU/REP/2000/7): 3, Table 1.

<sup>878</sup> Active Participation- For a Better Workplace, ILO Staff Union Committee, *Union* 306, (January 2001):5.

<sup>879</sup> Director General’s Address to the Staff, 23 January 2002:8.

<sup>880</sup> Ibid.

<sup>881</sup> Interview with the ILO official, Geneva, 20 February 2004.

<sup>882</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 6 November 2003.

The permanence of the ILO international civil service is tightly connected with the idea of an independent international administration which dates to A. J. Balfour's well-known report published in May 1920 (so called 'Balfour Principle'). The 'Balfour principle' states that

the members of the (international administration) once appointed are no longer the servants of the country of which they are citizens, but become for the time being the servants of the (international organization). Their duties are not national, but international (...). Nothing should be done to weaken the sense of their international allegiance (...).<sup>883</sup>

In practice, the Balfour principle has played an important role in shaping the nature of the ILO administration throughout its history. Essentially, the concept of an independent international civil service enshrined in the Balfour principle necessitated permanence within the ILO international civil service. This permanence ensured that the international labor administration would not be subject to political turbulence in the form of hasty turnovers and particularistic interests of member states.

The permanence of the ILO international civil service implied that any changes in top political leadership of the Office (including the Director General, Deputy Directors General, and Assistant Directors General, each with politically mandated terms), had not affected the Office civil service corps. The international civil servants continued to perform their duties undisturbed by political changes at the top of the organization. Permanence of the Office's professional cadre is clearly illustrated in the following statistics. At the end of December 2002, the Office had 395 professional personnel employed on contracts of unlimited tenure ("without limit" or long-term appointments) and 326 on a fixed-term basis (short-term appointments). Around 55% of the total number of professional staff was employed on long-term, effectively permanent contracts.<sup>884</sup> This figure stands in stark contrast to another UN specialized agency, the WHO. In December of 2003 only 2.5% of WHO professionals had career-service appointments (long term, permanent appointments).<sup>885</sup>

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<sup>883</sup> Langrod (1963:51).

<sup>884</sup> Composition and Structure of the Staff, Program, Financial and Administrative Committee, GB.286/PFA/12, Geneva, March 2003: 9, Table IV.

<sup>885</sup> Human Resources: Annual Report. Staffing Profile, WHO Executive Board 113<sup>th</sup> Session, EB113/17, 18 December 2003: 1.

In practice, the permanence of the ILO international civil service means that the individual ILO official enjoys considerable job security.<sup>886</sup> Job security in the Office is so high that it appears that may be even objective failures in the performance of official duties could be rewarded. Frequently, the only way managers can force poor-performing staff out of their positions is to promote them.<sup>887</sup> In the Office, according to the interviewed staff, sanctions are relatively mild and unless the officials do something absolutely outrageous, it is very difficult to fire them.<sup>888</sup> While referring to the strong employment security of the ILO civil servants, the senior official explained:

We have much higher job security in the ILO than in almost any organization outside (...). In many national civil services, they often have very strong guarantees, but across the 1990s in many cases those guarantees were weakened and there were some administrations that shrank. In the ILO there has not been any strong tendency to weaken those guarantees.<sup>889</sup>

The high level of job security and the permanence of employment that results from it strengthen a ‘civil service mentality’ within the Office.<sup>890</sup> As a result, the Office, which is ultimately a public civil service that functions on the international level maintains, in the opinion of one ILO senior official, a very traditional civil service type of mindset.<sup>891</sup> The international civil service ethos, although traditionally held in high esteem alongside notions of independence, stability, and professionalism, is now seen as a reflection of a non-adaptive, non-entrepreneurial, non-competitive and non-marketable profession. An important consequence of unusually strong job-security is reluctance to alter the *status quo*.<sup>892</sup>

There are problems associated with permanence of the ILO international civil service. For example, a system of highly secured job positions of the international civil servants in the Office neither facilitates innovation nor encourages initiatives. Citing a more exaggerated account: “I can sit back and do nothing all day long, and I think not much could happen to me.”<sup>893</sup> Even if such extreme situations are rare, the permanence of employment enjoyed by the ILO civil servants increases the propensity for action based upon the lowest common denominator. Accordingly, the staff behavior is often driven, in the words of one

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<sup>886</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 20 October 2003.

<sup>887</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 15 October 2003.

<sup>888</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 10 November 2003; Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 15 October 2003.

<sup>889</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 20 October 2003.

<sup>890</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 13 October 2003.

<sup>891</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 15 October 2003.

<sup>892</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 20 October 2003.

<sup>893</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 13 October 2003.

senior official, by the logic of “the safest way to go: not doing something and letting somebody else succeed or fail.”<sup>894</sup> This behavior is described by another ILO senior official as the practice of pushing responsibility to other people with the result that it is difficult to know exactly who, at end of the day, is responsible for a decision and even less so for its specific outcome.<sup>895</sup> Consequently, according to the above quoted senior staff member, personnel may have grown accustomed to a certain kind of idleness and may feel that they are “better off not taking initiatives.”<sup>896</sup> A well-known scholar of international bureaucracies observed that such type of behavior illustrates a specific *modus operandi* of the international civil service, whose members have generally little incentive to come up with imaginative projects.<sup>897</sup>

In the context of over-grading<sup>898</sup>, it is significant that more than half (366 or 52%) of the total number of professional staff from both the HQ and the field (707) have the highest possible administrative grades in the professional category: P5 (268, which constitutes 48% of all professional posts), D2 (77) and D1 (21).<sup>899</sup> This means that the Office has a very large managerial layer of staffers who advanced within the ranks, most often through internal competitions during long years of administrative service.

When they finally take over managerial posts that give them enough administrative powers to change the internal workings of the divisions and departments for which they are responsible, they have often lost their initial enthusiasm and drive for change.<sup>900</sup> Their long careers have exposed them to the internalization of existing rules and procedures which have in turn led to the kind of conservative behavior that they may have criticized twenty

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<sup>894</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 6 November 2003.

<sup>895</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 20 October 2003.

<sup>896</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 6 November 2003.

<sup>897</sup> Thomas George Weiss, *International Bureaucracy. An Analysis of the Operation of Functional and Global International Secretariats*, Lexington Books, (Massachusetts 1975): 53.

<sup>898</sup> The professional grading structure in the ILO starts from P1 and goes through P2, P3, P4 and P5 to D1 and D2. D2 is the highest grading position after which the non-grading (usually political) posts start such as Assistant Directors General, Deputy Directors General and finally Director General.

<sup>899</sup> Figures from 2001 in the ILO Gender Audit Report, (2002): 107 and 108.

<sup>900</sup> Although the WHO Secretariat faces similar, if not more serious, over-aging problem among its senior managers, it still remains more dynamic and flexible than the Office of the ILO. Over-aging in the WHO Secretariat is due to the fact that the medical staff members are usually appointed on P4-P6 positions as soon they enter the WHO administration because of their recognized scientific expertise. At the same time, the WHO administration has a relatively high turnover among the senior medical professionals and very few long-term appointments. Consequently, the ‘fresh blood and brain’ comes into the higher echelons of the WHO professional hierarchy much more freely and in greater numbers.

years earlier.<sup>901</sup> As a result, long careers of senior managers that contribute to conservatism and rigidity of the professional culture work also against non-routine or radical changes.

Another important factor related to over-grading was highlighted by one of the interviewees, whose lower grade made him more perceptive about the responsibilities and requirements of his job. He noted that, in the Office, there are different expectations placed on P5s and P2s. P5s work in more managerial capacities and are responsible for generating ideas and providing certain visions as to where particular administrative units should go and what kind of projects should govern their interests. It is left up to P3s or P2s to do the substantive, nitty-gritty work of preparing the budget, outlining the project or contacting organizations and people to get necessary data. Consequently, P2s and P3s are the people who are supposed to put in long hours of grunt-work in order to prove their competence and thus secure a permanent position in the organization, leading to advancement within the hierarchical system.

There seems to be less of this kind of entrepreneurial pressure to perform and demonstrate results for P5s or even P4s. This is because, in the current over-grading structure, the ILO international civil servants with P5 and P4 grades have little chances of advancing to D1 or P5 levels respectively. According to the interviewed official, it is currently almost impossible to get promoted to these overstaffed levels.<sup>902</sup> Consequently, the higher echelon of the ILO civil servants is left without an important administrative incentive to perform and get results for the sake of the promotion requirements.

The main consequence of ageism and overcrowding on the top levels of the ILO administrative hierarchy is a situation in which little “fresh blood” circulates in “old veins” of the Office system. The scarcity of young people within the ILO administrative structures combined with a general lack of more experienced “imported” professionals, strengthens the civil service mentality and increases the administration’s propensity to follow routine and habitualized ways of managing programs. The Office top program manager also

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<sup>901</sup> Similar argument is made by Hugo Heclo, who studied the drive for change in the American public administration and discovered that the career civil servants, who after 20 or more years of service reach high enough posts that allow them to change things in the administration, become by that time as conservative as the system, which they criticized when they joined the organization. See Hugo Heclo, *A Government of Strangers: Executive Politics in Washington*, The Brookings Institution, (Washington DC, 1977).

<sup>902</sup> Interview with the ILO official, Geneva, 17 March 2004.



acknowledged it when he noted that the ILO's machinery has evolved at a very slow pace during eighty-five years of its history and added:

(...) the age distribution of our staff is very high. We have many people who have had long careers. All of these things encourage people to look at the history, the traditions and to what we have always done. That makes change difficult and slow.<sup>903</sup>

The discovery of new ways of doing things more effectively and efficiently would normally require administrative readiness for trials and experimentation, demanding a greater tolerance towards a certain degree of risk-taking. However, the current ILO administrative system with its over-aging and over-grading problems strengthens cautious and habitual behavior, reinforces the focus on established rules and procedures, shapes conservative attitudes towards new and unfamiliar means of accomplishment, encourages patterned adherence to tested administrative paths of decision making, and, generally, provides little incentive for greater creativity and innovation. All these elements make overhaul and revitalization of the Office all the more difficult.

#### *4.3.3 Strong normative socialization within the Office*

A strong normative socialization of the ILO professional staff shapes the Office professional culture and its dominant static features. The permanence of the staff, and the longevity of their individual careers, ensure that the ILO officials are “groomed” within the system, internalize its values, and become highly conversant in the Office's professional culture.<sup>904</sup> As a result of this ‘grooming’, the senior staff members tend to be enormously loyal to the organization and believe very deeply in its principles and values.<sup>905</sup>

Additionally, a relatively high internal mobility within the Office allows the staff to work in different departments and get acquainted with various labor related issues, thus broadening their perspective on the ILO work. This makes the individual feel more like ILO official.<sup>906</sup> Because of the mobility within the Office over a period of two or three decades, the officials become well-versed in the long tradition of the ILO international civil service, which absorbs the virtues of social justice, tripartite dialogue and standard-setting functions of the organization. Therefore even if the ILO attracts people who are just interested in joining “a very high-paid league”, the socialization processes that take place

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<sup>903</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 30 October 2003.

<sup>904</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 6 November 2003.

<sup>905</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 30 October 2003.

<sup>906</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 12 January 2004.

inside the Office ultimately shape the behavior and determine the labor-conscious mindset of its professionals.<sup>907</sup>

The Office is thus an institution where the majority of its professionals are ideologically and compassionately committed to what the organization does and what it stands for. According to most interviewees, the Office consists of a group of middle and senior officials, who want to do something good for the society, who have a sense of pursuing a socially-based mission, are value driven and are not in a some sort of socially disvalued, commercial company, have a strong social ethics and are concerned about social justice and social dialogue.<sup>908</sup> All these features, when applied to ILO official, show that socialization within the Office turns its professionals, particularly those with long careers, into passionate, ideational carriers of the ILO principles based on tripartism, labor standards and social justice,<sup>909</sup> which constitute the very underpinnings of the Office normativity.

The professional culture within the Office owes its considerable strength to the powerful forces of socialization, which the staff members undergo during their long careers in the administration. However, the very factors which make the professional culture strong actually stiffen its resistance towards any change to the *status quo*. A strong socialization process that involves an internalization of the organizational behavior, leads to the

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<sup>907</sup> 'Friends Newsletter', run by the former ILO officials, has recently published a series of articles written by the former Office officials to the ad-hoc section: How I Came to Join the ILO. In the co-editorial summary that relied on 32 responses from various former senior officials on the subject of "what brought them to the ILO", one of the author's conclusions was that only few responses indicated that people had "a real vocation for the job" or "knew of and admired the ILO and its work". The majority of respondents "stumbled on the ILO by accident without having heard of it before, and some of them are frank enough to admit to the best of motives: "I applied of appointment because the money looked good". The author concludes with a rhetorical question: "Didn't we all" had similar motives? and recalls: "I remember proudly showing my letter of appointment to a friend of mine in the army on the day when I received it. His eyes came out of his head on stalks when he read the letter and he said: 'Do you realize that you will be earning more than a British Cabinet minister?' These 32 respondents followed by 5 others in the most recent issues of the Newsletter, have usually had a very long careers, slowly advancing within the ranks of the Office and ending their careers on very high professional posts of D2 or even Assistant Directors General. These people are remembered among their colleagues as distinguished officials who devoted their whole work to the organization and its causes. Most if not all of the respondents, who wrote their accounts to the Newsletter are the examples of the value-minded officials fully committed to the ideology of the ILO. Even though "motivations of those who applied for jobs may not have been entirely pure" the socialization effects that take place during one's long career in the Office, considerably strengthen people's emotional commitment to the Office and the support for the values the organization stands for. See Friends Newsletter, no.32 (May 2002):4-5.

<sup>908</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 15 October 2003; Interview with the ILO senior official, Budapest, 11 September 2003; Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 10 December 2003; Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 10 October 2003; Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 10 November 2003.

<sup>909</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Budapest, 26 February 2002.

mechanical acceptance of existing rules and procedures and generates a high degree of compliance with prevailing ways of thinking and doing things in the organization.

In general, socialization, which constitutes the strength of the professional culture and makes this culture very difficult to change, increases change-resistant behavior and strengthens the belief in the uniqueness and reliability of the functioning mechanisms. Consequently, socialization within a normative and process-driven professional culture of the Office strengthens uniformity, predictability and certainty, favors application of the already tested and familiarized policy instruments, and reinforces legitimacy of the Office's underlying mechanisms and rationality of the existing rules and procedures.

#### *4.3.4 Generalist nature of the international civil service in the Office*

In comparison with other UN agencies such as the WHO or FAO,<sup>910</sup> the ILO is less specialized and employs mainly generalists.<sup>911</sup> In the opinion of a former senior official, the technical side of the ILO work is not highly specialized and, if necessary, can be learnt rapidly by doing.<sup>912</sup> Thus, although in the ILO there are specialists, a labor specialization is generally easy to learn. As described by the same official, one

can go to any division in the ILO and get training there and within a year or two he or she would know anything needed to know. I worked in the cabinet of the DG and then I went to international labor standards division for a half a year. I could become an expert in that very easily. (In this way one) can become an expert by living and working in the ILO.<sup>913</sup>

The ILO, for example, can recruit young professionals from the universities and train them to become experts in specific areas of labor related policies. With additional training and proper administrative procedures, even people with higher grades in general service (G) category can be recruited to the ILO professional categories. The recent ILO Gender Audit sees this kind of grade transfer as not only possible but actually highly desirable and calls for overcoming the existing “concrete barrier between the G and P grades.”<sup>914</sup> In other UN specialized agencies, the policy of breaking a “concrete barrier” is hardly possible given the wide gap in specialization requirements between the general service and professional

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<sup>910</sup> Food Agriculture Organization.

<sup>911</sup> It is true that the Office of the High Commissioner employs even greater number of generalists (usually staffers with social science background) with even less specialized focus than the Office of the ILO. However, because the UNHCR generalists are situated within much more flexible, action-driven, operational professional culture and their identities are associated with the result-driven and hands-on image of humanitarian worker, a possible impact of their generalist features on greater rigidity of the UNHCR culture is considered insignificant and thus, not problematized.

<sup>912</sup> Interview with a former ILO and WHO senior official, Geneva, 2 December 2003.

<sup>913</sup> Ibid.

staff. This is not, however, impossible in the ILO. In fact, as the experience of some officials show, it is not uncommon for the ILO to promote staff members without higher education from the general service to the professional grade.<sup>915</sup> In the 1990s, the ILO linguistic staff, for example, was given the opportunity to go to the field, enrich their technical experience and acquire new specializations, facilitating their promotion from general to professional categories.<sup>916</sup>

This personnel policy would be impossible at the WHO. The WHO could not train specialists in malaria to become specialists in tuberculosis or arthritis, let alone train young university graduates with social science background to become doctors. The relative ease with which one can liberally specialize in the ILO, makes its professionals “Jacks of all trades”<sup>917</sup> and increases their propensity to explore different fields of expertise. In turn, because of the staff’s experience of working in various parts of the organization, the Office officials tend to maintain a strong affiliation with the organization as a whole (institutional affiliation) and identify themselves secondarily with a specialization in a given technical area (functional affiliation).<sup>918</sup> A strong institutional affiliation means that the Office professional generalists tend to focus on the right formats and processes rather than on actions and results. This is because the ILO generalists (more than, for example, scientific specialists in the WHO) are deeply immersed in the organizational system of the international administration and become particularly attuned to the ILO diplomatic environment. They are highly aware of possible political fallouts of their actions and extremely sensitive about the process-oriented issues such as legitimacy, authority, proper diplomatic channels, legal rules and administrative procedures that define and refine their rights, duties and responsibilities. All in all, the generalist nature of the Office professional service enhances its staff members’ ties with the organization, and its goals, and considerably reinforces its international civil service identity. As a result, the Office generalist professionals take considerable pride in identifying themselves as international civil servants than the professionals from the Secretariat of the WHO or in the Office of the High Commissioner.<sup>919</sup>

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<sup>914</sup> ILO Gender Audit Report (2002): 110.

<sup>915</sup> See: The UN Career Records Project, *Friends Newsletter*, no.15, (May 1993):26.

<sup>916</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 11 December 2003.

<sup>917</sup> Interview with a former ILO and WHO senior official, Geneva, 2 December 2003.

<sup>918</sup> Ibid.

<sup>919</sup> The empirical cases of the WHO Secretariat and the Office of the High Commissioner clearly show the affiliation of their professionals, first of all, with the medical profession and humanitarian vocation, respectively and less so with the international civil service.

In comparison with the specialists in the WHO Secretariat, generalists in the ILO Office seem to tolerate a low level of confidence and trust from the Office's top administrative echelon. A continuing reluctance of the ILO top leadership to delegate more authority to lower levels indicates a lack of trust placed in the generalists, emphasizing the belief that "the top people know best."<sup>920</sup> This stands in clear contrast with the specialized administration of the WHO Secretariat. According to a former senior official who worked in both the ILO and in the WHO, the Assistant Directors General and the directors of the particular departments in the WHO follow the men below, who are recognized specialists in a given field.<sup>921</sup> In the ILO, a more cautious approach towards entrusting generalists with greater autonomy leads to increased supervision, centralization, control and less delegation of power from the executive to the lower levels.

Because of this lower level of trust placed in generalists, it is, for example, very unlikely that anybody in the ILO below the political level of the Assistant Directors General could, in the performance of his or her duties, meet and negotiate with a government minister; whereas in the WHO, high specialists with grades D1 or D2 could access ministers and cooperate closely with a health ministry on the highest levels.<sup>922</sup> As a result of the management's reluctance to trust the generalists, the system tends to favor stronger adherence to the official hierarchy, increasing centralization and applying a more top-down approach to managing the Office. Such centralized tendencies were identified and critically evaluated in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). The report recognized the Office's unwillingness to decentralize and its aversion to the delegation of powers to field representatives, which seemed "to have little to do with objective constraints."<sup>923</sup> The JIU also emphasized the fact that the ILO representatives in the field often have much less freedom of action than the UNDP resident specialists.<sup>924</sup>

#### *4.3.5 The Office top-down governing system*

Historically, the process-driven Office was shaped by its founders, particularly by its first Director General (DG), Albert Thomas, a Frenchman, who chose the modality of organizing the work and structuring the secretariat based on the French public administration. The first DG established a centralized and hierarchical system of governing

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<sup>920</sup> Interview with a former ILO and WHO senior official, Geneva, 2 December 2003.

<sup>921</sup> Ibid.

<sup>922</sup> Ibid.

<sup>923</sup> *Review of Management and Administration in the International Labour Office*, Joint Inspection Unit, Geneva 1999: 22.

<sup>924</sup> Ibid.

the Office. In the opinions of the people who studied the first years of the ILO, the internal administrative system was highly centralized, with top-down command, communication and control functions.<sup>925</sup> The unusually strong centralized method of decision-making, placed in the hands of the DG, led some of Thomas' associates to conclude at the time that "even the hens at (the DG's) country place at Garchy needed his permission to lay eggs."<sup>926</sup>

The ILO international administration, modeled from its inception on the centralized and top-down French bureaucracy strongly contrasted with the British administrative model, which was more open and flexible. In the British model, according to a former member of the Office, "even junior officials are expected to make recommendations for action on any point arising in their field of competence."<sup>927</sup> In order to function properly, such system requires a great deal of trust between the top management and the rank and file that would encourage the former to delegate more and allowed the latter to participate and influence the main policy directions. This trust, however, has been difficult to establish owing to a comparatively low level of confidence in the generalist international civil servants and the inward-looking nature of the Office normative system that emphasizes processes, rules, and control mechanisms over greater flexibility and autonomy.

The Office's centralized system of command and control has required sizeable cabinets of DGs,<sup>928</sup> headed by powerful chiefs of cabinet,<sup>929</sup> in order to ensure that proper procedures

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<sup>925</sup> Henri Reymond, Two Contrasting Styles of Leadership in the International Labour Organisation: Albert Thomas and Harold Butler, *Pensioners Newsletter*, no.2 (1 December 1986):22 and Archibald Agard Evans, *My Life As An International Civil Servant in the International Labour Office*, (edited by Aamir Ali), International Labor Office (1995): 9.

<sup>926</sup> Reymond (1 December 1986):22.

<sup>927</sup> Evans (1995): 18.

<sup>928</sup> Nowadays, for example, the Cabinet in the Office consists of eleven professionals, including two D2, one D1 and four P5. This is one of the largest cabinets in terms of the size and the number of high-grades positions among the UN service-oriented agencies.

