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Working paper de l'IDHEAP 14/2000
UER: Management des entreprises publiques

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Abstract

   As a result of economic globalization, new geopolitical power relations, technological progress, and a severe financial crisis, international public organizations are under strong pressure to transform themselves into efficient and effective organizations. This paper presents the case of UNCTAD, and analyzes the dynamics of change created by the transformation of the organization's environment. More precisely, this paper studies the interfaces between UNCTAD and its organizational and ideological environment. It discusses the impact, on UNCTAD, of the different aspects of globalization along with the new forms of governance and the emergence of new actors on the development scene, especially actors from the private sector. Finally, it assesses UNCTAD's transformation against a model we have developed pertaining to the transformation of public sector organizations more generally.

   A la suite de la globalisation économique, de nouvelles relations de pouvoir géopolitiques, de progrès technologique et de sérieuses crises financières, les organisations publiques internationales sont mises sous pression afin de se transformer en organisations efficaces et efficientes. Ce texte présente le cas de la CNUCED et analyse les dynamiques de changement créées par les transformations de l'environnement de cette organisation. Plus précisément, ce papier étudie les interfaces entre la CNUCED et son environnement organisationnel et idéologique. Il discute les impacts, sur la CNUCED, des différents aspects de la globalisation, de même que l'émergence de nouveaux acteurs sur la scène internationale, en particulier des acteurs du secteur privé. Finalement, ce texte évalue la transformation de la CNUCED au vu d'un modèle que les auteurs ont développé et qui a trait à la transformation des organizations publiques plus généralement.

   Als Folge der wirtschaftlichen Globalisierung, neuer geopolitischer Machtverhältnisse, technologisches Fortschritte, sowie ernsthafter finanzieller Krisen, sind die internationalen öffentlichen Organisation neulich unter starken Druck gekommen, und müssen sich zunehmend zu effizienten und wirkungsorientierten Organisationen entwickeln. Dieser Text präsentiert das Fallbeispiel der UNCTAD und analysiert die Dynamik, die durch die Veränderungen ihres Umfelds entstanden sind. Im Detail untersucht dieser Text die Interaktion zwischen der UNCTAD und ihrem organisationalen und ideologischen Umfeld. Er diskutiert die Auswirkungen, auf die UNCTAD, der wichtigsten Dimensionen der Globalisierung, sowie das Aufkommen neuer Aktoren auf der internationalen Szene, insbesondere Aktoren des Privatsektors. Schliesslich evaluiert der Text die Transformation der UNCTAD, indem er diese mit einem Modell der Transformation öffentlicher Organisationen vergleicht, das die Autoren entwickelt haben.

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Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to better understand and ultimately facilitate the transformation process of international and intergovernmental organizations. Evolving in a constantly changing environment, such organizations have to adapt in order to remain legitimate and relevant in the global governance system. Consequently, this chapter emphasizes the specificities of the transformation of international and intergovernmental organizations, the obstacles and the nature of their transformation, as well as the newly emerging power relationships and actors. Organizational pathologies particularly reveal themselves in situations of transformation and change. As such, this empirical study of UNCTAD's transformation offers a concrete opportunity to crystallize the problems international public organizations face in today's changing environment.

The focus of this chapter is thus on the *transformation* of international public organizations in light of their currently evolving environment. There exists already some literature on the pathologies of international organizations from a static perspective (e.g., Barnett & Finnemore, 1999). Building on this literature, we see intergovernmental and international organizations,[3] as being relatively autonomous and purposive entities. Thus, they are not simply instruments through which states act. They are also agents pursuing their own strategies. Such organizational autonomy warrants the study of international organizations and their transformation in their own right.[4] As a result, we consider international public organization as being a particularly challenging object of study, as they are not only part of a complex system of intergovernmental governance, but also, and above all, independent structures with their own histories and cultures.

The research underlying this chapter focuses, consequently, on an internal approach of the organization in order to better understand its staff, its history, its symbols, its culture, and especially the problems related to its transformation. For over a year, we have conducted a case study on the *United Nations Conference on Trade and Development* (UNCTAD) based in Geneva.[5] We found UNCTAD to be a particularly

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[3] We thus use the terms intergovernmental and international organizations interchangeably.

[4] Both of us have a background in political science, public administration, and organizational behavior. Moreover, Matthias Finger is engaged in both the academic and the consulting world, while Bérangère Ruchat currently works within the UN system, which means that we are particularly concerned with the concrete questions of advising international organizations along their transformation process.

[5] In order to conduct our case study, we have used different methods. We had the opportunity to facilitate five workshops for UNCTAD staff between 1998 and 1999. Three of them focused on staff growth and development, introducing team-building and reflection about UNCTAD's vision, mission, and change processes. The two other seminars were the first step of UNCTAD's preparatory work for its next conference, UNCTAD X, which took place early 2000 in Bangkok. We consequently mainly used methods of participatory observation, but we also conducted more than 40 interviews amongst

relevant case, as UNCTAD is a highly complex organization being simultaneously active in policy advice as a result of its analytical work, in consensus building, especially between the North and the South, but also among developing countries, and in technical cooperation. As such, UNCTAD as an organization is quite similar to an university. Also, in the last ten years many observers have said that UNCTAD was no longer useful and relevant, putting particular pressure on UNCTAD. Moreover, the United States, along with some other governments, wanted the organization to be shut down. However, as will be shown below, since 1996 UNCTAD is trying to "re-invent" itself and is finding a new role in the system of global governance, essentially by helping developing countries to better integrate and take advantage of the World Trade Organization's negotiations.

This chapter is thus structured into four main sections. In a first section, an organizational transformation model will be presented. This is a model we have developed in order to analyze the transformation processes of public organizations at the national level. This model will structure the analysis of UNCTAD and its pathologies later on. In sections 2 and 3 we will describe our case study, i.e., the origins and earlier evolution of UNCTAD, as well as its recent transformations. Finally, we will analyze the UNCTAD case against the background of the transformation model, and by doing so highlight particular pathologies of international organizations.

1. Conceptual background: a transformation model of public organizations

The purpose of this first section is thus to present a transformation model of public sector organizations, which we have developed inductively from studying and working with public organizations at the national level, i.e., especially public enterprises and other semi-autonomous public entities. More precisely, these are public organizations which have undergone a process of commercialization of some of their services, of corporatization, and, in some cases, even of privatization (e.g., Finger & Ruchat, 1997; Finger & Bürgin, 1999). In this section the overall transformation model, its origins as well as its intellectual roots will be presented and then some of the key dimensions of the model will be discussed in more detail.

