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What is the added value of coordination?

An institutional analysis of the United Nations' response to national and regional  
coordination of human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion

by

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## **Abstract**

Since the 1990s, complex global problems such as HIV/AIDS, humanitarian crises, environmental degradation, and human trafficking have presented challenges at scales that transcend the nation-state as a focus for development initiatives. These challenges, in concert with the emergence of new public management rationalities and good governance discourses, have altered the mandates and capacities of different development agencies from NGOs to governments and United Nations (UN) agencies. The UN has the potential to become a leader for coordinated responses, which are seen as a prerequisite for resolving these issues. However, the marketisation and fragmentation of the development field has engendered an environment fraught with complexity, instability, and heightened competitiveness over scarce resources. The problematic nature of coordinating the activities of stakeholders in such an environment is not well understood. Effective coordination must marry ideals of cooperation to the different and often competing interests of stakeholders and to field-based development practices structured along marketised and disaggregated lines. In this thesis I explore what is meant by coordination, how it is being institutionalised, and what can be done to make initiatives more effective.

This thesis examines the institutional arrangements devised to coordinate the practices of agencies working to combat human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion. It analyses the institutional forms themselves and the practices that have emerged from them. Using an ethnographic institutional approach, I focus on the workings of a UN Inter-Agency Project (UNIAP) designed to facilitate a coordinated response to human trafficking. My research draws on over 70 interviews with practitioners and government representatives from six countries, as well as close examination of project documents. To analyse this material and the institutional contexts in which they are embedded, I draw upon strands of new institutionalism and the conceptual tools of Pierre Bourdieu.

I argue that the structure of the development field itself is not conducive to coordination. However, realising the potential that does exist will require that consultative platforms be built more on incentives (accumulation and exchange of resources) than on trust, equal participation, and neutral power relations. The findings suggest moving beyond the processes of market exchange toward a more realistic appraisal of hierarchies, markets, and networks as modes of governance and coordination.

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## Acronyms and abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AFESIP	Acting for Women in Distressing Situations
AIDéTouS	Association International pour le Développement le Tourisme et la Santé
ARCPPT	Asia Regional Cooperation to Prevent People Trafficking
ARTIP	Asia Regional Trafficking in Persons
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CATW	Coalition against Trafficking in Women
CCA	Common country assessment
COMMIT	Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DAI	Development Alternatives Inc
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DEX	Direct Execution
DFID	(British) Department of International Development
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
ECPAT	End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking
EPTA	Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance
FACE	Fight Against Child Exploitation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GAATW	Global Alliance against Trafficking in Women
GMS	Greater Mekong Subregion
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International nongovernmental organisation
IPEC	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
IR	International Relations
JPO	Junior professional officer
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Nongovernmental organisation
NIE	New institutional economics
NPM	New public management

NZAID	New Zealand Agency for International Development
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OPS	Office of Project Services
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
QUANGO	Quasi-nongovernmental organisation
PBA	Program-based approach
PFA	Principle facilitating agency
PIU	Project implementation unit
PRA	Participatory rural appraisal
RBM	Results based management
RC	Resident Coordinator
SAP	Structural adjustment program
SCUK	Save the Children United Kingdom
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SOM	Senior officials meeting
SWAp	Sector-wide approach
TIP	Trafficking in persons
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic & Social Commission for Asia Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization.
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN.GIFT	UN Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIAP	United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women

UNODC	United Nations Office against Drugs and Crime
UNOHCA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNOPS	United Nations
UNRC	United Nations Resident Coordinator
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WDR	World Development Report
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

*There is a profound hypocrisy in this business. Everybody wants coordination, but nobody wants to be coordinated. They don't want the kind of leadership that the inter-agency project or indeed the Resident Coordinator was established to provide.*

~ Interview with the United Nations Resident Coordinator for Thailand (June 3, 2004)

\*\*\*\*\*

In late November 2006, a high level United Nations (UN) panel established by the former Secretary General Kofi Annan released a report called “Delivering as one”, which put forth a series of recommendations aimed at overcoming its current systemic fragmentation to deliver its mandate in development, humanitarian assistance, and the environment with greater effectiveness. The members of the panel argued there should be stronger coordination within the UN system, but also better cooperation through partnerships with member governments, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), donors, and the private sector to meet the multisectoral challenges of global issues such as human trafficking. However, delivering a more coordinated response, at any level, is not going to be simple. While the underlying reasons for coordination might be evident, development practitioners will need to be convinced of the potential *added value*. The quote from a human trafficking expert, a participant in my research, illustrates this point:

We participate. We want to have input. We don't want to be seen as an agency that's not supportive of a coordinated approach, but we want to be recognised for our area. So this is I think the biggest challenge, and I'm not convinced yet that the inter-agency project is able to address that challenge. I am not entirely convinced of what their value-added role is. (interview, August 24, 2004)

As I thought about Secretary General Annan's call for coordination and cooperation, I reflected on my experience with the United Nations. These magical 'c' words, frequently used in the agency where I worked, were appealing to a naïve but eager idealist, one starting

her first job with an international organisation. However, during my tenure with the UN, I began to see how real world realities conflicted with idealised mandates and goals. In the story that follows, I relate my early experiences with the UN, and how they contributed to the issues addressed in this thesis.

I arrived for the first time in Southeast Asia in 2000, having accepted a position with the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) Regional Centre for East Asia and Pacific based in Bangkok, Thailand. During a year and a half service with the organisation, my youthful energy and eagerness to learn was quickly mobilised, and I was assigned to work on a variety of issues related to my background in criminology and the social sciences. Although my main responsibility was to assist the coordinator of a development project designed to strengthen the judicial systems of the six countries that comprised the Greater Mekong Subregion, I found myself drawn to the plight of women and girls who had been trafficked. It was an issue of increasing concern to several intergovernmental and nongovernmental agencies, and initiatives aimed at addressing the problem began to emerge. Mandated to assist Member States in the fight against drugs and crime, UNODC was responsible for the groundwork behind the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementary protocols on trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, which opened for signature in Palermo, Italy in December 2000. In addition to providing the first internationally accepted definition on human trafficking, one of the main premises behind the Trafficking Protocol is to promote international cooperation.

As my work with UNODC continued, I began to gain insight into the inter-organisational relations within the UN building in Bangkok, which was home to the offices of at least 12 UN funds, programmes, and specialised agencies. In this context, I grew increasingly aware of the difficulties associated with cooperation within and among UN communities, including my organisation. Often, innovative ideas regarding collaboration

were crafted, only to be left on the drawing board or tossed onto someone's desk, where they were buried under a mountain of paperwork. The result in both instances was that these ideas were not followed through. Everyone talked about cooperation, but little transpired in practice. I began to question why there was such a divergence between intentions and results. At first I attributed this problem to the bureaucracy embedded within the UN system; however, I did not realise the term 'bureaucracy' was insufficient to explain the situation. To understand the bureaucracy, I needed to understand the institutional, political, situational, and interpersonal complexities that both enable and constrain attempts at inter-agency cooperation. Using an ethnographic institutional approach, this research explores the workings of one UN inter-agency project designed to facilitate a coordinated response to human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion. Three primary observations are important in this regard.

### ***Learning about human trafficking: Basic parameters***

First, human trafficking is constituted by a set of practices and associated human experiences that demand attention in the field of development. Human trafficking, as I develop further in Chapter 5, involves the recruitment, transportation (within or across international borders), harbouring, or receipt of persons, through coercion, force, or deception, for the purposes of exploitation.<sup>1</sup> It involves exploitation, human suffering, deception, coercion, and often violence. Deceived, lured, sold, and sometimes even kidnapped, victims are forced into situations where conditions are often indistinguishable from slavery. In Southeast Asia, the trafficking of men, women, and children occurs amid high levels of

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<sup>1</sup> There are key distinctions between human trafficking and human smuggling (the illicit movement of persons across international borders, usually for profit), despite the fact that the terms are used interchangeably, particularly in the media (for discussions of the differences see ADB Guide to Trafficking, in press; Iselin & Adams, 2003; Salt, 2000; Sullivan, 2003). The broad range of terms – illegal immigrant smuggling, human smuggling, illegal aliens/migrants, human trade, human trafficking, etc – used by researchers, international agencies, and governments, to describe human trafficking exacerbates the confusion (see Salt, 2000).

internal and cross-border migration, and in a wide range of settings and for a variety of purposes such as begging, domestic help, marriage, labour in factories, work on fishing boats, and prostitution. In search of better opportunities, most trafficked persons lose basic human rights, dignity, and control over their lives through threats of violence, coercion, and debt-bondage. Human trafficking has become one of the most complex and pressing global challenges facing development agencies and governments around the world as well as for nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and women's rights advocacy groups. It is not a new phenomenon but has received a remarkable increase in attention in recent years, and anti-trafficking projects and programs have proliferated.

Second, the development field has become more complex in recent decades.<sup>2</sup> International agencies, donors, NGOs, private companies, and other non-state actors work with and alongside governments in unstable geopolitical configurations addressing issues that are being rescaled and seen increasingly as global. Issues such as human trafficking are no longer imagined, and they cannot be resolved through unilateral action, even by the most powerful states. The emergence of new global threats has also significantly changed the problem solving efforts of the UN's agencies, programs, and funds. The process of delivering effective programs, projects, and activities has become more complex as human trafficking and other new global problems that demand multi-sector, multi-agency approaches are integrated into the ambitious and over-extended mandates of UN agencies. But with their ever-expanding, multifaceted, and thus partly overlapping mandates, pressures and clashes among personalities, struggles around organisational interests, and changing jurisdictional and territorial boundaries are constitutive of a highly complex and unstable field.

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<sup>2</sup> By *field* I mean the wider institutional environment within which the relations among individuals, groups, and organisations are situated. The concept is a central pillar of Bourdieu's reflexive sociology of practice. It is discussed in depth in chapter two.



A third observation is that development coordination, in the face of this complexity, is as much a matter of reflection and daily conversations among practitioners as it is orchestrated top-down planning. Despite the rhetoric about partnership, nowhere are the actual rules of the coordination game written down, codified, or even defined in programs, projects, and activities where coordination is essential. Coordination, as a result, is a matter of improvisation, and it is largely subject to interpretation as the criteria for what should be brought to the table have not been definitively defined. Practitioners are simply finding their way.

Relating these three observations generates the research problem that underlies this thesis, namely that cooperative exchanges in the development field of human trafficking are difficult, complex, confused, and commonly visceral. “Human trafficking is an emotional issue,” explains one senior project officer based in Bangkok, Thailand. “You get a certain mix of personalities involved, definitions of trafficking, and all these ambiguous complex things going on.” These particular complexities add new dimensions to the more common refrain that, as the same interviewee observed, “one person thinks something should be handled this way within their structure, we think it should be handled another way. When those clash, it snowballs from there.” The person continues, “it is complicated enough with the organisational structures, but the *competition* can make it even more a field of misunderstandings” (interview, August 24, 2004). Competitiveness and rivalries are inherent, but so are interdependencies among development agencies as resources become increasingly diffused throughout the development field.

The pressures and demands stemming from these issues reflect the processes and institutional realities that powerfully structure everyday practices. As one participant observes of the human trafficking field:

We are paid to deliver certain outputs at a certain point in time. I think there is a lot of insecurity in tenure as well. Most of us in this work on trafficking are all temporary.

People move in and out. Because we deal with projects, we're trying to raise funds, we're trying to deliver. People have projects up to the next year. So what do they spend their time on? They are going to spend their time trying to do some more project documents to support the next project. It becomes like a job creation agency. (interview, July 13, 2004)

These pressures and demands make coordination difficult. Even a basic shared understanding of what is going on represents a challenge. However, as the number of agencies working to combat human trafficking continues to grow, coordination is seen as essential for an effective response. How and why tensions manifest among agencies in development cooperation relationships is, therefore, an important question. This thesis presents a case study of the workings of one inter-agency endeavour, the United Nations Inter-Agency Project (UNIAP), in the Greater Mekong Subregion. It examines not just the nature of the wider development field itself, but more specifically how ideas, strategies, and approaches about coordination are generated as well as the extent these approaches facilitate cooperation among different human trafficking agencies.

There is a growing literature on human trafficking and human smuggling in the Greater Mekong Subregion (e.g. Chapkis, 2003; Emmers, Greener-Barcham, & Thomas, 2006; Marshall, 2005; Marshall & Thatu, 2005; Piper, 2005; Samarasinghe & Burton, 2007; Skeldon, 2000; Sullivan, 2003). Much of this work discusses regional human trafficking patterns and their impacts, but it does not critique the response to human trafficking in the region. Little has been written about coordinated efforts to enhance cooperation among development agencies. My work will engage with, and contribute to, the existing research on human trafficking in the region; furthermore, it will extend the literature to redress this perceived gap.

### *The UNIAP: A new model for co-ordination?*

The Greater Mekong Subregion is an ethnically diverse, agricultural-based region comprised of Cambodia, the Yunnan Province of Southern China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. Despite recent economic growth, poverty is widespread and the region is marked by significant diversity among and within the different nations (see Chapter 5). Urban and rural disparities, marginalised ethnic minorities, high levels of internal and cross-border migration, and weak governance in border regions present significant risk factors for human trafficking, and each represents a significant factor in the human trafficking experienced in the region. The literature confirms that countries in the Greater Mekong Subregion experience trafficking differently as sites of recruitment, trafficking destinations, and trafficking routes (see Chapter 5). Although estimates of its full extent are imprecise, and men are largely absent from these figures, it is estimated that between 200,000 and 450,000 people are trafficked from, and within, the region each year (Huguet & Ramangkura, 2007). The Greater Mekong Subregion is a key circuit among different regional circuits and locked into other global circuits. Related in part to processes of neoliberalising globalisation from both the supply and demand sides, these numbers are increasing.

In 2000, the same year that the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementary protocols on trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants opened for signature, an inter-agency project (the UNIAP) was created under the leadership of the UN to facilitate a wider strategic approach to human trafficking within the Southeast Asian region. The purposes of the project are to coordinate national and regional responses to prevent trafficking, and to identify gaps in responses to reduce the severity and harm associated with trafficking. The aim is not, however, for the UNIAP to carry out the work; rather, responses are implemented through the participating agencies. At its inception (Phase I), the project brought together 6 national governments, 12 UN agencies, 1

intergovernmental organisation, and 7 international NGOs at the regional level, but it has mushroomed to include a growing network of partners from both local and international anti-trafficking communities. The UNIAP's most visible and active members are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: UNIAP member agencies

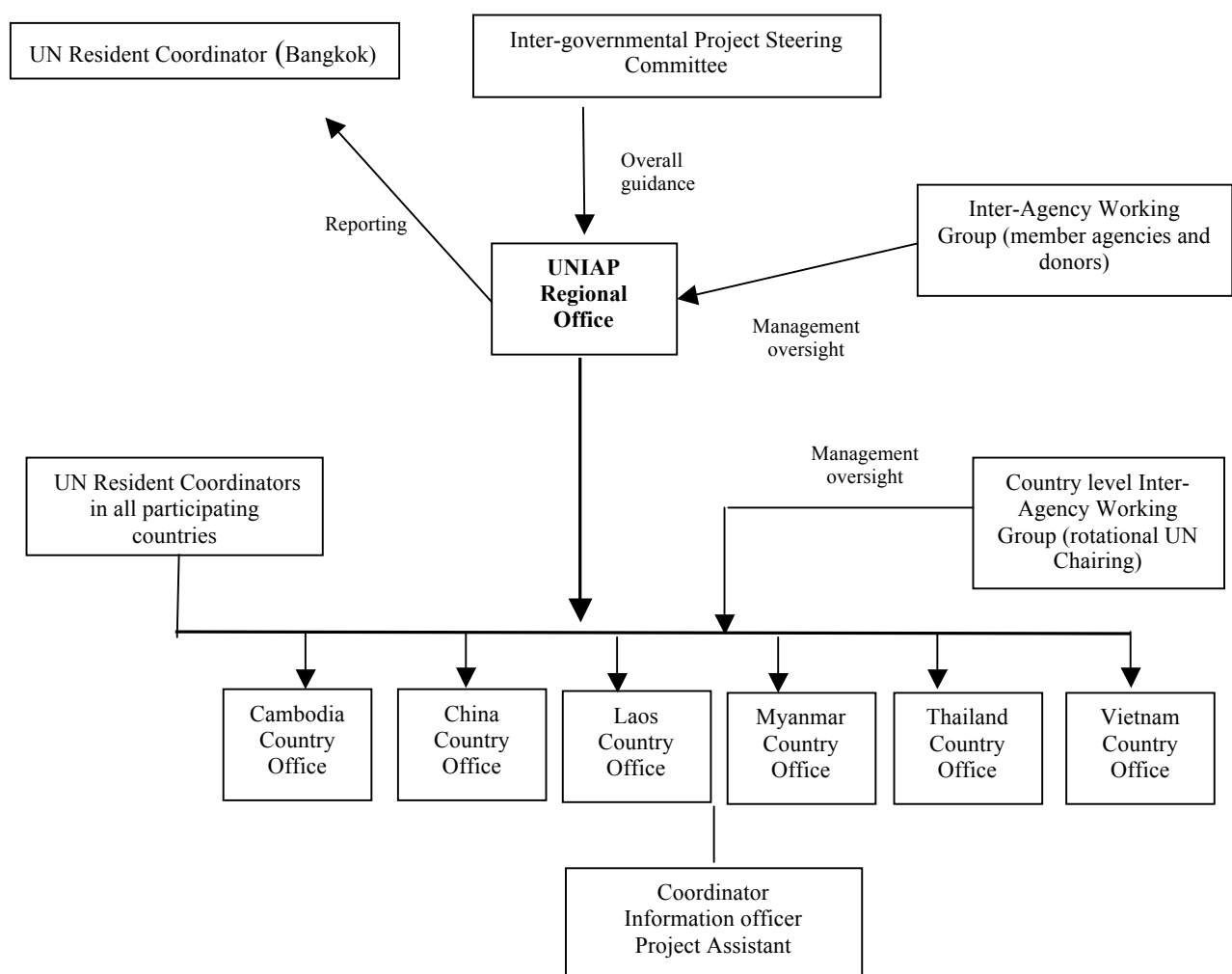
<b>Category</b>	<b>Agency</b>
<b>NGOs</b>	GAATW – Global Alliance against Trafficking in Women Oxfam International Save the Children Alliance World Vision International Mekong Regional Law Center FACE – Fight Against Child Exploitation ECPAT – End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking
<b>UN agencies</b>	ILO – International Labour Organization OHCHR – Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights UNAIDS – Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS UNODC – UN Office against Drugs and Crime UNFPA – UN Population Fund UNHCR – UN High Commissioner for Refugees UNICEF – UN Children's Fund UNIFEM – UN Development Fund for Women UNDP – UN Development Programme UNESCO – UN Educational Scientific & Cultural Organization UNOPS – UN Office for Project Services UNESCAP – UN Economic & Social Commission for Asia Pacific
<b>Intergovernmental</b>	IOM – International Organization for Migration

The large number of agencies listed in this chart indicate the enormous challenge the inter-agency project faces in terms of coordination. The UNIAP is not, however, a large joint UN program such as the one on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), which coordinates programmatically and financially the work of 10 UN agencies through a secretariat headquartered in Geneva. Instead, the UNIAP is a small, under-resourced *project*, staffed in its first phase with just a project manager, a junior professional officer (JPO) and a project assistant at the regional level. Housed in a two room office based in the UN Secretariat Building in Bangkok, the

regional project management office expanded in Phase II to five permanent staff members (project manager, deputy project manager, information officer, financial officer, and administrative assistant), though still insufficient for effective coordination at regional and national levels.

The project is divided into three pre-determined Phases: Phase I (June 2000 – May 2003), Phase II (December 2003 – June 2006), and Phase III (December 2006 – November 2009), with interim periods of six to seven months bridging each phase. Over the course of Phase I, country offices were established in each of the six countries, along with a regional management office in Bangkok, Thailand (see Figure 1)

Figure 1: UNIAP project structure (Phase II)



Overall guidance is provided by an inter-governmental Project Steering Group through annual meetings and the Inter-Agency Working Group in Bangkok, which brings together member agencies and donors. Project offices work closely with government counterparts, and initiatives associated with the UNIAP vary according to the trafficking situation and the activities of other agencies in each country. The UNIAP operates under the umbrella of the UN Resident Coordinator (UNRC) System, which encompasses all organisations of the UN system dealing with operational activities for development, regardless of their formal presence in the country. Its primary purpose is to bring together the different UN agencies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of operational activities at the country level.

Most Resident Coordinators of the six Greater Mekong Subregion countries have taken a strong interest in the UNIAP and work closely with project staff at the regional and national levels. Even with their support, the UNIAP is saddled with an enormous and unrealistic mandate given the inadequate financial and other resources allocated to the project in comparison to other regional projects. In Phase II, for example, the UNIAP had a budget of approximately \$2.5 million (US) for just less than three years. The International Labour Organization (ILO) Mekong Sub-Regional Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women (Phase II, five year period) has a budget of \$10 million (US).<sup>3</sup> The largest regional project is the Asia Regional Trafficking in Persons (ARTIP) project, which covers a five year period and has a budget of \$21 million Australian (approx \$18 million US).<sup>4</sup> In many respects, the story of UNIAP is not unlike the children's book, *The Little Engine that Could* – a small group of people leading a big coordination effort. But what was intriguing about the project was its coordination mandate. The UN system has a plethora of coordinating bodies, mechanisms, thematic groups, and programs responsible for enabling multifaceted responses

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/bangkok/child/trafficking/downloads/projectoverview2006-2008.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Exchange rate as of December 2007.

and cooperation among its specialised agencies, funds, and programs. The UNIAP, however, is unique in being tasked with facilitating coordination. It is also distinctive because it serves as a response to human trafficking that aims to draw together multiple, diverse stakeholders under a single, coordinated approach.

The idea of an inter-agency project to facilitate coordination in the human trafficking field developed from discussions among a small group of UN professionals employed with the larger and better resourced UN agencies mandated to address human trafficking in the region (e.g. UNDP, UNICEF, ILO, UNESCO, UNESCAP). As more funding poured into the Greater Mekong Subregion to combat human trafficking, the field was becoming increasingly dense and fragmented. Concerns were raised about overlapping agendas, duplication, and the misuse of funds. The complexity of human trafficking, growing interest in the issue by donors, and new emphases on aid efficiency, coordination and harmonisation in development thinking were reflected in the decision to establish the UNIAP. At the time the UNIAP was conceived, there were no regional projects on human trafficking. Just two and a half years later, at the start of Phase II, five regional projects (see Table 2) were being implemented, in addition to hundreds of national counter-trafficking initiatives across the six countries.

As Table 2 indicates, most of these projects are still ongoing, having progressed through multiple phases. Since the end 2004, two additional regional initiatives have commenced: World Vision's Mekong Delta Regional Trafficking Strategy project (now entering its second Phase) and the UN Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT) launched by UNODC, which is another mechanism to coordinate the effort against human trafficking. Managed through the ILO, IOM, UNICEF, UNHCHR, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), UN.GIFT recently hosted a regional law enforcement event for East Asia and Pacific in Bangkok.