<sup>929</sup> With a strong cabinet, the role of the *chief of the cabinet* becomes crucial. One of the former chiefs of the Cabinet described his responsibilities in the following manner: "(A given issue had to be) presented to the DG in a written form—if he did not have time, orally, — in a very objective manner with pros and cons. I discussed (an issue) with the DG if he did not want to take an immediate decision. He could give further instructions that somebody else should to be consulted on this particular matter. And then if he did take a decision, usually I had to draft a decision, which he then signed. I could also sign it. He delegated to me most decisions to sign. Very important policy things he signed. On average, one out of ten decisions were maybe signed by him and most by me". Interview with a former ILO chief of the cabinet, Geneva, 2 December 2003. The remarks of another former chief of the cabinet closely resemble the previous statement: "I guess that the DG took my advice more than half of the time because if he did not he should have kicked me out. (One of the chief of the Cabinet function is to prepare decisions) and this is the area where the influence is stronger. Like civil servant vis-à-vis minister. The way you prepare the files and summarize the issues can influence the decision. It is not that you are doing it deliberately but it is inherent in the functions. In many cases it becomes an advice: 'this leads to the conclusion', 'I recommend it'. I would often write: 'I recommend or we recommend this or this course after summarizing the issue, (which would include) pros and cons of the issue and the views of the people and then at the end you have your own specific positions--- I certainly did when I

are followed and an overall control and supervision of the top hierarchy over the organization is exercised effectively.<sup>930</sup> Therefore, traditionally, the Office has tended to rely on the large, organizationally omnipresent cabinet, whose powers extended beyond purely secretarial work associated with arranging and presenting written materials, distributing the DG internal or external correspondence or writing ceremonial speeches. In fact, the cabinet has emerged as very powerful body, which has not until now officially appeared in the Office organigram.<sup>931</sup> Thus, the cabinet is much more active and engaged in the daily administrative and political activities of the Office than is officially or formally recognized. A former official who worked in the cabinet described its functions in the following way:

Every file that came to the DG first went to the cabinet. It had to be studied and ensured that the things would be appropriately coordinated and that everyone who was supposed to be consulted was indeed consulted.<sup>932</sup>

Apart from administrative responsibilities regarding the filtering of information, which is passed to the DG, and ensuring that there is proper supervision of the organization's activities by the top leadership, the cabinet also performs a very important political function. Henri Reymond, a long time international civil servant in the ILO, described the cabinet as a

political watchdog, (which) ensures effective control of any action taken to carry out (the DG) decisions and policies and (protects) the DG against possible political blunders on the part of the bureaucracy.<sup>933</sup>

A large cabinet has important consequences for the functioning of the Office. Considerable power and institutional capacity of the cabinet combined with a strong administrative position of the chief of the cabinet both facilitate and advance greater centralization, as well as political sensitivity and thus cautiousness of the Office. A larger and more powerful cabinet tends to isolate the DG<sup>934</sup> because it raises a barrier between him and the rest of the Office. According to a former Deputy Director General, a large cabinet

is like an island. There has to be a formal request to meet somebody there. I, as a Deputy DG, had to make formal requests.<sup>935</sup>

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had a position. Sometimes I would say I do not. But yes, I would put (my position) very clearly".<sup>929</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 26 January 2004.

<sup>930</sup> Evans (1995): 9 and 18.

<sup>931</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 10 November 2003.

<sup>932</sup> Interview with a former ILO and WHO senior official, Geneva, 2 December 2003.

<sup>933</sup> Reymond (1 December 1986): 19.

<sup>934</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 9 January 2004.

<sup>935</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 10 December 2003.

Some former senior officials were of the opinion that the consolidation of policy-making within a small group placed in the cabinet has often been made to the detriment of the Office line-managers (D2, D1, P5), which eventually limited the freedom of their more independent technical and administrative actions.<sup>936</sup> In general, the cabinet has served the purpose of maintaining severe centralization and control of the Office and its activities.<sup>937</sup> Moreover, as a result of the cabinet's greater intervention in the day-to-day activities of the ILO, technical questions have often turned into sensitive political issues. Consequently, staff members have become all the more cautious. The ILO official describes the impact of politically oversensitive and intrusive cabinet on the technical programs in the following way:

As a unit, we like to go to new things and enter more into partnership with other organizations because we feel that as a unit we have a specific expertise so partnership would be quite complementary [with what we do]. But the backdrop is that we go further, go on and many times we run into political constraints from the cabinet. The cabinet wants us to go back and says that [a project] needs to be looked through and that we have to structure this initiative better. [Ultimately], the implication is that we have to be more careful. After such an opinion from the cabinet you can decide to go on with [the project] or do nothing. Nobody will say anything if you do not do that (...). But what we want to do is technical cooperation. It is not about a policy level but it is cooperation on expert level. It is not a political decision (...) and the cabinet should not be involved. People could do more if they did not have to fear about what it is really internally politically correct.<sup>938</sup>

The Office has a tradition firmly steeped in vertical, top-down means of control and command that have become the very centerpiece of the Office's professional culture. This top-down approach and centralization of decision making have become so embedded within the Office that it affects a process of delegation of managerial responsibilities to the 'line-managers'. When people reach the level of line managers after serving in the organization for fifteen or twenty years, by that time, they have already internalized the prevailing top-down approach. Consequently, they are less inclined to accept a bottom-up mode of work, with which they are less familiar. Centralized management has become such a strong part of the culture in the Office that even if delegation takes place, the managers are often not able to use newly acquired powers appropriately. The Office senior program manager, who could observe this phenomenon closely, described the situation this way:

There was and still is, a tendency that managers whenever there is a problem of managing their staff, refer to the human resource department, rather than trying to manage their units themselves.<sup>939</sup>

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<sup>936</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, 9 January 2004 and interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 10 November 2003.

<sup>937</sup> Reymond (1 December 1986):19.

<sup>938</sup> Interview with the ILO official, Geneva, 20 February 2004.

<sup>939</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 14 October 2003.



The extent of the centralized management is also reflected in the amount of money that the organization spends on management training for its senior officials that would eventually help them to acquire greater autonomy and learn how to use it effectively. It is estimated that the organization spends less than 1% of the ILO regular budget on the management training.<sup>940</sup> And even then, according to the ILO senior official the training is offered

on procedures (...): what are the financial procedures, management personnel procedures but actual management training in terms of managing people, we do not really do that. There is no standardized training for managers.<sup>941</sup>

On the one hand, centralization is the result and, at the same time, the source of the top management's belief in its infallibility, which increases its conviction of the necessity to exercise thorough control over the Office's activities. On the other hand, centralization is also a reflection of the 'low-trust' attitude that the top management ostensibly holds towards generalist staff. This kind of attitude promotes caution among managers and lower level staff that leaves little space for innovative ideas needed to reinvent and revitalize the organization. A centralized environment hinders the participation of middle and lower ranking officials in the process of policy-making, the very people who are least inhibited by the prospect of experimentation, risk taking, and even modifying procedural boundaries in order to find better and more effective ways to carry out their activities.

#### *4.3.6 Compartmentalization of the Office*

In the opinion of a former ILO Deputy Director General, the Office is a fragmented organization with "fiefdoms", compartmentalized manner of work and weak teamwork.<sup>942</sup> According to the internal Office report "sectionalism" prevails in the ILO administration<sup>943</sup> while the current Director General acknowledges that the ILO staff members "tend to work in an isolated way"<sup>944</sup> and that isolated style of work is often the result of a self-focused thinking and a concentration on one's own projects.<sup>945</sup> He also talked about a silo mentality that exists in the Office, in which people work exclusively in their own specific areas of

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<sup>940</sup> Ibid.

<sup>941</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 14 October 2003.

This is in contrast to the some other UN agencies and private companies that spend 5% or more of their budgets on management training activities. (To be elaborated further later on)

<sup>942</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 10 December 2003.

<sup>943</sup> ILO Strategic Policy Framework 2006-2009. Report on the Informal Consultations, (6-26 May 2003): 28.

<sup>944</sup> Director General's Address to the Staff, 23 January 2002:1.

<sup>945</sup> Ibid.

interest.<sup>946</sup> The interviewed officials also claimed that the ILO staff are “locked in small boxes”<sup>947</sup> and “are overly protective of their units and organizational set ups.”<sup>948</sup>

These views fall closely in line with the findings of the in-house consultation. Its conclusions were discussed during the meeting of the Senior Management Team in February 2003,<sup>949</sup> where it was observed: “a sizeable minority (in the Office) tends to think principally in terms of their particular field of work and trends there.”<sup>950</sup> In the connection with the compartmentalization problem, the Gender Audit report talked about the ‘beadcurtain syndrome’, where people maintain contact with their own superiors or subordinates in their unit only ‘vertically’ and have few issue-based contacts with other units. This ‘beadcurtain syndrome’ occurs even between individuals who work in different areas but in the same unit.<sup>951</sup>

Compartmentalization is further reinforced by the Office centralization that consolidates verticality of the management, control and communication, while at the same time, weakening horizontal or cross-programs and cross-departmental cooperation in the Office. As a result, the administration, in the opinion of an anonymous ILO official, has more than one thousand and seven hundred people who, like a thousand lights dispersed all over the place, work separately on their projects with little programmatic unity.<sup>952</sup> Compartmentalization does not only occur between smaller functional units and departments on micro-organizational level but is in fact even more visible, between two main structural divisions on the macro-organizational level: labor standards and technical cooperation, which have been managed as separate administrative structures and activities.

In fact, according to a former ILO senior legal official, ‘legal’ and ‘technical’ have never gone together in the ILO.<sup>953</sup> This kind of compartmentalization creates a particularly unfavorable environment for the promotion of crosscutting issues<sup>954</sup> and, as noted by the

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<sup>946</sup> Address by Juan Somavia, Director-General of the International Labor Office to Staff, Geneva, (29 May 2003): 10.

<sup>947</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 20 October 2003.

<sup>948</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 13 October 2003.

<sup>949</sup> Address by Juan Somavia (29 May 2003): 4.

<sup>950</sup> ILO Strategic Policy Framework (6-26 May 2003): 5.

<sup>951</sup> The ILO Gender Audit Report (2002):24.

<sup>952</sup> Based on an opinion of an ILO official cited in the ILO Strategic Policy Framework 2006-2009. Report on the Informal Consultations. 6-26 May 2003: 23.

<sup>953</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 14 May 2004.

<sup>954</sup> The ILO Gender Audit Report (2002): 24.

DG and one of the interviewees, makes teamwork complicated, if even possible.<sup>955</sup> Since many of the Office programs are not highly specialized and require the input of other labor-related disciplines, compartmentalization is thus particularly harmful for the effective performance of the Office's substantive work. Actually, the problems associated with compartmentalization cause greater damage to the work of the ILO than they would in the case of the Secretariat of the WHO where, in practice, a tuberculosis expert, in order to carry out his or her tasks effectively, does not really need to be informed about what his colleague next door, specializing in malaria, is actually doing.

The seriousness of the compartmentalization problem in the Office was explicitly acknowledged by the ILO administration when, in the first half of the 1990s, it launched the initiative known as Active Partnership Policy that aimed precisely at reducing, and eventually eliminating, compartmentalization by introducing a multidisciplinary approach to the ILO fieldwork.

#### *4.3.7 Power of the staff union in the Office*

Traditionally, the Office of the ILO has had a very active and powerful staff union. One of the reasons for the ILO staff union activism is its membership. In sheer numbers, the ILO staff union includes today 500 professional staff and 758 general staff.<sup>956</sup> Thus, almost two thirds of the total number of ILO staff are union members.<sup>957</sup> What is more, many of these people have a trade union background and strong ideological (generally, left-leaning) commitment. These people, as one of the former senior officials observed, tend to be more argumentative and more controversial.<sup>958</sup> In fact, the Office has been known as a “golden retreat for ex-syndicalists,”<sup>959</sup> and as being dominated by “aggressive socialists” or “pseudo-communists.”<sup>960</sup> Because of these types of people the ILO staff union is unusually more assertive and combative in comparison with similar organizations in other UN agencies.<sup>961</sup>

An illustration of the powerful position of staff union in the Office is the recent conclusion of several collective agreements with the ILO management: the Collective Agreement on a

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<sup>955</sup> Director General's Address to the Staff, 23 January 2002:7 and interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 13 October 2003.

<sup>956</sup> Annexes to Gender Audit Report, (2002): 250 and 251

<sup>957</sup> Staff Union Bulletin, No.1319, 16 March 2004:1.

<sup>958</sup> Interview with a former ILO and WHO senior human resources official, Geneva, 23 February 2004.

<sup>959</sup> Interview with the ILO official, Geneva, 17 March 2004.

<sup>960</sup> Interview with a former ILO and WHO senior official, Geneva, 2 December 2003.

<sup>961</sup> Interview with the ILO official, Geneva, 19 March 2004.

Procedure for Recruitment and Selection, the Collective Agreement on a Procedure for the Resolution of Grievances and the Recognition and Procedural Agreement that established a Joint Negotiating Committee as a forum for negotiating major staff-related agreements.

These agreements do not find their equivalents in other UN organizations where the staff-management relations do not figure so prominently in the day-to-day work of these agencies. Although the ILO staff union is not as strong as the national trade unions and does not negotiate the conditions of employment directly, (which are decided instead by member states in the UN assembly),<sup>962</sup> this did not prevent the staff union from calling the first strike in the history of the UN system, in 1962, followed by others in the same decade, and more in the 1980s. Generally, the ILO staff union tends to have more influence on the management of the organization than the staff of other UN agencies, which typically do not even have “unions” but only staff “associations.”

The power of the ILO staff union appears so strong because the management looks more vulnerable in this organization than in other international organizations.<sup>963</sup> The ILO deals with social and labor issues, and the staff union may always point out that the Office internal practice should reflect exactly what the Office preaches to the outside world. The argument ‘practice what you preach’ has indeed been used against the management, as the following Staff Union Committee statements shows:

Inefficient and often autocratic management characterized the ILO for decades (...). For the Director General and his senior management cannot make a credible plea for social dialogue, social protection or the application of fundamental principles and rights at work, unless they practice- as employers- the standards they preach.<sup>964</sup>

The ILO cannot promote labour standards that we are not prepared to apply ourselves.<sup>965</sup>

The ILO is the lead Agency for the defence and promotion of labour rights. It is therefore legitimate that (staff) expect these rights, values and principles to preside over their own working and employment conditions.<sup>966</sup>

Because of this kind of argumentation the power of the staff union in the ILO has become unusually strong.<sup>967</sup>

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<sup>962</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 6 November 2003.

<sup>963</sup> Ibid.

<sup>964</sup> Active Participation (January 2001):5.

<sup>965</sup> Staff Union Committee, *Union* 319, May 2002:3.

<sup>966</sup> Staff Union Bulletin, No.1319, 16 March 2004:7.

A powerful staff union, with the objective to preserve the conditions of the working environment of the international civil service, imposes considerable constraints on internal change. The presence of a strong and vocal staff union makes even a discussion about weakening security of employment in the Office an extremely sensitive topic for the top managers. In fact, the staff union has already raised strong objections to a growing threat to the job security in the Office,<sup>968</sup> demanding that the management

declares that it opposes and will continue to oppose the desire expressed by the International Civil Service Commission, some Governments and some Agencies experiencing difficulties, to consider that jobs within the United Nations organizations should no longer result in career appointments, and that permanent contracts should be abolished.<sup>969</sup>

Generally, the staff union attempts to preserve the *status quo*, which is favorable for the staff, while resisting changes that could weaken permanence of employment- the very thing responsible for the conservative and non-entrepreneurial Office culture. At the same time, a strong staff union reinforces the Office's normative focus on proper procedures, rules and regulations, as well as on the *esprit-de-corps* of the international civil service, its privileges and immunities.

#### 4.3.8 “Juridicalization” of the Office

Juridical characteristics have dominated the ILO since its inception in 1919, through to the 1960s.<sup>970</sup> However, even today, one comes across the opinion that this is Office managed and led more by lawyers than economists and others.<sup>971</sup> “Juridicalization” of the Office is driven mainly by normative tasks connected with the establishment and enforcement of international labor standards. However, “juridicalization” also refers to the overall adherence to internal rules and procedures and to the legality of administrative actions, which are closely monitored by the legal unit in the Office. The Office is thus focused on processes and on behavior that is in accordance with established rules and procedures, which are enshrined in the Standing Orders of the International Labor Conference, Standing Orders of the Governing Body and in the Staff Regulations of the International Labor Office.

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<sup>967</sup> Interview with a former ILO and WHO senior human resources official, Geneva, 23 February 2004.

<sup>968</sup> Staff Union Bulletin, No.1319, 16 March 2004:1.

<sup>969</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>970</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 27 November 2003.

<sup>971</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 16 October 2003.

The permeation of “juridicalization” within the Office makes the ILO administration all the more hierarchical and centralized. It also limits the actions of the Office to a narrow framework of procedures and regulations and generally reinforces caution in dealing with the outside environment. Robert Cox, a former Director of the ILO International Institute for Labor Studies and an international relations scholar, discussed the unwritten policy of *nihil obstat* used to impose a sort of censorship on any writing prepared by an ILO official for an outside audience.<sup>972</sup>

Cox adds that this policy was applied to prevent him from publishing a particular chapter about the ILO,<sup>973</sup> which he wrote for the widely-read and academically acclaimed book, *The Anatomy of Influence: Decision Making in International Organization*, published in 1973. In this book, Cox talked about the *nihil obstat* policy that was used by the Director General Wilfred Jenks (1970-1973) both habitually and as his prerogative.<sup>974</sup> This behavior, however, ought to be viewed in a much broader context, not limited to a particular individual. Jenks, as Cox noted, was very much “the essence of the insider”<sup>975</sup>, who joined the Office in 1931 and since then had been gradually and slowly advancing within the ranks. Jenks, a lawyer himself, who had worked for many years in the Legal Division and in the International Labor Standards Department, was as much a product of the juridical environment of the Office as its creator. Cox was of the belief that Jenks “was the embodiment of the ILO’s conventional doctrine, which he took pride in having personally articulated.”<sup>976</sup> Thus, Jenks’s behavior cannot be separated from the Office professional culture and its characteristics, which he had helped to shape. He saw things through the prism of its juridical culture and traditions, and acted accordingly.

A more contemporary example of the Office’s extreme cautiousness, rooted in its juridical style of work and its desire to avoid states’ criticism, is the 30-year long confidentiality rule restricting public access to internal documents held in the ILO historical archives (for biographical or autobiographical research, which necessitates consulting the files of individual officials, this rule extends to 50 years).<sup>977</sup> Such a long confidentiality rule for general archival materials, according to the ILO senior archivist, is necessary in order for

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<sup>972</sup> Robert Cox, Labor and Hegemony, *International Organization*, vl.31, no.3 (Summer 1977): 412-413, particularly footnote 49.

<sup>973</sup> Ibid.

<sup>974</sup> Ibid.

<sup>975</sup> Ibid., 411.

<sup>976</sup> Ibid., 411.

<sup>977</sup> Rules for Access to the ILO Historical Archives. Archives Committee. International Labor Organization.

the ILO to forestall any possible tensions with the states that have often similarly extensive rules of confidentiality.

If the Office confidentiality rule was shorter than in the states' archives, the ILO could expose itself to outside criticism, argued the archivists. If the Office were to suddenly release the correspondence between the ILO and a member state that was still being regarded as confidential in the national capital, the Office would certainly expose itself to criticism.<sup>978</sup> This overzealous protection of the Office from the possibility of outside criticism stands in a clear contrast with the archival policies of other major UN organizations. Most of them, including the WHO, UNHCR and even less specialized and highly political UN Secretariat in New York and the UN Office in Geneva, have only a 20 year-long confidentiality rule<sup>979</sup> and seemed to be at ease with the fact that their member states in their national archives may have longer and more restrictive confidentiality rules.

Another example of the juridical type of thinking shaping the Office's extremely cautious behavior is a piece of correspondence, which the author of this research received from the Legal Office in the ILO administration. This letter stated that

the duty of officials under the Staff Regulations is not to communicate to any person non-published information known to them by reason of their official position.<sup>980</sup>

The note continued,

it would not be appropriate for officials of the ILO... [to answer]... questions concerning the internal workings and management styles in the ILO ..., [which would thus, encourage them] ... to breach their obligation of discretion.<sup>981</sup>

An illustration of the impact of a stringent juridical environment is the fact that adherence to the right procedures has been always important in the ILO.<sup>982</sup> This tradition, for example, contradicts a much more flexible approach in the WHO exemplified by the case of Dr. Henderson, who led a successful campaign against smallpox, which resulted in the eradication of the disease in 1980.

According to the official who held high offices in both the ILO and the WHO, no representative broke more rules than Dr Henderson in WHO. However, because he was

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<sup>978</sup> This explanation was given to the author of this research by the ILO archivist.

<sup>979</sup> Detailed information on the archives' policies of various UN organizations can be accessed at: <http://www.unesco.org/archives/guide/uk/index.html>

<sup>980</sup> E-mail from the ILO senior official, November 2003

<sup>981</sup> Ibid.

<sup>982</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Budapest, 10 September 2003.

achieving concrete results, the organization allowed him to do it. The same interviewed official stressed that such behavior would never have been tolerated or even allowed in the ILO.<sup>983</sup> This is because, as observed by other ILO staff members, the people in the ILO internalize and habitualize the adherence to rules,<sup>984</sup> tending to focus on the legal and procedural aspects of how the job should be done, rather than on the impact of what they do.<sup>985</sup>

The above-described examples indicate that the “juridicalization” of the Office has brought about a great degree of caution, which has in turn, increased the centralization and hierarchical control within the Office. The Office interactions with its constituents and other external actors ought to be done according to the established procedures and regulations. “Juridicalization” strengthens the inclination of the Office staff to follow the rules. The former ILO Director General, Michel Hansenne, who spent ten years in office, confirmed this observation when he described the Office as a heavily bureaucratic machine with an incredibly complex system of procedures that is served by the devoted staffers, who rigorously follow the established rules.<sup>986</sup> The same rules, however, contribute to the unusual rigidity of the Office, conserve risk-averse behavior, and serve as a shield against both justified and unjustified external criticism and intervention.

#### *4.3.9 Focus on failures and punishment*

The Office, during 85 years of its history has not managed to establish a proper job appraisal system with comprehensible award and penalty schemes. Even the senior official from the human resources department acknowledged that there was no systematic means of job appraisal in the ILO and that the current method of evaluation was inadequate.<sup>987</sup> According to another interviewee, this system cultivated a problematic belief within the Office that the penalization of failure prevailed over the rewarding of success.<sup>988</sup>

Although the penalizing system in the Office is not as forceful as the one that exists in the private sector and very seldom, if at all, relies on actual dismissals<sup>989</sup>, there are various

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<sup>983</sup> Interview with a former ILO and WHO senior official, Geneva, 2 December 2003.

<sup>984</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Budapest, 10 September 2003.

<sup>985</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 16 October 2003.

<sup>986</sup> Michel Hansenne, *Un Garde-Fou Pour La Mondialisation. Le BIT Dans l'Après-Guerre Froide*, Editions Quorum (1999):20 and 21.

<sup>987</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 14 October 2003.

<sup>988</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 10 November 2003.

<sup>989</sup> “Failure (in the Office) is not so much penalized here as in the private company”. Interview with the ILO senior official, Budapest, 11 September 2003. “I do not know anybody that has been sucked because of failures. And I think there have been big failures”. Interview with the ILO senior official, Budapest, 22



administrative penalties that the Office may employ as a means of punishment for a perceived mistake. Even if an employee is not formally fired as a consequence, he/she can receive harsh feedback or a bad note,<sup>990</sup> which can, if not arrest, then at least hinder their future promotions and an administrative career. Eventually, one can be also sent to a very difficult duty station as a punishment for a failure.<sup>991</sup> Since people care about whether the next job position will be in Geneva or Kinshasa, care is taken to avoid having mistakes or failures attached to the career folder of the employee.<sup>992</sup> A punishment for a failure can be also concealed. As one interviewee noted, because of certain failures, an official might be removed from the mainstream of the organization and decision making process and could face organizational ostracism.<sup>993</sup>

Organizational failure, and the marginalization associated with it, are more likely to occur if a staffer dares to experiment in order to change things in the organization. In the view of a recently retired senior official, if the staffers keep their heads down and take few risks (or none at all) then his or her career will gradually move upwards.<sup>994</sup> These incentives, according to another interviewee, make people even less inclined to take a risk.<sup>995</sup> There is also a certain degree of ‘career visibility’ due to the existing personal career records and institutional memory reflected, among others, in the form of organizational stories that, according to the interviewed officials, concentrate more on who is going up or down and who did “this mistake” rather than who wrote “this fantastic’ paper.”<sup>996</sup> In such a situation, any failure is highlighted and quickly becomes a major detriment to promotion in the organizational hierarchy. Consequently, it may not be as important to have great successes as it is to avoid failures.<sup>997</sup> This in turn has an important (negative) impact on the way people think about taking new initiatives or experimenting with new, unconventional ways of doing things.