1.1. Overall transformation model

The transformation presented here is the inductive result of our empirical research on *public enterprises*, which have been or still are undergoing profound transformations,
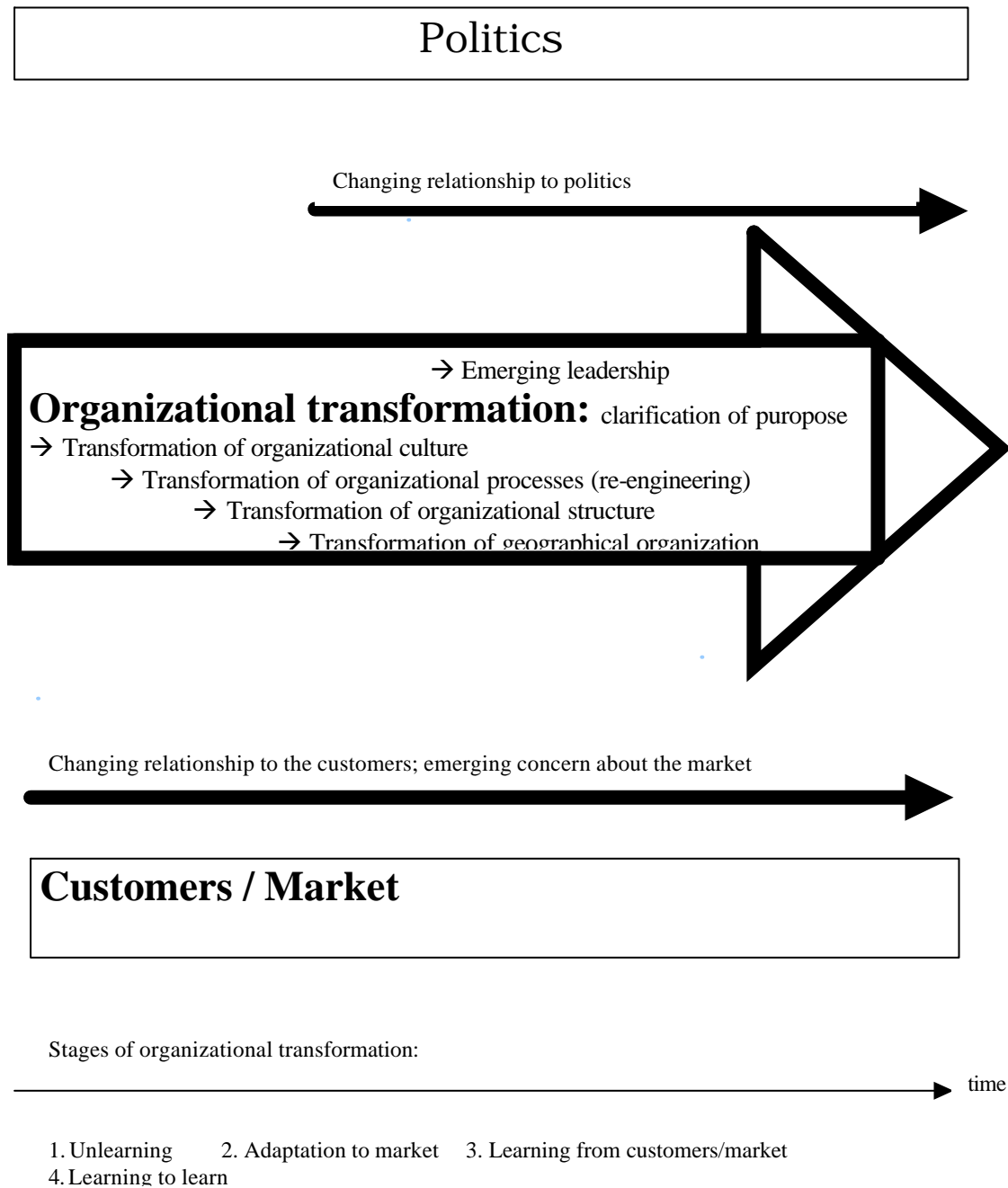

UNCTAD staff during the summer of 1998. We met with people from all divisions and services with a balance of senior and junior staff. Finally, we also collected and analyzed various UNCTAD reports and documents.

changing from public administrations into businesses thriving in an international and competitive market. Grounded in participatory action research with the Swiss Postal Service (Finger & Rey, 1994), the model has been empirically tested with five other public enterprises in the aviation, the audio-visual, the telecommunications, the railway, and the electricity sectors (Finger et al., 1997). The model stresses the fact that there are several interrelated dimensions to this organizational transformation process, as well as the fact that this transformation takes place over time and is structured into different stages. While it is important to stress that such organizational transformation is a process, its exact duration, however, can vary from two to eight years or even more, depending on the size of the organization, the degree of pressure, and the complexity of its relationships with the environment.

Intellectually, our approach is basically rooted in *organizational sociology*, an approach, which stresses the complex interplay between actors and their strategies on the one hand, and institutional norms and rules on the other (e.g., Clegg, 1989; Crozier, 1963; Crozier & Friedberg, 1977; Etzioni, 1964; Mintzberg, 1983). There exist, indeed, many organizational change models, developed mainly by management professors and consultants (e.g., Adizes, 1988; Gouillart & Kelly, 1995; Kottler, 1996; Miles, 1997). However, as they all generally refer to private sector organizations, the two main problems of these models pertain to the fact that they are basically interventionist and not transformational in nature, and that they tend to ignore power and power relationships, which are particularly prevalent in public organizations (Mercier, Bürgin & Finger, 2000). New public management literature also addresses some of these aspects of organizational change and transformation (e.g., Pollitt, 1993). Yet, again, most of this literature is weak on transformation processes and contains mainly recipes for financial and other efficiencies or for all sorts of managerialism, including managerial leadership.

We thus see *organizational transformation* as the result of a complex interaction between internal dynamics and external pressures. Such pressures generally stem from the various stakeholders, the customers, and/or the owner(s). The goal of such organizational transformation is to bring organizational structure, culture, and purpose in line with perceived environmental requirements. Such transformation can therefore be either adaptive or anticipatory, as it can be either incremental or systemic. The proposed model, however, does not conceptualize the transformation of the stakeholders or the changes in environment. Nevertheless, it does take into account the changes in the relationship between the organization and its key environmental actors. Graphically, this model can be summarized as follows:

Figure No.1: The organizational transformation model

| Politics |

Changing relationship to politics

→ Emerging leadership

Organizational transformation: clarification of puropose
→ Transformation of organizational culture
→ Transformation of organizational processes (re-engineering)
→ Transformation of organizational structure
→ Transformation of geographical organization