Table 2: Regional human trafficking projects in the Greater Mekong Subregion

<b>Organisation/name of project/duration</b>	<b>Project description</b>
<p>International Organizations for Migration (IOM) <i>Return and Reintegration of Trafficked Women and Children</i></p> <p>Phase I: 2000 – 2004 Phase II: 2004 – 2007</p>	<p>Covering the six Greater Mekong Subregion countries, the initiative facilitates the safe return and reintegration of trafficked and other vulnerable migrant women and children.</p>
<p>Save the Children UK <i>Cross-border Project Against Trafficking and Exploitation of Migration and Vulnerable Children</i></p> <p>Phase I: 2000 – 2003 (pilot interventions) Phase II: Jan 2003 – March 2006 Phase III: April 2006 – March 2009</p>	<p>Aims to reduce the incidence and impact of trafficking and abuse of the most vulnerable migrant children in the Mekong sub region, by 2006, through participatory development of sustainable coping strategies grounded in child rights and through evidence-based advocacy at local, national, and international levels.</p>
<p>Australian Government (Australian Agency for International Development AusAID) <i>The Asia Regional Cooperation to Prevent People Trafficking (ARCPPT)</i> April 2003 – August 2006</p> <p><i>Asia Regional Trafficking in Persons (ARTIP)</i> August 2006 – August 2011</p>	<p>Aims to strengthen the criminal justice process and to enhance regional cooperation in combating trafficking in Thailand, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Cambodia.</p> <p>Builds and expands on ARCPPT project.</p>
<p>International Labour Organization (ILO) <i>Mekong Sub-Regional Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women</i></p> <p>Phase I : 2000 – 2003 Phase II: 2003 – 2008</p>	<p>Aims to reduce trafficking in children and women for labour and sexual exploitation through the development, implementation and monitoring of effective and integrated sub regional and national strategies and actions. (Cambodia, China (Yunnan), Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam)</p>
<p>United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) <i>East Asia Regional Project Against Abuse, Exploitation and Trafficking of Children</i></p> <p>2002 – ongoing</p>	<p>The project identifies five major areas of interventions: community protection and reintegration; legal protection; capacity building for social work; data collection; and advocacy, cooperation and coordination. (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Viet Nam, Indonesia and the Philippines)</p>
<p>United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion (UNIAP)</p> <p>Phase I: June 2000 – May 2003 Phase II: December 2003 – June 2006 Phase III: December 2006 – November 2009</p>	<p>Aims to facilitate a stronger and more coordinated response to human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (Cambodia, China (Yunnan), Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam)</p>



In 1999/2000, however, translating the idea of coordination into something practical on the ground was a novel challenge for the small planning team of UN practitioners. Conceptualising what an inter-agency project actually does, or should do, was difficult from the inception (interview, November 9, 2004). How best to bring a number of independent agencies, with differing interests, resources, and influence, together under a single overarching mechanism was the challenge. The UNIAP was very much a journey into the unknown.

Using their field experience, the UN practitioners who designed and implemented the inter-agency project drew upon institutional modalities intrinsic in development practice. As James Ferguson (1990) has shown in the *Anti-Politics Machine*, there are sets of “institutional instruments” that are commonly “available to and put to use by” practitioners in the creation of development projects (p. 74). This thesis will show that the UNIAP was an experimentation of modalities and approaches, which led to the transformation of the project across its three Phases. For instance, several months into Phase II, the UNIAP staff members were still clarifying roles and expectations, or to put this differently, how coordination might work (see Chapter 6). As one national project coordinator with the UNIAP commented, “I mentioned that other people might get confused about what roles UNIAP play. I was confused! Really very confused, and I asked myself everyday what I was doing” (interview, September 20, 2004). My findings suggest that specific ideas about coordination are embodied in the principles and practices of development, and that these ideas are largely constituted through the dominant institutional logic(s) of the field itself. I argue that there is a deeply ingrained resistance to most forms of development coordination among practitioners, particularly among prominent development agencies with large regional anti-trafficking projects.

The utility and other values of co-ordination are hotly and widely contested. Many member agencies asked the question “so what is the *added value* of the UN inter-agency project?” As one participant observed:

We specialise in cross-border issues, it would be seen as our role. But it is not always simple because of this competitive environment. In essence, it's recognition of what you are doing. It's what gets us support from donors and others. If we're being funded by a particular donor to do a particular activity and it's suddenly reported in the press and we're not recognised, the donor's thinking “What's happening?” We may actually have done it, but if it is seen as UN inter-agency... I think that is why some agencies are less enthusiastic about participating than others. I mean within the inter-agency project, with ILO, UNICEF, IOM, we all have substantial funding and significant trafficking projects. Somehow tucking that under that under an inter-agency project is a bit unwieldy. (interview, August 24, 2004)

Interventions take place in complex, multilayered, and multiply-scaled political settings. At one end of these scales, the global geo-politics of aid condition the nature, funding and terms of interventions, whilst national politics of various forms condition decisions about whether to participate in programmes and on what terms, and how to organise this participation and implement programs. At the other end of the scales, government officials, border guards, and police often work in collusion with traffickers, accepting bribes and turning a blind eye to their activities. In the case of the UNIAP, relations among the involved nations produced new layers of political struggle. In heavily politicised development settings, these politics are often highly visible and heavily criticised – uncomfortably so for many agencies and individuals involved. The UNIAP often struggled to balance the competing political interests of member agencies and governments involved in the project. As the thesis developed, I became increasingly aware of these struggles, inspired by the political cartoon presented in Figure 2.

In 2004, the six governments signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as part of the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking (COMMIT) process.

The UNIAP acts as the Secretariat to ensure implementation of the Subregional Plan of Action, which supports the MOU (see Chapters 5-7).

Figure 2: Shan Women's Action Network Cartoon



The cartoon shows the neatly suited United Nations official doing business with a prominent figure within COMMIT whilst in the background a trafficker bribes a border-guard. Villagers continue their lives in the shadow of these practices. The cartoon highlights the politics of human trafficking and alerts us to the gendering of its most prominent and exploitative forms (notwithstanding the significance of the trafficking of males) and of those who engage in efforts to regulate it. Gendered perspectives are rarely explicitly integrated into anti-trafficking programs, projects, and activities.<sup>5</sup> It is too often assumed that what is at stake is a sex trade in women, but the gendering of practice and effect in trafficking and associated regulatory or palliative interventions that follow from this assumption are often left unexplored, as is often the trade in boys and men. The cartoon neatly makes the point that this issue must be addressed.

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<sup>5</sup> A gender perspective means, for example, recognising both men and women are trafficked; addressing similarities and differences between men and women in the trafficking process; addressing differential impacts of policies, legislation, etc (UNIFEM/UNIAP, 2002).

### *An institutional understanding of a coordinated response to human trafficking*

In recent years, human trafficking has received a vast amount of interest from governments, intergovernmental organisations, international donors, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), and the media. At a time when the UN has taken on differing issues and expanded mandates, human trafficking has become one of the most complex and pressing challenges facing the international development community. However, developing effective anti-trafficking interventions has been a learning process, and the results of this process have not been widely accepted as productive. Anne Gallagher (2001), former advisor to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, comments that “attempts to deal with trafficking, migrant smuggling, and related exploitation at the national, regional, and international levels have been largely ineffective” (p. 997). Although her comment was made seven years ago, some specialists in the field believe the problem is worse, despite the plethora of policies, projects, and programs (see Marshall, 2005; Marshall & Thatun, 2005). As Phil Marshall (2005), an expert on human trafficking issues, states, “although it is important not to forget how far we have come in a relatively short space of time, there is clearly more that can be done to strengthen responses to human trafficking” (p. 143).

Human trafficking is a complex, multifaceted issue that is clouded by misconceptions and misunderstandings. The actual scale of the problem is unknown because of its clandestine nature, the confusion between trafficking and smuggling, its correlation with internal and cross-border migration, and the methodological challenges associated with collecting accurate data. If the issue itself is poorly defined, intervention strategies are often narrow in scope (i.e. focusing just on the supply side of trafficking) or situated in areas without an understanding of the local context (see the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Guide to Trafficking, in press). As the realities of human trafficking became more apparent, it was recognised that quick-fix, singular solutions are inadequate to address its complexities (e.g. Oxman-Martinez, Martinez,

& Handley, 2001; Van Impe, 2000). Human trafficking is a challenge that requires a mix of approaches from different sectors. It brings together a myriad of agencies, each possessing distinct mandates, priorities, modes of operation, and organisational identities. The lack of coordination, cooperation, and pooling of resources (i.e. information, lessons learned, funding, recognition, etc.) among these initiatives and interventions is widely understood to hamper their effectiveness, individually and collectively (e.g. Marshall, 2005; Marshall & Thatun, 2005). Harmonised approaches are now called for at the national, regional, and international levels. New strategies are being developed under the leadership of the United Nations to improve coordination both within and among development organisations, but with questionable success.

### ***Framing an institutional understanding of collaboration in complex interagency settings***

The primary purpose of this thesis is to gain a deeper understanding of international coordination, particularly in its institutional construction. Institutional problems are not, in general, at the forefront of thinking in the human trafficking field, even in terms of coordinated interventions. Rather, practitioners are expected to get on with the task at hand. Coordination is assumed to be a 'good thing', and obstacles encountered as just something to overcome. These factors, coupled with the relative newness of the field, suggest there is an analytic deficit. This is compounded by the tendency for researchers and practitioners to under-theorise the design and implementation of collaborative interactions within and between international organisations in development fields more broadly (Brinkerhoff, 2002a 2000b; Lister, 2000; Lowndes & Skelcher, 1998). Where theoretical or conceptual frameworks have been developed, they are rarely used to examine empirically the behaviour of international agencies, particularly in relation to multi-stakeholder coordination problems (Dijkzeul & Beigbeder, 2003).

The behaviour of organisations/practitioners can have important implications for cooperation; therefore, it is necessary to theorise this behaviour. For instance, why do some organisations/practitioners working together on global issues continuously engage in conflict while others collaborate more efficiently? Similarly, why do agencies claim they want coordination, if in truth, no one wants to be coordinated? This thesis attempts to bring these and other questions into focus using both a theoretical and empirical lens by examining the planning, design, and execution of a single UN inter-agency project located in the Greater Mekong Subregion – an area in Southeast Asia renowned for human trafficking problems.

An institutional analysis of development coordination highlights two major challenges facing the anti-human trafficking community in developing effective responses. The first is dealing with the problem of human trafficking, both conceptually and practically. The second is developing an understanding of the workings of the field itself in order to mount an effective coordinated response that involves a large number of agencies and governments. Although the former clearly demands more immediate attention, it is the latter that forms the analytical focus of this research. I argue that the recent pressure for joint action to combat multifaceted problems such as human trafficking must be understood in the context of changing global economic, political, and social realities, as must the difficulties in forming cooperative strategies. Three inter-related factors stand out: the emergence of globally scaled problems, the expansion of organisational mandates in the development field, and the increasing complexity of this field.

Since the early 1990s, international organisations, including UN agencies, adopted new and expanded mandates to address the rise of complex global challenges (e.g. human trafficking), which demanded multifaceted solutions. Another example is the fight against HIV/AIDS, where there are at least 10 separate UN agencies responding to the problem worldwide. Humanitarian assistance and/or natural disasters also gain the attention of

numerous UN agencies (i.e. World Health Organization, World Food Programme, UNICEF, UNDP, UNHCR, etc) in addition to an abundance of NGOs. These threats are increasingly constituted as global. They have been instrumental in the proliferation of international and nongovernmental agencies. Interdependence among development agencies has never been greater, but neither has the competition among them brought about by the marketisation of their activities, or the uncertainty within which they are asked to work (Cooley & Ron, 2002). More agencies are taking on greater responsibilities in an environment of diminishing resources and increasing uncertainty.

The push for greater cooperation has coincided with shifting institutional and governance arrangements in the wider field of development (see Chapter 4). Since the end of the Cold War, development institutions, policies, and practices have undergone substantial transformations (Weiss & Daws 2007). Much of this change has been related to the restructuring of the UN (see Chapter 4), which is continuously being reformed to meet the challenges of changing times and new contradictions between its objectives and principles (Knight, 2005). In the 1980s and 1990s, neoliberal marketisation and new public management (NPM) reforms reconfigured the boundaries of the state, and in doing so, shifted power relations among states, markets, and civil society (also see Chapter 4). New roles, opportunities, and relationships emerged, involving international organisations, NGOs, governments, and the private sector. NGOs have become a more prominent feature of the field, in part, because of their expanded roles in service provision as they assumed responsibilities that were once performed by the state. In the latter half of the 1990s, however, it was clear these reforms had unintended effects, which included institutional fragmentation and a loss of coordination. (Bevir & Rhodes, 2003; Rhodes, 1997). In the latest round of reform, the fragmented, polycentric system of 'siloed' specialised agencies, funds, and programs is being transformed. New governance practices have emerged in

response to the need for greater coordination, prompting a shift from hierarchical *government* to networked patterns of multi-level *governance* (Newman, 2004; Rhodes, 2000a; Stoker, 1998).

A drive for inter-agency cooperation within a competitive and uncertain field began to emerge in the late 1990s, from both bottom up and formalised institutional reforms. Coordination relations began to be enacted, but were not theorised and remain poorly understood. This was the context in which the UNIAP was imagined and expected to perform. It is the context in which my thesis examines, through the UNIAP example, *the nature and impact of institutional arrangements in shaping coordinated, cooperative, and competitive behaviour among international development organisations working with expanded mandates*. This thesis is not about human trafficking per se; rather it is about the salience of broader institutional structures and logics in field-level development coordination.

I position the research in relation to a number of theoretical approaches. Global challenges and the complex institutional realities faced by development practitioners in their daily interactions and exchanges demand a level of theoretical hybridity. I adopt an approach that is interdisciplinary in its search for methodological inspiration, explanatory sensitivities, and theoretical perspective. I draw in particular upon various interpretations of new institutionalism (Chapter 3) and rely heavily on the reflexive sociology of Pierre Bourdieu (Chapter 2). In so doing, I do not posit a new conceptual model; rather, I attempt to sensitise Bourdieu's schema to organisational and institutional logics in order to capture the particular complexities, contestations, and conflicts within coordination in a particular place and time.

### ***A theoretical framework***

In an article entitled *The NGO Scramble*, Alexander Cooley and James Ron (2002) argue that most theoretical approaches inadequately explain the competitive pressures, fiscal insecurities, increasing fragmentation, and growing complexities that characterise the



institutional context of the international development field. Working within an international political economy approach derived from international relations theory and the new economics of organisation known as new institutional economics (NIE), they argue that both cooperative and competitive behaviour among international development agencies can be explained by an analysis of the material “incentives and constraints” produced by institutional environment pressures (p. 6). I agree not just with their proposition, but also their conclusion that the marketisation of development agencies’ activities and the growing number of international NGOs leads to a competitive aid environment. My work builds upon and extends these propositions.

Highly influential and relevant to development, these lines of inquiry and the case studies conducted to explore them have drawn attention to the importance of institutions. However, they remain largely centred on the state, and focused on markets and hierarchies in terms of institutions and organisations. This type of approach lacks sensitivity as to how institutions are built and subjectivities produced, and how decisions are made rational. Building on what has been termed new institutional economics, ‘new’ institutionalist perspectives also stress the importance of institutions, but question the nature of institutions and how institutional analysis should be carried out. Broadly speaking, they suggest that “people and institutions alike are embedded in wider social contests that structure their choices, behaviour, and development” (Bevir, 2005, p. 35). New institutionalism establishes the theoretical importance of institutions and develops multiple ways of analysing their formation and change. In particular, concepts such as isomorphism, path dependence, diffusion, and principal-agent relations will be central to my institutional analysis.

As I will argue, it has also become an influential *normative* approach that has guided practitioners in terms of institutional governance reforms – under the notion of good governance – in development. This tends to tie new institutional analysis to the neoliberal

policy positions and related new public management reforms from which good governance reforms emerged in both developing and developed countries (Santiso, 2001b). In Chapter 3, I illustrate how new institutionalism, particularly in British academe, has come to represent a particular reaction to neoliberal marketisation and the new public management (Bevir 2003, 2005). This ‘British’ new institutionalism stresses the value and importance of networks and partnerships in comparison to markets and hierarchies, all which are interpreted as “models of coordination” under the broad label of governance (Powell & Exworthy, 2002, p. 15). This offers a particularly productive approach to examining practices of coordination in development fields, notwithstanding the critique of the association of new institutionalism with good governance and its fragmenting effects (Bevir, 2005; Craig & Porter, 2006; Rhodes, 1997; Stoker, 1999, 2000)

New institutional perspectives are less helpful in revealing other key dimensions this thesis needed to frame. For example, they are inadequate in understanding the following questions: a) how the understandings and practices of practitioners are reflexively constructed through the institutional arrangements of the development field; b) to what end organisations and actors engage in processes of competitive collaboration and c) how different kinds of resources are exchanged and different kinds of power, legitimacy, reputation are achieved. To help frame this understanding, I turn to the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu offers an alternative way of thinking about the nature and impact of institutional arrangements in shaping development coordination in the field. Empirical analysis is a critical feature in his theoretical framework. He proposes a sociology built around conflict, power, and material interests, which he argues are, in turn, obscured in “broadly accepted, and often unquestioned, ways of seeing and describing the world” (Johnson, 1993, p. 2). Drawing upon the conceptual tools of Bourdieu, this thesis offers an analysis of how development practitioners use their experiences, backgrounds, and practical knowledge to frame, negotiate and deal with the

uncertainties related to development coordination. As the empirical evidence will show, their principal understandings, points of view, and choices are not made in a vacuum; rather, ideas and practices in development emerge from the field itself. In other words, how development practitioners “see” coordination is partly dependent on the structure of the field, which in turn is built upon institutional configurations of material and symbolic interests and pressures (see Bourdieu, 2000, Cooley & Ron, 2002). In this regard, Bourdieu offers a compelling analytical framework for understanding how development cooperation in practice both shapes, and is shaped by, the institutional arrangements of the development field.

## **Methodology**

### ***Institutional ethnography as a sociological mode of inquiry***

The research presented in this thesis is an institutional ethnographic analysis, which is a sociological mode of inquiry that explicitly aims to reveal the workings of institutional structures and processes through the experiences, realities, and practices of people (Smith, 2005). Pioneered by Dorothy Smith (1987, 1990), institutional ethnographies reveal how forms of power and complexity are implicit, but not often recognised, in social relations. Her institutional ethnographic research examines the standpoints of women to illustrate how their lives are mediated through complex “ruling relations”, or the combination of organisational and institutional arrangements as governing structures (Smith, 1999). More recently, Smith has argued that institutional ethnography is equally suitable for different institutional settings (e.g. Smith, 2005). Given that my research aims to explore both empirically and institutionally the ways in which realities of cooperation are constructed among development practitioners, there are parallels in our research projects. What is more, institutional ethnography is particularly suited to qualitative research as Smith encourages the use of multiple methods.

Institutional ethnography explores the social relations individuals bring into being in and through their actual practices. Its methods, whether of observation, interviewing,

recollection of work experience, use of archives, textual analysis, or other, are constrained by the practicalities of investigation of social relations as actual practices. (Smith, 1987, p. 160)

Because I was interested in how those involved with the UNIAP, either as project staff or as member agencies, interpreted the term coordination, as well as what their perceived roles and responsibilities were within the project, I saw value in using multiple methods to allow for triangulation and ensure that rich, in-depth, and trustworthy data were collected. Hence, my goal was to gather diverse narratives about the cooperative efforts to combat human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and the examination of documents pertaining to the project.

#### *UNIAP – a case study*

The UNIAP was one project in particular that captured my attention as I began to frame my thinking for a PhD thesis on coordination in the development field. It was created in order to foster a strategic and coordinated approach across the region and was associated with key initiatives globally to confront human trafficking. It sat astride many of the key tensions and multi-scalar political relations that I would need to investigate in my study.

Having one's research interests sparked is one thing; finding a way to gain access to the sources needed to carry out the research is another. Here, human contacts are the key. During my tenure with the UN, I became acquainted with the project manager of the UNIAP. Contacts and networks are often golden nuggets to a researcher who wishes to gain access to an organisation (Feldman, Bell, & Berger, 2003). Not only can they provide information and valuable insights into inner politics, these individuals have insight into how the research could affect the organisation or project, often a key determinant in whether access is granted. This contact and others made during my time in Bangkok eventually helped me to overcome the difficulties linked to research in organisations, particularly bureaucracies such as the World Bank or the UN. However, this was far from a straightforward process, even though I

considered myself somewhat of an ‘insider’. Access was an on-going and formative issue. Indeed, as I stepped onto the plane bound for Southeast Asia to begin the data collection process, I still did not have access.

### *Negotiating access to the research site*

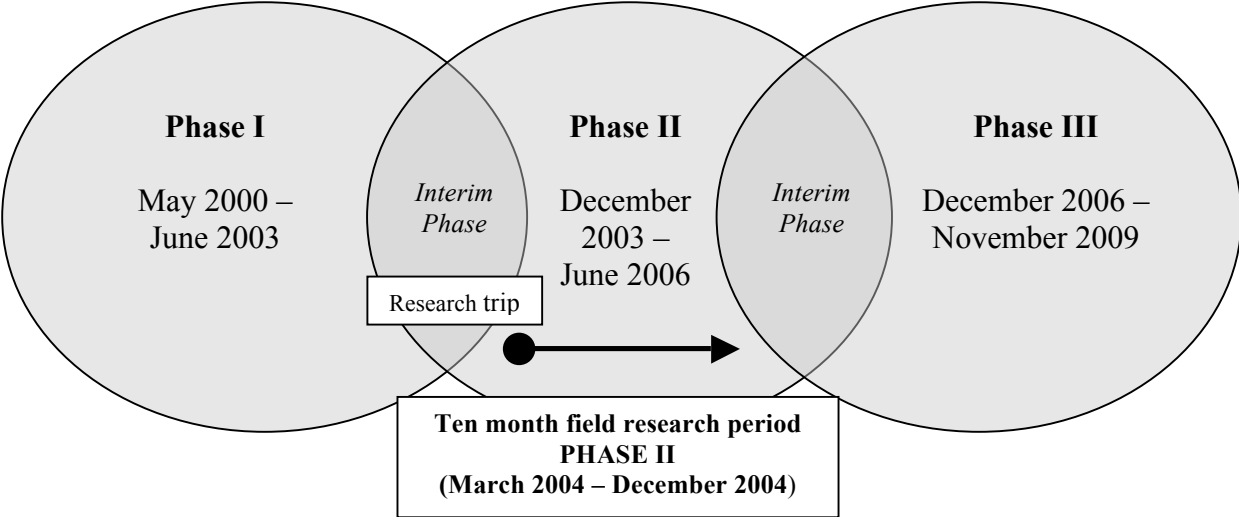
My first contact with the UNIAP manager was May 16, 2003. I sent an email re-introducing myself and asked for an update on the project, which was completing its first phase. A response was received later that day, which contained the project proposal for Phase II, other documents on human trafficking, and a friendly note updating me up on personal happenings. While in the process of refining the research proposal, I made contact with the manager to discuss specifically my desire to use the UNIAP as a case study for the research. Due to the manager’s hectic travel schedule, we did not establish contact again until June 20, 2003. It was this day that I experienced firsthand some of the pitfalls that await researchers wanting to work with large organisations. Initially supportive of my research idea and the use of the UNIAP as a case study, the manager informed me that he would not be continuing with the project through Phase II.

Since its beginning, the UNIAP has passed through a succession of phases (see

Figure 3): Phase I (June 2000 – May 2003), Phase II (December 2003 – June 2006), and Phase III (December 2006 – November 2009). Transition phases of six to seven months bridged each phase. Moreover, each phase had a distinct project structure, differing objectives, regional and national-based staff, and unique strategic approach to coordination (see Chapter 5 for the differences between Phase I and Phase II). In these transition periods, an interim manager would take over until a replacement was hired through proper recruitment procedures. Based on my previous employment with the UN, I knew selection would be a time-consuming process. He informed me that he was no longer in a position to grant access

to the UNIAP, and I would have to obtain permission from the interim manager as well as the UN Resident Coordinator.

Figure 3: UN Inter-agency Project: Three Phases (2000 – 2009)



However, he was happy to forward the research proposal and speak with them on my behalf. By the end of July 2003, the interim manager had been briefed about my intentions so I initiated contact with her and the UN Resident Coordinator.