The Office has no clear policy of rewarding success. For example, the conclusions of the latest Office-wide consultations showed that the ILO staff is concerned that their “work is

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September 2003. Because of the lack of visible policy of dismissals some of the officials were in the opinion that “failures are not really sanctioned” and the civil servants in the Office “do not get penalized for failure”. Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 15 October 2003 and Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 13 October 2003.

<sup>990</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 20 October 2003.

<sup>991</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 16 October 2003.

<sup>992</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 15 October 2003; Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 14 October 2003.

<sup>993</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 20 October 2003.

<sup>994</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 27 November 2003.

<sup>995</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 20 October 2003.

<sup>996</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 15 October 2003.

not being recognized.”<sup>998</sup> This opinion was subsequently confirmed during various interviews where the officials noted that the prospect of rewards in the Office is very low,<sup>999</sup> that there is little if any recognition when the success is achieved<sup>1000</sup> and that the Office generally does not reward either the success or the risk that often determines eventual success.<sup>1001</sup> One of the senior officials in charge of the job and program appraisal admitted that the Office had difficulties establishing effective reward mechanisms.<sup>1002</sup> One of the reasons for not having effective reward mechanisms is that in the Office, there is no agreement on what constitutes a success.<sup>1003</sup>

Rewards for good results in the sphere of technical activities may, indeed, be less important than in non-technical fields because, as observed by one ILO official, “if it is a success, it is normal because it is in your job description, so you did it.”<sup>1004</sup> And the officials are eventually promoted based on lack of failure, not prodigious achievements. However, the reward system becomes central if a technical job is combined with managerial (administrative) responsibilities and an ILO official is both a specialist and a manager. A non-awarded technical specialist, who sees his/her success as being part of his/her technical responsibilities, may not feel affected by a lack of explicit recognition. Even if he or she does feel affected it is more or less confined to this particular individual. The same person imbued with managerial responsibilities, has a much broader impact on the working environment by virtue of the fact that he or she leads the people that report to him or her. His managerial leadership, in turn, depends on specific administrative incentives and rewards, which, as observed by the person from the management unit, are currently lacking in the Office.<sup>1005</sup> This is even more crucial in the ILO Office since 52% of its staff members are employed at the level of P5 and above, which creates a substantially large cadre of managers. As observed by the above official, if there is no recognition for being a good manager, why make any effort to perform managerial duties above average. In these circumstances, it is easier and more enjoyable to focus on one’s own technical work.<sup>1006</sup>

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<sup>997</sup> Ibid.

<sup>998</sup> Address by Juan Somavia (29 May 2003): 4.

<sup>999</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 27 November 2003.

<sup>1000</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 13 October 2003; Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 6 November 2003 and Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 15 October 2003.

<sup>1001</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 20 October 2003.

<sup>1002</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 14 October 2003.

<sup>1003</sup> ILO source.

<sup>1004</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 16 October 2003.

<sup>1005</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 14 October 2003.

<sup>1006</sup> Ibid.

The existing “punish and reward” system in the Office provides little, if any, incentives to take risk in order to achieve outstanding results. In fact, in this type of system, the staff members essentially fear that they may be punished if they attempt to take risk.<sup>1007</sup> As a result, referring once more to the interview transcripts, the staff will tend to pull back, and wait before acting to avoid “mistakes,” and, if they take a risk, it would be a “carefully measured risk.”<sup>1008</sup> The last thing the Office expects is any sort of radicalism in its decision-making.<sup>1009</sup> Therefore, at best the Office has generally a low risk culture, and at worst, the organization tends to be enormously risk-averse.<sup>1010</sup>

#### *4.3.10 Tripartism and its impact on the Office*

Tripartism is one of the most significant elements of the outside setting in which the Office functions. The ILO international administration is surrounded by tripartism based on the tripartite structure of the ILO political bodies, which include the representatives of the member states, workers and employers. Tripartism in the ILO means that the organization is set on a dialogue of equal partners: labor, management and government. This particular feature distinguishes the ILO from other United Nations agencies.

Because of a strong sense of tripartism within the Office, the officials are always mindful of existing political constraints associated with tripartite structure, which in turn creates psychological ‘boundaries’ even before an action is taken or possible criticism voiced. As a result, the staff tend to silent their critical views, while the Office is generally reluctant to get outside of the limits within which it operates.<sup>1011</sup> This sort of self-censorship or ‘preemptive caution’ grows because the people in the Office seem to deeply internalize the tripartite system,<sup>1012</sup> which is reflected, among others, in the organizational story about three keys, symbolically representing tripartism, that is very much alive and well remembered in the Office.<sup>1013</sup>

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<sup>1007</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 10 November 2003.

<sup>1008</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Budapest, 11 September 2003; Interview with the ILO senior official, Budapest, 10 September 2003.

<sup>1009</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Budapest, 10 September 2003.

<sup>1010</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 20 October 2003; Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 14 October 2003.

<sup>1011</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 27 November 2003.

<sup>1012</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 10 November 2003.

<sup>1013</sup> The first ILO headquarters was located in the Centre William Rappard, which, today, is a host to the World Trade Organization. The gate to this building had been equipped with a triple lock to which three separate keys were made. The story about the keys was told to this author during the interview with the ILO senior official, who referred to the importance of tripartism for the organization. 16 October 2003. In 2003, the ILO magazine *World of Work* gave an extended coverage of the issue of tripartism and highlighted a historical symbolism of the three keys. See *The Three Keys to the ILO: Opening the Door to Tripartism*, *World of Work*, No. 46, (March 2003): 2-6.

At the opening ceremony in 1926, three officials, each representing one of the ILO constituents: workers, employers and governments, used the three keys to open the gate to the ILO premises. On this occasion, Arthur Fontaine, the Chairman of the ILO Governing Body is remembered as saying:

Each group enters the ILO through the same door, to collaborate on the same task. Each group has the duty to guard our building, our statutes and our common purpose.<sup>1014</sup>

In 1970, the Governing Body, on the retirement of David Morse, the ILO Director General, offered him three golden keys, replicas of the 1926 keys, in a gesture of the constituents' appreciation for his work for the ILO.

Consequently, tripartism should be viewed not merely as constitutionally inscribed formal structures and procedures, but also as a culturally-determined practice that has been strongly internalized in the behavior and thinking of the ILO officials. This was also emphasized in the statement made by the current DG, Juan Somavia, who said that tripartism was “the ILO’s bedrock.”<sup>1015</sup> In practice, tripartism is the yardstick that the Office uses to decide whether policies are acceptable or not.

According to an official with long-term experience in managing the Office policies, the Office staff members tend to measure their proposals in terms of what is feasible and what is within the governing boundaries of the existing tripartite system.<sup>1016</sup> The same official then described the constraining impact of tripartism on the Office activities in greater detail:

We have to take into account our tripartite constituents. You cannot come up with outrageous policies that would lead to a detriment of workers and employers. Everybody has the right to come up with his and her ideas and plans. But you would still try to fit it into what is feasible.<sup>1017</sup>

Another senior program official was also of the opinion that tripartism constitutes a constraint on the Office initiatives. As a consequence, officials tend to make the project proposals they perceive as feasible.<sup>1018</sup>

The impact of tripartism on the Office policies often increases rather than decreases the benchmark of what is and is not *feasible*. All policies viewed as politically sensitive may easily fail a feasibility test. Since feasibility depends often upon the time, place, parties

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<sup>1014</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>1015</sup> Ibid., 3 and 4.

<sup>1016</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 13 October 2003.

<sup>1017</sup> Ibid.

involved and a situational context, the scope and the power of politically driven constraints can be considerable. In the ILO, the degree of political constraint (or the feasibility test) is determined by the outcome of the equation: sensitivity of the issue multiplied by one hundred eighty two member states and squared by the interests of two social partners: workers' and employers' groups. Thus, the opinion expressed by a former senior official with a long career in both the ILO and the WHO that the political constraints in the ILO are 'terrible'<sup>1019</sup> is by no means an exaggeration. This high degree of political control raises the bar of what is feasible and acceptable for the ILO officials to accomplish in their efforts.

In practice, according to the senior staff member, the fact that the Office professionals have to take into account all the different views and interests of various constituents often leads to a kind of 'averaging' before the action is taken.<sup>1020</sup> This 'averaging' creates, in the view of another senior ILO official, a lingering danger of setting the benchmark for the choice of means and for actions at the lowest common denominator.<sup>1021</sup> In fact, Robert Taylor, a former Financial Times editor on employment issues, who held a similar opinion when he noted:

The ILO risks being held back from radical change by its tripartite structure (because it) needs to move at the pace of the slowest, operating through consensus and compromise (...).<sup>1022</sup>

Both views are surprisingly similar to Thomas Weiss' observation that the international civil servants undertake "programming involving calculations based on the lowest common denominator."<sup>1023</sup> In practice, the lowest common denominator implies that the Office tends to select courses of action that are neither the most effective nor the most needed but rather the most likely to meet the particularistic interests of the powerful tripartite constituents.

A strong internalization of tripartism in the thinking of the Office staff is exemplified by the opinion that tripartism is a sort of organizational "taboo" (or better sacred cow) and thus, can never be questioned.<sup>1024</sup> Such thinking may easily lead ILO officials to self-imposed limits on what they can propose, say or do. In practice, as observed by the long-time serving ILO staff member, omnipresent and organizationally embedded tripartism, combined with a degree of self-constraining attitude on the part of the Office officials,

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<sup>1018</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 14 October 2003.

<sup>1019</sup> Interview with a former ILO and WHO senior official, Geneva, 2 December 2003.

<sup>1020</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 15 October 2003.

<sup>1021</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 20 October 2003.

<sup>1022</sup> Robert Taylor, A Useful-Go-Between. The Key Role of the ILO in Global Governance, *New Economy*, vol.9, no.2 (June 2002): 89.

<sup>1023</sup> Weiss (1975): 53.

leads to a situation in which a considerable number of staff would choose to do nothing over taking action that could possibly offend the constituents or result in criticism.<sup>1025</sup>

The Office may, in fact, use real constraints imposed by tripartism to justify a particular action or lack thereof.<sup>1026</sup> During one of the ILO conferences, a paper on pension reform in the region was supposed to be presented to the ILO constituents. The first draft of the paper was quite blunt in its criticism of the design and implementation of pension reforms in particular countries. Some Office officials thought that, for the concerned countries, it would not be ‘pleasant’ to listen to such a report. Therefore a decision was made to ‘tone down’ the language of the report.<sup>1027</sup> Another time, Robert Cox, a former Director of the ILO International Institute for Labor Studies, wrote about the Office self-censorship on the ILO publication, which took a quite extreme form.<sup>1028</sup> According to Cox,

the ILO publications policy operated under such constraints as the prohibition on publishing anything about a country that was not written by a national of that country—a rule that was interpreted (...) to mean a national who was *persona grata* with the government.<sup>1029</sup>

The above examples, isolated as they may be, serve as a practical illustration of the ‘self-censorship in action’. This kind of censorship, in the view of another ILO official, determines the choice of the policies and the process of their implementation according to what is politically possible.<sup>1030</sup> Yet another, in this instance, recently retired ILO senior official, noted that self-censorship in the Office becomes particularly obvious when one realizes the range of possibilities that the Office may have considered, but had to reject because they were viewed as outside the range of what was acceptable to tripartism.<sup>1031</sup>

In a situation of self censorship it is not surprising that the Office officials, as observed by the staff member, have been generally unwilling to provoke and challenge the ILO constituents particularly in a situation wherein the employers, unions and states execute bad politics.<sup>1032</sup> Such action would be considered “too risky” by the officials because the Office fears outside criticism and traditionally does not go against the constituents’ wishes or

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<sup>1024</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Budapest, 10 September 2003.

<sup>1025</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 20 October 2003.

<sup>1026</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 10 November 2003.

<sup>1027</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Budapest, 11 September 2003.

<sup>1028</sup> Cox (Summer 1977): 412.

<sup>1029</sup> Ibid., 412 and 413, footnote 49.

<sup>1030</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 15 October 2003.

<sup>1031</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 27 November 2003.

<sup>1032</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 10 November 2003.

interests.<sup>1033</sup> In fact, several interviewed officials emphasized the significance of the Office's fear of criticism and risk-averse attitude as the reason for the Office's inability to face the ILO constituents.<sup>1034</sup> Tripartism thus casts a long shadow over the Office and suppresses a more risk-tolerant behavior. As a result, the Office rarely challenges its political organ, the Governing Body (GB), on critical issues that the GB may simply not want to have called to their collective attention.<sup>1035</sup> Consequently, the ILO political organs have become, for the Office officials, the last place to voice their criticism of particular issues.<sup>1036</sup> This corresponds well with Weiss' characteristics of the international civil servants as people who are "predisposed to avoid conflict at all cost."<sup>1037</sup>

Another issue associated with tripartism and the professional culture of the Office is the "cacophony of demands"<sup>1038</sup> coming from the ILO constituents. Because the Office does not say 'no' to the constituents, so as to avoid their likely criticism, the administration is often overloaded with work. The leadership recognized an urgent need to prioritize the Office activities. However such change would require the ILO officials to change their habitually risk-averse and criticism-conscious behavior. As the DG, Juan Somavia acknowledged, the professionals in the Office would need to

learn to say 'no' (...), to say sorry, because we simply cannot do everything (...). The worst thing to do is to say, yes, yes, yes, and then only afterwards ask how (...) to deliver on all the commitments made.<sup>1039</sup>

However, the Office professional culture, fearful of outside criticism and generally risk-averse, has remained entrenched in the tradition of saying 'yes' and has been unable to fend off the demands of the constituents. Thus, the call: "we have to prioritize"<sup>1040</sup> is very often silenced by the fear of criticism and risk avoidance.

#### *4.3.11 Office's fight for its survival*

The ILO is an organization that, as observed by a former official, has suffered quite a lot over its history.

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<sup>1033</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1034</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Budapest, 11 September 2003; Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 15 October 2003; Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 10 November 2003; Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 20 October 2003; Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 13 October 2003.

<sup>1035</sup> ILO source.

<sup>1036</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 10 November 2003.

<sup>1037</sup> Weiss (1975): 53.

<sup>1038</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 20 October 2003.

<sup>1039</sup> Address by Juan Somavia (29 May 2003): 12. See also Director General's Address to the Staff, 23 January 2002:6.

<sup>1040</sup> Address by Juan Somavia (29 May 2003):12.

The existence of the ILO has been questioned all the time. How good are the ILO standards if the governments are not applying them? Maybe these standards were all right in 1919 but what about in 2002? —they were saying that also in the 1970s. These questions were all the time there for the ILO, whereas nobody ever questioned the relevance of the WHO.<sup>1041</sup>

The organization's constant struggle to survive in the face of criticism and doubt regarding its conduct and relevance has made Office officials extremely sensitive to, if not suspicious of, the outside world. Every outside criticism is perceived in the Office as a serious threat to the prestige, if not to the existence, of the organization and the sensitivity to its possible negative impact on the labor agency is thus magnified.

The Office's oversensitivity to criticism from outside actors (even if the information is not made public) is epitomized in its attitude towards the consulting companies invited to the Office to carry out internal studies. Dynargie consulting company conducted the study known as the "ILO climate survey" that was published on the ILO intranet in October 2000. The Office officials were critical not only about the alleged non-transparent selection of the consulting company but also about the survey findings, which highlighted significant communication and management problems within the Office.<sup>1042</sup> Apparently, as a consequence of the specific sensitivity towards critical findings, the results of the study were 'quashed' and removed from the ILO intranet few months after its publication.<sup>1043</sup>

In 2000, Arthur Andersen was invited to conduct management studies in one of the ILO departments: RELCONF (Documentation Department). The final report criticized the Office document processing system and suggested necessary improvements based on the simple idea of "doing more with less."<sup>1044</sup> The ILO staff was less than impressed. The ILO internal journal *Union* wrote about "a climate of mistrust (that) had been created by the presence of the team."<sup>1045</sup> The suggestions were made that:

perhaps a solution for the future would be to use the funds saved by not employing consultants for more fruitful endeavours. (And the saved funds) could be used to ease the burden of these overworked colleagues, rather than to invent new schemes to do more work with less people and resources.<sup>1046</sup>

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<sup>1041</sup> Interview with a former ILO and WHO senior official, Geneva, 2 December 2003.

<sup>1042</sup> Looking for a Silver Lining. The ILO Climate Survey, *Union* 304, (October 2000):13.

<sup>1043</sup> This word was used by the Office officials to inform the author of this study about the fate of the survey.

<sup>1044</sup> Review of the Document Production Processes, International Labor Office, March 2001.

<sup>1045</sup> How to Save the ILO Some Money, *Union* 308, (March 2001):9.

<sup>1046</sup> Ibid.



This oversensitivity towards outside scrutiny and criticism seems to have led to the emergence in the Office of a besieged, or closed-fortress syndrome leading in turn, to the adoption of a defensive stance. This is exemplified by the recent tensions between the Office and the Joint Inspection Unit (JUI), a supervisory organ of the UN General Assembly, which is in charge of conducting financial and administrative supervision of the UN programs, funds and agencies, including the ILO and its Office. Often, the JUI in its reports is critical of what is taking place within particular organizations and points out to specific changes that need to be introduced to remedy the situation. Most likely, this was the reason for tension between the Office and the JUI, which reached its peak during the November 2003 Governing Body (GB) session when the Office confidently stated that “the ILO has its own oversight mechanisms through which it can derive most of these same benefits (offered by the JIU).”<sup>1047</sup> This, subsequently, led the administration to conclude that the “oversight systems of the ILO are adequate without the JIU.”<sup>1048</sup> As a consequence, the Office recommended the GB to withdraw the ILO from the JIU.<sup>1049</sup>

The Office is the only institution among the international administrations of the UN agencies that explicitly and assertively pushed for its withdrawal from the JIU. Such conflictuous relations between the Office and JIU stand in clear contrast with relatively harmonious cooperation between JIU and other agencies, which, far from using any threats of withdrawal, have actually been supportive of the JIU work (e.g. UNHCR or WHO). Although the GB ultimately did not concur with the Office’s wishes, the entire incident demonstrates a degree of sensitivity of the ILO administration towards outside opinion (even originating from another UN body) on the issue of the Office’s own internal management. This sort of sensitivity and anxiety about the outside appraisals and possible criticism of in-house managerial issues seems to have led to a fortress-like defensive stance within the Office, reinforced by its conviction about the merits of its own mechanisms.

Sensitivity of the ILO officials to the outside criticism was verbalized in the e-mail the author of this study received from one of the former ILO officials. The official, while referring to the note from the ILO legal advisor,<sup>1050</sup> wrote that he understood very well why the

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<sup>1047</sup> Matters Relating to the Joint Inspection Unit, Programme, Financial and Administrative Committee, Governing Body, 288/PFA/13/1, Geneva November 2003: 4.

<sup>1048</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>1049</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>1050</sup> See the paragraph 4.2.8.

active ILO officials are not supposed to release insider knowledge about the operation, organizational culture and quality of management to outsiders. (...) As much as I wish that an outside analysis is made of the effectiveness and efficiency of the ILO, I would nevertheless abstain from passing on my knowledge and experience because it could harm the ILO. There are persons and organizations, including certain media that would not hesitate to exploit such knowledge to the detriment of the ILO - especially today when certain political sources try to discredit the multilateral system.<sup>1051</sup>

A drive to preserve the interest of the organization and protect it from outside criticism, has increased the pressure on the Office officials to remain reserved, protective and even secretive in their activities and interactions with the other actors. Such pressure has generated what Robert Cox called ‘a cautious orthodoxy’ within the Office.<sup>1052</sup> This cautious approach towards contact with the outside world tends to increase the isolation of the Office vis-à-vis its environment, therein reducing its openness and responsiveness to external voices other than its own political masters. The careful manner in which the Office communicates with the outside world seems to be effective in keeping not only the organization’s adversaries, but also, paradoxically, its social and political allies and supporters, at a distance.<sup>1053</sup>

#### *4.3.12 Conclusion on the professional culture in the Office of the ILO*

The professional culture of the Office is highly rigid. The root cause of this rigidity is the Office normative orientation, which has reinforced the ILO administration focus on process rather than on action and results. This specific focus had led to an extremely cautious environment where people tend to be careful and risk-averse, adhering rigidly to the established rules and procedures, as well as to the centralized and hierarchical means of dealing with specific issues.<sup>1054</sup> This is because, in a cautious environment, according to the ILO senior official,

you want to make sure that you get the things right, that is why it is better to involve higher level to check: can I do this, what do you think, I have this problem, should I go ahead or not?<sup>1055</sup>

The cautious work environment of the Office, according to Robert Cox, leads to the suppression of critical voices in open discussions, effectively buttressing the organization’s ill-defined interests and dominant “don’t rock the boat” attitude.<sup>1056</sup>

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<sup>1051</sup> E-mail from a former ILO senior official, 14 November 2003.

<sup>1052</sup> Cox (Summer 1977): 421.

<sup>1053</sup> A former ILO top senior official voiced criticism that the Office officials “do not answer the call and social allies cannot get through.” Geneva, 10 December 2003.

<sup>1054</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 15 October 2003; Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 10 November 2003.

<sup>1055</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Budapest, 11 September 2003.

#### 4.4 Contents of Change: Active Partnership Policy (APP) and its radicalism

A major organizational change, which the ILO Director General, Michel Hansenne (1989-1998) launched during his first term in office, more precisely, in 1993, was Active Partnership Policy (APP). According to a close associate of the DG, the idea of APP came directly from Hansenne.<sup>1057</sup> The DG confirmed this observation during the interview in which he stated:

*I have proposed a new concept and a new policy for relations between the Organization and its constituents [which was] summed up in the term “active partnership.”*<sup>1058</sup>

Consequently, a direct involvement of external actors in the phase of formulation and implementation of APP was limited, if it existed at all. The Governing Body (GB) gave its political approval only after a whole package of APP reforms had already been designed by the DG. Furthermore, the GB essentially left the responsibility of implementing proposed change to the administration, and its DG; the GB only got involved a few years later, in 1999, when it launched the evaluation of APP.

The underlying goals of APP show that the proposed change constituted a radical departure from the Office’s *status quo* and its previous *modus operandi*. More precisely, the proposed change aimed for a fundamental transformation of the Office’s way of delivering technical cooperation programs. Therefore, the proposed change was identified as radical and transformational (see **Table 1** from the Introduction).

First of all, the APP was to make the ILO and its activities more relevant to its constituents by increasing the Office’s effectiveness in the delivery of technical programs. In a memoir on his work as the DG, Hansenne recounts his meeting with the Brazilian minister of labor in October 1989. The Brazilian minister asked the Office for advice and technical services, which he wanted to be delivered in “real-time” as soon as the problems emerged.<sup>1059</sup> Too often, the case of Brazil being no exception, too much time was spent on the examination of the project by Geneva and on selecting experts and making them available. By that time, the country had managed to tackle the problem on its own. Hansenne understood the seriousness

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<sup>1056</sup> Cox (Summer 1977):416 and 417.

<sup>1057</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 11 December 2003.

<sup>1058</sup> At the Confluence of Needs and Values, Interview with Michel Hansenne, *World of Work. The Magazine of the ILO*, no.6, (December 1993):4. Emphasis added.

<sup>1059</sup> Hansenne (1999):24.

of the situation very well: “If a developing state like Brazil does not find an adequate interlocutor in the ILO, then who will need us?”<sup>1060</sup>

The APP proposal to establish Multidisciplinary Teams (MdTs) was instituted to ensure that technical services could be provided “in real time” by people with different specialties who would be available in the field to offer timely advice and technical cooperation to countries and social partners.