Changing relationship to the customers; emerging concern about the market

Customers / Market

Stages of organizational transformation:

time

1. Unlearning   2. Adaptation to market   3. Learning from customers/market
4. Learning to learn

1.2. Key dimensions of the model

In essence, this model describes how a public organization transforms from a basically bureaucratic one (a monopoly) into an organization concerned with efficiency, transparency, and competitiveness, i.e., an entrepreneurial organization in the sociological sense of the word, not necessarily in the economic sense. Indeed, for many public organizations, the "market" will always remain an artificial construct, rather than an economic reality. Nevertheless, this transformation does affect the very purpose and identity of a public organization. If originally the overall purpose of such organizations can be summarized by the relatively vague term of "public service provision", actually a combination of multiple and often conflicting objectives, many of them self-assigned, the transformation process generally also leads to a *clarification of purpose and of services rendered to the public.* And such a clarification occurs along with cultural change, structural transformation, more efficient processes, as well as a more transparent relationship with the citizens who turn into customers, and a more contractual relationship with politics. More concretely and along this transformation process, the organization changes its *culture* from a bureaucratic to a more "entrepreneurial" one. It also re-arranges its *processes* along customer demands and production processes, and transforms its *structure* from a functional one to a structure more suitable to its processes. Moreover, during this process a more coherent (corporate) identity emerges, along with a growing sensitivity to better communication and marketing. Some strategic thinking, at least the need for it, is also emerging as the transformation unfolds. Indeed, in the beginning strategy is seen as being a political prerogative, whereas at the end of the process the transformed organization will have a strategy of its own. Generally, this process is driven by a leader, who gradually reveals him- or herself as the process unfolds.

All these organizational changes occur in parallel to a changing relationship with the *customer*, who is increasingly taken into account, both in terms of customer feed-back and even customer demands. This changing relationship with the customer can also lead to some geographical reorganization. At some point later in the organizational transformation process the relationship with *politics* is changing as well, as the organization will increasingly feel the need to make this relationship more transparent, as well as to put it onto a more contractual basis. Indeed, mainly for purposes of internal management, the organization will increasingly seeks to clearly define what politics wants from it and what it can deliver. This changing relationship might go as far as to propose new organizational governance structures, or even to suggest changes in the legal framework which governs and legitimizes the organization. Overall, this transformation process takes place in four distinct stages, which can be different in length, but which must occur in this sequence. We have conceptualized these changes in cultural terms, meaning that in a first step the organization has to unlearn its old habits, in a second step it has to turn outward and adapt to the new (more commercial

environment), in a third step it has to start learning from its customers, and finally it has to become an organization learning by itself.

This transformation process reveals numerous *pathologies*, which are furthermore highlighted by the transformation model, along cultural, structural, process, political and transformational dimensions. Let us note the paradox between a strong culture on the one hand and a weak identity on the other, the paradox between a hierarchical and authoritarian structure on the one hand and significant freedom of behavior inside the organization on the other, between precise rules and multiple norms on the one hand and fuzzy and incoherent processes on the other, between strong strategizing vis-à-vis politics on the one hand and the refusal to take any political responsibility on the other, between a powerful discourse on public service on the one hand and the absence of any clear definition of such service on the other, and finally the paradox between elaborate planning on the one hand and the inability to learn on the other.

The next two sections describe UNCTAD's transformation process along the above model, distinguishing, in particular, between a first phase leading up to the Midrand Conference (section 2), and a second phase since then (section 3).

2. UNCTAD and its evolution from Geneva to Midrand (1964-1996)

This section presents a long term perspective of UNCTAD's evolution from its creation to its 1996 Midrand conference. Such a historical perspective is necessary in order to understand the nature of the transformation process. As noticed in the conceptual framework, a transformation model has a time dimension, it is not a one shot exercise. Moreover, the transformation is deeply influenced by the historical heritage of the organization. In this particular case, important parts of the staff have worked with UNCTAD for more than twenty-years. They are carrying with them a lively institutional memory, which strongly influences UNCTAD's capacity or willingness to transform. Indeed, in order to understand the culture, the obstacles to change, and the complex debate about UNCTAD's future work, it is necessary to understand where the organization comes from. In this respect, one cannot limit itself to the description of the organizational changes, since in the specific case of UNCTAD the changes in the organization's ideology are closely related to the organizational changes. Let us describe the organization's history in three parts: first the motivation around its creation, second the sequences of its first nine conferences, and third the content of the organizational issues including the Secretariat's analytical work and technical assistance programs.

2.1 Origin and mandate

UNCTAD was created as an organ of the General Assembly in 1964. With the emergence and increased participation of a large number of developing countries as members of the United Nations, there was a growing focus on development problems within the UN. The important factor, which sparked these efforts was the progressively deteriorating position of developing countries in world trade in the 1950s and early 1960s. It was at this point in time that Raul Prebisch's[6] analysis of the center-periphery relationships, the commodity problems, and the unequal terms of trade of developing countries in the context of economic development focused the attention on the inherent defects of the international economy and of the trading system (UNCTAD, 1985). Indeed, at its creation, the Conference had as a goal to transform the rules of the game of the international system of trade. More precisely, UNCTAD's mission was to ensure equity amongst developed and developing countries in order to make every country benefit from economic development, technologic progress, and investments.

To recall, UNCTAD emerged in an environment, where the GATT and other agencies dealing with international trade were considered to be inadequate in order to meet the development needs of the developing countries. In that respect, UNCTAD became the "voice of the South", the "consciousness" of international development. In the final act of the first Conference, which took place in Geneva in 1964, UNCTAD received the following mandate: *"to seek a better and more effective system of international economic co-operation, (...) and lay the foundations of a better world economic order".* UNCTAD principal functions were thus described as follows:[7]

- to promote international trade,
- to formulate principles and policies on international trade,
- to review and facilitate co-ordination of activities of other institutions within the UN system in the field of international trade,
- to initiate action, where appropriate, in co-operation with the competent organs of the UN, and
- to be available as a center for harmonizing the trade and related development policies of governments and regional economic grouping.

The description of these original UNCTAD functions actually shows the complexity of the organization, which is thus active in three different inter-related areas: research and analysis, technical cooperation, and consensus building. The concrete agenda and mandates in these three areas are actually elaborated by the UNCTAD Secretariat to the intergovernmental machinery. After negotiations on the substance of UNCTAD's work plan, the Secretariat then executes the analytical work and technical assistance projects. The intergovernmental machinery in turn takes the form of a so-called Trade and Development Board (TDB), constituted of 188 member states, various commissions

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[6] Prebisch was a famous political economist. Central thinker of the so-called "dependency theory", he was also one of the founders of UNCTAD, and subsequently became its first Secretary General.
[7] General Assembly Establishes New Institutional Machinery for International Trade, UN Chronicle 1965.

on specific issues, and various experts groups. The TDB gives its mandate to UNCTAD every four years during an intergovernmental conference.