Throughout the month of August, time and energy were spent presenting myself as a legitimate and trustworthy researcher. Although it was difficult to explain the benefits of the study at this early stage in its development, I knew it was vital for the members of the project to understand the nature and value of the research if I was going to secure access to use the UNIAP as my case. After numerous emails that outlined the background, intentions, and benefits of the project, I received a note stating that my research looked quite interesting, and that the interim manager liked its unique approach. Encouraged by this support, I continued refining the proposal. Despite sending periodic emails to see if questions had arisen, additional information was required, or a decision had been made, I did not receive a response from the interim manager until the middle of October. Unfortunately, the email reported, she had not had a chance to discuss my proposal with the UN Resident Coordinator. Nonetheless,

she felt confident that it would go through and promised to forward the letter of support that I required from the project to accompany a scholarship application. The supportive letter was sent by fax later that week. Approaching November, I thought it wise to make a trip to meet with both the interim manager and the UN Resident Coordinator to ensure that there were no misunderstandings about the nature of the research and address concerns, if any. Arrangements were made to fly to Bangkok a few weeks later. The meeting with the interim manager was set for November 12 although I was told the UN Resident Coordinator could not attend.

I arrived the morning of November 12 at the UNIAP Regional Management office. In retrospect, the trip was a matter of bad timing. Because the new manager had not been appointed, just who was in charge was problematic. Technically, the interim coordinator was in charge, but she was applying for the manager's position so, understandably, she was focusing on gaining this promotion. The interim coordinator informed me that she had a number of serious concerns about the research, particularly that the member agencies would likely feel threatened by my study. Whether she felt threatened by the research is unknown. She also told me that power to grant permission rested solely in the hands of the UN Resident Coordinator, someone I had not met or heard from. Because my proposal had not yet been discussed with the Resident Coordinator, I asked if I could approach him independently. She agreed but mentioned he was a busy person, and even recommended grabbing him in the corridor if I could.

As 'luck' would have it, I encountered the UN Resident Coordinator in the hallway as I was heading to his office. Heeding the interim manager's advice, I introduced myself and explained the nature of the research. Clearly, he had other priorities, and in a polite manner told me my research sounded intriguing; he also said the interim manager was fully capable of handling the matter. There was no need for his involvement. I thanked him for his time and

considered how to approach the interim manager given the Resident Coordinator's comment. With time still left in Bangkok, I resorted to my network of contacts to solicit advice on how to proceed and discern the facts behind the transformation in the interim manager's change of tune. These meetings were productive in terms of possible strategies; however, the essence of the message was that I would have to wait to seek permission from the new manager, and this person was not supposed to begin the appointment until January 2004. I considered further discussions with the interim manager, but decided to focus on the new appointee because he would be the person I would work with during the data collecting process.

Two days before embarking on the data gathering process, the former manager sent an email stating that he had spoken with the new manager of the project. He had just come from a meeting discussing the research, and there had not been a favourable response from staff. They failed to see benefits regarding my research, and they deemed it to be another project evaluation, something to which the team had just been subjected. The issue of evaluation had arisen frequently in my discussions with various individuals associated with the project, and I thought I had assuaged concerns that this study did not constitute an evaluation. Clearly, they were not assuaged. Despite the former manager's encouraging words as to how I might overcome this latest obstacle, I was concerned. However, there was no turning back. My ticket was booked, scholarships secured, ethics approval granted, and it was simply too late to change my course of research. Simply put, I had to convince them.

Winning trust in an institutional environment fraught with uncertainties was a difficult process. I scheduled a one-on-one meeting with the new manager to discuss concerns. We spoke for almost an hour in his office, and by the end of the meeting came to a tentative agreement. Negotiations of the terms of reference took almost four weeks, underwent a number of drafts, and resulted in a contract both the manager and I agreed upon. Eleven



months after my initial contact with the UNIAP to secure access, my research could finally begin.

### ***Data collection methods***

A focus of this study was to understand how differing interactions among development agencies manifested within the project environment. I needed to access all levels and layers of the UNIAP and its member agencies. Multiple methods of data collection and an interpretative approach to data analysis were used. Data collection began in March 2004 and ended in late December 2004, although I continued to compile information after I returned from the field through email exchanges with several key informants, including the Phase I & II project managers. I believed it was important to maintain relationships with the people I had worked with so closely over the 10 month period because new documents and other information related to the study emerged. Although much of my data collection took place in the main UN building in Bangkok, Thailand, where the UNIAP regional management office was housed, interviews were conducted and observations made at all six field offices. National project offices were established in each of the six countries during the first phase of the project, along with a regional management office in Bangkok, Thailand. Project offices work closely with their government counterparts, and initiatives associated with the UNIAP vary according to the trafficking situation as well as the activities of other agencies in each country.

### ***Interviews: Stories of development***

Based from Bangkok, I travelled to the five other capitals (Phnom Penh, Cambodia; Beijing, China; Vientiane, Laos; Yangon, Myanmar; and Hanoi, Vietnam) where each of the UNIAP national offices and main member agencies were based. Between four days to two weeks was spent in each of these countries observing the daily routines of the UNIAP staff and visiting member agencies to conduct interviews. Informants were selected by purposeful

sampling, which incorporates several sampling strategies and encourages the selection of participants who are able to provide the best information to address the purposes of the research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Snowball and comprehensive sampling were identified as relevant strategies. Snowball sampling is a strategy in which potential informants are selected on the basis of referrals from previous participants. To start the snowball, Patton (2002) suggests soliciting recommendations from knowledgeable persons central to the case. The former Phase I project manager, who I continued to work with closely during my initial months of research, got my snowball packed and rolling. Hubbell (2003) concurs that personal contacts are frequently the most important means to obtain an interview. Comprehensive sampling, on the other hand, is employed when diverse subunits exist, and the researcher does not want to overlook potential variations in perspectives. My research methodology was designed to solicit the perceptions of everyone involved in the UNIAP, from UN agencies to government officials, as well as the regional and national project offices in each of the six countries. My aim was to ‘unpack’ the inter-agency project, which was seen as a harmonised response to human trafficking, by separating the narratives of the UNIAP staff from the member agencies and vice versa.

Once a list of main informants associated with the project was created, in-depth interviews were conducted with 13 of the 20 UNIAP regional and national level staff as well as representatives from 10 UN agencies; four governments; one inter-governmental organisation; six NGOs; three donor agencies supporting UNIAP; and one regional project on human trafficking. Several agencies had offices located in each of the six countries and perspectives were solicited from national representatives as well. For example, UNICEF has offices in each of the six countries so I attempted to meet with at least one agency representative in each country, particularly because the interviews served as the primary tool to provide insights into the main purposes associated with this research. Only one member

agency chose not to participate. In total, over 70 semi-structured interviews were conducted, although it is challenging to quantify the exact number. On multiple occasions, I spent hours chatting with people involved with the project who did not want to be interviewed. Others consented to an interview, but refused to sign the consent form. As far as ethics are concerned, are these exchanges considered interviews? Their opinions certainly contributed to the contextual background of this study; yet, the question of how one should incorporate these sorts of indirect or unofficial discussions, which inform research, is at times a challenging one.

I employed a semi-structured interview format, which requires the researcher to develop a set of questions that act as a guideline to ensure general concepts or issues are addressed (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Patton, 2002). This approach allowed me to make decisions regarding the sequence, wording, and focus of the questions asked during the interview. Questions were open-ended, and informants were encouraged to speak freely about their UNIAP perspectives. I conducted two pilot interviews and received comments about the interview questions from the former project manager; however, the majority of the questions were fashioned to elicit specific information about the UNIAP so it was difficult to evaluate their clarity and effectiveness without the appropriate context. As a result, I continued to rework and refine my questions over the course of the interviews. In addition to the structured questions, informants were given an opportunity to add additional comments they considered relevant to the research. These comments tended to focus on items and issues participants viewed as not covered in the interview. The length of each interview remained flexible to allow participants adequate time to express views and ensure fatigue did not interfere with the quality of the data being collected (Patton, 2002). As a result, lengths ranged from 30 minutes to over an hour, but the average time was about 45 minutes per interview. All interviews were conducted in English although the assistance of a translator was required in two situations. In both circumstances, translators were selected by the interviewees.

Prior to the start of each interview, informants were asked if they permitted the interview to be taped. Fifty-three interviews were recorded, but informants were also offered an opportunity to comment 'off record'. Only a few participants accepted this offer. I created verbatim transcripts of the taped interviews upon return to New Zealand from Southeast Asia. For those informants who did not consent to taping, detailed notes were written either during the interview or within 24 hours to ensure critical perceptions were not omitted or forgotten. To my surprise, given the access problems encountered, the individuals I approached for interviews were receptive because they saw value in the research. As a result of these procedures, I believe most informants were frank during the interviews, which enhances the validity of data collected (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

#### ***Document review: Records of development***

Documents reviewed were those filed in the large three ring binders that lined the shelves of the UNIAP Regional Management Office and project offices or promotional material that member agencies provided about their human trafficking projects and programs. Reading documents brought me into the heart of the cramped UNIAP Regional Office each day. In total, over 300 project documents, mission reports, evaluation reports, annual and mid-term reports, work plans, working papers, meeting minutes, correspondence (letters, faxes, and emails), written material on websites, pamphlets, and other types of information were compiled and reviewed. In addition to the actual reading of documents, the location gave me the opportunity to listen, observe, and absorb information as staff went about their routines. I learned a considerable amount about the project's strategies, structures, mandate, and culture, both from documents and interacting with staff.

Being in the office was not without its problems as it was challenging, at times, to access information. Although staff members were outwardly friendly, I sensed considerable tension whenever I was present in the two room office, especially during the first few months

of data gathering. Initially, no one appeared willing to offer information or assistance, but I thought by spending either the mornings or afternoons examining documents, tensions might ease and a trusting rapport develop. Nevertheless, I knew this harmony would not happen overnight. Moreover, because of my experience working for the UN, I knew the system is designed to protect itself, its staff, and its information. As evidence in this thesis will show, information is a form of power. The reluctance to share information, in part, was not personal. In practice, neither the UNIAP staff nor member agencies showed interest in the open exchange of information. Indeed, despite potential benefits of information sharing, there are both subtle and intentional ways the flow of information is blocked by its producers, particularly within the UN system (see Riles, 2000). Thus, I largely relied on accessible documents (i.e. meeting minutes, mission reports, etc.), some of which were made available through alliances with people affiliated with the project, who would share emails, internal memos, and other useful documents.

### ***Participant observation: Practices of development***

Reading through documents allowed me to gain a firm understanding of the UNIAP's mission and visions, but it is equally important to appreciate that individuals interpret these organisational documents differently. Numerous hours were thus spent in meetings, offices, hallways, and conferences, where I conducted informal interviews, engaged in participant observation, and collected stories. Participant observation enabled me to assess perceptions, feelings, thoughts, and beliefs of the practitioners involved through observation of individual and group actions (see McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). I made every effort to attend meetings, seminars, and workshops organised by both the UNIAP and its member agencies. Direct personal contact not only helped the participants understand my identity and purpose as a researcher, but it also gave me the opportunity to cultivate trust and ascertain information about the project and its relationships with member agencies. It also allowed me to identify

and meet key people that would later serve as potential interviewees. Each day spent interacting, conversing, listening, and observing participants yielded rich data.

To sum up this section, due to the qualitative nature of this research, my goal is to depict an accurate representation of the daily contexts and interactions among the agencies as they strived to facilitate an effectual cooperative response to human trafficking. As a result, many voices, including my own, fill these subsequent pages. The extensive use of quotes from my interviews, particularly through Chapters 5 to 7, is meant to bring the participants' perspectives to the fore. The caveat is that this depiction is ultimately my interpretation, which was informed by the literature and guided by accepted ethnographic research practices. Much of what I learned depended greatly upon the trust I built with people, their professional positions, the time they had available to speak with me, the political situations in countries, and a willingness (or unwillingness) to share information.

I chose not to interview trafficked victims for ethical reasons. Interviewing victims is a sensitive matter. Because this thesis is about the institutional dimensions of development coordination, not the victims themselves, I wanted to avoid the risk of re-traumatisation or re-victimisation through the interview process. What is more, I offer little detail about informants in order to protect their anonymity. Instead, I reference only the date of the interview rather than giving names or other information that may identify participants. The human trafficking community is tight-knit in the Greater Mekong Subregion, and informants might easily be identifiable to one another if titles, locations, and other pertinent information were revealed. It was also necessary to change, in certain instances, minor biographical details such as the gender of the informants. Most of the practitioners involved with the project, either directly (UNIAP staff) or indirectly (staff with member agencies), were women.

Despite the challenges of conducting an intensive study from within a large bureaucratic organisation such as the UN, receptiveness to my research was positive. An

intriguing query is why? Some people recognised the potential of an external perspective. Others used the interview experience as an opportunity for self-reflection, something they regrettably found little time to do. My research impacted on the many professionals who participated, but I too was affected by the research process as well as the ethical dilemmas that accompanied it. By recounting these experiences, wisdom can be gained not only about organisational research in general, but the international organisations themselves. I continued to learn about the organisations I worked with through reflection after returning from the field. These insights are central to this thesis because they also inform my analysis of the institutional context of development coordination to enhance cooperation among development agencies working through expanded mandates on multifaceted issues, such as human trafficking. That said, there are limitations to this research, which is the focus of the next section.

### ***Data collection limitations***

The main methodological limitation is tied to the difficulty I had at the beginning of the study regarding access. Obtaining access from a senior staff member to an organisation or project does not guarantee access to information or cooperation from all staff. Indeed, what I failed to realise was that ‘formal’ acceptance was only the beginning of my quest. At the outset, little effort was made to copy me on correspondence, share the dates of upcoming events or meetings, or even provide a list of contacts for each of the member agencies. It took a considerable amount of time to dissolve suspicions, or perhaps fears, about the research. My fieldwork commenced at the beginning of Phase II, at a time when the UNIAP was severely underfunded, despite the fact that human trafficking was deemed to be a “sexy topic” among the international donor community (interview, June 30, 2004). There was fear that a negative portrayal of the UNIAP would deter potential donors. Herein lies a contradiction in development. The donor community repeatedly advocates aid effectiveness through improved

coordination, harmonisation, and alignment; however, the aid system itself has shifted towards a market paradigm. The relationship between donor and recipient is perceived as a market exchange, a situation that encourages aggressive competition for funding, reputation, and influence as agencies attempt to seek out niches or push the boundaries of their mandates to fit the ‘flavour of the month’, the issues that donors promote as priorities.

The UNIAP continuously struggled for funding. This is because most funding for development projects and programs is provided by independent, voluntary contributions from donor governments. Despite the rhetoric of joined-up governance and coordination, practices are evolving slowly. Donors would still rather support on-the-ground interventions than coordination processes. If coordination is to succeed, commitment and action must start at the top of the hierarchy, with the heads of states and agencies of the wider UN system. However, it will be clear from this research that development agencies strongly resent the top down coordination the UNIAP was mandated to provide (also see Loescher, 2001). Until the COMMIT process, member agencies believed that there was no added value to a coordinated approach. If anything, the inter-agency project was, and still is to a certain extent, considered a competitor encroaching on the territory of other national and international human trafficking agencies. This thesis will show that financial vulnerabilities and dependence on not just international donors, but also its member agencies for different kinds of resources (capital), impeded the project from carrying out its principal task of coordination. Moreover, as the data reveal, there is an ingrained unconscious resistance to coordination among development practitioners. These feelings may be understood as an inherent reaction to the strong contradictions, as in the example above, embedded not just within the UN system, but also within the nature of development practice.

Funding was eventually secured for Phase II of the project, and I built trusting relationships and friendships with most, if not all, of the UNIAP staff, including some early



sceptics. I also received a supportive response to my research from the member agencies. In retrospect, the desire to protect information is embedded in the institutional behaviour of these organisations. Overall, I do not feel this compromised the research except to shorten the time I had to gather information. If anything, it made me a better researcher. With the assistance of the former UNIAP manager and other acquaintances I met in the field, I was able to achieve what I set out to accomplish, which was to collect rich, trustworthy data that would provide insight into the research objectives. The potential for events and factors beyond the researcher's control to manifest within any study will always exist. Therefore, the purpose behind this section is not to suggest I was at all careless during the data gathering process, but provide insights into challenges encountered when conducting research in a cross-cultural setting. Institutional ethnographies, however, begin with the experiences and practices of people; hence, its roots are not theoretical (Smith, 2005). Therefore, a theoretical framework was needed, which could make sense of these inherent contradictions and hypocrisies.

### ***Data analysis & methodological reflections***

When I began research with the UNIAP, there was a range of theoretical perspectives that held the potential to shed light on development coordination exchanges. However, a theoretical perspective cannot be selected in isolation. My initial thought was that the symbiotic relationship between actor and structure was important and deserved consideration. I knew many of the important questions as well as methods for gathering data that would address key issues; however, at this time, the investigation was not driven by an overarching theoretical stance. In essence, my research began with a hunch or assumption that was developed from existing cross-disciplinary literature. I assumed that organisational culture played an important role in shaping cooperative relationships that were formed within the framework of the UNIAP. Initially, I thought the data might best be explained using an organisational culture perspective; however, it proved weak in explaining the complex

institutional arrangements uncovered in the field.

I continued to peruse the relevant literature in order to find a better theoretical fit for the data. Although familiar with some of Bourdieu's writing, whose work ultimately had the most important influence on the research, I did not have a fully developed idea of habitus or any of his other conceptual tools, such as doxa or capital. It is important to note here that I did not suddenly read Bourdieu and see a complete, applicable theoretical frame for the study; instead, it was a matter of moving back and forth between the data and Bourdieu's ideas.

Bourdieu's thinking caused me to reflect on the data gathering process, even though it was completed. For example, participating in the daily exchanges of project life, I realised that I had been part of the field (which Bourdieu also refers to as the game). As I interacted with those involved, I was watching not just how the game unfolded, but also how it was being played, including the importance of differing forms of capital (resources) and the strategies (rules) used in exchanges. In interviews, I explored the ideas practitioners had about the UNIAP as well as the effects of these ideas on the project's implementation. I learned that strategic decisions being made were partly implicit and partly practical, based on the information available. These decision making processes were strongly influenced by sets of tacit dispositions (the habitus), which were part of the institutional, historical, social, and cultural context of the field. In turn, these decisions guided my movements as a researcher in the field. The habitus was just one of the notions developed by Bourdieu, all of which were eventually applied to the data analysis (see Chapter 2 for a full discussion of his ideas). Despite the value of Bourdieu's thinking, missing was a way to analyse structural/institutional arrangements. New institutionalism filled this gap (see Chapter 3). I also came to recognise how the various strands of new institutionalism had been influential in shaping the good governance agenda and related institutional reforms in the development field itself.

Following Bourdieu, along with ideas borrowed from new institutionalism, I assumed a relational approach to the data analysis. Thus, both deductive and inductive analysis was used to interpret the case and generate themes, patterns, and other findings. Patton (2002) distinguishes between the two types of analysis. Deductive analysis involves the processing of data according to an existing theoretical framework; thus, categories and themes are imposed. Inductive analysis involves uncovering patterns that emerge naturally from the data. Deductive analysis is also frequently referred to as analytic induction. Again, as Patton explains, qualitative analysis is initially deductive because the researcher applies an existing theoretical framework. However, during the process of deductive analysis, the researcher searches for new emerging patterns or themes to understand the data (inductive analysis). A further comment on deductive analysis/analytic induction is made by Gilgun (1995):

In analytic induction, researchers develop hypotheses, sometimes rough and general approximations, prior to entry into the field or, in case where the data already are collected, prior to data analysis. These hypotheses can be based on hunches, assumptions, careful examination of research and theory, or combinations. Hypotheses are revised to fit emerging interpretations of the data over the course of data collection and analysis. (pp. 268-69)

The analysis of data was an ongoing process that commenced while I was in the field. Each day as I recorded my observations and reflections, I would note thoughts about what was transpiring or the discovery of emerging themes in my diary. Upon returning from Southeast Asia, a second stage of analysis was conducted while I transcribed my interviews. Thus, the choice to use Bourdieu and new institutionalism did partly originate from empirical data. Continuously, I moved back and forth between theory and data in a didactic way. Interpretations from my empirical data allowed me to find new theoretical angles, which in turn offered a different view of my findings. Through the analysis, I attempted to find a balance between theoretically informed interpretation and letting the data speak for itself, which is why the narratives presented in Chapters 5 to 7 are constructed through detailed

quotations as well as thick descriptions of practices of those individuals involved.

### ***Value of the research***

This study draws upon the experiences of all those involved in the UNIAP – the UNIAP staff, UN agencies, government ministries and departments, and donors – so the results of this study will be useful to the dedicated professionals who participated in my study. However, because projects that stress cooperation are becoming more frequent, the results will be valuable to others working collaboratively with development agencies and governments. Especially useful to development practitioners will be perspectives as to how and why certain coordination arrangements are more effective than others as well as how coordination bodies might go about levelling the playing field in terms of power relations among stakeholders. Researchers will find value in this instigation because of its unique application of critical theory to development coordination exchanges.

### **Thesis organisation**

This thesis is organised into eight chapters. The introductory chapter highlighted the research problem and questions, the overall purpose of the thesis, and the methodology that underpins the study. The investigation is revealed as a project to gain theoretically and empirically a deeper understanding of the emerging institutional context of international cooperation among agencies working to combat human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion.

Chapter 2 is the first of two theoretical chapters seeking to develop a theoretical framework based on various strands of new institutionalism and the conceptual tools of Pierre Bourdieu. This chapter introduces and examines the work of Bourdieu. Although a number of scholars apply Bourdieu's ideas to a range of institutional contexts, few have used his concepts and assertions to understand the institutional arrangements and/or organisational behaviour in the development field (for exceptions see Ebrahim, 2005; Rankin, 2004). For

this reason, I discuss his ideas at length to illustrate how he provides an analytical model that shows how certain institutional elements and imperatives are created in development, which largely constrain rather than enable coordinative and cooperative efforts among international agencies working with expanded mandates.

In Chapter 3, I describe the various strands of new institutionalism (historical, rational choice, and sociological) as applied to the research. I join other new institutionalists in an attempt to bring elements of the three paradigms together, in what is referred to as a “second movement in institutional analysis” (Campbell & Pedersen, 2001; Campbell, 2004). In doing so, the chapter reveals a set of tools for analysing the reshaping of the structure of the development field and its changing institutional arrangements. These tools are then applied throughout later chapters to examine the implications of the shifting institutional policies and practices of the wider field of development as well as the efforts of the UNIAP to coordinate the projects, programs, and activities of agencies and governments working to combat human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion. New institutionalism, however, is also able to shed light on the normative dimensions of governance agenda in development planning and practice, its relationship to neoliberalism, and evolving forms of joined-up governance, partnership, and coordination. Thus, new institutionalism offers insights into how the development field itself is structured by both exogenous and endogenous forces, which give rise to its current cooperative forms and practices

In the fourth chapter, I paint a broad, historical picture of the changing institutional arrangements in the broader development field. Drawing upon the analytical tools presented in Chapters 2 and 3, the chapter explores how new public management reforms underlying the good governance agenda has reflexively transformed the institutional structure of the wider development field largely through isomorphic and path dependent forces. The effects of these reforms are explored in terms of the changing roles and governance arrangements of the state,

international agencies, and NGOs, which has resulted in a marketised, complex, and uncertain environment. The second part of the chapter turns to the UN system, offering a brief overview of its founding principles and structure. Specific attention is paid to the impacts of new institutional reforms within the UN system so as to lay the groundwork for interpreting the creation, form, and practices of the UNIAP.

The fifth chapter provides a “thick description” of the human trafficking context regarding the Greater Mekong Subregion (Geertz, 1973; Denzin, 2001; Patton, 2002). It begins by exploring what is meant by human trafficking. Is it a human rights issue? Is it a gender issue? Is it a facet of migration? Is prostitution the same as human trafficking? Agents continuously attach meaning to human trafficking, which affects, sometimes deeply, other agents in the field. I illustrate how development stakeholders, in particular the UNIAP, are shifting the dominant representations of human trafficking. The chapter then explores some of the regional human trafficking trends and the ways in which development agencies and governments are addressing them. The next section provides historical background on the UNIAP and offers a brief description of Phase I and II.