APP was thus envisaged to provide rapid and ongoing services to the constituents enabling the Office to establish a continuous dialogue in the field with participating governments and social partners. In consequence, APP was to become an instrument for ensuring the ILO administration’s relevance to its constituents and eventual survival in the new political and socio-economic environment at the end of the cold war. At the same time, the APP’s overall goal of increasing the ILO relevance to its constituents was seen as a possible solution for slowing down, and eventually reversing, the rapid decline in the amount of donors’ funds available for the ILO technical projects at the beginning of the 1990s.

Second, the DG saw APP as the answer to the decreasing specialization by the ILO staff. This was because, under the old way of managing technical cooperation projects, there was little institutional learning and little institutional memory because, for the most part, it was not the ILO officials who actually carried out the projects but externally recruited specialists.<sup>1061</sup> At the same time, the ILO senior official, who was at the center of decision-making during Hansenne’s directorship, noted that the staff, both in the field and in the headquarters, had grown increasingly preoccupied, over the years, with the administrative side of technical cooperation management, rather than its substantive part:

In this way, you had a large and growing number of people, in the field mostly, who were essentially administrators: they were hiring experts to prepare the contract, or collaborator or consultant but they were not the ones who were doing the substantive work and thinking and analysis. (Also), the ILO people in the headquarters who were in charge of research projects would essentially hire external collaborators and would be doing less and less themselves. What the people were doing was like university administrators, who are no longer doing their research and studies.<sup>1062</sup>

Under the APP, technical services would be provided by the ILO staff rather than by the external experts, as it was often the case previously. In this way, the ILO staff would gain

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<sup>1060</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1061</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 27 November 2003.

<sup>1062</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 26 January 2004.

greater field experience, in addition to broadening their specialized knowledge, which would then, stay in the house.

Third, the APP was conceived as an instrument for changing the way the Office was interacting with governments and social partners. Technical projects designed under APP were supposed to originate in response to the requests and needs coming directly from the constituents. Thus, the projects were to have a ‘demand’ (ILO constituents) rather than ‘supply’ (the Office)-driven nature. This was a complete reversal of the previous policy in which the Office officials, like “traveling salesmen”<sup>1063</sup>, were going out and selling the projects they wanted to implement to the governments. Ideally, it was the constituents (next to the governments, also the social partners) who would be engaged in consultations with the Office officials, who would ultimately identify the objectives and tools needed to achieve these goals. The Office would no longer make decisions, regarding the goals and content of technical cooperation projects unilaterally or only with the participation of the donors

Fourth, in connection with the substance of technical cooperation, the APP was a means of shifting the organization’s focus from implementing scattered *technical cooperation projects*, which usually came with a full package of various ‘equipment’ (cars, copy machines, faxes, computers, fellowships) toward providing *advisory services*. Under APP, these advisory services would be based on a delivery of technical advice, sharing technical knowledge and expertise, as well as on the availability of specialized technical support for the programs and projects being already implemented by the governments and social partners.

Fifth, Hansenne believed that international labor standards should be integrated into technical cooperation projects more closely and effectively than they had been before. Multidisciplinary of APP, based on the establishment of MdTs in the field, was thus an essential element for increasing synergy between technical cooperation and standards. Such synergy would eliminate the problem of the Office being a “schizophrenic organization (that resembles) a brain thinking standards on one side and cooperation for development on the other.”<sup>1064</sup>

Finally, the APP required revision of old practices associated with technical cooperation. A previously established philosophy of implementing technical cooperation was based on

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<sup>1063</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 11 December 2003.

thinking in terms of the volume of projects and money that could be brought in and spent. The administrative jargon used to refer to this input-driven approach was a “portfolio” of projects and money. This was “a very bank type lingua”<sup>1065</sup> that looked at the development and evaluation of technical cooperation projects from a simple perspective of growth in volume and in cash. As a result of this philosophy, the Office was involved in the projects that had little relevance to the labor-related problems (for example, large projects in hotel or tourism development) but did contribute to the increase of “portfolio”. The ILO senior official was of the opinion that

the ILO began to get a reputation of an organization that was taking any project that it could get, even if other agencies have refused it.<sup>1066</sup>

Generally, a bureaucratic proclivity of the Office was to acquire a maximum number of projects without even taking into consideration their relevance to the ILO, its standards and values, as it is reflected in the comment below.

We noticed absolutely hilarious types of projects (related to tourism or hotel-business) that people were selling or taking and trying to implement, which were very remote from any ILO core areas of responsibilities.<sup>1067</sup>

Hansenne wanted to see technical cooperation projects being directly relevant to the ILO’s core mandate and APP was seen as the means to achieve it.

The main goals of change were to transform the Office work overall and its technical activities in particular. The proposed change was expected to radically alter the *status quo* by redefining the organizational philosophy of managing technical cooperation, bringing labor standards and technical cooperation specialists together in multidisciplinary teams, pushing for greater financial and human resource decentralization, and establishing localizing and intensive interactions with all the ILO constituents.

#### *4.5 Outcome of APP change: accommodation*

An anticipated radical impact of the introduced change differed, however, greatly from the actual implementation process and its eventual outcome. Far from envisaged transformation, APP turned out to have a much more subdued and limited effect.

One of the main architects of APP judged the outcomes of change positively, but even he admitted that APP had not been entirely successful.<sup>1068</sup> Other top-level officials in the

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<sup>1064</sup> At the Confluence of Needs and Values, Interview with Michel Hansenne (December 1993):5.

<sup>1065</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 26 January 2004.

<sup>1066</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 27 February 2004.

Office were even more skeptical about the APP outcome. According to the top manager at the Office's program department, after the implementation of APP,

most technical cooperation decisions still go through the Headquarters (...). On the level of execution if you look at the responsibility for the projects that is to say who gets to decide to make a payment, in slightly over half of the total dollar volume of technical cooperation, the responsibility for it is in Geneva. So, even though technical cooperation is delivered at the country level decision-making about technical cooperation is still largely centralized. *This is the example of either the failure or the failure to complete the previous Active Partnership Policy. Because the idea was very strongly to decentralize technical cooperation and the organization found the way to make that not happen.*<sup>1069</sup>

(...) Decentralization of work implies that you should have very strong changes in your personnel policies. But we are the organization that is still very centralized in terms of location of our staffing. Two thirds of our staff is in Geneva (...). There was a big effort at the time of the introduction of the Active Partnership Policy to have greater mobility of staff between headquarters and the field. *That proved to be extremely difficult and basically five years later it had been largely a failure.* That is to say we have not significantly increased the proportion of ILO staff, who had served both at headquarters and field and therefore knew about what the ILO does in both central policy perspective and operation perspective. So in some sense, that did not happen. *The reform was not complete* and the basic idea of staff mobility was dropped by the late 1990s (emphasis added).<sup>1070</sup>

Indeed, the data on the decentralization of human resources suggests that the APP did not generate a major shift in the staff level between the headquarters and the field. The number of professional staffers working in the field in 1990, financed from the regular budget (that ensures a durability of posts)<sup>1071</sup> was 176. By 1996, upon almost finalized APP implementation the figure had risen only slightly to 184.<sup>1072</sup> In other words, the APP change, which strongly emphasized the issue of decentralization, led to the creation of only 8 additional posts in the field, which were financed from stable regular budgetary resources.<sup>1073</sup> During the same period of time, the ILO headquarters lost 46 professional posts, not because of the transfer of technical specialists to the field, but because of retirements.

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<sup>1067</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 26 January 2004.

<sup>1068</sup> Ibid., Geneva, 11 December 2003.

<sup>1069</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 30 October 2003. Emphasis added.

<sup>1070</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1071</sup> This is in contrast to more uncertain situations wherein the positions are subsidized by more volatile extra-budgetary programs.

<sup>1072</sup> The ILO and Global Change. 1990-1997: 13 and 19.

<sup>1073</sup> Ibid.

APP aimed at strengthening the Office's expertise and decreasing its reliance on outside, short-term, experts. However, in reality, APP did not change the balance in favor of long-term resident experts in the field. The Office still depends heavily on the consultants with short-term contracts and external collaboration contracts. And, as observed in the 1999 report on technical cooperation, the Office relies more on the technical cooperation personnel with specialized focus than on the resident experts on a long-term basis.<sup>1074</sup>

It was also observed that, despite the implementation of APP, which aimed at increasing the level of funds for technical cooperation, the Office "had not been able to halt or reverse the decline in expenditure on technical cooperation activities"<sup>1075</sup> more than four years after the launch of the change. During this time, the expenditures on technical cooperation were decreasing continually from an estimated 148 million dollars in 1993 to 113 million in 1994 and 1995 to 108 million dollars in 1997<sup>1076</sup> to around 94 million dollars in 1998.<sup>1077</sup> In response to the decrease in funds for technical cooperation, the Office presented a paper entitled 'The ILO's resource mobilization strategy' in 1997. This paper acknowledged the failure of APP to effectively mobilize resources up to that time, and highlighted the urgent need for a new strategy.

One of the main goals of the APP was to deliver technical programs to the ILO constituents in a timely and effective manner. During the APP implementation, however, the Office saw the constantly declining delivery rate for the technical cooperation programs.

The delivery rate of technical cooperation projects financed from extra-budgetary resources dropped sharply between 1993 and 1994 from 69.7% to 62.9%.<sup>1078</sup> It increased by 0.4% to 63.3% in 1995,<sup>1079</sup> dropped to 61.7% in 1996, plummeted further to the level of 55.3%<sup>1080</sup> in 1997, and increased slightly to 57.3% in 1998.<sup>1081</sup> The 1998 delivery rate was, however, still considerably below the 1993 level. The decline in the effectiveness of delivery of

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<sup>1074</sup> The Role of the ILO in Technical Cooperation. Report VI, International Labour Conference, 87<sup>th</sup> Session 1999: 8.

<sup>1075</sup> Mayaki, The Worker Vice-Chairperson, cited in the Report of the Committee on Technical Cooperation, GB.270/12, Geneva, (November 1997): paragraph 54.

<sup>1076</sup> *Active Partnership and Technical Cooperation, 1995-1996*, Governing Body, 267 Session, November 1996: Appendix I: table A and *The ILO's Technical Cooperation Programme, 1997-1998*, GB.273/TC/1, Geneva, (November 1998): Appendix I, table A.

<sup>1077</sup> *The ILO's Technical Cooperation Programme, 1998-1999*, GB.276/TC/1, Geneva, (November 1999): Appendix I, table A.

<sup>1078</sup> *The ILO Technical Cooperation in the Context of the Active Partnership Policy*, GB.264/TC/1, Geneva, (November 1995): Appendix I, table C.

<sup>1079</sup> *Active Partnership and Technical Cooperation* (November 1996): Appendix I: table C.

<sup>1080</sup> *The ILO's Technical Cooperation Programme* (November 1998): Appendix I, table C.

<sup>1081</sup> Ibid.



technical cooperation occurred in all geographical regions (Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa). Therefore, the sharp decrease in the delivery rate cannot be accounted for external circumstances, such as weak government institutions or violent conflicts that would have inevitably hindered the delivery of technical cooperation services. Instead, it was the APP, with its specific set of problems that not only failed to generate higher, more sustainable, delivery rates of technical cooperation programs, but also led to a sharp decline.<sup>1082</sup> According to an internal review, the struggle to improve delivery rates was associated with the delays in launching programs, difficulties in implementing projects, and the reduction in technical capacity to monitor and evaluate programs.<sup>1083</sup> The lower delivery rate was also the result of a failure to fill vacant positions in MdTs,<sup>1084</sup> along with a serious lack of clearly defined responsibilities at the headquarters that undermined the effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the projects in the field.<sup>1085</sup>

The APP was supposed to have moved the ILO from its scattered project approach of the 1980s, with separate sectoral and sub-sectoral goals, towards a program-based approach driven by a smaller number of programs with cross-sectoral objectives that required greater multidisciplinary. In fact, APP did not lead to the decrease in the number of small projects nor to the promotion of larger programs. Actually, the absolute number of projects steadily rose from 1169 in 1987<sup>1086</sup>, and 1431 in 1993, to 1526 in 1997<sup>1087</sup> while larger, more integrated, programs did not materialize as such. APP did not sufficiently encourage the program approach, and the Office remained largely immersed in the scattered-project philosophy of work. ‘Doing less but better’ did not occur, and the Office still tended to do more and, actually, less effectively, as evidenced by the decreasing delivery rate.

Finally, the creators and implementers of the APP hoped that the change could make the ILO and its activities more visible to the general public. However, the APP remained

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<sup>1082</sup> Taking a strongly defensive stance the Office protected itself from the outside criticism by claiming that the decline in the delivery rate could be actually associated not with the failure but with the success of APP. It observed that “the effective implementation of multidisciplinary and a demand-driven approach” often meant a slower pace of delivering programs, which, in turn, negatively affected a delivery rate. See *The ILO’s Technical Cooperation Programme, 1997-1998*, (November 1998): paragraph 141. The problem with this claim is that under APP there was often no or little effective implementation of multidisciplinary and demand-driven approach as it will be shown later in this chapter.

<sup>1083</sup> See *The ILO’s Technical Cooperation Programme, 1998-1999*, GB.276/TC/1(Rev.1), Geneva, (November 1999): Critical issues, paragraph 157.

<sup>1084</sup> See Report of the Committee on Technical Cooperation, GB.276/13, Geneva, (November 1999): paragraph 30.

<sup>1085</sup> See *The ILO’s Technical Cooperation Programme* (November 1999): Critical issues, paragraph 156.

<sup>1086</sup> *The Role of the ILO in Technical Cooperation. Report VI*, International Labour Conference, 80<sup>th</sup> Session, 1993: Chapter I.

known only to the immediate ILO environment: the Office and the ILO constituents. Efforts to make APP known to a wider public, including, for example, representatives of civil societies, ministries other than labor, NGOs, and academia, generated few, if any, substantial results.

The person directly responsible for the implementation of APP acknowledged that there were many unprecedented obstacles that originators of reform did not anticipate but encountered during process of change.<sup>1088</sup> Another top official in Hansenne's Office also confirmed that the obstacles were often not foreseen by the management.<sup>1089</sup> As a result, difficulties of implementation were underestimated, which drastically slowed the pace of change.<sup>1090</sup> In fact, the Office did not achieve its stated goal, to have all phases of APP operational by the end of 1994.<sup>1091</sup> This failure, which was still an issue in 1998, became particularly apparent when attempts were made to delineate "country objectives" and increase mobility of the ILO staff. The unplanned increase in the number of MdTs and changes in their geographical and administrative locations led to serious problems, which negatively affected the performance of MdTs responsible for making APP successful.

#### *4.5.1 Conclusion on accommodation in ILO*

APP change turned out to have characteristics of accommodation reflected in its incremental, goal-distorted and often interrupted character in addition to the longer-than-expected period of implementation. The process of implementation was impeded by a multiplicity of factors that were unanticipated by the DG and his close advisors. Eventually, these factors distorted the process of change implementation and the outcome of change. As a result, the APP fell short of generating a revolutionary change in the ways originally intended. The subsequent sections confirm the validity of the general and specific arguments presented in the Introduction, namely the assertion that the weaker leadership dynamism (transactional leadership) and the higher rigidity of professional culture (staticism) will, most likely, lead to accommodation. The sections below also address the puzzle of the difference between the projected impact of the proposed change, and the eventual process and its outcome. The following analysis provides evidence for determinative influence of Hansenne's transactional leadership style and the ILO Office's

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<sup>1087</sup> *The Role of the ILO in Technical Cooperation. Report VI*, International Labour Conference 87<sup>th</sup> Session 1999: 5.

<sup>1088</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 11 December 2003.

<sup>1089</sup> E-mail from a former ILO senior official, 1 May 2005.

<sup>1090</sup> Ibid.

rigid professional culture on the accommodative process of change implementation and its eventual outcome in the form of accommodation.

#### *4.6 Michel Hansenne as the Director General of the ILO: transactional leadership*

Hansenne's leadership dynamism in the Office was weak. During his first term, Hansenne's leadership failed to provide a well-articulated vision of the ILO in the new post-cold war era. Hansenne's style of leadership lacked charisma and compassion and was more introverted. This type of leadership used a compliance-based, rule-following approach to managing the Office, in lieu of an inspirational or ideational style of work driven by a particular vision, and a certain degree of affection. Furthermore, in terms of the authority it conveyed and the respect it enjoyed, Hansenne's leadership was on the whole very weak. Overall, Hansenne's leadership is considered transactional.

##### *4.6.1 Hansenne's political experience and limited exposure to diplomacy and the ILO*

Michel Hansenne before taking the post of the Director General (DG) in the ILO had an extensive experience in both academic and political worlds. He had worked as a professor at the University of Liège in Belgium for more than ten years. In the fifteen years preceding his assumption of the DG position, Hansenne had been a member of the Belgian Parliament and held several ministerial positions in the Belgian government: the Minister of French Culture, the Minister of Employment and Labour and the Minister of Civil Service.<sup>1092</sup> Hansenne was a politician who cut his teeth in a national parliamentary forum and the corridors of the Belgian national administration. He was a skilled politician, and an even more experienced administrator, capable of managing large national ministries. He had, however, little experience in international affairs. He was not a diplomat, and he lacked the polish and patience inherent to diplomacy that could have proved extremely useful in leading a highly political and multinational organization such as the ILO<sup>1093</sup>. This lack of exposure combined with Hansenne's unexceptional knowledge of the internal workings of the ILO and its administration, owing to the fact that Hansenne had come to the organization from an unrelated field, never having worked for the ILO or its Office before taking the post of the DG.

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<sup>1091</sup> Francois Tremeaud, (Assistant Director-General responsible for technical cooperation under Hansenne), *A new Spirit, Adaptable Structures, World of Work. The Magazine of the ILO*, no.6, (December 1993):8

<sup>1092</sup> <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/dgo/staff/formers/hansenne.htm>

<sup>1093</sup> In reference to Hansenne's performance as the ILO Director General, Bert Zoetewij writes: "(...) diplomacy did not seem his most shining talent(or maybe just not his preferred means of action) in tackling

This apparent lack of diplomatic experience, in addition to the limited exposure to the political tradition of the ILO, led Hansenne to a major confrontation with the Governing Body and, particularly, its social partners. One of the former ILO senior officials described this conflict in the following manner:

Hansenne wanted to broaden the range of employers—he felt that the representation of employers through the International Organization of Employers (IOE) was perhaps too narrow, perhaps wanted a diversity of opinion. And he took upon himself to write directly to individual firms in certain countries. And after the IOE learnt of this, he was quite strongly reprimanded—unofficially, but there was also one Governing Body (GB) session during his tenure where his problem with the employer group came to ahead and it was very, very tense (...) and emotionally stressful for the people within the Office as well as the GB members.<sup>1094</sup>

In connection with this controversy, the high-ranking representative of the workers' group in the ILO noted that Hansenne “wanted to see his ideas prevail, which was a very foolish thing to do for a politician in his shoes.”<sup>1095</sup> Hansenne failed to recognize the risk of a diplomatic fallout with his confrontational approach to the social partners, which only served to further undermine the dynamism of his leadership.

#### *4.6.2 Hansenne's weak emotive leadership*

His weak diplomatic skills and a general misunderstanding of the Office's tradition of decision-making made an unfortunate complement to his dry and offhand style of leadership within the Office. As such, the effectiveness of his leadership in the internal management had also been weak. Because of the weak emotive features of his style of leadership, Hansenne failed to appreciate the importance of his relations with the top senior officials, whom he generally held in low regard. For example, according to the DG's close associate:

Hansenne was not a man of very much patience. He got very impatient, very quickly. That was one of his problems in dealing with senior staff particularly; that he thought several steps ahead of them and went very quickly to the point (...). Hansenne was probably less diplomatic, more abrupt, less conscious of a kind of need for affection by the chiefs, particularly by the Assistant Directors General, who wanted to have this kind of warm relationship. But Hansenne was not that kind of man<sup>1096</sup>.

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issues he faced raised”, Bert Zoetewij, A Previous ILO Management, *Friends Newsletter*, no.28 (May 2000):20.

<sup>1094</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 27 November 2003.

<sup>1095</sup> Interview with the ICFTU high-ranking representative, Geneva, 16 October 2003.

<sup>1096</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 26 January 2004.

Hansenne's brusqueness in his contacts with his senior staff members led to the complaints that he did not appreciate them enough and showed little affection for them.<sup>1097</sup> The same interviewee then went on to elaborate on Hansenne's style of work with his senior staff:

He organized a number of lunches for department chiefs but they were really working lunches (not any informal, social events). He would have questions, agendas, sometimes little paper presentations and after initial pleasantries he would get down to the agenda. So even that was quite formal. People were happy to be invited, but these sessions, I cannot say, were successful [from a socializing point of view].<sup>1098</sup>

Hansenne's aloof leadership had its roots in the DG's deep mistrust of his senior officers (mainly Assistant Directors General), whom, according to a former ILO senior official, Hansenne criticized for their "focus on structures and processes and almost nothing on issues and substance."<sup>1099</sup> Hansenne also blamed them for collaboration with the Governing Body behind the DG's back in order to secure certain perks. He was quite explicit about his open aversion towards his senior officials, whom he referred to as

bureaucratic feudals [that] were acquiring part of their power and autonomy from the connivance with the Governing Body [and] when reforms had to be undertaken, many of these connivances were used to create an omnipotent lobby that opposed any proposal for change.<sup>1100</sup>

Additionally, the contacts between the senior Office officials and the GB enabled the former to use this venue to complain about the DG's activities.<sup>1101</sup> In reference to such complaint, Hansenne observed "already in the house, there were rumors that I did not like technical cooperation, which led to some displeasure among the members of the Governing Body."<sup>1102</sup> The situation shows not only how uninspiring and distant Hansenne's leadership was for the senior officials, but also what little authority Hansenne exercised within his own Office.

#### *4.6.3 Hansenne's weak authoritative leadership*

Hansenne's transactional leadership failed to exercise effective authority that could have ensured the loyalty of the senior staff and with it, the necessary support of the ILO constituents. Hansenne's authoritative weakness was reflected in the DG's conviction that the main political organ of the ILO, the Governing Body as well as the Office, constitute a

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<sup>1097</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1098</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1099</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1100</sup> Hansenne (1999):30.

<sup>1101</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>1102</sup> Ibid.

constraining rather than enabling force of his directorship.<sup>1103</sup> Hansenne summarized his feelings about the institutional environment, and the functioning of the DG, in the following way: “Situating on an intersection of two gears, which were created by a pair: the Governing Body and the Office, sometimes I had an unpleasant feeling of finding myself in the center of a nutcracker.”<sup>1104</sup> Eventually, Hansenne’s weak sense of authority failed to unite people under his leadership and enforced the DG’s understanding of his immediate surrounding in terms of constraints, checks and limitations more than opportunities, possibilities and capacity for achievement.

Hansenne’s leadership was based on a confrontational and argumentative style of work, rather than on a cooperative or conciliatory mode of interactions. Such style of leadership had a lot in common with Hansenne’s previous experience of working in the Belgian cabinet, known for its heated and spiteful debates.<sup>1105</sup> However, because this assertiveness had weak authority at its foundation, Hansenne’s directives only undermined his standing among the main ILO actors, exposing him to growing criticism and eventually weakening his overall leadership. Additionally, because of his weak authority, Hansenne essentially relied on the strategy of pitting the main actors against each other in order to maintain his power and influence. In this kind of balancing act, as Hansenne himself observed,

one time [he] had to rely on the Office in order to secure from the Governing Body needed decisions and the other time (...) had to rely on the Governing Body in order to overcome a resistance to change within the Office.<sup>1106</sup>

A major problem with this strategy was that, at one point, Hansenne had alienated both sets of constituents: the GB with its social partners for “inadmissible interference” in tripartism<sup>1107</sup> and the Office, particularly its powerful juridical representatives, who felt threatened by APP and its forced mobility policy. As a result, the DG could not fully rely on either of these organs, which effectively undermined his authority.