2.2. Functioning and impact of the intergovernmental machinery

Since its inception in 1964, the UNCTAD intergovernmental machinery has grown to impressive dimensions. Indeed, the process of setting up expert groups, session committees, ad hoc intergovernmental working groups over time represented a complex process of negotiation. But the critique of this machinery actually stems from the very beginning of the organization, as it was said not be satisfactory for both developed and developing countries. Early on, an UNCTAD document notes: *"It is conventional wisdom either to put these Conferences down as failures in terms of the results attained or to fault them for raising undue and unrealistic hopes and expectations"* (UNCTAD, 1985: 26). Yet, one can say that these periodic conferences should be seen not as isolated events but as important stage in the on-going process of dialogue and negotiation on trade and development.

Very roughly one can consider that the first five conferences were organized around very similar ideas, and this in an environment particularly conductive for North-South debate. Indeed, the seventies were without any doubt the "golden years" of UNCTAD. Thanks to the introduction of new negotiation techniques – in particular in small groups – developing countries managed to put a critical stand on international trade and were often promised radical changes. A staff member told that the 1970s were the *"period of UNCTAD's institutional fortune",* when developing countries took the driver seat, discussing their problems and bonding together. Indeed, through UNCTAD, and until the mid-eighties, the Third World countries did set the development agenda.

However, most of those conferences were essentially a compromise between the positions of industrialized and developing countries. Consequently, results were generally modest because, instead of negotiations aiming at international co-operation, there had mainly been confrontation and political compromise. Indeed, UNCTAD followed an agenda defined around the notions of interdependence[8], of problems of trade, of development, and of finance. The principal objective was the establishment of a New International Economic Order, which became UNCTAD's leading ideological tenet. In addition, UNCTAD was strongly supporting the governments of developing countries in their fight against poverty. However, UNCTAD, at that time, never really questioned the power exercised by those governments. As a result, UNCTAD suffered from the power bargain over the oil crisis in the seventies, when developing countries started to block any type of negotiations.

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[8] Interdependence implies that both the North and the South have an interest in negotiating trade and finance. However, UNCTAD always had difficulties to convince the North of the interest to negotiate with Third World countries.

This approach entered into a crisis in the eighties. The Belgrade (1983) Conference had been a deep disappointment with meager results achieved, at least according to the Group of 77[9]. Indeed, the resolutions adopted showed only little progress as compared to the positions agreed upon at earlier UNCTAD sessions. As a matter of fact, the United States were against propositions for a Generalized System of Preferences for developing countries and put strong pressure onto the Conference, condemning UNCTAD for being too ideological.

After Belgrade, UNCTAD was confronted with the emergence of a new engine of development, namely the private sector and more particularly the multinational companies. At UNCTAD VII in Geneva (1987), Secretary General Dadzie introduced, for the very first time in UNCTAD history, the idea that the market could play an important role in development. As a result, the priorities of UNCTAD were redefined and more resources were allocated to issues of investment and privatization. However, Southern countries resisted this new approach, leading to the fact that the working group on privatization only produced results four years later, i.e., at UNCTAD VIII in Carthagena. Already back in 1987 in Geneva the United States threatened to "kill" UNCTAD, as one observer put it, saying that the survival of UNCTAD was at the price of becoming a global OECD.

UNCTAD VIII (Cartagena, 1992) was an important step in the process of transformation of the organization. Over the previous years, UNCTAD had become more and more involved in technical work, even though this work remained ideologically solidly anchored in dependency theory. This more technical orientation did not, however, reduce UNCTAD's emerging "identity crisis". Rather, this crisis grew deeper as a result of the emerging so-called "Washington consensus" (World Bank-IMF), the neo-liberal criticism arcticulated by Thatcher and Reagan, the crisis of multilateralism as a means for action, and the crisis of the economic and social capacity of the UN. In spite of this difficult context, UNCTAD VIII was considered a relative success, as it opened the door to the ideological and organizational transformation of UNCTAD. In order to overcome the gridlock of the various groups' bargaining positions in the intergovernmental machinery, UNCTAD VIII proposed the notion of "New Partnership for Development". The goal was to create a partnership among member states and to engage in a constructive dialogue that should overcome confrontation. In fact, in Cartagena UNCTAD moved from a negotiation forum to a consensus building forum, which constitutes one of the major transformations of the organization. UNCTAD staff describes it as the transition from a political to a pragmatic organization. At the same time, UNCTAD lost considerable power, which got obviously transferred to a new trade negotiation forum: the World Trade Organization. Also, at UNCTAD VIII hopes for the

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[9] UN Chronicle 1984.

future of the organization were still constrained by the continued pressures of the United States and the European Union.

Before the nomination in 1996 of Mr. Rubens Ricupero, a former Brazilian finance minister, UNCTAD had remained without Secretary General for fourteen months, which put it into a very unstable position. Mr. Ricupero inherited the challenge to re-create UNCTAD's political legitimacy, credibility and utility. In 1996 in Midrand, South Africa, UNCTAD IX thus marked a complete ideological shift. If Cartagena had announced a transformation of the North South relations into a more uniform global system, Midrand continues this trend to create a totally new approach to North-South relations. The idea of a "partnership for development", launched in Cartagena was now given a much more comprehensive meaning. It included partnerships with non-state actors, and particularly with the business sector. This global partnership meant mobilization of resources through dialogue and common action between governments and civil society, along with partnership between the public and the private sectors.

Moreover, at Midrand UNCTAD updated its approach of development by giving a clear priority to the Least Developing Countries. Liberalization and globalization were the twin themes of the Conference, and UNCTAD entirely abandoned its opposition to the international system and re-defined its objectives in the context of globalization. As Mr. Ricupero noted in his keynote address to the Conference*: "UNCTAD must offer practical advice and tangible support to developing countries, carefully calibrated in accordance with their differing stages of development and of integration in the world economy"* (Midrand Declaration 1996). Indeed, UNCTAD's new task now is to help developing countries and economies in transition to integrate better, and more fully into the international trading and economic system. According to one observer, Midrand only followed the agenda of the United States by reducing UNCTAD's mandate on commodities, shipping and finally killed the so-called "common fund", a fund into which the richest countries paid.

In short, with Midrand, but starting already in Cartagena, a complete ideological shift of UNCTAD took place, moving from dependency theory to emphasizing the need of developing countries to be integrated into the global trading and financial system. In this respect, UNCTAD has been capable of changing the very nature of its policy advise to governments, and to adapt to the transformation of the world economy.