Chapter 6 provides a detailed analysis of the conceptualisation, planning, and design of Phase I and Phase II of the UNIAP. Organised temporally, the chapter addresses the challenges faced by the UNIAP staff in their attempt to conceptualise what an inter-agency project should be. As practitioners attempt to address the complexities and uncertainties associated with development coordination, I am interested in their frames of reference to understand which institutional configurations are put into play and why. Conflicts over the different modes of governance for coordination (hierarchical vs. network) and their outcomes are mediated by principal-agent problems and transaction costs as the UNIAP planning team relies on institutional tools and strategies commonly available to, and used by, development practitioners through their *habitus* (also see Ferguson, 1990). We see that the strategies

adopted by the planning team strongly tied to the institutional logics underpinning the structure of the field as the UNIAP evolves from Phase I to Phase II in a path dependent fashion. The effects of new public management on the practices of practitioners become more apparent. I highlight how Phase I was conceived as a hierarchical overarching coordination mechanism (UNIAP as principal), but shifted in Phase II to become a service provider (UNIAP as agent) largely because its strategies were constrained by the lack of appropriate resources (capital). Power struggles between the UNIAP and its funders also begin to emerge in this chapter, as well as conflicts between the UNIAP and member agencies. I begin to highlight the implications of these dynamics for coordinated relations among agencies involved in the project.

In Chapter 7, I examine the forms of what I describe as the economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital (or resource) mobilisation and exchange between organisations, specifically highlighting the concerns of the UNIAP with legitimation as a development project. Phase I and the transition phase have ended, and Phase II begins with the COMMIT process playing a central role in the project. Until the COMMIT process, member agencies believed that there was no added value to a coordinated approach. In examining these capital exchanges in terms of the thesis' analytic frames, I illustrate the interdependencies among development agencies, which, in turn, produce both cooperative and competitive strategies and behaviours. Analysis also reveals how the UNIAP needed to amass symbolic forms of capital and power from different sources in order to enhance its legitimacy, while also engendering value added incentives for coordination. Coordination must, therefore, be built on a platform or mechanism that facilitates the accumulation and exchange of capital to address both cooperative and competitive behaviour manifest in the field of development.

The concluding chapter draws the parts of the thesis together, revisiting important theoretical and empirical implications and offering conclusions. I reflect upon the

institutional field in which the UNIAP is situated, along with the complexities associated with coordination. I discuss the importance of understanding the institutional structure of the development if coordination is to enhance cooperation among development agencies. The interactions among agencies are complex, but I suggest possible ways in which coordinating mechanisms add value to the work of international organisations working with expanded mandates.



## Chapter 2

### Reconceptualising the development field: Insights from Pierre Bourdieu

The trafficking field is evolving. The dimensions are changing; it is not going to be static. Plan International, World Vision – they are important groups (NGOs) – they’re playing (the game), they have lots of resources, but they are not UN. They are operating under very different standards. Maybe they could come in later in implementation. (interview, July 13, 2004)

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It is close to 40C. I have only been outside for a few minutes, but sweat beads along the base of my hairline and forehead. I glance over my shoulder as a white Land Rover with a World Wildlife Fund (WWF) emblem emblazoned on the side ambles past on the bumpy, dusty road. Across the street, I see three more vehicles, each sporting logos from different development agencies, parked in front of an open-air restaurant. The first two emblems I recognise immediately. One belongs to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), while the other represents a prominent donor government working in the region; the third organisation is unknown. My ear tunes to an English conversation, and I turn to see a group of expatriates trotting on foot towards the same restaurant. “Coordination must be a big job in Phnom Penh,” I yell over the deafening noise of a two-stroke motorcycle as it races up the street. “Yeah, Cambodia is different from Laos, even from Burma,” the UN official explains. “According to our database there are more than 100 projects on trafficking” (interview, June, 29, 2004). He continued the conversation by pointing out that most initiatives are implemented through various partnership arrangements with national and provincial-based nongovernmental organisations (NGOs).

The number of agencies with a stake in combating human trafficking in Cambodia is overwhelming (see Table 3).

Table 3: Cambodian stakeholder working group on trafficking (members)

Category	Agency
<b>UN agencies</b>	ILO – International Labour Organization OHCHR – Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights UNAIDS – Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS UNODC – UN Office against Drugs and Crime UNFPA – UN Population Fund UNHCR – UN High Commissioner for Refugees UNICEF – UN Children’s Fund UNIFEM – UN Development Fund for Women UNDP – UN Development Programme UNESCO – UN Educational Scientific & Cultural Organization UNRC – UN Resident Coordinator FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization WFP – World Food Programme WHO – World Health Organization World Bank IMF – International Monetary Fund
<b>Intergovernmental orgs</b>	IOM – International Organization for Migration ADB – Asian Development Bank
<b>Embassies</b>	United States; German; Norwegian; Dutch; Swedish; British; Thai; Japanese; Australian
<b>Donor orgs</b>	Australian International Development Agency Danish International Development Assistance United Kingdom Department for International Development United States International Development Agency New Zealand International Development Agency Japan International Cooperation Agency
<b>Nongovernmental orgs</b>	The Asia Foundation; Dan Church Aid; Tearfund; World Vision International; World Education; Save the Children Norway; Terre des Hommes; Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association; AFESIP – Acting for Women in Distressing Situations; AIDéTouS – Association International pour le Développement le Tourisme et la Santé; ECPAT – End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking

\* In addition to at least 36 other national/community-based NGOs

As we walk down the unpaved road, my informant explains that to bring these stakeholders together, the United Nations Inter-Agency Project (UNIAP) national office based in Phnom Penh established two separate working groups, one that convenes United Nations (UN)

agencies and donors, and another more inclusive group that includes UN agencies, donors, NGOs, government ministries, embassies, and international organisations.<sup>6</sup> The meetings, though well attended, usually disperse without concrete steps being taken towards mobilising action around common priorities or planning. That said, the UNIAP national office in Cambodia neither had the legitimation nor the resources to carry out its coordination mandate (e.g. the project had just two national based staff in 2004). Even so, member agencies attended these meetings. Why, one might ask? As a high ranking UN official put it, most practitioners attended inter-agency group meetings “to sell their own goods, to explain what they are doing, or to keep a watchful eye on what everyone else is doing” (interview, June 3, 2004). But it was more. Embedded amongst the fractious turf wars, fiercely guarded independence, and competitiveness over resources was interdependence.

After attending a handful of these meetings, in different countries, the nature of this interdependence became clear – agencies used these meetings to legitimate their power as well as amplify the hierarchical distinctions among different agencies. “We do make it a point to attend the meetings,” another UN practitioner comments. “Obviously, some people don’t really get a chance to talk. Many of us had put up our hands, but in the crowd we were lost”. I nod in agreement, recalling the large presence of agencies in attendance at the last inter-agency meeting. “Powerful agencies get heard. Others who are not so powerful get put back on the shelf” (interview, November 2, 2004). Even though practitioners complained about the number of meetings, and believed their attendance was, for the most part, not the result of a conscious choice, they repeatedly went. One UN practitioner explains:

People like to talk, to be seen in meetings, so UNIAP gives them another opportunity to do that. It is like (inter-agency working group meetings) are a forum for people to

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<sup>6</sup> In 2006, the two inter-agency working groups were merged in an attempt to enhance the harmonisation and increase the effectiveness of outcomes in the anti-trafficking community in Cambodia.

advertise themselves. I don't mean that in a bad way. Actually I do mean that in a bad way, but that is not to say it is not normal. It is normal. (interview, August 31, 2004)

Most practitioners indicated that the meetings provided access to a network of people working on trafficking and offered a vehicle for sharing information. Indeed, these resources – eliciting better information, having access to an exclusive network of people, attaining recognition of ongoing activities – are valued forms of what Bourdieu calls capital, and the interdependence among development agencies is based on this exchange of economic, cultural, information, social, and symbol capital.

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Although it may represent an unusual case, the above vignette depicting the development landscape is not greatly different from that of other parts of the Greater Mekong Subregion, or even other parts of the world. As in many transitional countries, Cambodia's emergence from years of traumatic conflict and isolation brought an increased level of international assistance aimed at rebuilding the country after the tragic events of the past. This situation inevitably led to an effusion of different agencies, making the development field, its relationships, and the differing forms of capital needed to negotiate and coordinate, more complex. NGOs were there from the beginning. They carried out much of the reconstruction and rehabilitation work during the 1980s and 1990s, but as the socio-political context stabilised under the presence of United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), the international community presence grew and diversified. NGOs and other international agencies had to restructure their roles, alter mandates, and adopt new strategies to survive in the post-UNTAC period (Curtis, 1998).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> On October 23, 1991, the Agreements on the Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict document was signed in Paris, which established the operation. The deployment of UNTAC began officially in March 1992, lasting until September 1993. It assumed control of key government structures to strengthen and prepare the country for elections held in May 1993.

The scene in Cambodia now is more reflective of the wider changing trends in development, governance, and administration (see Chapter 4). There, as elsewhere, the restructuring of the state through new public management and neoliberal, market-led practices led to widespread institutional change in terms of new opportunities for non-state actors to play a role as service providers and gain access to funding and resources (Lewis, 2001). The changing role of the state, along with non-state actors, meant that the development field was increasingly pluralistic. As illustrated above, non-state actors represent only one group amongst a range of diverse stakeholders with explicit interests and varying degrees of influence and power, whether they are high-ranking government officials, quasi-nongovernmental organisations (QUANGOs), donors, private contractors, international development project staff, or even human trafficking victims. All these relationships are patterned, although the particular patternings are not easy to predict. Certain NGOs, bilaterals, and multilaterals tend to participate in some forums, but not necessarily others, or they will work together in a number of countries in similar kinds of cooperative arrangements. Donors, too, have relationships with particular agencies based on political, religious, and ideological reasons, although these relations are far from stable.

These relationships are, at times, adversely affected by competition or other conflictual tensions directly related to organisational insecurities, imbalances in resource distribution, and attempts to gain more visibility and legitimisation. Hence, most relationships are in need of constant reconstruction, and heavily dependent on endless networking and meetings among a range of often transient professionals based in or moving across regional locations. The development field is constituted by these complex interactions of exchange, characterised by asymmetrical interdependencies among a diverse group of agencies. As I argued in Chapter 1, a theoretical framework that identifies the particular challenges and complexities of the field and its multifaceted relationships is necessary to appreciate fully the various factors that

enable or constrain development coordination. This thesis draws upon two diverse, but complementary approaches – the reflective sociology of Pierre Bourdieu and the new institutionalism – which I argue are well positioned to bring insight into the structure of the development field in which coordinative, cooperative, and competitive behaviour is situated. Taken together, the perspectives provide a more nuanced understanding of how the structure of the field itself is reflexively constituted in and through exchanges of development coordination. Because of the complex nature of both perspectives, each is considered in turn. The new institutionalism paradigm is presented in the next chapter, along with a discussion of the complementary nature of both approaches.

The purpose of this chapter is to explicate the conceptual tools of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) to understand better the interactions and exchanges of coordination embedded within the institutional structure of the development field. Although much has been written on development coordination, particularly in humanitarian operations, few studies have proposed a conceptual or theoretical framework to analyse the complexities of these relationships (Brinkerhoff, 2002a; Lister, 2000; Lowndes & Skelcher, 1998). Missing is an analytic focus that provides insight into hierarchical differentiation, relations of power, and the politicisation affecting these relationships. Bourdieu offers an alternative perspective on the structural elements of power, but he also allows for an examination of cooperative and competitive practices as an economy of exchange driven by strategic positioning and individual interests within a field(s). Several of his theoretical concepts, namely the *field*, the *habitus*, *differing forms of capital*, *doxa*, and *symbolic power*, are useful in explaining how exogenous (external) and endogenous (internal) influences affect the cooperative and competitive practices engendered through the UN inter-agency project.

I begin with a discussion of three core concepts – the field, the habitus, and capital – underpinning his reflexive sociology. I proceed to discuss the ideas of doxa (and related

notions of orthodoxy and heterodoxy) and symbolic power. Although these theoretical constructs are inextricably tied to his core concepts, the latter ideas (doxa and symbolic power) were comparatively undeveloped in Bourdieu's writings, meaning some of these concepts will be developed later in the thesis through practical application (see Table 4). The chapter concludes by discussing how Bourdieu's theoretical tools inform my examination of the nature and impact of institutional arrangements in shaping behaviour among international development agencies addressing human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion.

### **Introducing Bourdieu**

Bourdieu's disdain for 'professorial' definitions of his core concepts, as well as a tendency to reformulate, redefine, and redeploy them in different contexts, make his work challenging to summarise (Swartz, 1997). Indeed, others have argued that "Bourdieu's work resists a simple ordering of the priority of concepts or themes" (Calhoun, LiPuma, & Postone, 1993, p. 12). These types of issues prompted critiques of his work. For example, critics have difficulties with Bourdieu's definition and relational treatment of concepts, specifically notions of the field and habitus, arguing that the constitutive elements of their relationship are far from clear (e.g. Jenkins, 1992). Indeed, Bourdieu contends his ideas are "open concepts" that "have no definition other than systemic ones, and are designed to be put *to work empirically in systematic fashion*" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 95-96). Such concepts can be defined, but not in isolation. They have, however, been applied productively in many situations.

Scholarly treatment of Bourdieu's work generally falls into two different, but at times, overlapping groups. Some writers present theoretical assessments of his work (e.g. Fowler, 1997; Harker, Mahar, & Wilkes, 1990; Jenkins, 1992; Swartz, 1997; Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002), whereas others attempt empirical applications of his concepts across the social sciences (e.g. Béland, 2005; Ebrahim, 2005; Everett & Jamal, 2004, Fram, 2004;

Meinert, 2004; Rankin, 2004; Risseuw, 1991). I endeavour to do both, focusing on more theoretical explorations before engaging in empirical applications; however, to make manifest some of Bourdieu's ideas, examples from my fieldwork are interspersed with theory. Bourdieu placed great emphasis on ethnographic fieldwork, which constituted the basis for his theoretical propositions. Theoretical arguments, Bourdieu (1988) reasons, are meaningless without empirical realities. Thus, after integrating Bourdieu's key theoretical contributions into a conceptual framework to inform this study, I present a critical application of his ideas to development coordination exchanges among human trafficking agencies in the Greater Mekong Subregion (see Chapters 4 through 8).

### **The field, the habitus, and capital**

Of all Bourdieu's conceptual ideas, habitus and cultural capital are the most thoroughly developed in the literature, but his notion of the field remains underexplored, despite it being the central, organising concept for the distribution of material and symbolic capital, and the analysis of power relations (Swartz, 1997).<sup>8</sup> In many ways, contemporary interpretations of Bourdieu's work paralleled the development of his own ideas. Over time, he established that the habitus alone could not explain individual social action. Everyday practices, he reasons, manifest from the dynamic relationship among the habitus, capital, and field. Bourdieu highlights this argument formulaically in *Distinction* (1984):

“[(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice” (p. 101)

Although a simplistic representation, this formula stresses that each defining concept is equally important in shaping an individual's practices. It also suggests that the habitus and capital only exist in relation to the field, which is why the field, understood as a spatial metaphor in which series of practices take place, is the first key element discussed.

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<sup>8</sup> Bourdieu's notion of the field was conceptually weak in his earlier work. For instance, he seldom refers to the idea in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977). However, in *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) and *In other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology* (1990b), the field is discussed more extensively.



## *The field*

The quote at the beginning of this chapter about the different stakeholders involved in combating human trafficking illustrates interactions of development practitioners take place in differing social contexts that constitute diverse fields of practice. To understand the institutional structure within which development coordination exchanges occur, Bourdieu argues we must think in terms of *fields*.<sup>9</sup> But what does he mean by the term? For Bourdieu, the field is not a physical space; rather, it is a socially constructed conceptual space defined as:

...a network, or configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relations to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.). (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 97).

In Bourdieu's language, the field is often used interchangeably with the notion of a game, structured in part by the unequal distribution of different forms of resources or capital (economic, cultural, social, and symbolic). Fields are constructed through the interactions of practitioners and organisations (the players), and "it is the state of relations of force between players that defines the structure of the field" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 99). Much like a rugby or football field, the game is played with both powerful (dominant) and not so powerful (dominated) players.

Competition and conflict are intrinsic in the structure of the field. In pursuit of their interests, players struggle competitively and strategically for legitimation, but they also strive to gain access to different kinds of capital (defined below) that are the basis of power within

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<sup>9</sup> For example, Bourdieu (1994) refers to the state as the "bureaucratic field".

the field as well as its mechanism of reproduction (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu, 2000; also see Everett, 2002). Everyone is “caught up in the game” because “the stakes created in and through the game are worth pursuing” (Bourdieu, 1998a, pp. 76-77). The players believe the game is worth playing, albeit not necessarily for the same reasons.

This captivated belief and interest in the game and its outcomes, combined with players knowing what is at stake (i.e. funding for a next project cycle, contract extension, etc), is captured through the notion of *illusio*. For Bourdieu (2000), *illusio* means “taking seriously” its stakes, arising from the “logic of game itself” (p. 11; also see Bourdieu 1990a, 1990b). I discuss field-specific logic later in the chapter through the notion of *doxa*. What is important here is that the *illusio* represents a fundamental belief that gives players both direction and meaning. For example, practitioners may adhere to different philosophies or discourses, some even opposing, about the most effective means or ‘best practice’ to combat human trafficking, but all agree it is a concern worthy of their attention.

### ***Fields and institutions***

Although the field is a more expansive concept, Bourdieu also speaks metaphorically of fields as a market. Bourdieu (2000) conceptualises the field as a “structure of social exchange” constituted through the dispositions of individuals, which are, in turn, “largely acquired through practice” (p. 113). He continues by saying:

It is these dispositions which enable them to construct the space of the specific possibles inscribed in the field (the problematic) in the form of a state of the argument, of the question, of knowledge, itself embodied in agents or institutions... They are what enables them to operate the symbolic system offered by the field in accordance with the rules which define it and which they respect for a strength that is both logical and social. (p. 113)

Bourdieu regarded the field not just in terms of interactions and exchanges, but also in terms of *institutions*, which in new institutionalist terms represent the “rules of the game” (North, 1990, p. 3) or its “embedded logic” (Scott, 2001, p. 69). As Douglass North (1990) argues,

“institutions are the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction” (p. 3). The field, which provides the rules of the game, becomes embodied into the habitus (discussed in the next section below). Although Bourdieu rarely makes explicit reference to institutions, field analysis “calls attention to the institutional aspects of individual and group action” (Swartz, 1997). Institutions exist reflexively within the relationship between the habitus (the sense of the game) and the field (the structure of the game). Bourdieu (1990a) argues there is dialectic between *habitus* and institutions, that is “the habitus is what enables the institution to attain full realization” (p. 57). It is hardly surprising, then, that institutional theorists conscious of Bourdieu’s work have referred to practices emanating from organisational or institutional environments as fields (e.g. Everett & Jamal, 2001; Oakes, Townley & Cooper, 1998; McDonough, Ventresca, & Outcalt, 2000; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). Merging institutionalist arguments with a field-analytic approach opens up new paths of inquiry for researchers in terms of struggles over field logics, governance arrangements, organisational boundaries, and dominant forms of practice (McDonough et al., 2000).

### ***Defining the limits of a field***

The theoretical concept of the field is an effective spatial metaphor although the boundaries of a particular field are difficult to define. Each field has a distinct structure, and its limits “are situated at the point where the effects of the field cease” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 100). In this sense, Bourdieu is proposing a broad-brush approach when using the concept of the field in an empirical investigation. Because field boundaries cannot be easily traced, critics suggest this is a weak point in his theory (e.g. Jenkins, 1992). However, Bourdieu’s perspective on this issue has its defenders. Sociological new institutionalists Walter Powell and Paul DiMaggio (1991), strongly influenced by Bourdieu’s theories, believe that one of the advantages to the field-analytic approach is that it

incorporates “the totality of relevant actors” as opposed to just “networks of organizations” (p. 65). In other words, ambiguity is advantageous, even if the concept remains challenging to operationalise.

Fields, of course, do not exist in isolation. Fields exist within fields, which Bourdieu refers to as *subfields* (Grenfell & James, 1998; Swartz, 1997). A wider, more global field might present itself as set of subfields (see Bourdieu, 2003; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). If development is seen as the field, for example, donor and NGO communities might be seen as two different but related subfields.<sup>10</sup> Each field or subfield has its own institutional arrangements, sets of beliefs and assumptions, and “legitimate means” of doing things (Grenfell & James, 1998, p. 20). Cognisant of the challenges associated with the differentiation of fields, Bourdieu offers three points for consideration (see Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). First, fields are fluid and dynamic, constantly altered by internal practices, politics, and their convergence with other fields (Webb, et al., 2002). Second, they are semi-autonomous and may contain subfields, which make the interrelations among different fields complex. Third, and most important, the boundaries of, and the relationships among, fields and subfields can be determined only through empirical investigation (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). What these three points illustrate is that fields are fluid and continuously changing, which suggests there is a relational dimension underlying the notion of the field.

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<sup>10</sup> See Grenfell & James (1998) for examples of fields and subfields in education.

Table 4: Bourdieu's conceptual tools

<b>Bourdieu's conceptual tools</b>	<b>Meaning in development field</b>
<p><b>Field</b> – a socially constructed conceptual space that encompasses a group of social relationships</p>	<p><i>Multiple fields and subfields:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The broader development “industry”</li> <li>▪ Group of development agencies and governments working to combat human in the Greater Mekong Subregion</li> <li>▪ UNIAP &amp; its umbrella of member agencies</li> <li>- Donors, NGOS, UN agencies, etc (<i>each might represent subfields</i>)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Habitus</b> – a socially constructed, historically produced, embodied form of practice knowledge that guide's one behaviour</p>	<p>Sets of institutional tools, instruments, processes, strategies, conceptual frames characteristically available to, and used by, practitioners, such as results-based management (RBM) approaches; participatory rural appraisal (PRA) techniques; project design processes &amp; procedures; etc.</p>
<p><b>Symbolic power</b> – the legitimization of power relations through symbolic forms. The ability to impose meanings and visions, which are accepted as legitimate</p>	<p>For example, the conditions that donors can (and often do) impose on practitioners who are seeking funding of development agendas</p>
<p><b>Doxa</b> – the established order of the field. Self-evident systems of logics, assumptions, &amp; processes that undergird all thoughts and practices of individuals in a field (becomes embodied in the habitus)</p> <p><b>Orthodoxy</b> – articulated logics &amp; assumptions that aim to reinforce the doxic status quo</p> <p><b>Heterodoxy</b> – articulated competing logics &amp; assumptions</p>	<p><i>Doxa</i> – neoliberalism</p> <p><i>Orthodoxy</i> – new public management under good governance</p> <p><i>Heterodoxy</i> – joined up governance, partnerships, harmonisation, &amp; alignment</p> <p>Taken together – some of the practical logics and assumptions underlying the broader development field (see Chapter 4):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ markets are central to growth; institutions should enable markets through regulatory frameworks; empower individuals to participate in the market; separate funder/provider roles; delivery of services through outsourcing, contracts, etc.</li> </ul>

## *The habitus*

Every few weeks we have a big event where we bring together a core of people, with an increasing number of other government officials to go over some of the basics of project management. We go over secondary data analysis, to zooming in on a particular geographical area, to doing participatory project design, to setting up participatory monitoring mechanisms prior to the start of actual interventions, to working with baseline data collection in selected target sites that you update so as to monitor change over time, while at the same time combining these baseline data with participatory monitoring tools so as to get a more comprehensive understanding of what changes are being made in selected geographical areas. (interview, September 16, 2004)

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One reason Bourdieu's work is important lies in his urging to take a relational approach to social ethnographic research (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Among his concerns about sociological thought dominating the field at the time were dualisms (i.e. macro/micro; subjectivist/objectivist; structure/agency, etc).<sup>11</sup> Throughout his scholarly career, Bourdieu tried to reconcile these conceptual dichotomies, seeking "to make possible a science of the dialectical relations between the objective structures...and the subjective dispositions within which these structures are actualized and which tend to reproduce them" (Bourdieu 1977a, p. 3). He successfully shifted beyond dualistic thinking through the notion of *habitus*.