#### *4.6.4 Hansenne’s compliance-based and introverted leadership style*

Hansenne’s leadership in the Office was based on a clerical and a “settled type” of organizational governing that concentrated on improving the efficiency of the Office’s work through rules and procedures, rather than ideational or inspirational elements. The staff of the Office described his leadership features in the following way:

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<sup>1103</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>1104</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>1105</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>1106</sup> Ibid., 31.

Hansenne, as he himself said in his farewell speech, was very shy, he was lacking people's skills needed to do the things he wanted to do.<sup>1108</sup> He was very much reserved.<sup>1109</sup> He was very quiet, introvert person. You did not see him very often within the organization.<sup>1110</sup> Hansenne was shy in his way of dealing with the people and had a cold personality although in private he was a very charming, interesting man and open to discussions.<sup>1111</sup> [Hansenne was] more of a bureaucrat type of person with a bureaucratic type of personality. He was a little bit dry.<sup>1112</sup> He was acting more like a pure, pure bureaucrat.<sup>1113</sup> Under Hansenne, there was little publicity. He was too much at the distant with press and public relations. Therefore the ILO was less in the news.<sup>1114</sup> He had a lower profile internationally.<sup>1115</sup>

Rather than being an inspirational or charismatic leader with appealing visions and emotionally dynamic leadership qualities, Hansenne was formal, reserved, and aloof in the execution of his responsibilities. He was an administrator and an executive who worked in relative isolation from his own staff. Hansenne had difficulty communicating, not only with his senior managers, but with the staff in general. Consequently, despite his powerful intellect, Hansenne had difficulties in selling his ideas to the staff of the Office. A former Assistant Director General was, for example, in the opinion that Hansenne

did not have a gift of communication like his predecessor, Blanchard, had. Much of what Hansenne tried to do was right. He was able to cut to the problem very quickly and clearly and to see what had not been done but he was not able to communicate that with the rest of staff and bring them along behind it.<sup>1116</sup>

Hansenne also shied away from participating in social events such as cocktail parties or receptions, which were often more important for advancing DG ideas and his general agenda than more formal gatherings. According to a former ILO senior official, Hansenne

would do the minimal. Especially at the beginning (of his term in office), he went to the smallest number of receptions and cocktail parties that he could. He saw the job as his function in the office and formal meetings. He did not see it as a social 24-hour job (...). He did not see social things as part of the job.<sup>1117</sup>

Hansenne's leadership style, based on weak social skills, cost the DG his good relations with the staff and the powerful ILO tripartite constituents. His reserved and introverted

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<sup>1107</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>1108</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 27 November 2003.

<sup>1109</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Budapest, 22 September 2003.

<sup>1110</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 14 October 2003.

<sup>1111</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 16 October 2003.

<sup>1112</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Budapest, 11 September 2003.

<sup>1113</sup> Interview with the ICFTU high-ranking representative, Geneva, 16 October 2003.

<sup>1114</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 10 November 2003.

<sup>1115</sup> Interview with the ILO senior official, Budapest, 11 September 2003.

<sup>1116</sup> Interview with a former ILO top senior official, Geneva, 9 January 2004.

style of leadership unexpectedly brought about serious consequences for the effectiveness of his directorship, demonstrated in the following passage:

Just at the beginning of his term in the Office, Hansenne missed one of the receptions, which had the consequences that no one could have foreseen and even I began to understand until years and years later. Later on he corrected it but the first impression stayed. The employers, the International Organization of Employers, have had a system of a rotating every year [now every two years] president. It was a kind of honorific post because they had also a permanent Secretary General. And the incoming president always gave cocktail party at the ILO a day or two days before the start of the international labor conference. There was a Swedish employer [holding a post of a president] who was also a spokesman for the Administrative and Budgetary Committee of the ILO. He gave the cocktail reception and Hansenne did not attend. I did. I was invited separately, that time and I was not part of the DG team. This man started being very hostile to me and he complained bitterly about [Hansenne not attending the party]. He held this grudge and hostility against Hansenne throughout his tenure (...) and in the Budgetary Committee he was really vicious. And he was kept telling the story years and years after that Hansenne did not come.<sup>1118</sup>

Already reticent leadership style of Hansenne was further undermined by his generally weak English language skills. Hansenne's English, as he himself acknowledged, was "*plus qu'hesitant*,"<sup>1119</sup> which must have created additional barrier for socializing and intermingling with international 'crowd' during numerous social events, where English was often more prevalent than French.

#### *4.6.5 Hansenne's leadership skills to initiate but less so to motivate and take a lead*

Hansenne, as a person who came to the ILO from a very different background, brought new perspectives on the way things should be done. As observed by a former ILO senior official, Hansenne did not just intend to administer what he found, he also thought through ways of changing it.<sup>1120</sup> As an outsider he seemed to better recognize, in the words of Bert Zoetewij, the "need and scope for changing the existing order than an insider would have (...)."<sup>1121</sup> Additionally, the person who worked closely with Hansenne, noted:

he was an intellectual power-house and much more of a conceptual man. He thought the ideas out, (but) he was less interested in going out and negotiating this with people.<sup>1122</sup>

Thus, Hansenne's leadership was driven more by the notion of a "change initiator" and much less by the image of a "change inspirator" or an "effective implementer". Hansenne

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<sup>1117</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 26 January 2004.

<sup>1118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1119</sup> Hansenne (1999):18.

<sup>1120</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 27 November 2003.

<sup>1121</sup> Zoetewij (May 2000):20.



was thus more of a policy designer; he was not a policy campaigner or an effective advocate or ‘salesman’ of grand ideas. Skills associated with analyzing and conceptualizing proved that Hansenne was able to come up with an innovative proposal for change. Hansenne’s leadership dynamism, however, was generally weak and muted. The DG relied on traditional, bureaucratic mechanisms for policy implementation, rather than on inspirational and motivational ways to move things forward. Hansenne’s leadership involved little active diplomacy or intensive international lobbying and was characterized by a lack of close personal contacts with the staff and the members of the ILO constituents, an essential link for motivating and inspiring potential followers. Hansenne was, in contrast to his famous predecessor, Albert Thomas, more “a man of thought” and not really “a man of action.”<sup>1123</sup>

#### *4.7 Impact of transactional leadership on change in the ILO*

This section will demonstrate that Hansenne’s transactional leadership style based on a centralized and isolated manner of running the organization, combined with factors such as a low level of trust in the senior staff, a general lack of vision that would inspire the officials, a reliance on sanctions rather than inspirations and emotional appeal all played an important role in influencing and determining the development of APP in a way that was unfavorable for achieving the initial goals of the policy.

##### *4.7.1 Impact of Hansenne’s centralized and introverted leadership style on change*

Hansenne initiated decentralization under the APP but his transactional style of managing the organization failed to generate support for the decentralization process among the staff members that eventually remained limited to a handful of people directly involved in implementing the DG’s idea. The DG was not able to provide, or subsequently sell, an inspiring vision of a decentralized, field-driven and multidisciplinary work of the future ILO administration to the Office staff members. This happened in spite of the fact that the Office staff felt an urgent need for internal organizational change in order to make their work more relevant for the countries undergoing rapid transformation after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This need for change was clearly expressed in the DG’s internal consultations with the staff conducted in 1993.<sup>1124</sup> These consultations, which delivered

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<sup>1122</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 11 December 2003 and 26 January 2004.

<sup>1123</sup> Reymond (1 December 1986):21.

<sup>1124</sup> A former ILO senior official recalls that the outcome of the consultations showed that “the staff wanted to change, change the organization, the culture, the way of doing things, wanted to move ahead and felt that a significant change was needed. They wanted change and were ready to do it. Hansenne said that he got the

more than two hundred propositions, wishes and criticisms addressed to the DG,<sup>1125</sup> made Hansenne, as he himself admitted, recognize the need

to get better acquainted with the officials and design the reform with them and around them and not to construct an abstract (utopian) reform.<sup>1126</sup>

Thus, Hansenne implicitly acknowledged that at least until 1993 (four years after taking the post of the DG) his policies, including the APP, were designed and implemented with little participation of senior and lower-ranking ILO civil servants. This style of work reflected a high degree of centralization and a considerable reliance on top-down command approach. In fact, according to a former ILO senior official, who had worked in the Office during the 1990s under Hansenne

everything ended on (the desk of his chief of the cabinet), even low level personnel changes, promotions from P3 to P4, naming the secretaries, ridiculous. Managers were deprived of the autonomy of being managers. Decisions were made at the level of DG office. Decisions took a long time and were not transparent.<sup>1127</sup>

In fact, as recalled by another former senior staff member, there were many ill feelings regarding Hansenne's cabinet and its members, who were seen as having assumed too much power in running the Office's day-to-day activities.<sup>1128</sup> Eventually, centralization of decision-making processes increased awareness of the remoteness of the top management from the rest of the staff. It also led to misunderstandings and contributed to the widening of a communication gap between Hansenne and his cabinet and the senior and mid-ranking professionals in the Office. Consequently, the staff was either astonished by the lack of action on the part of DG, or by the sudden push for a radical change. The words of one of the Office officials, which Hansenne himself refers to, aptly illustrates this sort of confusion:

At the moment where we started to have serious doubts about your desire to change, you launched the process of reforms, with successive waves, that *stunned us* (emphasis added).<sup>1129</sup>

Transactional leadership sees bureaucratic work through the prism of neatly divided managerial parameters of project invention, project design and project implementation with

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message: 'Je fonce' (directly translating: I will go and do it fast) was Hansenne's response as recalled by a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 27 November 2003.

Another former ILO senior official noted that the problem with these consultations was "that because it was spontaneous and unstructured—it was very difficult to draw broader conclusion and follow it up. It was very difficult to do something with it and paradoxically it turned down not to be so helpful and even counter productive because there was so little visible follow up. As a result, some staff members got rather disappointed because they felt that they went through this exercise and nothing happened", Geneva, 26 January 2004.

<sup>1125</sup> Hansenne (1999):64.

<sup>1126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1127</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 27 November 2003.

<sup>1128</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 11 March 2004.

no consideration for a possible impact of human and cultural factors on the process of change. Within this cogent understanding of bureaucratic machinery and its work a process of change is seen as a sequence of events that only needs effective and rational administrative coordination for generating a successful outcome. Thus, within the mindset of transactional leadership, the Office was viewed as rational bureaucratic machinery that could effectively transmit and carry out the ideas of its head master. It was assumed that a top-down command would guarantee an execution of a policy without the need to advocate for an effective ‘change-promotion’, or the necessity of explaining the consequences of such a policy, for a greater and more open deliberation about the concepts of decentralization and multidisciplinary and their practical implications. On the contrary, the transactional leadership favored limited consultations and gave preference to working in a small group of like-minded people, not only in the phase of initiating changes, but also during the period of their implementation. This led Hansenne, in effect,

to operate in a very small group of 4 or 5 people, who attempted to engineer the changes with the result that a lot of potential allies were antagonized.<sup>1130</sup>

Accordingly, the same cited official was of the opinion that the group of people who were interested in change, and were potentially Hansenne’s allies, could have been mobilized more effectively than they were.<sup>1131</sup>

#### *4.7.2 Impact of Hansenne’s non-inspirational leadership on change*

Hansenne’s idea behind APP was to institutionalize a spirit of ‘teamwork’ and ‘harmony’<sup>1132</sup> between the headquarters and the field structures as well as within the structures of MdTs. Hansenne’s transactional leadership failed to promote and establish a partnership style of work between the MdTs, and area offices and the headquarters. Consequently, the complaints were raised about the departments in headquarters bypassing or ignoring the MdTs’ action plans when they design their programs.<sup>1133</sup> This showed that Hansenne failed to instill a vision of ‘internal partnership’ that could overcome this fragmentation. Hansenne was thus unsuccessful in inspiring or convincing his headquarters staff to accept a comprehensive and integrated approach in formulating and implementing major projects. Because of this failure, the activities at headquarters continued their development along traditional technical lines.<sup>1134</sup> Hansenne’s transactional leadership style was sending the Office staff a very unusual message about the DG idea of ‘teamwork’. Hansenne’s

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<sup>1129</sup> Hansenne (1999):38.

<sup>1130</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 27 November 2003.

<sup>1131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1132</sup> *The Role of the ILO in Technical Cooperation* (1999):50.

<sup>1133</sup> Report on the Workshop on the Active Partnership Policy, Turin III (28-30 April 1997):52.

predecessor Francis Blanchard relied on the General Management Committee (GMC) composed of three Deputy Directors General (DDG), five Assistant Directors General (ADG) and a chief of the cabinet. The GMC was a forum for consultations with the senior managers and even a structure for making strategic policy decisions. The GMC also existed under Hansenne. Initially, it was conveyed quite regularly, several times a year, but with time, the DG found the GMC meetings, according to the eyewitness, increasingly ‘useless’ and, as result, the GMC “met less and less frequently and when it did meet it was almost a formality.”<sup>1135</sup> The GMC sessions turned into information-sharing, rather than the decision-making, meetings. The transformation of the GMC into a ‘talking shop’ showed, as observed by a former ADG, that

Hansenne really had no patience with his GMC and did not have much respect for the members of this GMC. [As a consequence] Hansenne relied more on cabinet or he tended to bring people who were not on the GMC.<sup>1136</sup>

Because of the difficulties the DG faced in promoting GMC teamwork, and his later disregard for this particular body, the formulation of policies, implementation of decisions and control over processes became even more centralized and concentrated within the hands of the DG and his cabinet.

A general reason for the failure to achieve a meaningful cooperation within the GMC (viewed as the nucleus of a senior managerial multidisciplinary team) was the inability of the DG leadership to provide an effective remedy to the compartmentalized behavior of the DDG and ADG. In the view of one staffer who observed the GMC meetings, these senior officials:

would spend most of the meeting defending their own sectors of vested interest. Whatever the questions, budgetary resources, personnel questions, program matters, they would fancy themselves as representatives of that particular sector or region.<sup>1137</sup>

Hansenne’s difficulties in implementing an idea of harmonious teamwork within the circle of his own top managers hindered the delivery of effective solutions to the problem of establishing a multidisciplinary culture in the Office, as well as in the field. The technical Cooperation Strategy of 1994, for example, envisaged the creation of the Interdepartmental Task Force (ITF) within the Office. The IFT was responsible for designing a detailed plan of action for promoting multidisciplinary work associated with the APP. It was also seen as

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<sup>1134</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>1135</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 26 January 2004.

<sup>1136</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 9 January 2004.

<sup>1137</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 26 January 2004.

an instrument for improving the delivery rate of technical cooperation programs.<sup>1138</sup> A couple of meetings took place but the initiative proved “too ambitious” and was eventually abandoned.<sup>1139</sup> In fact, the failure of ITF was an illustration of the weakness of Hansenne’s leadership to promote multidisciplinary work within the Office, both on the senior, GMC level, and also on the lower, departmental, levels. In other words, the transactional leadership of Hansenne failed to effectively address the issue of compartmentalization of the Office, which eventually hampered the implementation of multidisciplinary in the field. As a result, the Office and its management, according to the independent report on APP, faced difficulties with “developing a multidisciplinary culture” in the headquarters and in the fields while “specialists were still focusing on their own areas without consideration for multidisciplinary or joint work.”<sup>1140</sup>

The leadership of the DG failed to provide the senior officials with the inspiration that could have brought them together to work as a one team firmly united around a common idea. In order to build a collectivity that favors the interest of the whole organization over the particularistic interests of different departments, the DG leadership should have had a charisma-driven vision of one, united organization. Paradoxically, Hansenne’s problems with his own managers stood in a clear contrast with the proposed character of his APP reform. What the DG actually advocated in connection with APP was multidisciplinary set in an effective teamwork, the very concept his leadership failed to handle while working with his own senior managers. Particularistic interests of his senior managers, which did not find their vent in any encompassing and uniting vision, were to haunt the DG during the APP implementation phase. At this stage, discussions in the GMC focused on the exact number of MdTs, which were to be established under APP framework. The initial idea was to have one MdT in each of the five regional offices. However, as recalled by a former senior official, who was a central player in supervising APP implementation, the DDG and ADG in the GMC

started saying that: we need to have at least two for Africa, we need to have four MdTs for Latin America, we need three for Asia and so on. Instead of having one MdT in each regional office, which would give us five, we ended up with fourteen.<sup>1141</sup> (Currently there are sixteen MdTs).

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<sup>1138</sup> Assistant Director-General Tremeaud cited in *The ILO Technical Cooperation in the Context of the Active Partnership Policy*, GB.264/TC/1, Geneva, (November 1995): paragraph 51.

<sup>1139</sup> Mayaki in the Report of the Committee on Technical Cooperation, (November 1997): paragraph 60 and 65.

<sup>1140</sup> Report of the Working Party on the Evaluation of the Active Partnership Policy, Committee on Technical Cooperation, GB.271/TC/1, Geneva (March 1998).

<sup>1141</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 26 January 2004.

The failure to address the problem of compartmentalized thinking within GMC and a lack of authoritative leadership, led to fragmentation and dispersion of MdTs, generated grave consequences and effectively undermined the whole APP. More precisely, a bigger number of MdTs in comparison with what was initially envisaged, led to the dilution of the MdTs specialized capabilities by dispersing the ILO technical specialists among too many MdTs. This situation significantly undermined the APP because the capability of MdTs to provide specialized, technical advice was the very thing this reform wanted to rely on when it aimed at making the ILO more relevant to its constituents. The dilution of specialization occurred because, as the person engaged in implementing APP noticed,

we did not have the budget and nobody was going to make a budgetary decisions to staff all the teams. So we had less multidisciplinary, we did not have critical masses, we were unable to finance the specialists and we had teams overstretched.<sup>1142</sup>

The initial idea of having MdTs attached to five regional offices also meant that MdT directors would be located under the aegis of the regional director.<sup>1143</sup> The DG's inability to prevent a multiplication of MdTs led to the situation in which MdTs were established as autonomous structures (focused on technical matters), which worked parallel with the ILO area offices (charged with administrative responsibilities) that functioned on subregional or country levels. As a result, two serious problems emerged with this administrative framework. The first one related to the geographical and functional competence of MdTs, which often did not match the responsibilities of the area offices. For instance, a technical MdT, which had been physically located in the area office in Delhi, covered many more countries than its administrative counterpart. The area office included in its area of administrative interests India, Nepal, Bhutan and Maldives, whereas MdT covered all of these countries plus Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and, at one point, even Afghanistan.<sup>1144</sup> This, in turn, created a great deal of confusion in the division of responsibilities between MdTs and area offices and created duplication as well as shortages in the flow of information and coordination problems between administrative (area offices) and technical (MdTs) field structures of the ILO.

Another problem associated with the greater number of MdTs and their placement next to or with the area offices was related to the conflicts, which erupted very quickly between the directors of MdTs and the directors of area offices. The conflicts concerned 'down-to-earth'

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<sup>1142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1144</sup> Ibid.

matters related to a diplomatic status. In many countries, only one ILO official representative could be recognized as having an ambassadorial rank and could enjoy the diplomatic privileges associated with it. This, then, raised the question as to who should be entitled to these privileges. It was often the case that the directors of MdTs and directors of area offices had the same grades D1 or P5, both of these grades granting them the right to a diplomatic *appanage*. The significance of conflicts resulting from the fight for diplomatic recognition, and a higher status was so unexpectedly great that it caused “a bigger headache than any other issue of policy or substantive matter.”<sup>1145</sup> This could have been avoided if the DG had managed to convince his senior officials to support his initial idea of having five MdTs that could have been attached to five ILO regional offices. In this situation the directors of MdTs would have worked under a direct supervision of the directors of the regional offices, all having the rank of the Assistant Directors General (ADG). Thus, a clear hierarchy of ranks and superior/subordinate relations (regional directors in the rank of D1 answerable to ADG) would have been preserved. At the same time, criticism such as “the role of regional offices in the APP is unclear”<sup>1146</sup> could have also been avoided.

#### *4.7.3 Impact of Hansenne’s compliance-based leadership on change*

A strong reliance on rules, which is a characteristic feature of a transactional leadership, was reflected in the practice of using internal administrative circulars. These circulars were not only employed as a legal instrument to move forward decentralization reforms, but also served as an important tool to introduce APP to the staff. Consequently, there were few, if any, consultations and discussions between the staff and the top management about the reform. The APP seemed to have come suddenly, as a new circular’s rule to be implemented by the bureaucratic machinery.

Additionally, the APP, which would shift technical work back to the Office officials located in MdTs, aimed at increasing competence, qualifications and specialization of the ILO international civil servants. Ironically enough, APP was seen by the DG as an instrument to advance specialization and preserve knowledge was viewed by the staff as a real danger to their specialty<sup>1147</sup> and as the sly undermining tool rather than an instrument for its enhancement. This was because of the perception that, in the Office, there was a

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<sup>1145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1146</sup> Appendix III, Draft for Consideration by the Working Party on the Evaluation of the Active Partnership Policy proposed by the Employer and Worker Members. Report of the Working Party on the Evaluation of the Active Partnership Policy, Committee on Technical Cooperation, GB.271/TC/1, Geneva (March 1998).

<sup>1147</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 11 December 2003 and Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 27 November 2003.

relatively low number of professionals who worked in identifiable areas of specialization, and the idea of dispersing them among, by now, numerous MdTs, raised a growing fear about a possible dilution of specialty in the headquarters.<sup>1148</sup>

A transactional leadership style that limited decision-making and implementation to procedures and internal regulations, with not much consultation and information sharing, fell short of alleviating these fears. It thus failed to make a convincing argument for APP, and the contributions it could make to strengthening professional specialty rather than weakening it. The DG leadership seemed to fail to recognize the inherent contradiction in APP regarding the issue of specialty. If this problem had been identified earlier, it could have forced the people involved in planning the change to undertake deliberative consultations with the staff in a much more dynamic manner. One of the architects of the APP reforms acknowledged that:

if we have done a better job in the operational stage and implementation policy maybe we could have lessened APP (negative) effects.<sup>1149</sup>

Hansenne's leadership seemed to be driven by an implicit confidence in the compliance-based measures rather than inspirational guidance as a means of implementing the APP. The success of APP depended largely on a significant increase in the staff mobility between the headquarters and the fields. Hansenne's transactional leadership chose to rely on compulsory rather than voluntary mobility of the staff between the headquarters and the new MdTs. Even though it was a myth that people were actually forced to go upon pain of losing their jobs, one's career could still be stalled if one refused to go.<sup>1150</sup> In fact, as acknowledged by the person who supervised the APP implementation, "the policy was that service in the field in the ILO was a precondition for promotion."<sup>1151</sup> This reliance on the implicit threat of punishment in managing the change in organization rather than on an inspiration-based approach is a characteristic element of transactional leadership. Eventually, the compliance-based approach towards implementation of APP backfired and even the manager of the reform recognized that the staff interpreted the APP mobility requirement

as a kind of sanction, as a kind of military service—you have to go and do your three years of service in the field and come back.<sup>1152</sup>

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<sup>1148</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 11 December 2003.

<sup>1149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1150</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 26 January 2004.

<sup>1151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1152</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 11 December 2003.