2.3. Reforms

As a matter of fact, UNCTAD has tried to undertake many reforms since the seventies. Early on in a resolution adopted in Manila in 1979, governments asked UNCTAD to restructure and rationalize its machinery (UNCTAD, 1985: 34). Indeed, by the end of the 1970s, it had become increasingly evident that what was required was a

more extensive and purposeful adaptation of the UNCTAD structure and operating procedures. The growth in numbers and variety of UNCTAD bodies had given rise to several problems, and exceeded the substantive, technical, and logistical resources of the secretariat and strained budgets. It has led to the proliferation and overlapping of activities within UNCTAD bodies themselves. Propositions for reforms were made but had no effect before the mid-eighties. UNCTAD justifies its incapacity to reform in twenty years as follow: *"To conclude, every UNCTAD mandate has been a major effort in overcoming the resistance of developed countries. These gains could be lost by hasty and ill-considered measures put forward in the name of efficiency and rationalization"* (UNCTAD, 1985: 37). As a result, it was considered that UNCTAD needed a gradual, step-by step approach to the restructuring of its organization. And it is true that UNCTAD's transformation process always strongly depended upon the capacity of politics to find a consensus on change. In the environment of the confrontation between the North and the South such a consensus was obviously not possible, as rationalizing UNCTAD implied weakening the position of the governments of developing countries on the international scene.

However, changes in international relations, especially North-South relations, during the nineties allowed for a slowly emerging transformation process. Indeed, UNCTAD VIII, held in Cartagena in 1992, was the starting point of a spirit of reform, which evolved further in Midrand, and which probably saved UNCTAD from disappearing. The Cartagena reform touched practically upon all aspects of the institution, i.e., its intergovernmental machinery and working methods, as well as its mandate and program orientations. Among other decisions, the mandate in the area of services was broadened, new areas of work were introduced, especially in the areas of privatization. The Board decided to introduce new working methods requiring streamlining, resulting in particular from resource constraints.[10] However, Cartagena still only focused on the transformation process of the governmental meetings, but left the functioning of the Secretariat unaddressed.

As mentioned, at Midrand UNCTAD found itself in a very critical situation. Both the Report on Global Governance (1990) and Maurice Bertrand's (1995) suggestions for UN reform had already introduced the idea of an Economic Security Council, which would have made UNCTAD totally irrelevant. Against this and other pressures UNCTAD was facing, fundamental proposals for the transformation of its ideology, its work priorities, and the functioning of its secretariat were made. As we will show below, the transformation process initiated at Midrand is both radical and difficult. For example, twenty-five work programs and sub-programs were replaced by one program consisting of five-subprograms, nine divisions were reduced into four, and the number of

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[10] Homero L. Hernandez, *UNCTAD: Review of Institutional and Programme Issues*. Joint Inspection Unit, Geneva 1996.

intergovernmental bodies was cut into half.[11] Midrand also stressed the need to improve accountability and assessment in the Secretariat. To summarize, Midrand aimed at turning UNCTAD from a critique of the global economy into an instrument of the global economy, i.e., an instrument of global economic governance. The next section shows that since Midrand UNCTAD has taken on the role of facilitating global trade.

3. UNCTAD between Midrand and Bangkok (1996-2000): the dimensions of change

The second part of this case study presents UNCTAD's secretariat after the resolutions for reforms endorsed in Midrand. It offers a comprehensive picture of UNCTAD's current transformation process. Through six different aspects, all of which refer to the model presented in the first section of this chapter, this section will discuss the changes UNCTAD is undergoing and the challenges and problems that still remain to be addressed. It thus will present the transformations in UNCTAD's structure, its staff, its leadership, its ideology, its partnership strategy, and its culture.

3.1. The structure

Upon the initiative of Mr. Rubens Ricupero, the overall structure of UNCTAD has considerably been simplified at Midrand: four divisions were created, which correspond to UNCTAD's new priority of work and especially to its new role to integrate developing countries into the economic globalization process. In doing so, UNCTAD sees itself as being complementary to the WTO: if the WTO's role is to remove barriers to global trade, UNCTAD's role is to assist developing countries in participating in such global trade, and especially in being able to take advantage of it. As a result, UNCTAD is now re-structured into a division dealing with Globalization and Development Strategies, a division on International Trade, a division on Investment, Technology and Enterprise, a division on Services and Infrastructure, and a sub-division dedicated to the co-ordination of the work done for the Least Developed Countries. Besides these divisions, UNCTAD has also reorganized into three Services for administrative support, i.e., Executive Direction and Management (including external relations), Administrative Services, and Intergovernmental Support Services.

Implementing the new structure after Midrand, the UNCTAD secretariat identified several complex problems related to this restructuring exercise.[12] Among these, the question of the re-deployment of staff and of the competencies available to address the new challenges before UNCTAD is a major issue, which will be discussed in section 3.2. The most difficult issue, according to the efficiency review team, is the capacity of

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[11] *UNCTAD in Brief.* UNCTAD Geneva, 1998.
[12] UNCTAD Efficiency Review, *Final Report of the Efficiency Review Team*, July 1996.

the new divisions to create coordination mechanisms among them. The question is how to reconcile the need to decentralize, to delegate, and to empower program managers, while at the same time ensuring central and effective coordination, which has been profoundly lacking in the past. And this is a problem that UNCTAD has not been able to solve in the two to three years after this research started. As a result, information still does not flow well among and even within divisions. Divisions are working like independent organizations. Some of them even follow contradictory approaches to economic development.

On paper, the new structure of UNCTAD might indeed appear to be simplified and to work smoothly. The reality is however different: over 50% of the interviewed staff considered the new structure to be inefficient. Some of them considered the divisions[13] and the branches too big and too difficult to manage, since each branch is working on very specific projects not directly linked to the work of the division. Staff even considered that a lot of projects were totally disconnected from UNCTAD and could be carried out somewhere else. Two divisions are said to be problematic, i.e., the Globalization (Globalization and Development Strategies) and the International Trade divisions. The Globalization division, it is said, is in charge of a too broad variety of activities, ranging from the development of computer programs to managing the debt of developing countries, to the publication services, or to the analytical work on the effects of globalization. In the International Trade division the problem is the comparatively slow transfer of trade issues in comparison to the WTO, leading to staff demotivation. A senior staff of the division even said that if there is no more room for trade in UNCTAD, the division should be closed because the priority is to remain relevant and especially complementary with the WTO.