The habitus, which is the basis for action, is a set of embodied dispositions and orientations reflecting the structure of the field. For Bourdieu, the complex network of relations (the field) should ultimately be seen as a "system of circular relations which unite structures and practices, through the mediation of habitus" (emphasis in original, Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 203).

The habitus, therefore, is not just "a structuring structure, but also a structured structure" (Bourdieu 1984, p. 170). Perhaps his most renowned concept, Bourdieu has provided

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<sup>11</sup> Also see Anthony Giddens' (1984) structuration theory.

numerous meanings of the habitus over the course of his extensive writings.<sup>12</sup> One of the most commonly cited definitions is from *The Logic of Practice* (1990a):

Systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them. (p. 53)

In development, there are particular sets of operational policies and procedures that practitioners draw upon in their everyday practices. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) generates a “user guide” that outlines, for example, results-based management (RBM) approaches (derived from new public management – see Chapter 3 & 4), which have become a well-established tool in development (Hatton & Schroeder, 2007). The comment made below by one UN official captures another common practice in development, results-based project design:

In those [difficult] situations, I prefer to go back to the basics. Start with a small group, have a clear focus, have a clear mandate, and be very clear on what you want to get out of it in what particular timeframe. This is all back to the basics of project planning and a logical framework with a clear problem definition and clear objective. Work that out in specific outputs and activities that you want to do in a particular timeframe, with a particular budget, and make sure you’re realistic. (interview, September 16, 2004).

According to Bourdieu, meaningful social perceptions and practices arise from, and are informed by, the characteristics or orientation of individuals – their habitus – a set of dispositions that guides one’s behaviour, which is the product of existing institutional structures and historical contexts. In other words, the habitus is a socially constructed, historically produced, embodied form of practical knowledge. It provides agents with a tacit

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<sup>12</sup> Bourdieu’s most extensive thinking on the habitus is found in *Pascalian Meditations* (2000).

sensibility about how to behave or act in different situations without strictly determining their actions (Thompson, 1991). These actions, perceptions, and sentiments unfold with little orchestrated or conscious thought. He writes:

The habitus entertains with the social world which has produced it a real ontological complicity, the source of cognition without consciousness, intentionality without intention, and a practical mastery of the world's regularities which allows one to anticipate the future without even needing to posit it as such. (Bourdieu, 1990b, pp. 11-12)

Many of the dispositions or acquired schemes are learned during childhood, through a gradual process of socialisation, until these actions become second nature (e.g. eating with a knife and fork, driving a car, or playing sports). Revisiting the game metaphor, the habitus offers the players “a sense of one's place”, an internalisation of the game rules (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 465). An agent engaged in a field is comfortable because she/he knows the environment and has a feel for the game. Thus, when an agent or player is engaged on the playing field, she/he is aware of the rules and knows how to play the game because this information is part of the embodied, cognitive structure that motivates behaviour. While the game plays out, the knowledge base of a player is continuously evolving as he/she learns to cope with different situations encountered in the field. In Chapter 6, we will see the habitus of the practitioners provides a “fuzzy logic of practical sense”, or put differently, a set of common institutional orientations that were applied to the conceptualisation and design of Phase I and II of the UNIAP. Through the concept of habitus, one is able to account for the ideological articulations and representations underlying the structure of the field, as manifested in individual and organisational practices.

When players encounter conditions or situations unfamiliar to them, a *dialectical confrontation* is triggered between habitus (“as a structuring structure”) and the “objective structures” of the field, altering their habitus (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 46). The field demands its



players equip themselves with the appropriate habitus in order to function properly (Bourdieu, 1990a). Bourdieu explains (2000) further:

The sense of the game is the forth-coming of the game, of what needs to be done... (the) habitus predisposed to anticipate it, the sense of history of the game, which is only acquired through experience of the game... Strategies oriented by the sense of the game are practical anticipations of the immanent tendencies of the field. (pp. 211-212)

The relationship between the field and the habitus, therefore, is a mutually constituting interaction. The field structures the habitus, and the habitus constitutes the field (through the thoughts and practices of individuals) as a meaningful environment. It is this interaction between the habitus and the field that dictates the “possibilities and impossibilities that are inscribed in a field” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 115). The habitus is capable of adjusting itself in new situations, continuously shifting (within limits) in response to changing social, cultural, and political contexts or fields (Bourdieu, 2000). “It is durable but not eternal!” Bourdieu writes (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 133).

Bourdieu often faced accusations of determinism from his critics (e.g. Jenkins, 1992; Nash, 1990). Others disagreed, arguing these criticisms fail to appreciate the complexity behind his perspectives (e.g. Swartz, 1997). Bourdieu thinks critics misinterpreted his notion of habitus, seeing it as a static entity, and this misunderstanding is why he insists “the habitus is not a fate, not a destiny” (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 45). The habitus, instead, should be understood as “pragmatic adaptation” (e.g. Crossley, 2001, p. 112). Although there is a tendency for certain dispositions and orientations to be perpetuated and reproduced through practice, he insists individuals are not “locked in” to sets of rules or norms. Rather, Bourdieu (1986) argues that rules and norms constrain the choices and practices of individuals, without wholly determining them as such. Bourdieu prefers to speak of strategies or interests; thus, he admits to both conscious and unconscious forms of strategic calculation (Swartz, 1997). Because interests and strategies are construed differently, individuals are able to choose paths

to follow, thus not precluding agency. Engaging in a new game means an embodiment for its recent entrants, what Bourdieu (2000) refers to as the “instituted points of view” (p. 99). To each field are structures of thought, which create the principle visions and divisions, modes of knowledge, and discursive practices. This socially constructed, contextual knowledge becomes inscribed in the habitus and plays out in the form of strategies, which is how Bourdieu explains the ways power relations and domination manifest through the distribution, accumulation, and exchange of differing forms of capital. Over the course of this thesis, I will show how development is replete with these instituted points of view.

### ***The four forms of capital***

Resources, in Bourdieu’s theory, have considerable significance. He speaks of the field as structured space embedded with differing kinds of valued resources, or conceptualised by Bourdieu, as *capital*. We have seen that Bourdieu refers to the field as a market of exchanges, in which the flow and distribution of specific forms of capital – what is at stake – establishes the power relations and hierarchical positioning of its agents. Social practices, for Bourdieu (1984), are about capital accumulation, an ongoing exchange or process of alchemy (turning one form of capital into another) that transforms capital of different kinds – economic, cultural, and social (explained below) – into a distribution of symbolic capital (also explained below). Resembling a game of poker, actors use strategies that are designed to enhance the “structure and volume” of their different kinds of capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 99). Whatever official discourses of collaboration might be heard, competition around capital is endemic, as are unequal longer term outcomes: “capital, in its various forms is a set of pre-emptive rights over the future; it guarantees some people the monopoly of some possibilities although they are officially guaranteed to all” Bourdieu, 2000, p. 225). Before the game begins, in fact, capital is unevenly distributed throughout the field, but at all times, the

strategies of individuals largely depend on the amounts and types of capital in their possession. Bourdieu (1993) elaborates through a depiction of a poker match:

...those who have lots of red tokens and few yellow ones, that is, a lot of economic capital and little cultural capital, will not play in the same way as those who have many yellow tokens and few red ones. ...each player sees the play of the others, that is, their way of playing, their style, and he derives clues from this regarding their hand. (pp. 34-35)

Inherently conflictual interactions of exchange, the mobilisation, accumulation, exchange, and fungibility of the differing forms of capital are at the core of the practices of individuals.

Social and other fields, and the practices of habitus, are powerfully shaped by these capital accumulating and exchanging activities and strategies. Indeed, “the structure of the field of power depends at every moment on the forms of capital engaged in struggles over their respective weight within the structure” (Bourdieu quoted in Wacquant, 1993, p. 24). Power and domination, therefore, are structurally embedded in the field itself. Bourdieu argues it is impossible to account for the structure and functioning of a field unless “capital in all its forms” is recognised (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 242). He writes:

The structure of the distribution of the different types and subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represents the immanent structure of the social world, i.e., the set of constraints, inscribed in the very reality of that world, which govern its functioning in a durable way, determining the chances of success for practices. (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 242)

Because capital is field-specific, its value must be conferred as such by its agents. The different forms of capital, however, are not evenly distributed, as he explains:

Two individuals endowed with an equivalent overall capital can differ ...in that one holds a lot of economic capital and little cultural capital while the other has little economic capital and large cultural assets (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, p. 99).

So what are the differing forms of capital (see Table 5) at stake that individuals use to enhance their positions? I begin with the most recognisable form, economic capital.

### *Economic capital*

Arguably the simplest form, *economic capital* consists of financial, material, or physical resources “directly convertible into money” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243). In the development field, funding is the most coveted version of economic capital; other forms of this type of capital include expansive office space, meeting/conference rooms, project vehicles, and other forms of equipment. The flow of financial resources is pivotal to development organisations. Largely dependent on external resources, most development agencies face a similar financial situation, which means they must seek out and secure external funding for projects and activities. Donors, in this regard, exercise a considerable amount of power because they not only possess, but also control, the majority of economic capital within the development field. Most relations involving donors are structured around funding support, which typically is carried out on a project or program basis (e.g. sector-wide approaches). Economic capital, however, in development is increasingly dispersed across multiple agencies. Putting together a project or program now involves gathering bits of funding and other capital contributions from one or more funding sources (i.e. bilateral agencies, multilateral agencies, donor governments, international NGOs (INGOs), funds/foundations). Donors have their pots of money, but also their defined new public management outputs that need to be met. The broader implications of the dispersal and diffusion of capital is that programs and projects, such as the UNIAP, are more substantively involved in, and dependent upon, donor participation to promote information sharing and networking. As one donor told me, development agencies “can access a lot more than just money” if they are willing to engage on a deeper level (interview, September 23, 2004). This assertion leads to the next form of capital, cultural capital.

Table 5: Bourdieu's forms of capital

<b>Bourdieu's type of capital</b>		<b>Meaning in development field</b>
<b>Economic capital:</b> Financial, material or physical resources/assets directly convertible into money		Funding, office space, meetings rooms, project vehicles, equipment, etc.
<b>Cultural capital</b>	<b>Embodied state:</b> Durable dispositions, attitudes, preferences, and behaviours internalised by an agent	Characteristics such as managerialism procedures and expertise; language skills; charisma; presence; analytic ability; confidence in negotiations; ability to work in a multicultural environment, etc.
	<b>Objectified state:</b> Embodied within an agent, but transmissible through cultural or material goods	Websites; progress reports; published research studies/document ownership; baseline studies; toolkits; meeting notes; project proposals/design, etc.
	<b>Institutionalised state:</b> Educational/academic qualifications, credentials, recognised competence	Expertise in a particular area; specialised training; Master degree, Doctoral degree; CV/pedigree; grounded international experience; consultancy experience; team leadership, etc.
<b>Social capital:</b> Resources that individuals, groups or organisations accumulate through recognised networks, social relations, or group membership		Connections – who you know/close to; information & communication channels; forms of capital gained through relations facilitated by the UNIAP
<b>Symbolic capital:</b> The form in which the different forms of capital – economic, cultural, and social – are institutionally recognised as legitimate		Prestige; status; recognition; distinction; visibility; influence; presence; respect; reputation; being listened to, etc.

### *Cultural capital*

The second form is *cultural capital*, nonmaterial goods such as the different abilities, skills, expertise, and qualifications (perceived legitimate behaviour and knowledge) possessed by individuals (and indirectly, by the organisations they work for).<sup>13</sup> Bourdieu (1986) breaks this type down into three related states: a) *embodied state*: durable dispositions, skills, attitudes, preferences, and behaviours internalised by an agent (into their habitus); b) *objectified state*: embodied within an agent, but transmissible through cultural or material goods such as writing, books, publications, pictures, and so forth; and c) *institutionalised state*: educational/academic qualifications, credentials, or recognised competence granted through recognised institutions such as universities, training schools, and other organisations.

Cultural capital manifests through forms of shared knowledge, understandings, and symbolic meanings, and, as a result, is seen as an extension of the habitus. The embodied form of capital allows agents to exploit effectively their objectified and institutionalised kinds of capital. In the development field, most organisations possess a rich but diverse stock of cultural capital in the form of people and their various skills and talents. Some are generalists, working from headquarters in Geneva, New York, or Vienna, with expertise in policy and program execution, negotiation procedures, and relationship-building among states. Others are specialists, with expertise in their assigned regions, implementing policies and programs at the grassroots level. The key, however, is the ability to gather the appropriate combination of professionals that have the right blend of skills, knowledge, and attributes, or capital, in order to achieve successful results. As indicated, resources, including people who possess qualifications or expertise, are often limited. One of the strategies used in the development field to bridge gaps in cultural capital is to establish or draw upon personal networks that allow individuals to access needed resources. These networks are referred to as social capital.

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<sup>13</sup> Some scholars view Bourdieu's focus on cultural capital as too individualistic, even though organisations are comprised of people who carry inherent, embodied attributes (e.g. Fine, 2001a; Stehr, 2001).

## *Social capital*

The idea of social capital has become influential across academic, social, and political circles, prompted in part by reaction to the individualistic bias of neoliberal market values during the 1980s and 1990s (Field, 2003; Putnam, 1993b). Popularised by the works of James Coleman (1988, 1990), and most notably Robert Putnam (1993a, 1995, 2000), the notion of social capital has been applied to explain the decline of the traditional family and community cohesion, which traditionally have been built on foundations of shared values and trust. It is often overlooked that Bourdieu was one of the first to write about social capital during the early 1970s and 1980s (e.g. Bourdieu, 1977a, 1986; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Neither Coleman nor Putnam paid much attention to Bourdieu, who saw social capital in more critical terms, as being unevenly distributed across society, and as being used to maintain class and other hierarchies (Field, 2003; Gilchrist, 2004).<sup>14</sup> Although Coleman and Putnam construe the meaning of social capital differently from Bourdieu, there is a shared belief that individuals, groups, or organisations will achieve better outcomes through connections and collective arrangements.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Bourdieu's work on social capital was part of a wider analysis of social inequalities characteristic to French social theory. The work of American scholars, Coleman and Putnam, whose work was more concerned with explaining social capital through empirical analyses, appealed to a wider North American and British audience (Fine, 2001a).

<sup>15</sup> Putnam contends social capital refers to "connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (Putnam (1996, p. 19). Many writers credit him with bringing the idea of social capital to the general public as well as political leaders, including the Clinton, Bush, and Blair administrations (e.g. Cuthill, 2003; Gilchrist, 2004; Harriss, 2002). Hence, it is hardly surprising that his interpretation of social capital has permeated the development lexicon with notions of networks, trust, mutuality, and reciprocity. Praised as the "missing link" (p. 1) to economic growth, good governance, and development by a World Bank senior economist (Grootaert, 1998), governments and international organisations in both developed and developing countries have shown considerable interest in the notion of social capital to strengthen levels of civic engagement through horizontal networks. In an era of growing interdependence, social capital enables people to work together through high levels of reciprocity and trust in order to access mutually advantageous resources such as information, skills, and knowledge (Field, 2003, 2005).

Although less influential than Putnam, Coleman's focus on social capital was also responsible for bringing the concept to the attention of researchers, academics, and development professionals. He presents a broader model than Putnam, claiming that "...social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity, but a variety of different entities having two characteristics in common: They all consist of some aspect of social structure, and they facilitate certain action of individuals who are within the structure. (Coleman, 1990, p. 302). Coleman

Bourdieu defines social capital as “the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 119). Membership in a particular group constitutes social capital, in which obligations, mutual recognition, common identities, and shared exchanges provide access to coveted resources in the field (Bourdieu, 1993). Put differently, it is the “added value which membership in a solitary (and powerful) group brings to capital already possessed” (Wacquant, 1987, p. 69). Bourdieu (1986) argues that agents can purposefully create “lasting, useful relationships that can secure material or symbolic profits”, which are achieved through “the alchemy of consecration”, or as I interpret it, *cooperation* (pp. 249-250).

An individual’s ability to mobilise social capital largely depends on the size of one’s associations, in addition to the volume of capital (economic, cultural, and symbolic) each connection holds (Bourdieu, 1986). In other words, social capital generates a set of valuable collective assets. Bourdieu recognises these groups might be informal or formal, such as families, community organisations, private clubs, or networks of friends, noting that their existence is not always naturally given. As a result, platforms for social capital are implicit in maintaining dominant visions and divisions within a field (see Rankin, 2004).

The main divergence from Bourdieu’s perspective comes from Putnam and Coleman’s conclusions that trust, reciprocity, information exchanges, and norm building are essential ingredients of social capital that facilitate mutually beneficial cooperative behaviour. These American scholars also share a common belief that social capital is a public good,

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(1988) premises his view of social capital on rational choice or rational action theory, in which agents act to maximise and advance their interests. Extending this perspective, he argues that accessing social ties was crucial because of the tangible benefits yielded to individuals (Portes, 2000). Thus, he sees social capital as a structural element, the actual or potential resources embedded in the relationships among agents, which are, in turn, gained through interest-driven exchanges (Lin, 2001).



implying that its benefits reach a broader population, and our endeavours should value social capital because it is essentially a good thing.<sup>16</sup> As Katharine Rankin (2004) argues, much like neoliberal thinking, these interpretations of social capital encompass “the rational, utility-maximizing individual as the locus of progressive change” (p. 38). In contrast, Bourdieu adopts a more critical perspective because he sees social capital as a strategic investment within the framework of a hierarchically structured field characterised by competition, power struggles, and social inequalities. According to Putnam and Coleman, social capital is unlimited, where it is scarce for Bourdieu, and commonly used as an asset by elites to maintain or augment their positions.<sup>17</sup>

Although the works of Coleman and Putnam went further in influencing social researchers and development practitioners, Bourdieu’s idea of social capital offers an alternative understanding of the structure of relationships and how power relations are reconstituted in the field. His approach focuses more on groups or networks than the individual. Social capital is contextual, and Bourdieu’s treatment acknowledges the negative consequences it may generate, such as the perpetuation of inherent inequalities. Conversely, the interpretation of social capital as a public good, dependent on the trustworthiness and reciprocity of individuals, does not capture the power relations embedded within the development field. Coleman and Putnam neglect the dynamics of power and conflict,

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<sup>16</sup> Putnam and Goss (2002), however, recognize social capital can be at the same time a private good, which serves the immediate interest of an individual (p. 7).

<sup>17</sup> There are some marked conceptual differences as well, and I briefly compare and contrast their respective positions, an exposition designed to show how Bourdieu offers an alternative, and arguably better, way of understanding social capital and international cooperation. On the surface, it might appear that Coleman’s analysis of social capital has stronger affinities with Bourdieu than Putnam.<sup>17</sup> This individualistic line of thinking also resonates with Bourdieu; however, Coleman maintains individuals rationally pursue their own interests (Field, 2003). Thus, networks are part of the social structure and social capital that emerges as “a by-product of activities engaged in for other purposes” (Coleman, 1990, p. 312). Bourdieu was critical of rational choice theory in spite of the fact he too espouses an individualistic model of social capital. Unlike Coleman, Bourdieu denies the intentional or conscious realm advocated by rational choice theorists and contends that “without being rational, social agents are *reasonable*” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 129). Adopting this stance, Bourdieu emphasises social capital as a *structuring force* that perpetuates power relations within a complex system of social exchanges. Also, see John Field (2003), *Social Capital*, for an excellent review and analysis of the seminal contributions of these three scholars.

whereas Bourdieu's notion of social capital allows us to locate existing power inequalities in the development field. For example, Bourdieu recognises that institutionalised group relations offer benefits, and a group such as the UNIAP can serve a valuable function.

### *Symbolic capital*

The final form of capital, possibly the most complex, is symbolic capital. According to Bourdieu (1985), it is "commonly called prestige, reputation, renown, etc., which is the form in which the different forms of capital are perceived and recognized as legitimate" (p. 724). Symbolic capital arises from the accumulation and possession of other forms of capital, which is the reason it is arguably the most valued kind. The accrual of symbolic capital is an important aspect in development, and it can be accumulated through long experience and success, or it might be borrowed from a partner organisation. The UNIAP's symbolic capital comes, in part, from their identification with the UN itself. I asked one national project coordinator what facilitates coordination. Her response was:

...being the UN itself. I don't want to use the word power, but you do. You have something supporting you. You can say, 'I'm coming from the UN,' and we get an appointment quite quickly and willing. For example, I went to meet with the Director of this huge institution, and I could hear "the UN is here, the UN is here!" I couldn't imagine myself going to places like this when I was with NGOs. I would never have been able to go to these meetings. (interview, September 20, 2004)

It is a symbolic identification that smaller agencies (e.g. NGOs) are keen to appropriate, through measures such as putting the UN logo on a publication or listing them as a partner. Symbolic capital also emerges, as we will see later in this thesis, from the mandates given by states to UN agencies. Although the state(s) define its scope, the mandate confers legitimation and prestige, core forms of capital that will prove crucial to the UNIAP's coordination activities. On an everyday level, symbolic capital might be tied to the reputation of a particular program or project, which has successfully compounded several other forms of capital such as a large amount of funding, high levels of cultural capital in the form of expert

staff, and/or built trusting relationships and networks over a number of years. This accumulated capital – cultural, social, and economic – simultaneously functions as an instrument of symbolic capital, which is represented within the logo of a particular program or organisation. The quote below, in reference to UNICEF, demonstrates the inseparability of other forms of capital in the accumulation of symbolic capital:

UNICEF is a great partner because they are recognised (symbolic capital). People don't have a problem with UNICEF like they do with some other agencies. They have an easier mandate to support (symbolic capital). Also their reach and their capacity (reputation equals symbolic capital, capacity equals cultural capital) is so huge. They are also well funded (economic capital), so strategically speaking they are a very good partner (social capital), but they also have a lot of knowledge and expertise (cultural capital). (interview, May 19, 2004)

Symbolic capital may embody the legitimate demand for recognition from others; at the same time, it is a form of power and domination that is not necessarily perceived as such (Swartz, 1997). In this light, symbolic capital is the manner and degree to which individuals or organisations differentiate themselves from others in the field, acting as lead or peak agencies. As a recognised form of authority and legitimation, symbolic capital often generates the most anxieties and conflicts, even where there are few economic resources at stake. In the UNIAP experience, as we will see, there have been continuous rivalries over image, profile, and reputation, which often prevent practitioners from seeing the benefits of coordination.

Although symbolic capital is 'priceless', economic considerations are never far away. The fact that development organisations must maintain a solid reputation (symbolic capital) to remain competitive in the field, otherwise funding mechanisms (economic capital) will be greatly limited, illustrates Bourdieu's (1977a) point that "practice never ceases to conform to economic calculation" (p. 177). In broad Marxist terms, Bourdieu (1986) contends "economic capital is at the root of all the other types of capital" and specifically "at the root of their

effects” (p. 252). He continues by arguing that the other three forms of capital, including symbolic capital, are “transformed, disguised forms of economic capital” (p. 252). Organisations necessarily actively engage in these transformations on a daily basis by turning information into funding opportunities, using human or cultural capital to attract partners, and yet more funding, and turning all of these into reputation, which in turn draws in more capital from elsewhere.