This eventually led to growing staff criticism of the top management, a greater resistance towards APP and an increase in the internal opposition to change.

#### *4.7.4 Conclusion on the impact of Hansenne's transactional leadership on APP*

Hansenne was a strong thinker, who understood and accurately identified major problems associated with the work of the Office after the end of the cold war. His intellectual abilities allowed him to produce and design a proposal for far-reaching and radical change in the way the organization worked and carried out its technical cooperation activities. However, during the analyzed period in office, Hansenne's leadership was generally weak, lacked authority, charisma, and was characterized by a rule-driven and compliance-based, rather than inspirational and visionary style of work. Consequently, Hansenne's transactional leadership undermined the effective implementation of the DG's own initiative and considerably subdued the outcome of APP.

#### *4.8 Impact of the professional culture on APP change*

A highly rigid professional culture in the Office turned out to constitute a major obstacle for a full and unhindered implementation of APP and thus, considerably slowed down its pace and limited its scope. Particularly, the elements of a rigid professional culture such as "juridicalization," centralization, cautiousness, fear of offending tripartite constituents, proclivity towards unnecessary and unjustified confidentiality all played an important role in effecting implementation of APP to its eventual detriment.

##### *4.8.1 Impact of "juridicalization" of the Office on change*

The rigidity of professional culture was particularly discernable in the form of resistance, which the 'agent of "juridicalization"', namely the international legal standards department, mounted towards the idea of going to the field.<sup>1153</sup> As observed by one of the Office insiders:

There was a huge reluctance on the part of standards people not to be posted on the team. They were happy to do missions and trips or hiring people from outside to be posted as consultants but not (them being) posted on the team.<sup>1154</sup>

The conviction among these staff members was that their work could be done effectively from the center. A certain 'ivory tower' mentality prevailed over a more open attitude towards participatory work in the field and strengthened a general resistance of the

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<sup>1153</sup> "There was no expectation from people dealing with the standards to move in and out to field positions and coming back. And when there was a push to make them rotate and to have them decentralized staff opposed". Interview with the ILO senior official, Geneva, 6 November 2003.

<sup>1154</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 27 February 2004.

professional staff towards mobility between the headquarters and the field. This attitude was rooted, according to a former ILO senior official, in a belief that standards and supervisions of standards existed above the reality.<sup>1155</sup> The standard people, as observed by the same former official, have seen themselves as the guardians of the temple, whose job is not to go out, but to remain and protect the “inner sanctum.”<sup>1156</sup>

As a result, as the evaluation report on APP noted, many “vacancies (in MdTs) had been unfilled for long periods.”<sup>1157</sup> The problem arising from a shortage of experts in the MdTs was described vividly in the 1998 report of the Working Party on APP:

As a large number of countries had to be covered by a single specialist, the assistance provided in some cases had to be at a very superficial level. A specialist in one of the MdTs had to deal with 53 countries—by all standards an impossible task.<sup>1158</sup>

The practical impact of the ‘ivory tower’ mentality was finally reflected in the urgent call for more standard specialists, which should be included into all 16 MdTs.<sup>1159</sup>

#### *4.8.2 Impact of centralization of the Office on the implementation of change*

The traditionally predominating centralized style of work also had visible impact on the functioning of APP and coordination of the APP implementation process between the field structures (MdTs or area offices) and headquarters (department of technical cooperation). The centralized style of work has been particularly visible in the development of regional, interregional and global technical programs. After the APP was launched, the headquarters continued to design these programs according to an old, centralized and non-consultative style of work. As a result, headquarters was criticized for working ‘unilaterally’, for not making links with the country objectives developed under APP, and for excluding, to a certain extent, MdTs in identifying and designing the contents of the regional, interregional and global programs.<sup>1160</sup> Furthermore, despite the DG’s 1993 circular, which shifted responsibilities for the recruitment of local professional staff to the directors of the area offices and MdTs, the report of the Joint Inspection Unit discovered that this recruitment often was still carried by the ILO headquarters.<sup>1161</sup> Consequently, APP’s underlying idea of decentralization seemed to meet with a strong tradition of professional culture set on a

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<sup>1155</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 11 December 2003.

<sup>1156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1157</sup> Report of the Working Party on the Evaluation of the Active Partnership Policy, Committee on Technical Cooperation, GB.271/TC/1, Geneva (March 1998):paragraph 23.

<sup>1158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1159</sup> Appendix III, Draft for Consideration by the Working Party on the Evaluation of the Active Partnership Policy proposed by the Employer and Worker Members. Report of the Working Party on the Evaluation of the Active Partnership Policy, Committee on Technical Cooperation, GB.271/TC/1, Geneva, March 1998.

<sup>1160</sup> Report on the Workshop on the Active Partnership Policy (28-30 April 1997):17.

centralized manner of doing things, which eventually weakened the impact of reform and hindered its smooth implementation.

#### *4.8.3 Impact of compartmentalization on change*

APP envisaged the creation of MdTs as the technical nucleus of the new decentralized structure. The novelty of MdTs was based on the idea that the field teams will bring together experts with different labor specialties so as to have a critical ‘know-how’ mass required to design more integrated, multidisciplinary technical programs. In other words, MdTs called for a less compartmentalized individual style of work and a greater integration between various technical experts through teamwork in the field. However, the compartmentalized style of work rooted in the Office professional culture was strong enough to weaken the concept of multidisciplinary work in the field. According to a former senior official with inside knowledge of the APP, despite the fact that some MdTs were successful, it was only initially and

in many cases, members of the ‘teams’ very soon started to do their own thing, with little attempt to coordinate their activities with others, or even to keep others or the MdT chiefs informed.<sup>1162</sup>

#### *4.8.4 Impact of the Office’s caution, risk aversion and over-adherence to routines on APP’s country objectives*

The APP with its concept of “countries’ objectives” was designed to address the problem of ‘going after’ too many projects that were often not related to the ILO’s mandate. The goal of setting country objectives was to facilitate establishment of priorities for technical cooperation projects in the concerned regions, and focus technical advice on the ILO core areas of interest. As stated by one of the executioners of the APP change, country objectives were supposed to ensure that the Office would no longer have to deal with random requests that did not fit with any ILO’s priorities.<sup>1163</sup>

Because the underlying principle of APP was a constituent-led approach, country objectives were to be determined through joint consultation exercises between the Office officials and the ILO constituents (governments and social partners). Such consultations called for an entirely new philosophy of work. Previously, the Office had been implementing technical cooperation program by and large autonomously, and with little consultation with ILO social constituents. At the same time, the Office had not really been

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<sup>1161</sup> *Review of Management and Administration in the International Labour Office* (Geneva 1999): 23.

<sup>1162</sup> E-mail from a former ILO senior official, 1 May 2005.

<sup>1163</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 26 January 2004.

engaged in any effective consultation or deliberations with the governments because they tended to agree on every project that the Office proposed, as long as it came with an equipment component (e.g. cars, computers, faxes, etc.). The country objectives aimed at imposing certain priorities among the scattered number of various technical projects, which would pave the way for promoting larger, more integrated and multidisciplinary technical programs, and also at increasing the involvement of the ILO constituents in determining the range of Office technical cooperation programs and thus enhancing their sense of ownership for the ILO technical work.

As a result, it is important not to underestimate the significance of country objectives for the successful implementation of APP. In one of the progress reports on APP, it was, for example, noted:

*Central to the active partnership policy is the concept of country objectives developed in a process of consultations and continuous dialogue with the ILO constituents on major social and labour issues (emphasis added).*<sup>1164</sup>

The workshop on APP conducted in Turin in 1993 recognized the “country objectives and their implementation as key elements of APP”<sup>1165</sup> and the report from the follow-up meeting organized in 1997, included the following observation

The central importance and critical role of country objectives in the implementation of the APP can be gauged from the fact that all five regional directors participated throughout the sessions (of the working group, which focused on the problems related to setting country objectives).<sup>1166</sup>

The DG himself recognized that determining country objectives constituted an “essential element” of APP<sup>1167</sup>. However, already at the beginning of APP implementation, the idea of country objectives, according to the APP manager,

got completely distorted and this happened despite of numerous talks, contacts, memos, personal clarifications by the DG and written instructions.<sup>1168</sup>

Instead of designing country objectives that would succinctly enumerate a list of top priorities in the area of technical cooperation for a given country, the Office officials continued working on a long elaborated and a very general “country profiling.”

A top management executive envisaged country objectives as a relatively short list of clearly stated objectives that would provide guidance for designing and developing technical cooperation projects for particular countries. The brevity of the list was crucial; if

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<sup>1164</sup> Committee on Technical Cooperation, Progress Made in the Implementation of the Active Partnership Policy with Special Emphasis on the Multidisciplinary Teams, GB.261/TC/5/3, Geneva, (November 1994).

<sup>1165</sup> Report of the Second Turin Workshop on the Active Partnership Policy, Turin (26-28 April 1993): 3.

<sup>1166</sup> Report on the Workshop on the Active Partnership Policy (28-30 April 1997): 9.

<sup>1167</sup> Active Partnership Policy, ILO Circular, Director General's Announcements, No.505, 4 August 1993: 3.

there were too many priorities included, they could, in fact, no longer be seen as priorities, and the whole exercise would lose its significance.<sup>1169</sup> In short, as stated in one of the documents, which reviewed the implementation of APP, the exercises that determined country objectives, were “expected to be simple, not time- and resource-consuming but precise in scope.”<sup>1170</sup> The DG in his 1993 circular, which introduced APP, reiterated that the statement of country objectives “should be extremely brief” and “should not become disproportionately time-consuming, cumbersome and costly.”<sup>1171</sup> In practice, however, the people in the Office were writing thirty or forty-page studies of the whole country, including factual information about the country’s history, size of the population or the climate and geographical location. Often, the number of country objectives exceeded ten, which contradicted the very idea of setting clear priorities.<sup>1172</sup> According to the official directly involved in the APP implementation

(...) preparing country objectives took too much time and efforts. For instance, director of area/country office would call in the specialists from the regional teams to help her or him prepare the country profiles. It is natural to have an expertise but this should not have been the main use of time of the country specialists, who were there to provide direct advice and assistance to the national people. In many cases, preparing the profiles became heavy and cumbersome and so many people were involved, so much time, so much efforts and resources went on preparing the profiles and very often this never led to specific [list of] country objectives.<sup>1173</sup>

The existence in the Office of a particular mind-set that led people to do things in a specific way was the reason, according to a former ILO senior official, for the failure of the country objectives to serve their single function of facilitating prioritization that as such never functioned properly.<sup>1174</sup> The issue paper on country objectives included in the 1997 workshop report on APP also acknowledged that

there is a strong temptation for concluding that the country objectives exercise has not fully lived up to its expectations.<sup>1175</sup>

Similar language could be also found in the evaluation report on APP, which highlighted the “weakness and incompleteness of country objectives.”<sup>1176</sup> The report concluded that

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<sup>1168</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 27 February 2004.

<sup>1169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1170</sup> Committee on Technical Cooperation (November 1994).

<sup>1171</sup> *Active Partnership Policy*, ILO Circular, Director General’s Announcements, No.505, 4 August 1993: 3.

<sup>1172</sup> See, among others, Country objectives for Pakistan, May 1997; Country objectives for Tanzania, December 1996; Country objectives for Lithuania, February 1995; Country objectives for Kenya, December 1996 (draft).

<sup>1173</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 27 February 2004.

<sup>1174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1175</sup> Report (28-30 April 1997): 43.

<sup>1176</sup> Report of the Working Party on the Evaluation of the Active Partnership Policy, Committee on Technical Cooperation, GB.273/TC/2, Geneva, (November 1998).

five years after APP was launched, a large number of the country objectives had not been finalized and the experience of the formulation exercise and its effects had varied.<sup>1177</sup> In fact, according to the review of the country objectives conducted in 1998, out of 144 country objectives, only 62 were completed, whereas the remaining majority- 82 of them- were either labeled “on-going,” “to be undertaken” or “pending.”<sup>1178</sup> The existence of such large delays in setting country objectives was in clear contradiction of internal guidelines, which advocated the formulation of country objectives within the period of three/four months at most.<sup>1179</sup>

The country objectives, which aimed at setting up program priorities, would inevitably limit the number of scattered technical projects, which were often only loosely connected to the mandate of the organization. However, since the technical projects were bringing specific financial and status-related benefits for particular departmental units responsible for their implementation, the organizational resistance to the idea of country objectives could have been considerable. Chapter 5 will show that the difficulties in determining country objectives did not relate to a rational, bureaucratic desire to maximize tasks and resources. At the same time, the paragraphs below will focus on demonstrating a specific impact of the Office professional culture on distorting the country objectives exercise. More precisely, a rigid professional culture of the Office with a high degree of caution and a fear of stirring up controversy and criticism of the ILO constituents played important role in creating serious obstacles for a quick and effective setting of country objectives.

The process of setting country objectives was supposed to be based on consultations and discussions between the Office officials and tripartite actors: social partners (workers’ and employers’ representatives) and government representatives. More precisely, determining country objectives required the Office officials to decide what projects are necessary and what projects are superfluous. This was to take place when the Office was facing skyrocketing demands for technical cooperation coming from the social partners and government representatives. After the introduction of APP, the Office was suddenly

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<sup>1177</sup> Report of the Working Party on the Evaluation of the Active Partnership Policy, Committee on Technical Cooperation, GB.271/TC/1, Geneva March 1998. See also Effect to Be Given to the Recommendations of the Working Party on the Evaluation of the Active Partnership Policy, Committee on Technical Cooperation, GB 274/TC/1, Geneva, (March 1999).

<sup>1178</sup> Status of the Country Objectives, Committee on Technical Cooperation, GB271/TC/5, Geneva, (March 1998).

<sup>1179</sup> Report. Bureau for the Promotion of the Active Partnership Policy and Technical Cooperation, (28-30 April 1997):10.

engaged in closer consultation not only with the governments (as was the case before APP was introduced) but also with the social partners. This was a new experience for the officials that until then had been fairly free (sometimes through informal consultations with the governments) to determine the type and number of technical cooperation projects. At the same time, the recipient states tended to accept every project proposed by the Office officials provided that it had an ‘equipment’ component attached to it such as cars, office supplies, faxes, copy machines, computers, etc. Now, with APP in place and the concept of country objectives in use for determining real country priorities, the Office suddenly had to become much more resolute and demanding in its interactions with the governments and social partners.

Essentially, through its country objectives, APP required the Office staff to be able to say ‘no’ and insist that the constituents limit their expectations. Actually, the inability of the Office to say ‘no’ to various demands was the main reason why the idea of country objectives was put forward in the first place.

(Country objectives were) to enable the area office, regional office and technical cooperation teams to set some priorities so as to have a basis for saying yes, no, maybe or later, because you would refer the constituents to the priorities.<sup>1180</sup>

Any ‘imposing’ attitude, however, contradicted the cautious nature of the Office professional culture rooted in the fear of offending the social partners and governments. Criticism of the constituents was expected if the ILO administration began telling social partners that their requests could not be accepted because they were not on the ILO priority list. Each demand may seem to be a high priority depending on the constituent, and its particularistic interest. In this situation, the Office officials were quite reluctant to embark on prioritizing or setting country objectives in a straightforward manner. Instead, they opted for a safer strategy, which was to keep preparing country profiles where the objectives were not stated at all, or stated in a very implicit manner. As a result, the country objectives were often presented as “vague general areas for action”<sup>1181</sup> that, at the same time, provided the bureaucracy with some leeway for a more malleable interpretation, depending on the requirements of particular situations.

Another means of ‘bureaucratic adaptation’ to the new mandatory consultations with a larger number of actors (not only with the governments but also with social partners) was to accept most of the constituents’ demands. Such an approach allowed the Office to avoid

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<sup>1180</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 27 February 2004.

<sup>1181</sup> Report (28-30 April 1997): 19.

the criticism by social partners that their “legitimate” demands were not included in the list of country objectives. As a result, country objectives were often considered to be over-ambitious<sup>1182</sup> and were viewed as wish-lists and shopping itineraries.<sup>1183</sup> In general, however, the Office officials, rather than engaging themselves in broader consultations, tended to avoid them and shun consultative processes that, in addition to being unfamiliar, could likely lead to the uncomfortable situation, wherein the officials might be forced to say ‘no’ to the constituents’ demands.

As a result, the cases were identified in which “the social partners had not been party to the (country objectives) exercise.”<sup>1184</sup> It was also observed that the African countries and the states of the Andean Pact “felt that the Office had been slow to engage in the consultative process”<sup>1185</sup> and, as a result, the problem with a “slow progress in conducting these (consultative) exercises” had occurred.<sup>1186</sup> During the discussion on technical cooperation and APP at the 1997 Governing Body session, the workers’ representative observed

participation of employers’ and workers’ organizations in the planning, implementation and evaluation of technical cooperation programmes at the national, regional and subregional levels was rather isolated and exceptional.<sup>1187</sup>

A general avoidance of consultations, alongside a relatively low frequency and intensity (in comparison with what was needed and expected) of contacts between the Office officials and the ILO constituents, led to the inability of the constituents to feel a “sense of ownership” for the country objectives.<sup>1188</sup> Thus, some states, for example, the Caribbean countries, were explicit in their complaints that “the country objectives were ILO’s objectives and not theirs.”<sup>1189</sup>

The Office officials’ proclivity towards initial acceptance of nearly all requests that were verbally submitted to them by the constituents during direct, face-to-face, meetings seemed to be associated with the Office officials’ tendency to avoid open disagreements with the social partners and governments over their demands. A verbal acceptance of almost everything that the constituents demanded allowed the officials to stay away from the potentially stressful and tense situation, in which they would be directly engaged and “on

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<sup>1182</sup> Report (November 1998).

<sup>1183</sup> Report (28-30 April 1997), Bureau for the Promotion of the Active Partnership Policy and Technical Cooperation, p.10 and Report (28-30 April 1997): 19.

<sup>1184</sup> Report (November 1998).

<sup>1185</sup> Mayaki in Report of the Committee on Technical Cooperation (November 1997): paragraph 26.

<sup>1186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1187</sup> Ibid., paragraph 19.

<sup>1188</sup> Report (28-30 April 1997):44.

<sup>1189</sup> Ibid., 27.



the spot”, in prioritizing numerous demands that were often seen by the governments or social partners as being equally important. It appears that the officials tended to draw up country objectives on their own, behind their desks, ‘secured’ by the walls of their MdTs and area offices. This, in turn, led to major surprises for the constituents when the country objectives failed to include discussed and already accepted requests. As a result, according to the report on APP,

some constituents had the impression that formal tripartite meetings had been held and a consensus reached; however, although they had been heard, their points of view and interests had not been taken into account and did not appear in the final document.<sup>1190</sup>

At the same time, the Office officials showed softness toward the actors, who often expressed specific preferences and, which, at the end of the day, mattered the most: the governments. Their criticism could be highly detrimental to an individual career, as well as for the effective work of a MdT, or an area office, both of which have to collaborate closely with the government structures (e.g. labor ministry). As a result, the governments’ views, according to the conclusions of the workshop on APP, “often prevailed at the end on the decisions (regarding country objectives).”<sup>1191</sup>

Caution of the Office was also reflected in its ambiguity over the issue of conditionality.<sup>1192</sup> Generally, unanimous agreement within the Office decided that the officials should not avail themselves of the opportunity to formulate and determine country objectives with the constituents as a means to attach any requirements, so as not “to convey any sense of conditionality.”<sup>1193</sup> The idea of explicit conditionality attached to APP has not corresponded to a prevailing manner of doing things in the Office that avoids raising controversy or criticism of the ILO constituents. Such controversies or criticisms were likely to materialize if governments or social partners suddenly came up against conditionality (a requirement or demand for a certain action) attached to the Office technical cooperation. Not daring to apply an explicit conditionality on the constituents, the Office chose, in its view, the safer and milder approach of implicit conditionality that it placed on ... itself. Thus, it was recommended that the Office

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<sup>1190</sup> Report (November 1998).

<sup>1191</sup> Report (28-30 April 1997): 25.

<sup>1192</sup> Conditionality is defined here as the policy whereby a country receives technical aid with a specific requirement (demand) attached to it.

<sup>1193</sup> Report (26-28 April 1993):1.

should impose some ‘conditionality’ on its own work [rather than directly on the constituents] by ensuring that its activities [determined by the country objectives] correspond to its core mandate and are in conformity with standards.<sup>1194</sup>

Although the Office intended to ensure that only the activities that corresponded to the ILO core mandate would be selected for eventual implementation, because of the cautious attitude the ILO administration might have been generally reluctant to openly state its intention about prioritizing certain activities over the others. Therefore, the choice of implicit conditionality may have addressed the Office anxiety and caution in its dealings with the constituents because it freed the officials from the thankless job of telling the constituents what they should or should not do. Simultaneously, these circumstances led to the opacity of Office decisions, which were increasingly incomprehensible to the social partners, and even to the states. This was because the officials were then seen as imposing conditionality that was worked out behind the closed doors and without engaging in consultations with the constituents. In turn, such an approach aroused criticism from the constituents, which the Office, paradoxically, wanted to avoid.

Because the Office did not want to impose explicit conditionality on the constituents and used a hidden type of conditionality in order to prioritize among the future technical cooperation projects, the outcomes of the process of setting country objectives became often incomprehensible to the constituents. It was difficult for the member states and social partners to understand why the list of previously agreed upon priorities and technical projects differed from what the Office was later publishing in its country objectives. Because of the use of implicit conditionality, the Office officials now had to listen to the constituents’ complaints that many country objectives were “unduly influenced by the ILO staff and in many cases (were) not fully shared by constituents”<sup>1195</sup> and that the program priorities were dominated by the technical specializations present in the MdTs, rather than by the country’s genuine needs.<sup>1196</sup>

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<sup>1194</sup> Report (28-30 April 1997): 43.

<sup>1195</sup> Effect to Be Given to the Recommendations of the Working Party on the Evaluation of the Active Partnership Policy, Committee on Technical Cooperation, GB 274/TC/1, Geneva, (March 1999).

<sup>1196</sup> *The ILO’s Technical Cooperation Programme, 1996-1997*, Committee on Technical Cooperation and Related Issues, GB.270/TC/1, Geneva, (November 1997): particularly section 124.

#### 4.8.5 *Impact of professional culture fixation on confidentiality and its impact on visibility of change*

Cautiousness as a means of avoiding criticism has pushed the Office in the direction of greater secrecy, resulting in restrictions on the access to, and dissemination of, information. Similar tendencies were on display during the process of designing and implementing APP, which eventually weakened the visibility and public effectiveness of the change. At the workshop organized before the APP was introduced, the Office officials directly responsible for designing and implementing APP discussed the issue of a *feasibility* of having country objectives kept confidential. The conclusion was

*it will not be possible to maintain the outcome [of the country objectives exercise] as a confidential document between the various partners and that it will de facto become public.*<sup>1197</sup>

The fact that the discussion about the feasibility of having country objectives confidential has taken place at all, confirms a considerable degree of the Office's immersion within its culture of secrecy, confidentiality and risk-aversion. At the same time, the quoted passage shows clearly that the Office officials were most concerned about the *possibility* of a document being made public, and did not even consider the *desirability* or advantage of such public disclosure for the visibility and transparency of the whole APP project. This way of thinking has been typical for the professional culture within the Office, and it reflects a prevailing, averse attitude towards disclosing anything at all, in fear of disapproval and criticism. No wonder, then, that such behavior affected the Office's general unwillingness to share information about APP and about the process of change, particularly when openness would also expose particular problems and weaknesses within the administration. It follows that the professional culture affected the Office's abilities to promote the APP contents, and the ideas that stood behind the change, in a more public and open manner.