In that respect, some interviewees argued that the new structure does not totally reflect the mandate, still has problems to set priorities, and reflects too many compromises in order to keep small programs, rather than redefining divisions around clear topics. Staff members say that they expected a much flatter structure, which they consider to be better for handing down responsibility. In this respect, a director said that he has little power to manage a division because of the political constraints of the UN system, but also because of the difficulty to let go staff. Overall, staff was more or less indifferent to the structure of the organization. They continue to do their work, which has not changed much, and for some of them the transformation of the organization does not seems to be fundamental. One staff member told: *"They invented the branches, sections and division without consulting the staff. I could not tell you for which branch I am working and actually I do not care. I continue doing my work, since the mandate gives us an important flexibility of interpretation"*. Another person, explaining the obstacles to changing the functioning of the Secretariat, said that staff basically has an interest to perpetuate the traditional way of working and not to change. As a result, underneath

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[13] For instance the globalization division has 180 people and some branches have 40 people.

the formal new structure there continues to exist an informal structure made of small and strong entities, which have been working together since a long time. These informal structures resist change because they want to continue to do what they like and what they have an interest for. Such a structure is definitively chaotic and difficult to manage. According to one staff member, this is also a strength, because it allows for diversity of opinion. Nevertheless, it creates incoherence and considerable impatience in the international community.

In conclusion, it appears that even with a new structure, the internal functioning of the organization remains very traditional in various parts of the secretariat. Indeed, alliances among individuals freeze the transformation process. Some staff also consider changing management practices a fad decided by the political environment, arguing for example that a concept like "efficiency" is before all tied to the political agenda, implicitly saying that the political agenda is not a noble one, and it is almost the duty of the staff to resist such change. The literature on changing such relatively politicized organizations is actually quite clear (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977): such an organization, it is said, cannot be changed by decree. If it is to be successfully transformed, it has to involve the concerned actors of and within the organization and their strategies into a complex bargaining process, which will ultimately redefine their power.

3.2 The staff

One way to start transforming an organization is through the transformation of the mentality of its staff. To recall, after Midrand, UNCTAD secretariat had to face important issues concerning its human resources. The transformation of the mandate putting emphasis on consensus building outside of formal negotiations, reinforcing technical cooperation, and opening new areas of work, especially in the domain of investment, technology and enterprise revealed an important lack of competencies among UNCTAD staff. Overall, UNCTAD needed more and better communications and management skills. An interviewee explained that at Midrand the Secretariat had received an innovative mandate, but had not received the necessary human resources. He added that UNCTAD needs to recruit people with stronger personal skills, rather than with specialized economic competencies. But, because of the UN context of reform and corresponding budget cuts, UNCTAD has not much flexibility to hire new staff and has consequently to struggle between new needs and demands and the limited capacity of its staff to fill in those needs. Significantly, the Midrand mid-term review, which took place in summer 1998, pointed out: *"the growing gap between the level of requirement and the level of resources available. This refers both to the quantity and the quality of resources"[14].*

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[14] UNCTAD, TDR 18th Executive session, Geneva, July 1998.

This situation is, among others, creating a feeling of demotivation among staff. There is indeed no system to reward them and at that level no visible change is taking place. To illustrate this point, we have come across staff, who have been in the same rank for over 15 years. In the seventies staff used to come to UNCTAD because of idealism and because it was a new attractive institution for young economists, eager to criticize mainstream ideology. A senior staff also remarked that before the nineties staff were mainly recruited because of their strong academic records, and because they had a lead in their discipline. Starting in the nineties staff are more and more often got recruited through the official UN examination process. This process may be more transparent, but it appears that somehow less bright and less original people are joining UNCTAD through it. From our personal experience working often with groups of UNCTAD staff, we are struck by their incapacity to communicate with each other. They are usually very high level professionals in their domain, but they do not know how to work as team. Moreover, they are often divided into clans and do not really appreciate each other. They are able to argue for hours on the relevance of their individual points without listening to the others' critical comments. Moreover, there seems to be a very strong division between the "new" and the "old" UNCTAD. New UNCTAD staff certainly is less formal, more entrepreneurial, and more creative. But it remains a minority, which is strongly criticized, even though this minority appears to be supported by the Secretary General. In short, UNCTAD faces various serious problems of staff competence and motivation, but also of respect and cooperation, only some of which are being addressed since 1998 by means of group training and team building.

3.3. The leadership

Indeed, the Secretary General took rapidly initiatives in favor of staff development after Midrand. In a Memorandum of Understanding with the UN Staff College in Turin he decided to offer to 75 of its staff (a third of UNCTAD's employees) three training and learning workshops, aiming at creating team spirit, shared vision, and identifying possible change projects. During the activities most of the staff were enthusiastic to be put into new environments and new situations. Most of them had never talked to each other, which made the human dimension of this event to be the most important one. However, one year after those workshops, staff are more or less disappointed, as senior management had never systematically implemented the change projects that were developed in Turin. Staff are saying that they were frustrated to learn new ways of interacting with each other, but that they were never able to reproduce these new ways back in their traditional environment. The positive side is probably that these events provided some fresh air, and created discussion amongst staff. However, they did not transform the organization as was expected.

This is an example of the new UNCTAD leadership: the new leadership actively wants to provoke its staff and to put them into new situations. Mr. Ricupero sees this

as an essential part of the organizational change process. Nevertheless, his main contribution to changing UNCTAD is mainly on the political and ideological, but not on the managerial side. Indeed, he repositioned UNCTAD in the context of economic globalization, outlining a new vision for the organization. In doing so, he is certainly a visionary and a very charismatic leader, well respected by his entire staff, whatever their divergences. He is viewed like the person who saved UNCTAD in Midrand, the "engine of change". Whenever he is introducing a new line of thought, his staff generally builds on his ideas, as we remarked in the recent activities for the preparation of UNCTAD X. Mr. Ricupero has a clear vision for UNCTAD, and various ideas as to how to implement them and to make their impact more relevant. Also, among UN agencies he has been a precursor of the notion of partnership with private sector, as we will see below. He has supported many individual initiatives within his secretariat going into this direction. Even more importantly, he has succeeded in creating a relative consensus on UNCTAD's new approach, i.e., working now with and not against the global system. And this leads directly to UNCTAD's new ideology.

3.4. The "ideology"

The concept of "ideology", and especially changing ideology, is particularly relevant when presenting UNCTAD's various dimensions of change. Indeed, unlike many other organizations, which are transforming their structures, processes, and perhaps even their culture, UNCTAD has, at least in the past, had a strong ideological dimension, which cannot be neglected in any analysis of its transformation. In fact, one could probably argue that UNCTAD is replacing its past ideology with a new one, but we rather want to explore, here, the idea of UNCTAD "abandoning ideology" in favor of a more pragmatic approach. The majority of the interviewed persons are saying that UNCTAD is increasingly grounding itself in pragmatism, and no longer in ideology. It is obvious that UNCTAD is no longer searching for a new development paradigm or a new global economic order, but rather for policy guidelines, which will help developing countries to adapt to the liberalization of world trade. If one wants to use the concept of "ideology", one might call UNCTAD's new approach one of "capacity-building", i.e., empower developing countries to allow them to participate and to take advantage of economic globalization. Such capacity-building is being developed in UNCTAD's research work and implemented through technical assistance programs. For example, such capacity-building takes the form of training sessions on international trade to electronic-commerce or small and medium sized enterprises of developing countries. On the other hand, UNCTAD does not want to be criticized for blindly supporting liberalization and economic globalization. Recently, in a brain-storming seminar to launch the preparation of Bangkok, staff strongly stressed the necessity to promote the notions of equity and social justice in global trade. It appears that UNCTAD wants to keep its advocacy role, wants to stay the "development consciousness" of the world,

even though it no longer criticizes the capitalist system per se. This combination might however be tricky to maintain in the long run.