On another, more complex level, capital must move beyond its material base into the symbolic realm because this is how capital is legitimated into power relations. Here again, the important point is that symbolic capital is (only) a product or representation of other forms of capital. Bourdieu, thus, urges us to recognise the fungibility of the different forms of capital, a circular transformation or ‘alchemy’ through which symbolic capital is accrued (e.g. Bourdieu, 1977a, 1986; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Reflecting upon the new public management agenda in development promoted through western neoliberal governments during the 1980s, Townsend, Porter, and Mawdsley (2002), for example, show how complex interdependencies were created by examining the flow of resources between development stakeholders as a result of these reforms. These authors argue that through partnerships or network arrangements, NGOs “move resources, authority and concepts from donors to recipients, and return images, information and legitimation from recipients to donors, whether the individual member of the public, the state, the taxpayer, the multilateral agency, or the Ford Foundation” (p. 832). Here, the NGOs, by acting as vehicles for moving and exchanging capital, were themselves able to accumulate new levels of symbolic capital recognition.

This activity in development and elsewhere commonly requires some greater form of recognition, by higher agencies, if the efforts exerted in these processes are to be legitimated. Here, peak agencies like the UN, and in particular for Bourdieu the state, have a core role in recognising and giving legitimacy to these processes of capital concentration. The state is

thus something of a ‘central banker’ for different kinds of capital, overseeing and recognising its existence and exchange, declaring the outcomes valuable, and giving them important symbolic recognition. In Bourdieu’s (1994) terms:

The state is *the culmination of a process of concentration of different species of capital*: capital of physical force or instruments of coercion (army, police), economic capital, cultural or (better) informational capital, and symbolic capital. It is this concentration as such which constitutes the state as the holder of a sort of meta-capital granting power over other species of capital and over their holders. Concentration of the different species of capital (which proceeds hand in hand with the construction of the corresponding fields) leads indeed to the emergence of a specific, properly statist capital (capital étatique) which enables the state to exercise power over the different fields and over the different particular species of capital,... (emphasis in original, p. 4).

As the above quotation illustrates, each form of capital has a symbolic effect, performing to differing degrees as symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 2000).

In spite of the complex institutional arrangements currently in place in development (see Chapter 4), the convertibility of different types of capital is far from simplistic. For example, because social capital implies an act of knowledge and recognition, it continuously overlaps as symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). In actuality, all forms of capital are interconnected, and although some types are more highly valued, each has a differing degree of transference. What distinguishes the different types is their reproducibility. As Bourdieu (1986) points out:

The convertibility of the different types of capital is the basis of strategies aimed at ensuring the reproduction of capital (and the position occupied in social space) by means of the conversions least costly in terms of conversion work and of the losses inherent in the conversion itself. (p. 253)

Although there are differing forms of capital, “agents yield a power proportionate to their symbolic capital, i.e., to the recognition they receive from a group” (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 731). The primary aim is to impose their principal visions and dictate the division of the social field.

In these processes of capital exchange, then, there is a constant accounting of different kinds of capital, especially symbolic capital – the prestige and reputation of particular programs and agencies. In development, however, the state is not always the “central bank of symbolic credit” (Bourdieu 1996, p. 376). The UN itself, as we will see, also operates as a key symbolic exchange site.

As human trafficking emerged as a global concern, the international community began to negotiate socially constructed understandings and representations of victims, perpetrators, perspectives regarding supply/demand, and the nature of the trafficking process (Doezema, 2000; Sandy, 2007; Sullivan, 2003). An abstract discourse around human trafficking grew as agencies sought to implement counter-trafficking strategies (see Chapter 5). However, what had yet to develop in the Greater Mekong Subregion was a sustained, overarching mechanism for regional cooperation to combat human trafficking. The process, which became known as the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT), would consolidate the technical expertise (cultural), financial (economic) support, and other forms of capital in the field in order to bring about the legitimation and recognition needed to keep the flow of funding and exchanges of capital constant. Here, as we will see, the UNIAP, as Secretariat for the COMMIT process, came to fulfill a central role. At a crucial point in the project, the UNIAP came to operate as a kind of platform for exchange of capital, a platform that had secured legitimation from the six governments and a range of other agencies, and a platform that enabled member agencies to contribute all their different capital, including symbolic capital, without losing them. Indeed, by participating in the process, they could see their different types of capital augmented.

There is yet another level to Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic capital. Although it is the ultimate form of power, agents in the field do not perceive it as a form of power; thus, it is constantly misrecognised. He argues:

...capital (or power) becomes symbolic capital, that is capital endowed with a specific efficacy, only when it is *misrecognized* in its arbitrary truth as capital and *recognized* as legitimate and, on the other hand, that this act of (false) knowledge and recognition is an act of *practical* knowledge which in no way implies that the object known and recognised be posited as an object. (emphasis in original, Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 112)

Given the extent that symbolic capital is a “disguised” form of capital, Bourdieu implies that it is the practical consequences that are of importance (Bourdieu, 1977a, p. 183; also see Grenfell & James, 1998). It is the interested calculation underlying the practices of individuals that is misrecognised. More critically though, misrecognition also relates to the ways in which the “underlying processes and generating structures of fields are not consciously acknowledged” (Grenfell & James, 1998, p. 23).

### ***Symbolic power/symbolic violence***

Symbolic capital, crucially, involves a level of power and domination appropriate to its position as the ultimate concentrated form of capital power. Commonly, it is this *symbolic power* (also referred to as symbolic violence) that is used to assert hierarchy, claim legitimation through association, and reshape agendas to insist things are done a certain way. Domination, Bourdieu (2000) argues, “always has a symbolic dimension...capable of being applied to all the things of the world, and in particular to social structures” (p. 172). He continues to state that symbolic power “is defined in and by a determinate relationship between those who exercise this power and those who undergo it – that is to say, in the very structure of the field in which belief is produced and reproduced” (Bourdieu, 1977b, p. 117). For Bourdieu, the power of legitimation and domination is *symbolic power* that is based on the accumulation of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1989a). He further articulates its meaning in the following passage:

Every power to exert symbolic violence, i.e. every power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which

are the basis of its force, adds its own specifically symbolic force to those power relations. (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 4)

Bourdieu's perspective clarifies the importance of symbolic capital and its role in maintaining the hierarchical structure of positions and divisions of relations within a field. In this respect, symbolic power demands the complicity of both the dominant and the dominated (Bourdieu, 1991; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Swartz, 1997). For example, symbolic power is often used by governments or agencies with more power in the field to shape and control both the language used to conceptualise human trafficking and its interventions, that is to reshape what is being recognised in trafficking programs. An excerpt from a report on Laos written by Oren Ginzburg (2002), a former research officer for UNICEF and UNIAP, highlights this point:

Authorities in sending countries can also be driven to equate illegal migration to trafficking, and the official Lao discourse on migration sometimes exemplifies this trait. Although Lao authorities may be unhappy with current migration trends to Thailand the economic situation in Laos does not give them much latitude to curb these trends. In the meantime international organisations are willing to invest resources in the fight against trafficking, i.e. the exploitation of migrants. There is no total overlap between these two agendas, but there is obviously a point where they meet. By blurring the boundaries between trafficking and migration, authorities can promote their migration priorities under the auspices of the organisations' anti-trafficking agenda. (p. 3)

Through its symbolic power, the state is able to exercise its interests, which is to restrict illegal migration, though under the guise of funding for anti-trafficking programs. The state is able to do this because the symbolic capital it holds legitimises its ability to exercise influence and power.

States are not the only holders of symbolic power in development. Donors and even consultants are often in positions of symbolic power. These practitioners, who are seen as 'technical experts', can (and often do) impose certain conditions or criteria on development



agendas, programs, and projects (see Chapter 6). This leverage (symbolic power) also enables donors to regulate how information is interpreted and used (see Ebrahim, 2005). Symbolic power is inextricably linked to discourse, and the ability to shape the way things are framed and presented. “Every linguistic exchange”, Bourdieu maintains, “contains the *potentiality* of an act of power, and all the more so when it involves agents who occupy asymmetric positions in the distribution of the relevant capital” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 145). The struggle for symbolic power is a struggle:

...for the power to impose the legitimate vision of the social world, or, more precisely, for the recognition, accumulated in the form of symbolic capital of notoriety and respectability, which gives the authority to impose the legitimate knowledge of the sense of the social world, its present meaning and the direction in which it is going and should go. (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 185)

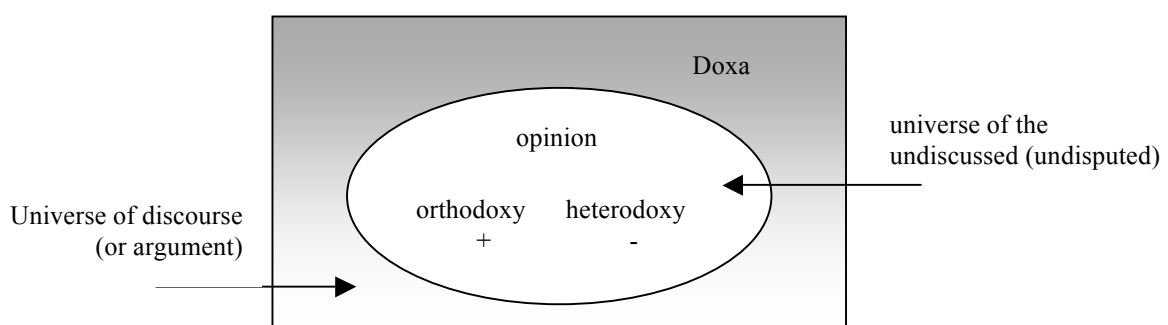
The international development literature often neglects to acknowledge the politicised nature of development coordination exchanges disguised under notions of partnership and cooperation (Makim, 2003). Yet to understand why these dynamics are overlooked, we must understand the notion of doxa.

### ***Doxa, orthodoxy, and heterodoxy***

According to Bourdieu, each field is constituted through a set of presuppositions that distinctively defines its structure and underlying processes. Bourdieu (1977a; 1990a, 2000) refers to this inherent structure of the field as doxa. In his words, “doxa is the relationship of immediate adherence that is established in practice between a *habitus* and the field to which it is attuned, the pre-verbal taking-for-granted of the world that flows from practical sense” (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 68). These presuppositions, which constitute the doxa, establish the field logic(s), which becomes embodied in the form of a specific habitus, or alternatively, the sense of the game (Bourdieu, 2000). The doxa, Bourdieu (2000) argues, undergirds all “thought and practice” (p. 68). Acceptance of the doxa is implied when players choose to participate in the

game, “sharing a tacit adherence, which makes their competition possible and assign its limits” (p. 102). Bourdieu continues to suggest that recognition of the established order of domination and legitimation “effectively forbids questioning of the principles of belief” as it “would threaten the very existence of the field” (p. 102). When the doxa is challenged, however, the result is the emergence of *orthodoxy* and *heterodoxy* to constitute a field of opinion (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Bourdieu’s notion of doxa<sup>18</sup>



Bourdieu (1977a) writes “orthodoxy, straight, or rather straightened, opinion, which aims, without ever entirely succeeding, at restoring the primal state of innocence of doxa, exists only in the objective relationship which opposes it to heterodoxy” (p. 169). Put differently, the orthodoxy (articulated assumptions aimed to reinforce the doxic status quo) and heterodoxy (articulated alternative assumptions to the doxa) represent the appearance of competing or conflicting discourses that bring the doxa into the realm of consciousness. The habitus, therefore, generates practices adjusted to either orthodox or heterodox expressions, or, at times, variations of both, depending on the degree of isomorphism and homogeneity (see Chapter 3) in the field (Bourdieu, 2000). In spite of this divergence, Bourdieu reminds us that no matter whether one adheres to the orthodoxy or the heterodoxy, all individuals share an adherence to the same doxa. Thus, the doxa, much like Gramsci’s notion of hegemony, can be seen as a form of power, which Bourdieu (1987, 1989a, 2000) explicitly refers to as symbolic

<sup>18</sup> Adapted from (Bourdieu, 1977a, p. 168).

power (worldmaking power) because of its ability to legitimate the dominant vision of the world and its divisions. The policies and practices of development, for instance, have reached a moment in which the naturalness of neoliberal economic paradigm has come under challenge, which has given rise to new orthodoxies (which I define as new public management and good governance) as well as new heterodoxies (which I define as partnerships, joined-up governance, and coordination) (see Chapter 4). These ideologies and discourses are currently shaping the field of development, how the game is being played out, what is at stake, and the nature of development coordination exchanges.

Having outlined a number of Bourdieu's conceptual tools, the remaining part of this chapter will revisit these main theoretical concepts to briefly show how they inform this investigation regarding the nature and impact of institutional arrangements in shaping coordination among development agencies working in the human trafficking field of the Greater Mekong Subregion under the umbrella of the UNIAP.

### ***The relevance and application of Bourdieu's reflexive sociology***

The insights of Bourdieu's reflexive sociology are relevant because he provides a framework for exploring how power is embedded in development coordination exchanges, arguing for a relational analysis of practice. These ideas about the complex interaction between subjective dispositions and objective structures underpin the concept of the habitus, which, like capital, is relational to the field. Bourdieu urges us to recognise that the practices of individuals are possible because of an embodied knowledge or understanding of their particular social context, and act, both consciously and subconsciously, on the basis of that knowledge (Swartz, 2003). Areas of practice constitute themselves as fields, structured through differentiated modes of knowledge or discourses, but also the practical strategies of individuals, endowed with their specific habitus, to leverage differing forms of capital

(Bourdieu, 2000). For Bourdieu, then, the practices of individuals are socially constructed and contextual, built around inherently conflictual struggles for domination and legitimation.

In my study, the field in question is the network of human trafficking development agencies and practitioners affiliated with the UNIAP in the Greater Mekong Subregion. Given the diversity of stakeholders, it is clear there are multiple fields and subfields in existence. In this sense, the human trafficking field of the Greater Mekong Subregion (discussed in Chapter 5) is situated within the broader field of development (discussed in Chapter 4). Within these fields, however, are other fields. I argue it is possible to conceptualise the human trafficking field in the Greater Mekong Subregion as a set of separate but interrelated subfields involving: a) intergovernmental agencies (e.g. UN agencies and the UNIAP, etc.); 2) governments; 3) NGOs; and 4) donor governments. The UNIAP and its member agencies do not operate in a vacuum as separate stakeholders from the broader development context. They are influenced by the wider shifts in policies and practices in development by virtue of their position.

Bourdieu urges us to recognise the importance of field-specific logics, embodied in the form of a specific habitus. The habitus is the basis for all practice, and it provides practitioners a sense of the game. Thus, the strategies of the practitioners involved under the umbrella of the UNIAP are examples of the habitus in action. As detailed aspects of the conceptualisation, design, and implementation of the UNIAP are explored (see Chapter 6), the sets of dispositions, institutional instruments, tools, and processes commonly available to, and deployed by, practitioners in development will become apparent. Through an analysis of their experiences, it will be possible to see how the practices of individuals are tailored through their shared habitus to the particulars of a given or unforeseen situation. For these reasons, it is important to contemplate the structuring components of the habitus through an examination of the discourses and logics that become “taken for granted” (Bourdieu, 1977a, p. 166). Here,

I draw upon Bourdieu's concepts of doxa, orthodoxy, and heterodoxy in order to gain a clear understanding of how power and knowledge reflect the discourses constitutive of practice. As Fram (2004) aptly notes, "the link from the structurally oriented analysis of doxa, orthodoxy, and heterodoxy to individuals' experiences of social location lies in Bourdieu's formulation of habitus" (p. 558).

Different interpretations and approaches (orthodoxies and heterodoxies) can be an asset because a broad range of perspectives encourages debate and generates an array of options from which a coordinating project such as the UNIAP can proceed. Indeed, Bourdieu (1977a) argues orthodoxy cannot exist in absence of its objective relationship with heterodoxy. However, a fragmented approach also presents disadvantages. At times, the UNIAP was undermined as organisational interests and professional policies conflicted with one another and/or the project as a whole. Some member agencies failed to identify with the UNIAP, resulting in a lack of commitment to the project. In other situations, tensions mounted about the sharing of information, infringement on territorial mandates, and the role/purpose of the UNIAP. These differing institutional investments in the game and competing discourses manifested in the everyday practices of international development professionals, which, subsequently, constrained cooperation among agencies.

Development practitioners are agents of their organisations, and the discourses espoused about coordination, for example, reflect their interests as well as the contexts in which they operate. Everyone involved with the UNIAP that I spoke to, for instance, had his/her own set of expectations as to risks and returns, but the narratives relayed by development professionals related only partially to, and sometimes even conflicted with, the UNIAP's prescribed roles and responsibilities. When positioned in a collaborative context, agencies would put forth their habitus-formed strategies, hoping to convince other participants that their ideologies or approaches were the most advantageous. I found power relations were

continuously shifting as practitioners strived for compromise and agreement on priorities, objectives, and strategies. Given the hierarchically constituted field within which they operate, the potential existed for more powerful organisations to exert their influence, steering the agenda and negotiation process to the detriment of weaker organisations.

Bourdieu's theories of capital swapping have an immediate resonance for contemporary development practice (see Table 5). One of the primary forces that drives international agencies in the development field to form cooperative relationships is the need to access material and non-material resources such as funding (economic), people with different kinds of skills or expertise (cultural), networks (social), or even the prestigious reputation of a certain person or organisation (symbolic), which would otherwise be inaccessible. Individual organisations, especially the United Nations, can no longer act alone in a field increasingly characterised by a growing number of players and diminishing resources. Development agencies make strong efforts to maximise capital in order to ensure their organisations have the needed resources to function effectively in the field. Given the limited availability of capital, though, agencies adopt different tactics or strategies. UN agencies, for example, are often seeking and/or soliciting the same donor contributions. This search creates the strategic basis for cooperation, but it fosters competition as well. Other strategies look to swap resources or convert one type of resource into another. The primary aim is to secure and maintain access to existing resources within the field. Different patterns, forms, and volumes of capital determine both the investment strategies and the social positioning of an agent or organisation within each field. Development professionals must mobilise capital to carry out successful programs, projects, and activities. Given its importance, agents actively seek out and accumulate these forms of capital to gain advantage and recognition in the field. As such, capital is equivalent to power in Bourdieuan terms (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243).

## ***Conclusion***

Pierre Bourdieu dedicated his work to theorising practice through the study of lived experience. The logic of his sociology leads to the idea that the actions of social groups cannot be explained merely as the aggregate of subjective individual behaviours, but rather as actions that integrate influences from objective structures within society. Recognising that “theory without empirical research is empty, empirical research without theory is blind”, Bourdieu developed a set of theoretical tools, such as the field, the habitus, and capital, that are useful in investigating the nature of international cooperation (as cited in Jenkins 1992, p. 10). Following his three stages of analysis outlined in this chapter, the remainder of this thesis will extend a field-analytic approach by engaging several of Bourdieu’s concepts to describe the nature of the development field in terms of its structural foundations and the production of everyday practice.

Accordingly, the next chapter explores the historical circumstances and “plurality of logics” constituting the meta-field of development (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 21). History, as Bourdieu (1993) explains, “is inscribed in things – institutions” (p. 46); yet, history is also part of a field’s structure, causing what occurs in the field to be a symbolic reflection of external restraints, “refracted” through the logic of the field (p. 147). Given the broader institutional field of development operates as a structuring mechanism for the other fields it encompasses, including the human trafficking field in the Greater Mekong Subregion, an understanding of its institutional properties will provide insights into the ideational sources of cooperative approaches within the development field. Thus, with the notion of structure playing such an important role, the next chapter incorporates into my theoretical framework insights from new institutionalism – given its “natural affinity” with Bourdieu’s ideas – to extend further an analysis of the nature and impact of institutional arrangements on development cooperation exchanges (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991, p. 38).

## Chapter 3

### **Theoretical reflections of new institutionalism in development:**

#### **Bringing together theory and practice**

As Adrian Leftwich (1993) aptly noted, “a new orthodoxy dominates Western aid policy and development thinking. At its core is the confident assertion that ‘good governance’ and democracy are not simply desirable but essential conditions for development in all societies” (p. 605). In the early 1990s, when the World Bank first introduced the concept, good governance meant “good government” for markets – a “government that is transparent and accountable, working with a clear and consistent legal framework, such as will provide the conditions for effective and efficient markets” (Harriss, 2002, p. 78; also see Bevir, 2003; Rankin, 2004). At the same time, however, it came to stand for governing through markets, or to be more precise, for allowing markets or market like mechanisms to take over the work of governing from (or even within) state institutions.

These reforms had two facets. On one hand, they represented a turn away from the state downsizing agendas of the 1980s and early 90s, towards an agenda of strengthening the state to perform key functions of importance to markets. On the other hand, they continued the process of repositioning the state to make it the servant of markets: to ensure that its inefficiencies did not impact negatively on markets, and that its institutions guaranteed the security of capital and market transactions. In this latter aspect, neoliberal marketisation and the impact of new public management modalities for creating new contract like accountabilities within the state represented an important dimension of the neoliberalisation of the state (Bevir, 2003; Craig & Porter, 2006).

Although it marked a shift from the conservative neoliberal agenda underpinning the World Bank’s structural adjustments programs during the 1980s, good governance, in many respects, still “had a profound relationship to a neoliberal narrative” (Bevir, 2003, p. 201, see



Chapter 4). It was a relationship that expanded over time. The mixed record of earlier neoliberal and new public management reform (and subsequent critiques) led in part to the expansion of the good governance agenda to focus on re-embedding markets in political, social, and cultural institutions (Craig & Porter, 2006; Leftwich, 2005; Rankin, 2004), and to a wider range of meanings and interpretations (Grindle, 2004; also see Chapter 4 of this thesis). Its reach now extends to almost all aspects of the public sector – from institutions that represent the rules of the game (see North, 1990) to basic governance strategies of hierarchies, markets, and networks as modes of coordination for the growing number of development field stakeholders (Craig & Porter, 2006; Grindle, 2004). As Merilee Grindle (2004) argues, the good governance agenda is “unrealistically long and growing longer over time” (p. 526).

Much of the good governance agenda evolved from the research and practical experiences of multilateral agencies, bilateral donors, and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) in addressing governance. At the same time, however, the work emanating from economists and other theorists brought the importance of institutions and institutional arrangements to the fore in development. The ideas and perspectives, which provided the theoretical origins for the good governance agenda and its institutional reforms, are now known as the *new institutionalism*. As this chapter will show, new institutionalism constitutes a central underpinning of governance (see Kjær, 2004).

### **What is new institutionalism?**

Over the past 20 to 25 years, new institutionalism gradually established a recognisable position across and within a number of social sciences disciplines concerned with institutional factors, including sociology, public administration, political science, and economics. New institutionalism implies a difference from old institutionalism; yet, many scholars contend a comparison is both “false and misleading” (Hirsch & Lounsbury, 1997, p. 408; see also Bevir, 2005; Immergut, 1998). Old institutionalism focused more on political behaviour within local

communities and informal structures, in addition to organisational dynamics, change, and values. In contrast, new institutionalism arose as a reaction to behaviouralism and rational choice theories, and shifted the focus back to institutional structures, routines, and institutional stability of the field (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; for other comparisons, see Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Hirsch & Lounsbury, 1997; Scott, 2001; Selznick, 1996). In this regard, I will argue that the works of Bourdieu build a bridge between the old and new institutionalism, by combining structural elements with micro-level action (Hirsch & Lounsbury, 1997).

Broadly, new institutionalists assert that “people and institutions alike are embedded in wider social contexts that structure their choices, behaviour, and development” (Bevir, 2005, p. 35). New institutionalism is not a monolithic approach, however. Parallel streams emerged that were grouped under this rubric. Hence, key terms are debated in the literature, leading to a highly fractured set of ideas. Advocates of these branches of new institutional analysis are often dissatisfied with the ‘vague’ definitions of institutions, blaming each other for the problem; however, some scholars contend that new institutionalism overall is an expansive umbrella, which can and should encompass a range of incompatible perspectives.