The impact of the professional culture seems to account for the findings of the workshop on the APP, which highlighted the Office's general inability to take "sufficient advantage of the (country objectives') exercise to publicize the work of the ILO and the APP."<sup>1198</sup> It is hardly surprising that the Office had not realized potential benefits from publicizing its work on country objectives, if the professional culture was, first of all, geared towards the increase of confidentiality in all forms. As a result of the professional culture embedded in a cautious and often confidential manner of work, the Office generally failed during the

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<sup>1197</sup> Report (26-28 April 1993): 4. Emphasis added.

<sup>1198</sup> Report (28-30 April 1997): 47.

ongoing change to address the public at large. In consequence, the APP had a rather meager impact on increasing overall visibility of the ILO work clearly shown in the criticism of the ILO constituents who, during the period of APP implementation, “frequently felt that there was a need to improve the Organization’s visibility.”<sup>1199</sup> A prevailing culture of confidentiality and secrecy in the Office largely contributed to the administration’s failure to take advantage of the country objective exercise in order to publicize APP and to capitalize on the ongoing change by promoting the ILO work beyond the traditional constituents among others, civil society groups, NGOs and academic community. In reality, APP gained neither wide publicity nor media coverage.<sup>1200</sup>

#### *4.8.6 Conclusion on the impact of professional culture on APP*

High rigidity of the Office professional culture determines its overall static nature which, in turn, affected the implementation of APP. More precisely, “juridicalization,” centralization, compartmentalization, cautiousness, the fear of criticism and confidentiality were key factors in the hindrance of specific changes and impeded the effective implementation of the main APP proposals. Consequently, the APP change faced considerable obstacles, which reduced the pace and confined the scope of the reform and weakened its overall impact on the visibility of the ILO work.

#### *4.9 Conclusion of the chapter*

This chapter made clear that Active Partnership Policy (APP) was carried out under a transactional style of leadership and a highly rigid type of the professional culture. The intellectual abilities of the leader, in the post of the Director General, led to designing a change, whose contents were radical, if not revolutionary, particularly when juxtaposed to the existing way Office *modus operandi*. During the implementation process, however, the ground-breaking ideas that stood behind APP became distorted, and the eventual outcome turned out to be far from what was initially anticipated. The chapter highlighted the visible difference between the planned contents of change, and the actual process of change. Implementation, and its eventual outcome, can be explicated and appraised by a careful analysis of the leadership style and a specific type of the ILO professional culture and the impact these factors have on a working environment.

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<sup>1199</sup> Report of the Working Party on the Evaluation of the Active Partnership Policy, GB 271/TC/1, Geneva, March 1998.

Because of the specific influence of a particular leadership and culture,, the component parts of APP were significantly modified. The initiative eventually generated a much smaller impact on the Office's method of delivering its technical cooperation projects than had initially been anticipated. APP thus fell short of what the DG and his advisors expected. In general, an accommodative process of change implementation and its eventual outcome in the form of accommodation, were determined by the impact of Hansenne's transactional leadership style and a rigid professional culture present in the ILO Office. More precisely, centralized, uninspiring, non-charismatic, introverted style of leadership and the normative, juridical, compartmentalized, cautious, secretive and centralized professional culture of the Office constituted a determinative impact on APP. Mollifying and subduing the process of change have resulted in accommodation rather than the envisaged transformation of the ILO technical cooperation activities originally anticipated with the introduction of APP.

## **Chapter 5. Contending Explanations**

### *5.1 Introduction*

Although the above chapters showed that cultural and leadership variables have sound explanatory powers, the existing international relations (IR) literature, including studies on international organizations, on the European Union and foreign policy analysis, offers

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<sup>1200</sup> It is enough to look up the term: Active Partnership Policy on the most popular search engines on internet in order to see that APP comes up only in a limited number of the ILO documents and reports. The concept has not been adopted by other UN agencies not to mention a wider public.

several alternative explanations that enjoy widespread acceptance and may in effect contend with the main accounts of this book. Therefore, this chapter intends to rule out the alternative explanations and show that they do not, in fact, rival the preferred explanation of this study.

### 5.2 Three main alternative explanations

This chapter considers the most challenging alternative explanations for each of the case studies. **1)** The rational bureaucratic group explanation is analyzed in the case of the Office of the ILO. **2)** The states' rational interest explanation is considered in the study of the Secretariat of the WHO. **3)** Finally, the environmental demands explanation is examined in the case of the Office of the High Commissioner. Due to the space limit, each alternative explanation was applied to only one case deemed, however, to be the least likely example to contradict the given contending account.

The explanations were derived from the foreign policy-making analysis<sup>1201</sup> and its focus on the role of powerful bureaucratic groups<sup>1202</sup> as well as from the popular (neo)realist view of international relations, including the intergovernmentalist approach to the study of the European Union. The (neo)realist and intergovernmental studies consider international organizations as fora of a traditional rivalry and a competition among the states<sup>1203</sup> and see the policies pursued by the international organizations as a mere reflection of the rational preferences of the most powerful countries.<sup>1204</sup> Within the neorealist explanation, the

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<sup>1201</sup> Steve Smith, "Perspectives on the Foreign Policy System: Bureaucratic Politics Approaches," in Michael Clarke and Brian White ed., *Understanding Foreign Policy. The Foreign Policy Systems Approach*, (Edward Elgar 1989): 109-134; I.M. Destler, "Organization and Bureaucratic Politics", in Michael Smith, Richard Little and Michael Shackleton, *Perspectives on World Politics*, The Open University Press (Kent 1984): 158-172; Lauren Holland, The US Decision to Launch Operation Desert Storm: A Bureaucratic Politics Analysis, *Armed Forces and Society*, vol. 25, no.2 (Winter 1999): 219-242; James M. Goldgeier, NATO Expansion: the Anatomy of a Decision, *The Washington Quarterly*, vol.21, no.1 (Winter 1998): 85-103.

<sup>1202</sup> Graham T. Allison, Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis in John G. Ikenberry, *American Foreign Policy*, Harper Collins (New York 1989): 332-380; Allison and Zelikow (New York 1999): 143-254.

<sup>1203</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 6<sup>th</sup> eds., Knopf (New York 1985); Hans J. Morgenthau, "Six Principles of Political Realism", in Williams P., Goldstein D., Shafritz J., ed., *Classic Readings of International Relations*, second edition, Harcourt Brace College Publishers, (New York 1999): 43-48; John Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions" in Brown M., Cote R. O., Lynn Jones M. S., Miller E. S., *Theories of War and Peace*, The MIT Press, (London 1998): 329-383.

<sup>1204</sup> Even in the studies on the European Union where the EU is viewed as an entity much more powerful than a traditional type of international organizations, a (liberal) intergovernmental perspective with the state-centric approach remains an influential framework of analysis. See Andrew Moravcsik, Preferences and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Intergovernmentalist Approach, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol.3, no.4 (December 1993): 473-524; Moravcsik (1 April 1999): 267-306; Moravcsik (Autumn 1999): 811 – 814.

structural conditions of the international system are seen as having an important impact on shaping the IOs' possible responses towards the outside environment.<sup>1205</sup>

### *5.2.1 The rational bureaucratic group explanation*

According to the explanation **1**, the process and the outcome of change are determined by the rational interest of a bureaucratic group that usually dominates the organization.

#### *5.2.1.1 Rational bureaucratic group and the change in the ILO*

In the case of APP in the ILO, the idea of having a bureaucratic group with a particularistic rational interest determining direction and eventual outcome of change sounds very plausible. In fact, there was a powerful group in the Office that resisted the ongoing change and its actions have eventually modified some elements of change. However, the explanatory power of the variable is limited to two aspects of the multi-featured APP change and even then, the variable either provides a merely theoretical elaboration for the staff resistance to change (e.g. the staff rational self interest) while the empirical evidences are pointing to other explanations (e.g. a resistance of staff towards the change determined by the features of the professional culture and styles of the DG leadership) or accounts for a very general characteristic of a given element of change without problematizing that particular aspect of change in greater details (the example of a distortion of country objectives).

The first aspect of change under consideration relates to a powerful group of standards professionals (lawyers) within the Office, who was said to resist the mobility policy necessary for staffing the new multidisciplinary teams, which, in turn, constituted the core of APP and the essence of its new decentralized philosophy of work. The resistance to move out from Geneva 'somewhere to the bush' in a developing country could have been associated with a pure rational and self-centered interest of the staff to stay in a well-off place, where the spouse had also a well-paid job and children attended good schools. However, from the empirical research it might be construed that the grounds for the resistance to go to the field were related less to a rational interest of living comfortably in Geneva and more to the specific way the ILO professionals viewed their careers in the organization. The Office professionals were recruited to the organization with the

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<sup>1205</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, "Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory", in Charles W. Kegley ed., *Controversies in International Relations Theory*, St Martin's Press (New York 1995): 67-82; Kenneth N. Waltz, Structural Realism after the Cold War, *International Security*, vol. XXV, no.1 (2000): 5-41; Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory", in Betts R., ed., *Conflict After the Cold War. Arguments on Causes of War and Peace*, Allyn and Bacon (London 1994): 88-95.

expectation that they would work and advance in the ILO hierarchy while staying permanently in the headquarters in Geneva. They would naturally go on missions to different countries but these assignments would be short-term in nature and the substantive work would still be done in Geneva. The professions would thus expect to spend, on average, thirty or so years in the ILO headquarters with no established practice of leaving their office and going to the field.

The importance of a specific philosophy of work, which shapes the staff expectation about their careers and determines the staff resistance or, for that matter, willingness to go to the field is depicted by the contrast between the ILO general immobility culture and a highly mobile style of work in UNHCR. Despite the fact that UNHCR has its headquarters, similarly to the ILO, in Geneva, Switzerland there is little or no resistance to the idea of leaving behind a comfortable living in the ‘diplomatic city’ and going somewhere to the field, often with no basic utilities available. In fact, as it was shown in the chapter on UNHCR, in the refugee agency there is a considerable proud in the opportunities to go to the field. This attitude has emerged because the idea of living and working in the field has been the established practice since the creation of the refugee agency. While in the ILO, as noted by a long-time senior official, there were no expectations whatsoever that the staff generally and the legal officers dealing with the standards in particular would move to the field for a certain time.<sup>1206</sup> On the contrary, the prevailing belief was that the effective work of the legal professionals depended largely on their in-house analyses, evaluations and supervision of the legal standards without the need to work or live in the countries concerned. Over many years of the ILO existence and work, a headquarters-centered thinking and practice have led to the emergence of a genuine conviction that the most effective work on the ILO standards was actually done in the Geneva Office where the core expertise was located. Consequently, APP, which suddenly asked the Office specialists to work in different field offices, raised a considerable fear among the standards professionals about undermining the Office overall expertise and the dilution of the Office specialization as a consequence of dispersing the headquarters’ professionals all over the world.<sup>1207</sup> Furthermore, a degree of the “ivory tower” mentality related to the feeling of the organizational prominence of the standards and supervision of standards above other professional activities played also an important role in the legal group’s resistance to move to the field and intermingle more with the technical cooperation officials outside the ILO

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<sup>1206</sup> Interview with a former ILO senior official, Geneva, 11 December 2003.

<sup>1207</sup> Ibid.



headquarters.<sup>1208</sup> Overall, rather than purely rational self interest of individuals, it was a particular tradition of immobility present in the Office, a general practice of in-house work, a habitual way of doing legal and standard-related work in the headquarters combined with a traditionally high standing and importance of the legal profession in the headquarters in Geneva that appeared to determine the staff opposition towards APP decentralized philosophy of work.

The second aspect of change implementation and its outcome, which, at first sight, might have been accounted for by the actions of the rational self-interest bureaucrats, relates to the distortion of country objectives. The country objectives that constituted an important element of APP change aimed at setting up program priorities based on stricter interpretation of the ILO mandate. Such prioritization, in turn, would have inevitably led to the fall in the number of scattered and loosely related to the ILO core mandate technical projects that were being implemented by the Office. The technical projects, however, were bringing specific financial and status-related benefits for the particular ILO departments and their staff. Every technical project entitled the ILO bureaucracy to ‘overhead costs’ in the amount of 14% (later lowered to 13%) of the total financial resources designated for a given project. The number of technical projects and thus also the amount of money attracted to the Office from various donors determined the administrative prestige of a particular department and provided a departmental management with a strong justification for recruiting more personnel, carrying out more abroad missions or giving out more promotions. Consequently, the explanation based on the action of a group of rational bureaucrats interested in maximizing their tasks, prestige and resources would envisage the opposition towards setting country objectives that aimed at prioritizing and, in practice, limiting the department’s involvement in the number of non-core ILO projects. This explanation would then be in a position to account for a possible distortion of country objectives, which was exactly what happened in reality. However, a more careful empirical research uncovers that although the aforementioned explanation seems to account for a general failure of the staff to implement country objectives its explanatory power is rendered futile for more detailed inquiries of how exactly the country objectives were distorted.

Furthermore, the actions of rational and self-interested bureaucratic groups fail to provide a plausible answer to a number of other important inquiries such as why, instead of country

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<sup>1208</sup> Ibid.

objectives, the staff chose the format of long and descriptive country profiles, why the Office officials, according to the available critical statements, oftentimes chose to avoid consultative processes and set the country objectives on their own, why the ILO professionals tended to agree verbally to the long lists of constituents' demands only to reject them later when writing down the country objectives, why the staff declined having an explicit conditionality imposed on the constituents as a way to determine the country objectives while, at the same time, used an implicit form of conditionality on its own work and finally, why the Office staff generally failed to use the country objectives' exercise to publicize their own work and the work of the ILO. As study shows, the main elements of the professional culture provide a more convincing explanation for the above questions.

### *5.2.2 The states' rational interest explanation*

According to the explanation 2, the rational interests of the most powerful actors in the international system: the states determine the process and the outcome of change in international administration. In other words, the process of change implementation in international administration and its eventual outcome are the ones most preferred by the members of the international organization- the states.

#### *5.2.2.1 States' rational interest and the change in the WHO*

The analysis of Making a Difference in the WHO shows that the process of change and its eventual outcome were more open to a possible influence of the state actors. However, even in this case, the influence of the states, more precisely major WHO donors, was discovered to be limited to merely one among many elements that constituted the specific contents of change. More specifically, the donor-states rather than the WHO Secretariat as the case study argued could have determined vertical, short-term, result-oriented and disease-focused character of the Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) advanced under Making a Difference. However, the relevant evidence shows that the WHO Secretariat with its medical force has been generally powerful enough to determine particular goals and strategies of programs independently from the interests of its donors. As shown by a major study on the extra-budgetary funds conducted in 1995, "by no means is it clear that WHO is donor driven."<sup>1209</sup> In fact, according to this report, the WHO professional staff maintain their "key role in establishing new initiatives by setting agendas and harnessing policy

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<sup>1209</sup> Patrick J. Vaughan, Sigrum Mogedal, Stein-Erik Krause, Kelley Lee, Gill Walt, Koen de Wilde, WHO and the Effects of Extrabudgetary Funds: Is the Organization Donor Driven? *Health Policy and Planning*, vol.11, no.3 (1996):262.

processes within WHO itself.”<sup>1210</sup> The WHO staff have been thus in the driver’s seat of policy-making in the organization, which ensured that the donors, although important and influential, did not actually dominate the programs and less so determine their direction.

Furthermore, the WHO human reproduction program, which, due to its sensitive and controversial focus, could be, more than any other WHO activity, a subject to the donors’ strict control and their dominance, has been, in fact, successful in maintaining its autonomy from the major benefactors. Actually, the independent evaluation showed that the criticism that the donors have largely determined the agenda of this program was in fact not true.<sup>1211</sup> According to the person who was familiar with the contents of the evaluation, the document also highlighted that the governing body of the program: a policy coordination committee was able to shield itself from too much influence from major donors and their views did not dominate the policy strategies or objectives of the program.<sup>1212</sup> Interestingly, according to the same person, the evaluation showed that it was the Secretariat of the program (rather than the donors) that has had the most influence over the program’s ultimate priorities. Because the program was discovered to be so firmly in the hands of the members of the Secretariat the evaluators were even forced to question the benefits of that dominance.<sup>1213</sup> No doubts, the donors’ own preferences for short-term, result-oriented and vertical programs, including the contents of PPPs, help the WHO Secretariats’ managers in funding and continuing their vertical projects. Nevertheless, the donors’ influence should, by no means, be seen as a decisive factor in determining the direction and final outcome of Making a Difference, which, in practice, was tightly controlled by the Secretariat and its leadership. In fact, the explanatory power of the donor-driven argument has been challenged by the empirical finding of this research, which discovered that the Secretariat, and not the donors, was often seen as the dominant actor in PPPs.

The member-states were interested in the WHO transformation and in raising WHO profile. The states’ interest was reflected in the election of Brundtland to the post of the DG on the assumption that she would be capable of introducing radical change to the organization and would be able to alter the *status quo* established after a widely criticized directorship of doctor Nakajima. Consequently, the explanation based on the actions and interests of the most powerful states provides a plausible account of the origin of change and has little, if

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<sup>1210</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>1211</sup> Phone interview with a former WHO senior technical official, Geneva, 30 January 2004.

<sup>1212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1213</sup> Ibid.

any, analytical significance for the study of the process of change implementation and its outcome. In fact, the states' rational interest explanation leads to the important conclusion that the powerful countries were interested in providing the new DG with a considerable autonomy in choosing the means that would take WHO out of its doldrums. Such observation, in turn, means that in order to understand change implementation and its outcome one needs to look closely at Brundtland's leadership and internal organizational dynamics more than the interests of the most powerful member states.

### *5.2.3 The environmental demands explanation*

According to the explanation 3, the process and, more importantly, the outcome of change in international administration have to satisfy environmental demands so that the organization is able to claim its continued relevance and ensure its survival.

#### *5.2.3.1 Environmental demands and the change in UNHCR*

In the case of UNHCR, the process and, even more so, the eventual outcome of change in the form of humanitarian transformation went along with the profound shifts taking place in the international system at the beginning of the 1990s. These changes included, among others, shifts in the nature of conflicts from interstate to intrastate and a growing numbers of people on the move as a result of the outbreaks of the new types of the post-cold war internal conflicts. The beginning of the 1990s also saw an important change in the notion of sovereignty, which 'relaxed' previously rigid interpretation of the right to intervention in the internal affairs of other states. All these developments in the international environment rather than determined the process and outcome of change in UNHCR could be seen as having provided the refugee agency with the opportunity to initiate change. In other words, the explanation based on the environmental demands makes (like in the WHO and in the ILO cases) an important contribution to the understanding of the origin of transformation in UNHCR but it is less helpful for analysis of the implementation process and eventual outcome of change.

At the same time, the environmental demands explanation regarding transformation, in UNHCR in contrast to other alternative explanations regarding the changes in the WHO and ILO, seems to hold its popular sway among both the practitioners and the scholars of the refugee agency. It thus often stated that UNHCR involvement in humanitarian assistance and relief activities and thus its transformational process was inevitable since there had been a specific non-addressed, humanitarian, need and no obvious institution to

fill in the vacuum.<sup>1214</sup> However, the fact that there was no obvious candidate to assume responsibility for humanitarian assistance should, by no means, imply that UNHCR had no choice. On the contrary, UNHCR did have a choice to be either engaged as part of a wider political process or disengage and assist only refugees when they cross the border into a safe country. UNHCR could have been more selective and more principled in its humanitarian involvement in countries of origin. The UNHCR has said ‘no’ before, when it declined to assume a leading role in humanitarian assistance in Venezuela and in Cambodia in the 1980s.<sup>1215</sup> More precisely, in Cambodia in 1981, UNHCR did not take the lead in providing care for displaced people because the organization had set out *prior* specific conditions that eventually determined UNHCR’s non-involvement. The UNHCR’s requirements, among others, included a demand that the camps were to “be moved away from the border, be demilitarized, and UN access be unrestricted.”<sup>1216</sup> The Office could have used similarly limited approach towards many more of its engagements and, as result, could have pursued much more restricted involvement in humanitarian assistance in the 1990s. Indeed, it was even implied that

UNHCR could absolve itself from any responsibility for the internally displaced, or for monitoring the human rights of refugees, who have returned home, and more broadly for dealing with any of the conditions in countries of origin (...).<sup>1217</sup>

The ability to decide about its possible abstention or involvement came from the Office’s perceived autonomy and independence. Although the constraining power of the member states on the organization should, by no means, be disregarded, the Office, according to a well-known refugee scholar and former UNHCR practitioner “has become (over the years) a purposive actor in its own right with independent interests and capabilities.”<sup>1218</sup> The same person, in other places, has recognized UNHCR ability to act independently or evolve in ways that are not expected or necessarily sanctioned by states.<sup>1219</sup> The autonomy and independent power of the refugee agency has also been acknowledged in the normative aspects of its work. Due to its ideological and legitimacy functions the organization was observed to encourage international behavior that corresponded with UNHCR concerns and

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<sup>1214</sup> This opinion was voiced in the majority of interviews, which closely followed the view of Brian Gorlick, the UNHCR regional protection officer, who also expressed his belief in “inevitability of UNHCR assuming an expanded role” since there was no other international organization able to deal with humanitarian crises. Gorlick in Steiner, Gibney and Leoscher (2003):82-83. Similar opinion was voiced in Weiss and Pasic (1997): 50. Also, Interview with a former UNHCR senior official, Geneva, 6 April 2004.

<sup>1215</sup> McNamara, Dennis, UNHCR’s Protection Mandate in Relation to Internally Displaced Persons, [http://www.nrc.no/global\\_idp\\_survey/rights\\_have\\_no\\_borders/mcnamara.htm](http://www.nrc.no/global_idp_survey/rights_have_no_borders/mcnamara.htm). Accessed on 15 November 2004.

<sup>1216</sup> Martin (July 2000): 21.

<sup>1217</sup> Weiner, (1998): 444.

<sup>1218</sup> Loescher (Spring 2001):33.

interest.<sup>1220</sup> A considerable autonomy of the Office of the HC was also demonstrated in the study on the UNHCR repatriation culture, which influenced the Office's repatriation strategies and actions independently from the states.<sup>1221</sup>

A particular kind of change that took place in the Office under Ogata's leadership did match the demands of the external environment, including the preferences of the member states. UNHCR seemed to head the calls of its external environment and its member states not so much because it *had to* but most of all because it *wanted to*. This observation has been clearly depicted by the words of the UNHCR senior official, who noted:

Some commentators argue that the evolution of UNHCR's mandate and operational priorities were unavoidable due to the changing nature of conflicts and the dynamics of displacement. It cannot be ignored, however, that the Office *itself* played a willing role to meet the demands of the international community (emphasis added).<sup>1222</sup>

In other words, although UNHCR was a *potential* candidate for expanded humanitarian involvement, the organization was not necessary an *inevitable* candidate given its autonomy of action and a history of more cautious approach towards humanitarian assistance in countries of origin. Generally, there was nothing inevitable about the fact that UNHCR embraced 'Humanitarian Agenda' and that the refugee agency implemented it to such a large extent.

#### 5.2.3.2 *Environmental demands explanation and the change in "UNHCR-like" organizations: UNICEF and WFP*

The explanatory power of the rival argument, set on the inevitability of UNHCR transformation due to the external conditionalities, is considerably weakened by the supplementary research on the two UN agencies, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Food Program (WFP). Both agencies had very similar organizational characteristics to UNHCR, were highly decentralized with strict mobility policies of their personnel,<sup>1223</sup> a similarly field-oriented bias and, over the years, have developed extensive operational capabilities. In fact, WFP and UNICEF (next to UNHCR) were identified as the

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<sup>1219</sup> Loescher (2003):6 and Loescher (Spring 2001):33.