In short and parallel to UNCTAD's organizational transformation, its strategic options are also changing from a philosophical approach of politically acceptable and equitable development to a more market-oriented approach of global trade and of optimizing Third World participation in it. In this respect, UNCTAD's leadership is constantly arguing that priorities have to be re-defined along the demands of the international economic community. In other words, parallel to changing from an ideological to a pragmatic organization, UNCTAD also is becoming more re-active, rather than pro-active. And it is precisely this new approach, which allows for new types of strategic alliances, in particular alliances with the business sector. It is probably in this sector that the UNCTAD secretariat has experienced as of today the most important changes as far as its culture, its staff and its processes concerned. Indeed, thanks to the so-called Lyon Summit "Partners for Development" a new type of staff emerged, promoting a new image of UNCTAD worldwide.

3.5. The Partnership strategy

Affirming in Midrand the key role of business leaders in the development process, UNCTAD sought a way to create dynamic links with them. But because of its political nature, UNCTAD's intergovernmental machinery was not the right area to start with the integration of business actors. As a consequence, UNCTAD started building a partnership strategy with business actors linked to its technical assistance programs and based on a project-by-project type of integration. The objective was to select few sectors where private partners might be interested in working with UNCTAD. The selected topics were: electronic commerce, bio-trade, micro-finance, global movement of goods, and risks management. The culminating event marking the official starting point of UNCTAD's partnerships with business took place in November 1998 in Lyon, France.

During four days, 2.200 representatives from business associations, corporations, NGOs, academia, governments, and the media coming from 164 countries met in Lyon for the UNCTAD Summit «Partners for Development». The key aim of the gathering was to focus on ways of mobilizing the huge amounts of potential investment capital available in developed world to help the poorest nations to catch up. In his keynote address, the Secretary General spoke of civil society and the private sector as the real actors of development. He added that by working with the private sector, UNCTAD will demonstrate that profit and development, market and solidarity, are no longer in opposition but rather complementary. The central premise of the conference was that strategic partnerships between governments and the private sector can play a significant role in promoting development. The summit was indeed a very dynamic

forum showing a new mediatic image of UNCTAD. Debates looked more like television shows than like classical UN debates. Beside the various conferences and working groups' meetings, a commercial fair was organized for businesses investing in development projects, among them global consulting firms working on risk management.

Officially eighteen partnerships' agreements were launched in Lyon. For instance, the International Association of Ports and Harbors and UNCTAD will work together to develop and implement information systems that respond to the particular requirements of ports in developing countries. Another partnership is aimed at linking the UNCTAD secretariat with a regional development bank, Banco do Nordeste, and a private investment bank, Banco Axial[15] S.A., in order to improve the living conditions in the poor, underdeveloped Northeast and Amazon regions of Brazil. Jean Gurunlian, the executive director of the Lyon Summit, noticed at one of the seminars that there are two types of partnerships: *«Thinking together and acting together through operational partnerships; we focused on the latter, where UNCTAD is a catalyst for change».* Indeed, UNCTAD's first strategy works at the project level where partnerships are being developed case by case. As the secretary-general commented in the Partners for Development report: *«In Lyon there will be no attempt at following a uniform approach to the concept of partnership between UNCTAD and civil society, but different modalities will be considered according to the various goals to be reached ».[16]*

The second level of strategy is the development of strong and active networks between UNCTAD's leadership and business leaders. Indeed, UNCTAD has participated in all recent gatherings UN's Secretary General Kofi Annan has organized for business leaders, and where CEOs from the biggest oil, chemical, food, and computer companies are defining social action plans on the field together with UN agencies, and by doing so take on social responsibility.

UNCTAD is expanding here the boundaries of traditional private-public relationships, changing the rules of the game for governments, for business, for NGOs, and for itself. This change process creates considerable contradictions and instabilities within the secretariat. The question now is, whether UNCTAD is an organization that can sustain such partnerships in the future. The Trade and Development Board, reviewing during the summer 1998 the work carried out by the Secretariat since Midrand, found among others: *«The partnership for development envisaged in the Midrand Declaration should be the hallmark of UNCTAD. These will require further changes in the way business is conducted. UNCTAD should strengthen its links with civil society, in particular the private sector, and international organizations. Links with the private sector should be aimed at*

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[15] The bank was set up last year by Pierre Landolt, president of the Sandoz Family Foundation, one of the biggest Swiss chemical companies.

[16] UNCTAD and City of Lyon, Partners for Development: the First Meeting, *The Business community, governments and NGOs join forces with the UN for Development*, Nov. 1998.

tapping its innovative capacity, engaging in joint activities and supplementing funding, and in this connection clear guidelines should be adopted for private-sector funding.»[17]

Considering such a recommendation, it is only logical that UNCTAD prepared the UNCTAD X Conference in Bangkok, held in February 2000, along these lines. If at the political level, partnerships are certainly viewed as a very positive evolution, at the secretariat level however, this desire of governments is seen with some perplexity. Moreover, the concrete application of this spirit of change, announced in Lyon and everywhere by UNCTAD's leaderships, still requires deep changes within the organization before being fully integrated and adopted. Knowing the history of the organization and its internal culture, we will now still discuss the cultural obstacles to making partnerships a long term and sustainable strategy for UNCTAD.

3.6. The culture

As noticed, UNCTAD is not a homogeneous organization but quite an incoherent conglomerate of individuals and ideas contradicting each other. In this respect, UNCTAD has diverse cultures. If we may, we will separate the old from the new UNCTAD. It is not surprising that the old UNCTAD is still referring to a bureaucratic culture based on loyalty, more than on openness. The loyalty is mainly to ideas (the "UNCTAD ideology"), and has as its goal to create a stability of the structure. Since results are not rewarded, individuals become absorbed within the organization's habits. Most of the time, papers and research work are not signed by authors. UNCTAD, like any other public administration, does not like leaders and personalities. Moreover, UNCTAD is made up of economists and has a profoundly academic culture, in which people are working by themselves and do not like to interact. UNCTAD historically has a very individualistic culture at least in the old part of the organization. This is slowly changing in the new part of UNCTAD, which is working more in teams. But, the new teams still do not share their work with sceptical old UNCTAD. There is also a still willingness to avoid conflict.