Recently, researchers have begun to ask whether these divergences and debates can be bridged, a phenomenon John Campbell and Ove Pedersen (2001) depict as a “second movement” in new institutional analysis (pp. 249-275; see also Campbell, 2004; Hall & Taylor, 1996; Immergut, 1998; Peters, 1999; Thelen, 1999). These scholars note similarities in new institutionalists’ ambitions, such as the attempt to comprehend better institutional change, but also suggest that building on the complementary aspects of the approaches, especially with empirical studies, may allow for a more analytical understanding of institutions. Particularly significant is their attempt to link the political economy of neoliberalism and new institutional analysis.

Although efforts to establish a second movement within new institutionalism have largely taken place among North American scholars, there has also been a new institutionalist endeavour among British thinkers. As described below, British new institutionalism developed as a counter narrative to neoliberalism and the restructuring of the welfare state, and it contrasts sharply with North American institutionalist approaches (e.g. Bevir, 2003, 2005). British new institutionalism has become particularly influential in shaping the governance and new institutional reforms in the development field, which has significance for this thesis. The impact of this influence, however, runs ahead of the argument I will make in this chapter and the subsequent one.

### *New institutionalism as a reflexive theory*

The role of new institutionalism (particularly British new institutionalism) in the wider development field and related institutional and public management fields is complex because the modes of analysis used to define and discuss recent institutional frameworks have themselves become part of the ways in which institutions are constructed. Put differently, new institutionalism provides a normative basis for institutional change as well as a set of conceptual and theoretical tools for conducting institutional analysis. Consonant with this train of thought, new institutionalist B. Guy Peters (1994) argues that in any attempt to understand the nature of governance reforms, one must take care in separating theory from practice:

...we will need to be extremely careful to distinguish the theories (implicit or explicit) that have guided practitioners who constructed the reorganizations from those theories which political scientists and other organizational analysts have utilized in their attempts to understand, ex post facto, the changes imposed. In some instances the two bodies of theory may be synonymous, while in other cases there are marked differences. (p. 166)

Because of the inherent closeness, and growing influence of aspects of new institutional ideas on everyday development thinking, certain writers have chosen to see new institutionalism as

an “organising perspective” (Bevir & Rhodes, 2006, p. 42; Gamble, 1990, p. 405; Lowndes, 2002, p. 108). An organising perspective is not just a theory per se. It is an analytical framework that generates questions and explores complex interrelations and processes (Bache & Flinders, 2004). Concurrently, it is a discursive rubric for organising, which directly shapes the work being done.

Broadly speaking, then, new institutionalism does two things. First, it allows us to see how the good governance agenda and institutional reforms underpinning development practices in the UN context (and in particular the UNIAP) have been strongly influenced by new institutionalism (concrete examples of new institutionalism’s effects are explored in Chapters 4, 6, & 7). Second, it provides different paradigms for conducting an institutional analysis or critique of the institutional governance reforms themselves. Despite the complexities of building a common framework, it is within this approach that I situate my work.

The purpose of this chapter is three fold. First, it will explore what is meant by new institutionalism because it encompasses a broad range of insights and positions, which are at times riddled with contradictions about what institutions are, the extent institutions shape action, and the nature of institutional change (see Lecours, 2005). The three main streams of new institutionalism – historical, rational choice, and sociological institutionalism – each proffer different answers to these questions as well as different sets of conceptual and theoretical tools for conducting institutional analysis. Each of these streams, however, is useful in explaining the pervasiveness of the new public management and neoliberal marketisation underlying both the good governance agenda and related institutional reforms. New institutionalism, thus, points to the temporal and spatial specificities, political projects, and logics that prevail in development, and which prevail in the UNIAP context. A final theme, related to the first focus, is that the conceptual tools of new institutional analysis can

assist in our understanding of how individuals and groups are embedded in social structures, processes, and relationships, offering a meaningful, explanatory, and plural frame in which hybrid governance forms can be considered and advanced.

Second, this chapter will show how features of new institutionalism can enrich and expand the work of Bourdieu. Although the tools of Bourdieu developed in the previous chapter provide the conceptual framework for this thesis, the institutional complexity and pluralisation that characterises the development field demands a more focused critique. New institutionalism enables us to unpack the complex institutional and organisational forms, both within the wider field of development and the field in which the United Nations Inter-Agency Project (UNIAP) and its member agencies are situated. There is a strong resonance between the two perspectives, which the research of new institutionalists has increasingly acknowledged (e.g. Béland, 2005; Benson, 2006; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Hirsch & Lounsbury, 1997; Oakes, et al., 1998; Scott, 2001). Throughout this chapter, I highlight certain affinities between new institutionalism and the works of Bourdieu, concluding with a section that makes an explicit linkage between the two approaches. I highlight the key strengths and weaknesses of both perspectives to show how each helps to fill the critical gaps of the other.

In achieving the first two objectives, the final purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the closeness inherent in using new institutional approaches and Bourdieu's ideas to examine the institutional reforms taking place in the development field because they have the same roots. Notwithstanding the difficulties in distinguishing between the new institutionalist streams that have guided development practitioners from the streams of new institutional analysis that enable us to understand the changes imposed (as per Peters' suggestion above), Bourdieu helps us to recognise the significance of this cyclical pattern of influence. Much of Bourdieu's work attempts to overcome dichotomies (see Chapter 2), and through his notion of

relational thinking and reflexive sociology he posits that although the logics of a field cannot be separated out from its practices, it is worth exploring how the reflexive interaction works (see Bourdieu, 2000).

To assist with this analysis, the discussion is divided between two chapters. In this chapter, I present both the conceptual and normative strands of new institutionalism, beginning with North American strands and ending with the wider governance agenda. In these discussions I highlight some of the ways in which new institutionalism will be applied in this thesis to illuminate the complexity of the development field's structure, as well as the institutional arrangements that produce and reproduce this structure. Chapter 4 will illustrate more clearly, in an historical narrative, the relational aspects between new institutionalism and good governance practice.

#### ***North American interpretations of new institutionalism***

At least three major schools of thought have materialised regarding the nature of new institutionalism, largely within North American political science, economics, and sociology disciplines. They are: historical institutionalism, rational choice institutionalism, and sociological institutionalism (Campbell, 2004; Hall & Taylor, 1996; Lecours, 2005; Thelen, 1999). Each school of thought purports to have a distinct interpretation of new institutionalism. Despite variations across these fields, new institutionalists share a common consensus that institutional arrangements shape an individual's motives and actions. How they differ lies in their origins, definitions, and the political and intellectual projects to which they are attuned. I briefly discuss each stream, highlighting the different concepts best suited to conduct an analysis of the changing institutional arrangements of the development field, along with their impact in shaping the coordinated, cooperative, and competitive behaviour among international human trafficking agencies working with expanded mandates under the umbrella of the UNIAP.

## *Historical institutionalism*

### *Historical path dependent forms*

Historical institutionalism arose in the 1960s and 1970s as an attempt to build on structural functionalism and group theories of politics and the state. It defines institutions as a set of rules, norms (collectively held informal rules), conventions, and bureaucratic administration procedures embedded within temporal processes of the political economy. Adopting a macro approach, proponents of this school see institutions as structuring elements through which struggles over interests and power are battled out among actors over time (Steinmo, 2001). Once formed, however, institutions have a constraining effect on future actions, but often in unanticipated ways or with unintended consequences (March & Olsen, 1984). In this manner, historical institutionalism is linked to the idea of path dependence, particularly in theories of economic development (Hall & Taylor, 1996). According to Paul Pierson (2004), path dependency means that once a particular path is chosen, it is often difficult to reverse it. At the outset, agents have a number of plausible alternatives, but they become influenced by a series of events or processes that steer them in a particular direction. Feasible alternatives that once existed are no longer an option, and agents find themselves constrained by their 'chosen' path, with change only possible at "critical junctures" (Collier & Collier, 1991).

Although critical junctures do provide insight into how paths open up, some historical institutionalists dispute the emphasis on this notion, arguing instead for greater attention to "the politics of path dependency" (Peters, Pierre, & King, 2005, p. 1297). Drawing on the work of Douglass North (1990), they maintain that institutional change is more evolutionary, and it occurs within a larger social, political, and economic context, which in turn inspires this change (Peters, 1999; Pierson 2004). These debates centred on questions of path dependence in many different domains. My interest is in the persuasiveness of these ideas in the field of

development. Peters et al. (2005) argue that path dependencies exist, for example, in relation to economic and public administrative performance, pointing to the “persuasive power of the market” in addressing problems during the 1980s and 1990s (p. 1296). They also contend the ideational roots of new public management are equally similar. The significance of this pattern is the importance of *ideas* in explaining changing institutional arrangements.

What this strand of new institutionalism highlights is that there is a salience in exploring historical trajectories in order to reveal entrenched path dependencies and understand fully the reconfiguration of the development field. Put simply, *history matters* because once decisions or approaches are institutionalised, they shape the *rules of the game* (North, 1990).<sup>19</sup> Here, affinities with Bourdieu’s notion of field and habitus can contribute to an understanding of the structuring impact of institutions on behaviour. Once agents have internalised these rules into their habitus, there is a reluctance to deviate from the game. Positive returns (“doing things in a particular way...yields effects which pre-dispose the organisation to do at least some things in the same way the next time around”) are an important institutional concept regarding path dependence, and they are one of several mechanisms that lead to the persistence of particular paths (Coombs & Hull, 1998, p. 242). “With increasing returns, actors have strong incentives to focus on a single alternative, and to continue moving down a specific path once initial steps are taken in that direction” (Pierson, 2004, p. 24).

The concept of historical path dependence will prove useful in building an analytical framework that sheds light on the extent institutional and governance reforms have transformed the development field. Chapter 4, for example, explores the unintended consequences of neoliberal marketisation and new public management reforms, which created

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<sup>19</sup> Intriguingly, Douglass North is one of the most influential rational choice institutionalists, highlighting that common ground does exist among the variant approaches.



path dependencies related to fragmentation, interdependence, and complexity in development. Subsequently, this situation engendered the need for greater coordination, harmonisation, and alignment through networks. Path dependent arguments will also illustrate how the beginnings of the UNIAP, in terms of its planning, design, and implementation, were critical as it established the project as a competitor in the eyes of member agencies, which perpetuated because of self-reinforcing processes embedded within the field (see Chapter 6).

### ***Rational choice institutionalism***

#### ***New institutional economics and transaction costs***

Around the same time as the notion of historical institutionalism was being formulated, a second school of thought emerged; it too argued that institutions play an important role in structuring political behaviour, but important differences were evident (Steinmo, 2001). Rational choice institutionalism borrows heavily from economics and takes a micro-level approach to institutions. It views institutions, in neoliberal terms, as a set of procedural *rules* and incentives that structure actions by limiting the amount of choice and information available to individuals who are trying to maximise their own interests (Hall & Taylor, 1996; Lecours, 2005). Particularly influential within the rational choice paradigm is *new institutional economics* (Campbell, 2004; Lane & Ersson, 2000).

Associated with the intellectual accomplishments of Ronald Coase (1988), Douglass North (1990), Elinor Ostrom (1990), and Oliver Williamson, who coined the term in 1975, new institutional economics broadens neo-classical economics with organisational theory.<sup>20</sup> Succinctly summarised by North (1995), these ideas are premised on assumptions related to dwindling resources and, consequently, increased competition. New institutional economists acknowledge that market exchanges are complex, and thus abandon the neoclassical logic that individuals continuously possess “perfect” information through costless transactions (Ménard

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<sup>20</sup> Most scholars, however, acknowledge the work of Ronald Coase (1937) theory of the firm as its influential force.

& Shirley, 2005, p. 1). *Transaction costs*, in terms of this thesis, are the resources - time, effort, money, endless meetings, etc. - required for any form of exchange or contractual arrangement in coordination. To reduce these transaction costs, Ménard and Shirley continue, institutions need to be created.

According to North (2005), institutions represent both the formal rules and informal norms of the game, structuring how it is played. Organisations, which are “groups of individuals bound by some common purpose to achieve objectives”, symbolise its players (North, 1990, p. 5). Driven by self-interests, individuals in hierarchical organisations both cooperate and compete with one other through exchanges, blurring the boundaries between markets and organisations (Fukuyama, 2004). As Rhodes (1996) points out, new institutional economics introduced incentive structures, such as competitive markets, into the public sector. It emphasises, he maintains, the disaggregation of large bureaucratic structures, competitive bidding arrangements through quasi-markets, and the focus on consumer choice. In short, new institutional economics integrates and explains the institutional embeddedness of markets within organisations.

The normative influence of new institutional economics has been significant in development (see Cameron, 2004; Craig & Porter, 2006; Harriss, Hunter, & Lewis, 1995; World Bank 1997, 2002; 2004; also see Chapter 4 of this thesis). One effect of new institutional economics has been the diffusion of the view that “all organizations are simply bundles of individual labor contracts” (Fukuyama, 2004; p. 47). This marketised disaggregation of institutional roles has served as a wider rationale for further fragmentation through outsourcing to NGOs and other private contractors, turning relationships into exchanges governed by contractual or, as described below, principal-agent relations. Chapter 6 will show the perverse effect of this trend. Here, the markets-hierarchies framework developed by Williamson (1975, 1985), which links transaction costs, contractual

arrangements, and modes of governance becomes important (also see Ménard, 2005). Williamson suggests that agents seek to minimise the transaction costs of both contracting and open-ended coordination through tighter, hierarchical projects and ad-hoc organisational partnerships.

Joint efforts, through either informal or formal contractual arrangements, can offer appealing incentives. Development agencies, for instance, can access information and scarce forms of capital, such as funding, while simultaneously maximising their interests to efficiently meet organisational mandates. Acknowledging this situation, the World Bank focused its attention on the politics of service-delivery configurations (central government provision, contracting out to NGOs and the private sector, decentralisation to local government, community participation, etc.), which sits at the core of these new institutional arrangements (see World Development Report (WDR), 2004). The report applied an analytical framework based on *principal-agent* theory, which, as Fukuyama (2004) points out, is commonly used to understand governance problems. But what is principal-agent theory?

### ***Principal-agent relations***

Principal-agent theory is perhaps the most commonly applied approach to institutional reforms within new institutional economics. New institutional economics argues that institutional arrangements involve contract-like transactions between two individual actors acting rationally and in their own interests. Its analysis reveals the asymmetries implicit in hierarchical structured relations between these actors that give rise to interest conflicts between a principal and an agent. The *principal* (e.g. bilateral or multilateral donor) enters into a contractual arrangement (e.g. to implement an aid project to counter human trafficking) with an *agent* (e.g. recipient government or NGO) in order to carry out a specific task the principal is unable to execute independently. The problem is devising incentives that entice

the agent to act in the principal's best interest, without adding drastically to the transaction costs involved. However, it is assumed that the agent may have goals, objectives, or intentions other than the fulfilment of the principal's directives. Often the principal faces problems of hidden or inadequate information about whether the agent is implementing the project according to plan. Accordingly, the principal attempts to offer the 'right' incentives or performance based outputs, which, if not met, may threaten chances for funding or contract renewal, or even survival of the implementing organisation itself (Cooley & Ron, 2002). In addition, the principal must be prepared to pay the costs of surveillance to ensure compliance by the agent.

An implication of principal-agent theory in development is that most relationships become characterised in a simple dyadic manner. Assumptions that seek both in theory and in practice to simplify this relationship are common in principal-agent theory. For example, the roles of each should be clarified and codified in terms of narrowly conceived inputs and outputs to ensure shared expectations and adequate resourcing (Miller, 2005). Agents, it is argued should not be accountable to plural principals (e.g. Pritchett & Woolcock, 2004). Rather, accountabilities should be dyadic, based on clearly defined outputs compatible with wider new public management orientations (see the next chapter for discussion). Lant Pritchett and Michael Woolcock (2004) show that effective service provision in a principal-agent framework depends on the structure of incentives, which, in turn, are influenced by five key elements: the control of resources; the flow of information; the scope of decision-making; delivery mechanisms; and accountability. As Chapters 6 and 7 will reveal, these five elements will become manifest in the interactions between the UNIAP and member agencies.

Creating the right incentives and safeguards becomes a central preoccupation in principal-agent relationships because agents are assumed to cooperate for their own self-benefit (Fukuyama, 2004). The presence of opportunistic behaviour suggests, however, that

divergent interests or strategies might develop between an agent and the principal, which is the core of the principal-agent problem. When agents deviate from an agreement and carry out tasks in a manner to advance their interests, a problem arises, one that Bertin Martens (2002) calls a “moral hazard” (p. 8). Another common problem, he continues, occurs when the agent reaches an agreement with the principal, hides information, and then uses this information to advance self interests. He refers to this situation as “adverse selection” (p. 8). In a similar vein, the thrust of the neoliberal critique of developing countries is that state officials lack the incentives to perform in the interests of the public good, acting instead on behalf of their own self-interests (Lewis, 2001). Although a valid argument, Fukuyama (2004) argues that the problem of public sector performance in developing countries is more complex than rational choice theory and neoliberalism claim, citing in particular internalised norms promulgated by socialisation and bureaucratic cultures.

Given the escalating marketisation of the development field, contractualism is a pervasive feature. Relations in development are disaggregated into outsourcing and other short-term contractual arrangements, which become, as this thesis will show, relationships built on capital exchanges. The fact that there are acute principal agent problems is a core contention of this thesis. Principal-agent theory extends insights into the dynamics of governance and exchange, hierarchies, and transaction costs; hence, it is a fruitful exercise to conceptualise the UNIAP and its member agencies as a principal-agent situation. In this case, however, the framework must be extended, both vertically and horizontally, to include multiple principals and multiple agents, illustrating the complexity of the project’s relations.

Chapter 6 will examine the implications of these changing relations over Phase I and II, in terms of coordination. Drawing on new institutional economics, Cooley and Ron (2002) highlighted the dysfunctional implications of principal-agent relations among humanitarian NGOs. The scholars concluded that “competitive environments create institutions that not

only systematically shape the behavior of donors, INGO contractors, and recipients but also inhibit cooperation” (p. 36). The case study discussed in this thesis will present similar findings. It will also show how contractual or principal-agent based arrangements can produce limited kinds of coordination while impeding others. Here, the thesis will demonstrate how partial applications and misunderstandings of principal and agent roles can lead to failures in coordination.

In summary, rational choice institutionalism draws upon and incorporates a number of distinct, but inter-related ideas, including transaction costs and principal-agent theories and new institutional economics. Campbell and Pedersen (2001) inform us that rational choice institutionalists are concerned with how agents, bounded by rationality, construct institutions to further their own interests and solve problems of exchange, through the management of transaction costs and principal-agent relationships. For this strand, institutions perpetuate equilibrium and therefore have a mediating effect on an agent’s strategic calculations (Lecours, 2005). Put in a different manner, individuals or organisations behave in accordance with “the rules of the game” (Lane & Ersson, 2000).<sup>21</sup> In the field of development, the rules of the game are articulated through performance based outputs, competitive short-term renewable contracts and projects, and capital-based incentives. Institutions are built to advance self-interest, which, in terms of this thesis, is the desire to leverage capital (Campbell, 2004).

Rational choice institutionalists also examined determinants of institutional change. Much like historical institutionalists, some rational choice scholars contend institutions respond incrementally to change, while others adopt the punctuated equilibrium argument, or

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<sup>21</sup> This notion of the *rules of the game* resonates with Bourdieu although he vehemently denies any affinities between his theory of practice and rational choice theory (see Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 24-25). As highlighted in chapter two, Bourdieu maintains that practices are shaped by an individual’s habitus, which, in turn, is rooted in the doxa of the field. The habitus strongly shapes the self-interested actions of an individual, but it does not solely determine their destiny (Bourdieu, 2005).

more dramatic or rapid change (Campbell, 2004). Nevertheless, change will only occur if it helps individuals better their interests. Rational choice institutionalism, with its focus on self interest, enables an understanding of the differences among principal-agent objectives, demands, and responses to particular situations. The main drawback is rational choice institutionalism does not explain what informs those demands or the resulting behaviour (Weaver, 2003). Recent applications, however, particularly among international relations theorists, have sought to address these weak points through tools used in sociological theories to examine the behavioural tendencies within and between international organisations (e.g. Barnett & Finnemore, 1999, 2004; Kardam, 1993; Ness & Brechin, 1988; Weaver, 2003). Sociological institutionalism has been of particular interest, and as these scholars have demonstrated, theoretical ventures into neighbouring disciplines can be a rewarding exercise.

### ***Sociological institutionalism***

#### ***Habitus and isomorphic tendencies***

The third school of new institutionalist thought, sociological institutionalism (sometimes referred to as organisational institutionalism), evolved from organisation theory around the mid-1970s (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). It describes institutions broadly, seeing them as “cognitive, normative, and regulative structures and activities that provide stability and meaning to social behaviour” (Scott, 1995, p. 33). This expansion represents an important intellectual divide from the former two schools of new institutionalism thought. Sociological institutionalists argue that historical and rational choice institutionalists neglect crucial cognitive and social/regulative elements by defining institutions as just formal rules, norms, and procedures (Campbell & Pedersen, 2001). Of course, scholars from the other two camps dispute this characterisation (e.g. Hall & Taylor, 1996). Contentions aside, even opponents, such as Hall & Taylor (1996), point out that these sociological institutionalists have developed a distinguishing argument that illustrates the mutually constitutive

relationship between institutions and individual action, moving this strand of thought beyond methodological individualism.

In her analysis of new institutionalism, Martha Finnemore (1996) notes that although political science arguments emphasise the roles of key actors, sociological institutionalists tend to lean towards structural explanations of enablement and constraint. John Campbell (1998) helps illustrate this point. Routines and habits, he maintains, are such critical components of an actor's cognitive frame they become "taken for granted" and "virtually invisible to the actors themselves" (p. 381).<sup>22</sup> Because structure is ontologically prior, as Finnemore (1996) argues, sociological institutionalists present their analysis against this backdrop. These ideas will be extended and applied empirically in later chapters through the tools of doxa and habitus to provide a detailed account of how the established order of the field is enacted through individual's everyday practices.

Sociological institutionalism, without explicitly renouncing an inherent rationality, maintains that an actor's environment, which in turn is socially constructed, actively shapes his or her behaviour. In an organisational context, individual agents, as they go about daily routines, encounter situations that must be recognised and responded to using "scripts or templates" (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p. 948) embedded within the institutional consciousness of the organisation (see also Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Scott, 2001; Thelen, 1999). For instance, in development, for path dependent reasons, project modalities are the favoured template for most international agencies to carry out activities at the field level (discussed in Chapter 4). In another example, it can be seen that Phase II of the UNIAP was modelled after the template of the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). Identifying elements of 'best practice' is popular in development, which is then communicated or

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<sup>22</sup> This argument is reminiscent of Bourdieu's (1990a) notion of doxa, which he defines as "the pre-verbal taking-for-granted of the world that flows from practice sense" (p. 168).



promoted through such materials as practical guidelines (scripts) and toolkits (templates). My analysis will reveal how the choices made about the scripts and templates by practitioners involved in the UNIAP mirror the institutional structure of the field.

### ***Isomorphism***

Kathleen Thelen (1999) expands this notion, asserting that shared scripts or organisational understandings are another form of path dependence. To support her argument, Thelen reasons institutional forms in organisations are isomorphic. *Institutional isomorphism* refers to the tendency of organisations to become similar or homogenous over time (see Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). Powell and DiMaggio identify three separate, but often indistinguishable, modalities of institutional isomorphic change. *Coercive isomorphism* stems from political influence, authority, and legitimacy. Government policies are a good example. *Mimetic isomorphism* results from uncertainty, in which organisations model themselves after successful ones, adopting similar structures and approaches of working in order, as Powell and DiMaggio (1991) explain, to cope with unfamiliar situations. Finally, *normative isomorphism* is associated with professionalisation, which includes approaches and strategies such as workshops and train-the-trainer programs, as well as the less formal but nonetheless pervasive aspects of professional demeanour and behaviour.