<sup>1220</sup> Chimni (1998): 366.

<sup>1221</sup> Barnett and Finnemore (Ithaca 2004): chapter on Defining Refugees and Voluntary Repatriation at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

<sup>1222</sup> Brian Gorlick, "Refugee Protection in Trouble Times: Reflections on Institutional and Legal Developments at the Crossroads", in Niklaus Steiner, Mark Gibney and Gil Loescher, *Problems of Protection: the UNHCR, Refugees and Human Rights*, Routledge (New York 2003):83.

<sup>1223</sup> Even Fontaine Ortiz, Ion Gorita and Victor Vislykh, *Delegation of Authority and Accountability. Part II Series of Managing For Results in the United Nations System*, Joint Inspection Unit, JIU/REP/2004/7: 4.

only offices from among UN organizations<sup>1224</sup> that “routinely carry out direct operations in the field during humanitarian emergencies using their own staff, equipment and management.”<sup>1225</sup> In other words, UNICEF and WFP were equally predisposed to implement the change that would have taken them through a humanitarian transformation. Yet, in the 1990s, these organizations remained confined to their original mandates, tended to adhere to their primary tasks and were particularly reluctant to enter huge-scale humanitarian operations.<sup>1226</sup> The sections below provide an explanation as to why humanitarian transformations have never taken place in these organizations. The absence of these transformations in the emergency-oriented organizations (UNICEF and WFP) that operated under the same external conditions ultimately weakens the argument about the inevitability of humanitarian transformation in UNHCR. Furthermore, as the explanation shows, even in the cases of UNICEF and WFP the leadership and professional cultures turned out to play a major role in preventing the humanitarian transformation from taking place in these organizations.

#### 5.2.3.2 UNICEF potential for and rejection of greater humanitarian involvement

Because the UNICEF’s original *raison d’être* was the provision of emergency relief the agency has gained a vast experience in providing material aid in the form of food, clothing and medicines.<sup>1227</sup> Although UNICEF has been seen as a development institution, it retained significant emergency capabilities.<sup>1228</sup> In fact, during various emergency operations UNICEF proved its flexible management and effectiveness<sup>1229</sup> and was even judged as being the most familiar with the problems of vulnerable populations among all UN organizations.<sup>1230</sup> As a result, at the beginning of the 1990s, both the UNHCR and UNICEF were seen as “the likely candidates for designation as lead agencies in complex humanitarian emergencies.”<sup>1231</sup>

The UNICEF mandate (similarly to the UNHCR mandate) has a limited focus, which may have been the main obstacle for the organization to expand. However, the organization’s

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<sup>1224</sup> WHO and UNDP have also emergency response included in their mandate but, in practice, have a limited role in that area.

<sup>1225</sup> *The State of the World’s Refugees* (1993):90.

<sup>1226</sup> *Working in a War Zone* (1 April 1994): 26.

<sup>1227</sup> Yves Beigbeder, *New Challenges for UNICEF. Children, Women and Human Rights*, Palgrave (New York 2001): 16, 20 and 117.

<sup>1228</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>1229</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>1230</sup> Larry Minear, U.B.P. Chelliah, Jeff Crisp, John Mackinlay and Zthomas G. Weiss, United Nations Coordination of the International Humanitarian Response to the Gulf Crisis 1990-1992, *Thomas J. Watson Institute for International Studies*, Occasional Paper, no.13 (1992): 15.

<sup>1231</sup> Weiss and Pasic (1997): 53.

limited focus on children did not mean that UNICEF could not step into the crisis situations where children were a major part of the victim population. UNHCR, for example, stepped into humanitarian crises with the argument that there is a refugee link to everything that the organization does.<sup>1232</sup> UNICEF could have made the same arguments about children and could have connected them with humanitarian and relief driven operations in the same fashion as it linked children with human rights.<sup>1233</sup> Indeed, in many instances, UNICEF did manage to go beyond its statutory focus and expanded the mandate to include the provision of relief in complex emergencies to all victims of conflicts, particularly women and children.<sup>1234</sup>

Even if UNICEF maintained its mandate-limited focus on children and women (rather than on the whole, war-affected, population), the organization would still have enough legitimate reasons for humanitarian expansion in the 1990s. For example, it is estimated that in 1992, about 80% of the refugees under UNHCR's care were women and children.<sup>1235</sup> Children and adolescents alone made up between fifty to as much as sixty five percent of the total number of displaced people in the world.<sup>1236</sup> Lastly, 64% refugees from the former Yugoslavia were women.<sup>1237</sup> UNICEF had also the support of states, including its major donors, for the continuation and even expansion of the organization's emergency and relief focus. In 1992, the UNICEF Executive Board encouraged the organization to

continue providing emergency assistance to refugee and displaced women and children, particularly those living in areas affected by armed conflict and natural disasters (...).<sup>1238</sup>

In the former Yugoslavia, seen as a symbol of UNHCR humanitarian transformation, UNICEF initially had a practical advantage over the refugee agency in terms of its long-established focus as well as a long history of involvement in the region. UNICEF, with its strong tradition of providing assistance to all parties in the conflict<sup>1239</sup> was actually better predisposed to carrying out humanitarian activities in this part of the world. At the same

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<sup>1232</sup> Interview with the UNHCR senior desk officer, Geneva, 10 June 2004.

<sup>1233</sup> For more detailed analysis on the subject of incorporating human rights in UNICEF activities see: Joel E. Oestreich, UNICEF and the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, *Global Governance*, vol.4, no.2 (April-June 1998):183-198.

<sup>1234</sup> Francesco Mezzalama, *Investigation of the Relationship Between Humanitarian Assistance and Peace-Keeping Operations*, Joint Inspection Unit, (Geneva 1995): 10.

<sup>1235</sup> Sadako Ogata, Statement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to the UNICEF Executive Board, New York, 15 June 1992. See also *The State of the World's Refugees* (1993): 87.

<sup>1236</sup> *The State of The World's Refugees* (1995): 28, Chapter 1. See also Sadako Ogata, UNHCR for a Decade: "The Refugee Problem Can be Solved", *Gaiko Forum*, vol.40 (Summer 2001):44.

<sup>1237</sup> S. Ogata, Refugee Women: The Forgotten Half, *Our Planet*, vol.7, no.4 (1995): abstract.

<sup>1238</sup> UNICEF Executive Board resolution 1992/21.



time, UNICEF, unlike other UN organizations, was a very familiar agency for the Yugoslav people. Yugoslav citizen committees had supported UNICEF work since the 1940s.<sup>1240</sup> At the beginning of the 1990s, UNICEF maintained a relatively large operational and administrative presence in Yugoslavia, which could have easily served as a hub for large humanitarian operations.<sup>1241</sup> Consequently, the organization was considered to be better equipped for delivering humanitarian assistance in the former Yugoslavia than UNHCR or other UN organizations.<sup>1242</sup> Despite the apparent advantages, UNICEF involvement remained modest.<sup>1243</sup>

The grounds for UNICEF lack of interest in humanitarian expansion and its eventual limited involvement in the emergencies of the 1990s are found inside (more than outside) the organization. The way UNICEF saw its opportunities and made choices among available options were largely determined by the overall organizational focus and preferences of its leadership. At the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, UNICEF increasingly concentrated its programmatic activities on long-term developmental issues such as poverty, diseases and malnutrition. Purely emergency short-term relief efforts became relegated to secondary choices.<sup>1244</sup> In other words, around the time of major humanitarian openings, the UNICEF ‘mindset’ was actually driven by a strong belief in the necessity to build and strengthen the state infrastructure and its institutional capacities rather than to engage in distribution of material assistance.<sup>1245</sup> At the same time, at the end of the 1980s, UNICEF executive director, James Grant (1980-1995), began emphasizing the importance of the organization’s normative involvement. This new policy was based on a promotion, implementation and monitoring of children’s rights<sup>1246</sup> and was evolving parallel to the operational tasks related to the delivery of relief to children<sup>1247</sup>. As a result,

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<sup>1239</sup> Larry Minear (Team Leader), Jeffrey Clark, Roberta Cohen, Dennis Gallagher, Iain Guest, and Thomas G. Weiss, *Humanitarian Action in the Former Yugoslavia: the UN’s Role, 1991-1993*, *Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies*, Occasional Paper, no.18, (1994): 29-30.

<sup>1240</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>1241</sup> UNICEF “opened program offices in Zagreb and Belgrade in November 1991 and in Split and Sarajevo in July 1992. In November 1992, UNICEF appointed a Special Representative for the region, who set up shop in Zagreb. During the following year, UNICEF opened suboffices or programs in each of the former republics. (...) Its operations (in the former Yugoslavia) had become firmly established by late 1993”. *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>1242</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30.

<sup>1243</sup> In 1993, for example, UNICEF established a target of less than 50 million dollars that were to be spent for the operations in the former Yugoslavia, in comparison with almost 250 million dollars assigned for the former Yugoslavia by UNHCR in 1992 and 500 million dollars in the following year. *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>1244</sup> Beigbeder (2001): 32.

<sup>1245</sup> Larry Minear eds., (1994): 30.

<sup>1246</sup> See Joel E. Oestreich, *UNICEF and the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child*, *Global Governance*, vol.4, no.2 (April-June 1998): 183-198. See also, Larry Minear eds., (1994): 30.

<sup>1247</sup> Beigbeder (2001):33.

in the 1990s, Grant moved UNICEF towards a “rights’ agency”<sup>1248</sup>. UNICEF preoccupation with developmental programs and its leadership focus on children’s rights, were both dominant characteristics of UNICEF work in the time when new operational opportunities emerged after the end of the cold war. UNICEF’s attention and its leadership interests were, however, directed at other areas. UNHCR, undergoing humanitarian transformation, was thus unrivalled in the field of humanitarian emergencies.

### 5.2.3.3 WFP potential for and rejection of greater humanitarian involvement

Next to UNICEF and UNHCR, WFP is an operational agency that has proved its abilities to move quickly and flexibly into the emergencies if necessary. In the 1980s, the World Food Program took a humanitarian lead in Angola<sup>1249</sup> and its humanitarian role during the Gulf crisis was highly praised and its operational effectiveness acknowledged.<sup>1250</sup> Similarly to UNICEF and UNHCR, WFP is a donor-driven organization and thus could have easily secured not only political but also additional financial support from its member states (interested at that time in greater UN participation in humanitarian emergencies) had it decided to pursue greater humanitarian involvement in the 1990s. Overall, because of the availability of emergency funds and donors’ interests, WFP had the potential to expand its activities.

A possible shortage of staff in the field, which WFP could have experienced if it had decided to embark on larger humanitarian operations,<sup>1251</sup> should not have been a major concern for the organization. A similar problem did not constitute an obstacle for UNHCR. At the beginning of its involvement in the former Yugoslavia, UNHCR did not have the capacity for rapid deployment of an adequate number of experienced personnel and had to go through a hasty external recruitment.<sup>1252</sup> With its relatively large emergency budget WFP like the UNHCR, could have relied extensively on external recruitment.<sup>1253</sup> Also, because of the existing needs there was a considerable niche for WFP humanitarian

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<sup>1248</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>1249</sup> Michael Pugh and Alex Cunliffe, The Lead Agency Concept in Humanitarian Assistance. The Case of the UNHCR, *Security Dialogue*, vol.28, no.1 (1997):17.

<sup>1250</sup> Larry Minear ed., (1992): 13.

<sup>1251</sup> In 1993, WFP was employing less than a half of the number of professional staff than UNHCR and UNICEF (416 in comparison with 1008 in UNHCR and 1248 in UNICEF) and was quite centralized agency (more than 60% of its staff were based in Rome). See Andrzej Abraszewski, Richard Hennes, Kahono Martohadinegoro, Khalil Issa Othman, *Accountability, Management Improvement and Oversight in the United Nations System. Part II- Comparative Tables*, Joint Inspection Unit, (Geneva 1995):2, Table 1.

<sup>1252</sup> *Working in a War Zone* (1 April 1994): 32.

<sup>1253</sup> WFP emergency budget constituted around 40% of its total expenses estimated at almost 1.6 billion dollars (much bigger than that of UNHCR: 1.3 billion and UNICEF: 1 billion dollars). All figures come from 1993. See Abraszewski eds., (1995):2, Table 1. See also Karen Wolman, *Feeding the Uprooted, Refugees* (March 1991): 10.

expansion. In 1991, for instance, WFP was providing ‘only’ half of the world’s total emergency food aid needs<sup>1254</sup>. Thus, the organization had the possibility to expand its humanitarian engagement while concentrating merely on doing what it was doing best: delivery of food.

Additionally, in the former Yugoslavia, the relief efforts were basically “a trucking operation with frills,”<sup>1255</sup> the very thing that WFP had expertise in and a comparative advantage over other organizations. In other words, the humanitarian crises of the early 1990s provided WFP with a number of opportunities for a rapid humanitarian expansion. The organization, however, shied away from more active presence in the emergency operations of the 1990s and failed to use its window of opportunity. This was a conscious choice. At the time of the new humanitarian operations, WFP leadership interest was, essentially, directed at longer-term, developmental programs and shied away from greater involvement in delivery of short-term aid and relief assistance. As a result, its limited operational commitment in the former Yugoslavia and, for that matter, in other emergencies of the 1990s was closely connected with the organization’s general reluctance “to engage in what (it) feared would become a major detour from its primary task of assisting developing countries”<sup>1256</sup>. The leadership’s preferences were strong enough not only to silence the donors’ voices for a stronger WFP presence in humanitarian emergencies but also, despite various other opportunities, to sustain the organization’s focus on long-term development work.

#### *5.2.3.4 Conclusion on UNICEF and WFP*

The mini case studies that generated evidence on UNICEF and WFP, contradict the statement that the change, which led to humanitarian transformation in UNHCR, was in fact inevitable because of the specific environmental demands. This alternative explanation is ruled out based on the study of UNICEF and WFP, which were seen as emergency-oriented UN agencies and, in fact, no different from UNHCR. They have also operated under the same external circumstances and faced the same environmental demands like their refugee counterpart. Despite the institutional similarities and exposure to the same external environment, UNICEF and WFP (in contrast to UNHCR) did not go through radical, humanitarian transformation. This suggests that the process that led to humanitarian transformation in UNHCR was not driven by external factors, but rather

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<sup>1254</sup> Wolman (1991): 9.

<sup>1255</sup> *Working in a War Zone* (1 April 1994): 18, paragraph 148.

<sup>1256</sup> Minear eds., (1994): 28.

leadership and cultural variables, which also turned out to account for the absence of a radical humanitarian change in UNICEF and WFP.

### *5.3 Conclusion on the alternative explanations*

The alternative explanations derived from the international relations literature are all in all weak in their explanatory power to account for all or the majority of the elements that constitute a particular process of change in a single organization. Each of the explanations turned out to have enough explanatory power to shed light only on a limited number of elements (usually one or two) of the multi-featured phenomena such as the process and outcome of change. Finally, while the study is interested in the process and outcome of changes the alternative explanations tend to concentrate on the origin of change, which remains outside the analytical scope of this particular research.

## **Chapter 6. Conclusion of the study**

### *6.1 Analytical and empirical inquiries*

At the beginning, the study established clear analytical and empirical ‘signposts’ to guide this analysis. The main analytical inquiry was how institutional change in the international administrations of the UN organizations is carried out given the proven record of organizational inertia present in both national public institutions and international public organizations. The subsequent empirical inquiry focused on the major institutional changes that were initiated during the first five years in office of the last retired (at the time of the field research) executive heads of the selected international administrations: the Office of the ILO, the Secretariat of the WHO and the Office of the High Commissioner. The initial contents of identified changes: Humanitarian Agenda in UNHCR, Making a Difference in WHO and Active Partnership Policy in ILO had radical characters and aimed at substantive transformation of the way the organizations carried out their activities. The outcomes of initiated changes that ranged from transformation, semi-transformation, to accommodation intrigued this study. Consequently, the analysis came out with specific empirical puzzles about how it was possible that the implementation process and the outcome of change were either the same, slightly or entirely different from the earlier envisioned contents of changes and their anticipated impact.

### *6.2 Leadership and cultural variables provide the answers to the study’ inquiries*

The main arguments developed in the introduction to this study stated that it were leadership and cultural variables that could account for the process of change implementation and its outcome and answer both analytical and empirical inquiries of this study. More precisely, the arguments indicated that it were the specific styles of leadership of the executive heads and particular types of professional cultures inside organizations that could, in fact, explain radical (transformation) and subdued (accommodation) process of change implementation and its eventual outcome.

The idea of considering leadership and culture as the main independent variables of this study was shown to have its roots both in the analytical and empirical literature. First of

all, the ‘nested’ approach, which brought together leadership and culture, aimed at addressing the scholarly call for greater analytical integration between independent actions of key actors and the impact of structures in order to understand the organizational dynamics. Secondly, the chosen approach has used the variables that have already been developed and successfully tested in other social science disciplines such as the organization behavior studies, public administration or business and management studies but have been relatively underdeveloped in the international relations literature and more precisely in the analysis of IOs and their administrations. Because of the scarcity of the IOs’ literature on the impact of both leadership and culture, the mini case study of WIPO was introduced with the aim to strengthen the justification for the selection of the main variables.

### *6.3 The case studies and selected leadership and cultural variables*

The selected empirical cases tested the explanatory powers of the analytically derived arguments about the impact of leadership and culture, which were presented in the introduction. The case studies of institutional changes: Humanitarian Agenda in UNHCR, Making a Difference in WHO and Active Partnership Policy in ILO served as a testing ground for studying a formative impact of a particular leadership style of a given executive head and a determinative influence of a specific type of professional culture on the process of change implementation and on its outcome. In other words, detailed descriptions and thorough examinations of the main features of professional cultures in the agencies and the leadership characteristics of particular executive leaders paved the way for tracing the impact of a specific leadership style and a particular type of professional culture on the processes of change and their outcomes in the considered organizations.

### *6.4 Addressing contending explanations*

All analyzed organizations belonged to the family of *intergovernmental* organizations, which are, as the popular belief holds, tightly controlled by their masters: member states. In such circumstances, the role of internal attributes of IOs such as their leadership or cultures has been seen as negligible (if acknowledged at all) and thus not powerful enough to generate the assumed pattern of influence. Therefore, the case studies of the administrations of the UN organizations were to a greater or lesser extent the critical (‘deviant’) cases, which provided an opportunity for accounting for and eventually ruling out “disconfirming evidences.”<sup>1257</sup>

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<sup>1257</sup> Seale (1999): 73.

In order to enhance the validity and the accuracy of the stated arguments, next to applying a certain methodological technique known as ‘methodological triangulation’, a separate chapter was introduced in order to address specifically the existing contending explanations that might have challenged the main arguments of this study. By ruling out the applicability of the rival explanations to account for the processes and outcomes of changes in the considered case studies, the chapter reinforced the explanatory power of the selected leadership and cultural variables. With the purpose of defending the explanatory powers of leadership and cultural variables, which particularly in the case of UNHCR were exposed to various contending explanations, a brief account of the lack of humanitarian transformation in the organizations similar to the refugee agency such as UNICEF and WFP was brought in and reinforced a critical role of leadership and culture.

### *6.5 Generalizability of the findings*

This study is based on a variable-oriented inquiry and the question raises about possible generalizability of the study’ arguments beyond the considered case studies. David Dessler distinguishes two types of generalizability: *generalizing* and *particularizing*.<sup>1258</sup> If applied in this study, the *generalizing* strategy would be interested in seeing whether the explanation of the policy processes would also hold its ground in other case studies. In other words, generalizability of the findings would be based on the quantity of the cases where the leadership and cultural explanations could maintain its validity. The larger sample involved the better for generalizability.

In turn, the *particularizing* strategy is interested in the limited number of cases. Generalizability is thus set on the meticulous accounts of a particular process of change and no attempt is made to place the analysis into a larger class.<sup>1259</sup> According to this particular type of generalizability the more detailed inquiry about the development of the studied phenomenon and its causalities the stronger the claim for generalization of the main arguments.

In order to show that the event in question (the process and outcome of a particular change) could have been expected in the circumstances in which it had happened (e.g. under a specific style of leadership and type of professional culture) this study provided a very

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<sup>1258</sup> David Dessler, Constructivism within a Positivist Social Science, *Review of International Studies*, vol.25 (1999): 129-130

<sup>1259</sup> Ibid., 129.

detailed accounts of the leadership and organizational settings in three organizations in which the change took place. It then showed the causal links between particular variables. Consequently, this study can defend its generalizability based on the *particularizing strategy*.

The study has also attempted to apply the *generalizing strategy* in order to strengthen generalizability of its main arguments. The analyzed case studies brought together different kinds of organizations, each of which belonged to a separate category of operational (UNHCR), technical (WHO) and normative (ILO) organizations. Despite this apparent diversity the considered variables still played a determinative role in the process of change implementation and its outcome in all organizations. Furthermore, next to the cases of UNHCR, WHO and ILO, the analyses of change (or for that matter, its lack) and the impact of leadership and culture in UNICEF and WFP have also been considered. In order to justify the selection of particular variables a mini case study on WIPO that depicted a determinative role of leadership and culture was included into the introduction of this book. The UN system, however, consists of around 40 different organizations<sup>1260</sup> and even with the addition of, (next to UNHCR, WHO and ILO), UNICEF, WFP and WIPO a possible generalization of the findings can only be, at this stage, very tentative. Before a stronger claim for generalization of the study's arguments is made there is a need for a greater number of studies on leadership and culture within IOs, including the apparent 'deviant' cases.

#### *6.6 Difficulty in researching inner workings of international administrations of IOs*

The study emphasized and showed the difficulties in studying the impact of leadership and cultural variables inside the structures of the UN organizations to discover certain causalities. The major practical problem was a scarce amount of information available on the investigated phenomena. Thus, oftentimes, the extensive reliance on the interviews has substituted the usual reference to written materials, which, with regard to particular case studies, were either absent or inadequate. At the same time, the access to the UN international civil servants, who are the main source of information about the internal organizational matters, was considerably limited and effectively prevented this author from carrying out more detailed analysis.

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<sup>1260</sup> The chart of the UN system with its organizations is available at <http://www.un.org/aboutun/chart.html>.



### *6.7 Contributions of the study*

In conclusion, the practical contributions, which this study brings into the international relations literature, are fourfold. First of all, this study provides a possibly new way to classify and study the population of UN organizations or IOs in general based on the hegemonic orientation of its substantive work carried out by the professional staff. Such classification allowed to distinguish three types of administrations of the UN organizations: operational, technical and normative, represented by UNHCR, WHO and ILO respectively, which covered, if not all the types of IOs, then a significant majority of the UN administrations. Not only is the hegemonic orientation useful to establish a new IOs' classification it also serves as an effective instrument for analyzing organizational behavior and thus for better understanding of the professional cultures within the agencies. Secondly, each empirical case study makes an individual and quite distinct contribution to the existing but relatively scarce knowledge about the internal workings of particular UN agencies: UNHCR, WHO and ILO and its administrations and to certain extent, UNICEF, WFP and WIPO. Thirdly, the book considers and problematizes two independent variables: leadership and culture, which, although enjoying a considerable popularity in other disciplines, have so far gained less recognition in the studies of the IOs' behavior. Specifically, the analysis shows that particular styles of leadership and types of professional culture may either facilitate or hinder institutional changes (reforms). Finally, the study looks closely at the uninvestigated issue of major institutional changes in IOs and the process of change implementation in the administrations of the UN organizations.. The book provides a clear contribution to the explanation of the variation or the match between initially proposed change and its anticipated impact, on the one hand, and the actual change implementation process and its eventual outcome.

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