In short, UNCTAD, in its majority, still is a self-reproductive or closed-loop organization. One of the interviewed persons quite self-critically explained that: *"We should stop looking and talking about ourselves and talk more about concrete problems of development".* And we have also noticed in seminars the difficulty to be critical about oneself. Above all, it seems difficult to accept critiques pertaining to the functioning of the organization. It looks like each staff has in its mind another perception of what the organization is or should be. This situation is probably due to the fact that UNCTAD has no strong shared culture and shared vision. On top of that, the mission is not a shared

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[17] Mid-term Review Outcomes, Chairman's draft, TDB, Geneva, 10 July 1998.

one, but a mission defined by governments. As a consequence, organizational culture remains the main obstacle to transformation.

4. Conclusion

In order to better understand UNCTAD the pathologies, this section briefly compares UNCTAD's transformation process to the transformation model as presented in section 1. This will put UNCTAD's pathologies into relationship with the pathologies that emerge from public organizations' transformations more generally.

4.1. Confrontation with the transformation model

The model systematizes the transformation of public organizations in the context of current pressures towards competition, efficiency, marketization. It helped identify the main pathologies, which emerge along the transformation process in the areas of organizational culture, structure, processes, relationship to politics, public service, and learning. It appears that the case of UNCTAD highlights five different areas, where our initial model seems to be particularly challenged, namely the areas of culture, the relationship to the clients, politics, and leadership.

- UNCTAD's *organizational culture* seems to be significantly more blocked than bureaucratic cultures at national levels. In our view, this blockage is basically explainable by the more complex and more politicized environment of international organizations, which considerably adds impediments to organizational change. As a result, UNCTAD's organizational culture is even stronger than is generally the case in national bureaucracies, and its identity is even weaker. And this paradox still exacerbates UNCTAD's organizational fragmentation.

- Also the *relationship with the clients* appears to be more complex than in the case of national public organization, which is certainly related to the fact that, at an international level, clients are much more difficult to define and in any case not homogenous. In addition, the difficulty of defining the clients of an international organization also results from the growing importance the private sector is taking in the newly emerging partnerships. Indeed, the private sector, by becoming a partner, certainly influences the very definition of a customer, as well as of the products and the services of the organization. This, in turn, changes the relationship between UNCTAD and its historical "clients", i.e., the governments. This certainly further exacerbates the growing tension between UNCTAD and traditional politics.

- *Politics* is particularly present in the case of UNCTAD. This presence manifests itself, among others, in the intergovernmental machinery, but also in the

organization's ideology (development versus trade, South versus North), its culture, and even its structure (special crosscutting unit on least developed countries, for example). Especially an international organization like UNCTAD reminds us that politics, in our model, has probably been conceptualized in a too simplistic way so far. While all public organizations are caught in a tension between striving for autonomy from politics while having political backing, this tensions seems to take a particularly pathological turn in the case of UNCTAD where the potential for tensions between the organization and politics is high.

- *Leadership*, at least in the case of UNCTAD, seems to be a particularly important element, a fact which our model so far does not adequately reflect. This leadership, of course, is actively supported by friendly member states, who give it the necessary backing to be effective. In light of the above three pathologies we can also better understand the particularly paradoxical functions such leadership has, namely to promote transformation while simultaneously preventing the organization from breaking up because of fragmentation, to encourage partnerships while simultaneously keeping up the dialogue with politics, and more generally to hold the organization together at an ideological level.

4.2. Critical observations: UNCTAD's three pathologies

The case study presented in sections 2 and 3 has clearly shown that UNCTAD still is in the midst of a profound transformation process. As a result, the traditional bureaucracy co-exists along with a more entrepreneurial and more market-oriented organization in such areas as ideology, culture, structure, and staff. While the future direction of the transformation is clearly indicated, the traditional UNCTAD still exists, especially when it comes to certain worldviews held by certain collaborators. Also, the new idea of partnership clearly is not as strong a belief system as was the original UNCTAD "social development ideology". This tension between *the old and the new* UNCTAD, which is likely to continue for some more time, also defines UNCTAD's three main organizational pathologies, as we see them, namely in the areas of organization, relationship to politics, and ideology.

On an *organizational level*, UNCTAD can be compared to an university with its specialized research institutes, which neither talk to each other, nor do they know who exactly their "clients" are. It is moreover a "university", which reports to a board of 180 members from as many different countries. As said in the introduction, UNCTAD's activities encompass actually three different levels, i.e., analysis (policy advice), consensus building, and technical assistance. If the work of analysis can best be compared to the work of an university, technical assistance is more like the work of a public enterprise, while consensus building is quite similar to the work of a traditional public administration. In terms of management, this means that at least three

different kinds of organizational processes apply -- i.e., transformation of a classic administration, transformation of a public enterprise, and transformation of an university -- meaning different transformation speeds and different cultures. Therefore, as UNCTAD's transformation progresses, this is likely to exacerbate the already currently existing fragmentation of the organization. In other words, *fragmentation* of the organization defines UNCTAD's first pathology.

The case of UNCTAD also highlights a profound change in *international governance.* This change can be seen in the growing amount of actors from civil society and the private sector, with whom an international organization such as UNCTAD increasingly has to compose. In the case of UNCTAD, such new governance mechanisms emerge essentially at the interface with the private sector, especially through UNCTAD's partnership strategy, while the intergovernmental machinery does not yet seem to be affected by this transformation in governance. However, it is easy to predict that if the intergovernmental machinery will not follow suit, a growing discrepancy between UNCTAD and its political environment will arise, which will inevitable lead to problems with the governments. The *tension between (the new) UNCTAD and (traditional) politics* thus defines the second pathology.

Finally, this evolution towards new governance mechanisms is paralleled by a change in *global ideology*, a change which the case of UNCTAD clearly reflects. Indeed, the world in general, and UNCTAD in particular, seem to move from an ideology of development -- which was particularly embraced by UNCTAD from a Southern perspective -- to an ideology of free trade. If Midrand, and especially Secretary General Ricupero, seem to have made this transition, furthering it by organizational changes and partnerships, neither UNCTAD as an organization, nor the United Nations as a whole system yet seem to follow suit. Therefore, in the long-term, this not only creates a tension within UNCTAD, but furthermore is likely to put UNCTAD at odds with the UN system more generally. *Ideological tensions and inconsistencies* thus make up for UNCTAD's third pathology.

Organizational fragmentation, growing tensions with politics, and ideology inconsistencies thus define, in our view, the three main pathologies, as they emerge from our case study. All three are particularly exacerbated by UNCTAD's recent transformation process, especially by its partnership strategy. In light of this analysis, UNCTAD would certainly need a much stronger attention paid to its organizational transformation than is currently the case, if it again wants to play a significant role in the international development arena.

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