These ideas are important because they illuminate the value in understanding institutional norms in addition to dominant ideologies, discourses, and paradigms that the development field articulates as the doxa (illustrated in the next chapter). The weakness of the concept of isomorphic institutions as shared scripts lies in its inability to incorporate satisfactorily notions of conflict and power (Bidwell, 2006; Thelen, 1999).<sup>23</sup> This is a valid criticism given ideas of isomorphism and path dependencies convey notions of institutional equilibrium. Others dispute this, arguing that sociological institutionalism, in particular,

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<sup>23</sup> But, again, the reflexive sociology of Bourdieu is able to yield an empirical account of how power is enacted through the routine practices of development practitioners.

places “interests and power on the institutional agenda” and “address[es] head on the issues of change...” (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991, p. 27). In particular, these sociological institutionalists point to the concept of diffusion, which is used to explain how institutionalised logics, principles, and practices are spread through and across organisational fields, and thus become taken for granted (Campbell, 2004). Put differently by Campbell, “organisations may evolve as they seek to adopt principles and practices that confer legitimacy on them as social actors” (p. 20). These ideas – isomorphism, path dependence, and diffusion – offer the analytical tools for understanding how change transpires as the UNIAP adopts differing strategies as the need for legitimation became more pressing as the project progressed through its various Phases (see Chapters 6 & 7).

A key reason I draw upon Bourdieu’s practice theory is the striking resonance between the sociological institutionalist approach and the ideas of Bourdieu, which others have noticed (e.g. Everett, 2002; Leander, 2000; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Scott, 2001). Of course, this is not to say that Bourdieu’s ideas do not complement the other strands – historical and rational choice – institutionalism. I elaborate the parallels between Bourdieu and new institutionalism at the end of this chapter.

Sociological institutionalism, in conclusion, presents a broader interpretation of institutions than the other strands, including not only rules and norms, but also beliefs, individual actions, and material resources (Scott, 2001). Primarily concerned with how frameworks of meaning become institutionalised and taken-for-granted, sociological institutionalists seek to understand how institutional arrangements determine the identities and behaviour of international organisations. What is particularly appealing about this approach, which André Lecours (2005) sums up nicely, is the principle that institutions shape “strategies and interests, but also *patterns of relationships between actors*, preferences, objectives, and individuals, and indeed, the very existence of actors” (p. 11, emphasis added). Moreover, the

notion that organisations embedded within the same field tend to exhibit isomorphic tendencies is a compelling argument for explaining institutional change. The movement of NGOs toward service-provision roles offers just one example of emerging similarities. Yet, as I illustrated above, other institutionalists have presented valid interpretive alternatives, suggesting that change is often constrained by historically contingent path dependencies, which can perpetuate institutional stability and result in unintended consequences or tensions.

### ***Bridging institutionalisms: North American and British approaches***

Despite their differences, North American institutionalists collectively argue that people and organisations are embedded in wider institutional arrangements that structure their interactions. Yet, by bringing together aspects from each of the three versions, we can begin to draw additional generalisations. An integrated framework stresses the importance of both formal and informal institutions as well as exogenous and endogenous factors that define the preferences, behaviour, and activities of international organisations. John Campbell (2004) acknowledges that the emphasis of new institutionalists tends to focus on exogenous influences; yet, he argues that an acceptance of institutions as multifaceted entities comprised of plural and often incongruous logics would result in a better theory for understanding institutional change.

British applications of new institutionalism, which are more concerned with confronting the normative underpinnings of the neoliberal agenda and the evolving forms of governance, have taken this conceptual turn. Although their approach is built on the three aforementioned paradigms, these writers are driven by a different problematic. As a result, their work is, at times, more sensitive to both the ideational and structural foundations of institutions. To assess properly the forces of institutional change and its causal mechanisms, they argue, one must analyse the influence of ideas or logics on interests and strategic action (Campbell, 1998, 2004; Campbell & Pedersen, 2001). These factors might also explain the

intersections these new institutionalist applications have with notions of governance. Governance perspectives, despite multiple conceptualisations, also incorporate rationalisations for institutional change (Kjær, 2004). Furthermore, new institutional analysis, combined with a governance approach, provides ways of looking at international cooperation, interdependencies, coordination, and other forms of exchanges within a field-level context. I present these applications of new institutionalism in the next section.

### ***British interpretations of new institutionalism and governance***

New institutionalism, given its breadth and scope, has found wide application, including analyses of globalisation (e.g. Campbell, 2004), education (e.g. Meyer & Ronan, 2006), and development (e.g. Craig & Porter, 2006; Harriss, et al., 1995). Among British and Western European scholars, new institutional analysis has become a popular means to examine the changing role of the state and public sector reforms associated with neoliberalism. As Bevir (2005) explains, British political scientists coming to grips with public sector reforms through new public management and marketisation were seeking “a new narrative to counter neoliberalism”, which they discovered “in the new institutionalism” (p. 37).<sup>24</sup> Summarising the new institutionalism counter-argument, Bevir writes:

Institutionalists...argue that marketisation and the new public management had unintended consequences as a result of entrenched institutional patterns and norms: neoliberal reforms fragmented service-delivery and weakened central control without establishing markets. ...The state now acts, they suggest, as one of a number of organisations and individuals who come together in diverse networks to deliver varied services. (pp. 38-39)

New institutionalism emerged in the United Kingdom (UK) context in the aftermath of the pluralisation of governance through new public management reforms and during the

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<sup>24</sup> Despite his in-depth discussion of the topic, Bevir (2003) is critical of the new institutionalism, advocating instead for an interpretative approach (see Bevir & Rhodes, 2003; 2005 for an introductory account and a response to critiques).

advent of partnership type approaches. Hence, it considers the institutions of governance as plural, complex entities, involving hierarchies, markets, and networks (Bevir & Rhodes, 2001). On one side, Bevir (2003) elaborates, there is the neoliberal adherence to neo-classical economics and rational choice theory to promote marketisation, a minimal state, and new public management reforms (see Bevir, 2005; Bevir & Rhodes, 2001). On the other side, the British new institutionalist approach reflects New Labour's attempt to confront the unanticipated fragmenting impacts of neoliberalism and new public management reforms through the notions of joined-up governance, networks, and partnerships. In short, these contributions advance an alternative new institutional arrangement that normatively emphasises the value of networks, partnerships, and joined-up governance in an attempt to resolve the fragmenting effects that ensued from neoliberal attempts to replace bureaucratic hierarchies with markets.

Bevir (2005) argues that the neoliberal narrative of governance (promoting new public management reforms and marketisation) and the new institutionalist narrative (network and joined-up governance rather than hierarchies and markets) currently represent the two dominant narratives. Both narratives, I argue, hold salience for understanding the reconfiguration of the development field.

Jonathan Davies (2005) purports this British conception of governance and its focus on governance mechanisms has been highly significant, itself “contributing to the rise of New Institutionalism” as a wider mode of analysis (p. 313). British new institutionalist interpretations of governance have been used as both a normative and analytical framework to explain shifts in public administration. In development, various aspects of new public management and neoliberal marketisation were influential and played an important role in reshaping the institutional field within which development ‘happens’. Although the neoliberal market rationality continues to dominate development policies and strategies, increasingly its

effects are being examined. Although much attention has been given to the impact of national level public sector reforms and the changing roles of NGOs, less attention has been focused on the impact of these reforms on other international development agencies or the implications for practice.

British new institutionalism, therefore, provides an account of an institutional field (the political economy of New Labour in the UK context) after it has been subject to plural, complex, and reiterative reforms based on new public management arrangements. Although UK focused, the arguments presented are similarly applicable to the international development context. Demands for new levels of coordination have resulted in multi-organisational partnerships and changing, complex modes of governance based on hierarchies, markets, and networks, which can stimulate both cooperation and competition (see Lowndes & Skelcher, 1998). Davies (2005) contends, “new institutionalism invites scholars to consider how individuals and groups create and utilise ties” (p. 314). Despite well-founded scepticism from British academics about the possibility of a “universal theory” of new institutionalism (e.g. Bevir & Rhodes, 2006, p. 42), I draw on Campbell and Pedersen (2001) to identify possibilities for methodological and theoretical cross-fertilisation.

### ***Governance***

Overlapping and intertwined significantly though unevenly by new institutional theoretical developments, governance theory can be seen as a more applied and less elaborate theoretical approach, the influence of which is most clearly seen in the hegemony of notions of good governance pervading the development field. Governance theory begins with the widely accepted premise that a shift has occurred from traditional forms of *government* (central authority, power, and control) to *governance* (collaboration and coordination with wide variety of actors) (Benz & Papadopoulos, 2006; Jessop, 1995; Newman, 2001; Peters & Pierre, 2003; Pierre, 2000). The governance perspective, Gerry Stoker (1998) argues, is a

useful framework to represent the shifting forms of governing away from traditional ideals of public administration. He maintains the meaning of governance carries five main propositions. For Stoker, governance refers to:

- 1) (A) set of institutions and agents from within, but also outside of the state;
- 2) Shifting roles and responsibilities for dealing with social and economic issues;
- 3) Power dependence relations between institutions involved in joint action;
- 4) Autonomous, self-governing networks of agents; and
- 5) The capacity to get things done without relying on the state to use authority. The government has tools and techniques to guide and steer (p. 18).

What these five propositions emphasise is how blurred the traditional boundaries of the state and other agents have become. As Jon Pierre (2000) notes, governance refers not only to the changing nature of the state, but also to coordination and formal/informal interactions among a wide range of actors. Thus, as Rhodes (2000b) maintains, the language of governance, like that of British new institutionalism, imparts a narrative that captures these unintended effects of neoliberalism and new public management reforms. Within this governance story, forms of governance based on hierarchies and markets have given way to networks as modes of coordination in response to the high degree of fragmentation brought about by the increasing number of organisational players and service-provision arrangements (see also Hirst, 2000; Newman, 2001; 2004). Going further, Rhodes (2000b) argues this to be a normatively good thing. Pluralised, network governance can achieve results that hierarchical and market modalities cannot; therefore, networks should be embraced. In this thesis, the roles of markets, networks, and hierarchies will be revisited in the context of coordination modalities experimented with during the course of the UNIAP development.

Jan Kooiman (2000) highlights a slightly different, but related, view of governance, again relevant to this thesis. Taking into account larger societal changes, he presents the idea

of “co-governing”, in which power and authority are shared in a world characterised by growing complexity and interdependence (p. 148). Expanding mandates to incorporate global problems, such as human trafficking, demand harmonisation and blur organisational boundaries. Mission statements overlap, and development agencies must share and swap capital (e.g. funding, specialised expertise, etc) with others working on similar issues or problems. Consequently, Kooiman (2000) maintains, agencies form horizontal modes of governance through collaboration/cooperation (interactions among individual agents) and coordination (interactions among organisations). No single agent holds authority or power over the others. Not surprisingly though, agencies also compete and clash with one another, and the marketisation of the development field has exacerbated these tensions.

In this regard, Kooiman (2000) contends new institutionalism is a helpful tool to understand the institutional and structural characteristics of co-governance arrangements. Governance captures the process of institutional change, which is sometimes weak in new institutionalist frameworks (Kjær, 2004). The growing engagement among the state, international agencies and civil society is best understood through notions of governance and, specifically, co-governance. As this chapter is beginning to reveal, the changes brought about by institutional reforms are not seamless. Illustrating this point, Kooiman (2000) goes on to stress that hierarchical modes of governing, with their historical underpinnings, are still prevalent. However, as Newman (2001) reminds us, the traditional Weberian notion of hierarchy has changed considerably under the auspices of new public management so, in reality, these governance forms often co-exist in complex ways. Here lies the strength with governance theory. Notions of governance provide the context for the contemporary institutional arrangements of the development field, but they also offer a way of examining international cooperative relationships and exchanges. In the next chapter, I track the shifting



forms of governance in the wider development field to examine how these changes have impacted development organisations.

### ***Tying the threads together: Governance, new institutionalism, and Bourdieu***

The possibility of criticism always exists when engaging in a multi-theoretical approach; however, the arsenal of analytical tools from any one particular discipline is insufficient to capture the complexity of the development field. Weaknesses in one approach can be compensated by strengths in another, which is why I argue valuable insights can be gained from an analytical framework based on multiple theoretical perspectives. In the final section of this chapter, I bring together three theoretical threads to consider how governance and new institutionalism relate to the theories of Bourdieu. My goal is to present an integrated, multi-theoretic approach that is able to examine the transformations within the development field as well as the impacts these changes have had for cooperative relations in the UNIAP.

#### ***Strange bedfellows? Bourdieu and new institutionalism***

Bourdieu and new institutionalism may seem strange bedfellows. The two approaches are diverse, but each can enrich the other (Oakes, et al., 1998). New institutionalists argue that people and organisations are embedded in wider institutional contexts that structure choices, behaviour, and practices (Bevir, 2005). Bourdieu's theory seeks to explain how individual and group practices or actions are reproduced in the social world. His conceptual tools are useful in providing a deeper theoretical and critical examination of neglected aspects of new institutionalism such as the politicised nature of exchanges built around conflict and legitimation, and the nature of institutional change within the development field (Oakes et al., 1998; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). New institutionalism sheds light on how institutional logics and ideologies underpinning the structure of the development field emerge, and how they are diffused and legitimated through the practices of individuals. Bourdieu's conceptions

of doxa, habitus, and field open up new ways of understanding the relational dynamics of collective interaction among diverse groups of actors in complex environments. Taken together, the perspectives provide a more nuanced understanding of how the structure of the field itself is reflexively constituted in and through exchanges of development coordination.

In recent years, a growing number of new institutionalists have recognised that several of their fundamental principles have a strong resonance with Bourdieu's theories (e.g. Béland, 2005; Benson, 2006; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Hirsch & Lounsbury, 1997; Mohr, 2000; Oakes et al., 1998; Scott, 2001). Collectively, these scholars embraced the use of his work to conceptualise how individuals and organisations respond to the institutional environments in which they operate. Bourdieu's field analysis, as Swartz (1997) notes, is in essence an institutional analysis of patterned individual and group action. Powell and DiMaggio (1991) point to Bourdieu's constructs of doxa and the habitus, suggesting these historically produced, taken-for-granted, embodied forms of practical knowledge and dispositions reflect his representation of institutions. As the structural source of our socially reproduced actions, both of Bourdieu's ideas have strong affinities with the new institutionalism approach, which contends institutions shape individual behaviour.

In particular, Bourdieu's thinking is useful in considering the sociological aspects of institutional development, especially in terms of how social forces and institutions reflectively and isomorphically structure fields and the habitus of those acting within them. Bourdieu agrees that fields are isomorphic, explained as "structural and functional *homologies*" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 105). Unwittingly, agents produce these homologous effects through the pursuit of individual interests and strategies, which manifest from *the habitus* rather than through conscious calculation (Swartz, 1997). These notions will be developed and applied in later chapters.

The role of habitus in shaping development cooperation will also be examined. The habitus, to recall from Chapter 2, is the embodiment of dispositions and history, an acquired set of characteristics, that is the “manners of being, seeing, acting and thinking” of an individual person (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 43). Put another way, the habitus is the shared scripts or understandings, rooted in the doxa and thus the field, which characterise human behaviour. These dispositions perpetuate and reproduce themselves, but they can be altered through new experiences (Bourdieu, 2000). Sociological institutionalism contributes a similar argument, with both making strong connections between an agent’s behaviour and institutions. But what Bourdieu brings specifically is the structural theory of practice that incorporates elements of power and conflict. Habitus-generated action occurs in the hierarchical structured arena of the field, in which patterns of conflict over capital (power) assume a prominent role.

Highlighting another affinity, Benson (2006) argues that Bourdieu and new institutionalism each underscore the influence of historically influenced or path dependent rules, both formal and informal, which in turn become commonsense assumptions that shape behaviour, but without being completely determining. A final area of congruence is noted by Fligstein (2001), who observes that new institutionalists are fundamentally concerned with the notion of “local social orders” which could easily be referred to as “*fields, arenas, or games*”, illuminating another notable parallel with Bourdieu (emphasis in original, p. 107).<sup>25</sup>

In addition to strong similarities between key ideas, there are also balancing aspects to these approaches. Combining the analytical perspectives of Bourdieu with the normative tendencies of new institutionalism is a fruitful exercise, extending my analysis of institutional structures by providing the means to explore notions of power, inequalities, and individual or group actions. New institutionalism, with its limited focus on formal structures, “lacks a

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<sup>25</sup> In chapter two, I explained that Bourdieu often refers metaphorically to the field as a game or market (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

theory of individual action” (Bevir, Rhodes, & Weller, 2003, p. 5). Other new institutionalists noted the neglect around the issue of agency as well as individual interests, to which they maintain Bourdieu offers some coherence (e.g. Béland, 2005; Mutch, Delbridge, & Ventresca, 2006). Without these dimensions, the new institutionalist framework is weak on explaining institutional change (Gorges, 2001). In this regard, it is obvious what Bourdieu adds to new institutionalism; however, new institutionalism also contributes to the theoretical work of Bourdieu.

The nature of institutions is contested by new institutionalists, although no less contested in Bourdieu’s discussions of wider institutional discourses. Although most new institutional theorists would agree that *rules* represent one of the core elements, Bourdieu (1977a) believed the term inadequately explained individual behaviour. Although all games have rules, which more or less establish what an individual is able or unable to do, he preferred to substitute rules for *strategies* to incorporate the concept of agency and “reintroduce time, with its rhythm, its orientation, its irreversibility” (p. 9). Some (e.g. Jenkins, 1992; Nash, 1990) have criticised Bourdieu’s work for this stance, in the sense that he is ambiguous regarding the meaning of institutions.<sup>26</sup> In reality, Bourdieu is more concerned with structures than institutions. He speaks of the macro level of the field, which is an objective structure that embodies institutions (Swartz, 1997). Jenkins (1992) argues that “a theoretical model of institutions” would bridge this particular flaw (p. 90). The model I adopt for this undertaking is a hybrid form of new institutionalism, combined with insights taken from the thinking of Bourdieu. Clear similarities and obvious differences exist between new institutionalism and the works of Pierre Bourdieu, but together these approaches capture more strongly the structure of the development field.

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<sup>26</sup> In *Acts of Resistance*, for example, Bourdieu (1998b) refers to institutions as rules, but also as organisations. In his other works (e.g. Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), he often talks about the “rules of the game”.

### ***Governance and Bourdieu***

Throughout this chapter, I illustrated that the notion of governance in development is shaped by differing influences, including new public management and one or more strands of new institutionalism. On both theoretical and normative levels, there is a natural congruence between new institutionalism and governance. Intriguingly though, Swartz (2003) shows that points of convergence exist between Bourdieu's sociology and forms of governance. Although Bourdieu is "*not* a governance theorist", in his later writings, he was highly critical of the normative ideas of neoliberalism and shared similar concerns with governance theorists about the declining welfare state and the reliance on market for service provision (Swartz, 2003, p. 141). Swartz also emphasises other important overlaps. For example, he suggests Bourdieu's field analytic approach captures increasing entanglement of public, private, and non-profit sectors. Continuing, Swartz rightly observes parallels between the doxa and institutional logics, which not only constitute the basis of social and political realities through the exercise of symbolic power, but are able to account for new emerging forms of governance. What Bourdieu does not speak of are forms of cooperation or co-governance; his main concerns are struggles over power and domination (Swartz, 2003). For this reason, and others, a multi-theoretical approach allows for a more in-depth engagement on a broader range of issues related to international cooperation, governance reforms, and the changing nature of the development field.

### ***Summary: New institutionalism, governance, and development***

New institutionalism has gradually established a recognised position across and within a number of social science disciplines concerned with institutions, including sociology, public administration, political science, and economics. From the discussion in this chapter, it is clear the strength of new institutionalism comes from its "multi-theoretic" nature, which has prompted certain writers to see it as an "organizing perspective" (Lowndes, 2002, p. 108;

Bevir & Rhodes, 2006, p. 42). As noted at the outset of this chapter, it is now plausible, or even arguably best to describe, as this thesis does, the institutional reforms that have taken place within the development field as *new institutional* reforms (also see Craig & Porter, 2006). In this regard, new institutionalism is a powerful example of the reflexive processes that Bourdieu and others, such as Anthony Giddens, have proposed to underline the false dichotomy that exists between theory and practice. New institutionalists, for example, would describe this reflective process in terms of isomorphism, where institutions take on similar forms. This homogeneity is driven by the “logic of appropriateness”, which suggests behaviour is shaped by rules, norms, and situational circumstances (March & Olsen, 1989, pp. 159-162). For Bourdieu, the transformation of theoretical knowledge into practical knowledge is a recurring pattern of influence, which is a fundamental premise underlying his reflexive sociology and theory of practice (Swartz, 1997). Commenting on his beliefs, Bourdieu writes “for me, sociology ought to be meta but *always vis-à-vis itself*. It must use its own instruments to find out what it is and what it is doing, to try to know better where it stands“ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 191).

This chapter has described a number of useful conceptual tools that will be used throughout this thesis to examine empirically the influence the nature and impact of institutional arrangements on the behaviour among development agencies operating under the umbrella of the UNIAP. In the next chapter, I present a historical account of the recent new institutional reforms in development and demonstrate the mutually constitutive relationship between these new institutional arrangements and the structure of the development field. The shifts that have occurred within the development field in recent years are significant, and the chapter will explore how and why these transformations have transpired. Changes have occurred at the institutional level, in terms of governance arrangements among governments, international agencies, and NGOs, but also at the ground level, in terms of development

strategies, programs, and practices. In this regard, international agencies have dedicated much effort and financial aid toward implementing their governance agendas, in which new public management reform initiatives are a large part. These agencies are quick to impose institutional reforms on states, often as a condition to aid, but what impact have these reforms had on development organisations? More importantly, what are the implications of these reforms for coordination? These are questions this thesis will address in the next chapter and remaining chapters.

## Chapter 4

### **Development, governance, and institutional reforms:**

#### **Doxa and the reconfiguration of the development field**

The United Nations once dealt with governments. By now we know that peace and prosperity cannot be achieved without partnerships involving governments, international organizations, the business community and civil society. In today's world, we depend on each other. (Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General, United Nations, World Economic Forum 1999)

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Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, changing global economic, political, and social forces prompted numerous shifts in institutional policies and practices that make up the development field. Many similar changes happened initially in the public administration systems of the richer countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the changes and their underlying rationalities transferred to the wider practices of governance, including aid. These practices (known collectively as new public management) and their effects were powerfully felt across development, not only in the remaking of aid relationships and aid delivery but also in the ways that the United Nations (UN) and other multilateral agencies and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) began to conduct their business in the development field. The wider field of development and its many institutional subfields, including the UN with its coordinating role, became transformed.

The spread of new public management prompted an emphasis on well functioning institutions for both economic growth and wider social development (Craig & Porter, 2006; Fine, Lapavitsas, & Pincus, 2001; Hirst, 2000; Santiso, 2001b; World Bank 1997; 2002). As a result, development became increasingly focussed on issues of institutional support and reform, understood under the broad framework of *governance*, both in its programs of institutional reform in the countries and international contexts (including human trafficking).



Moreover, it adapted its own internal arrangements, operations, and modalities, in consort with coordination, harmonisation, and partnerships arrangements within the field itself (Bøås & McNeill, 2004; Huque & Zafarullah, 2006; Lowndes & Skelcher, 1998; Santiso, 2001a; Turner & Hulme, 1997). In the past 20 years, internal governance reforms in countries were closely associated with both the remaking of development planning and practices as well as governance reforms in multilateral agencies and their relationships with partners. Indeed, the terms ‘partner’ and ‘partnerships’ are part of this shift. The development field has been remade in these terms and the wider ideas of new public management. At various times, as this chapter will demonstrate, there have been *isomorphic* dimensions to these changes as social actors working in the development field urged or demanded other stakeholders (e.g. states, NGOs, private sector, etc) to introduce complementary institutional reforms.

Understanding these shifts requires a historical and theoretical survey of institutional change using the conceptual frameworks introduced in the previous two chapters. It also requires further engagement with theory in order to ground the conceptual tools of Bourdieu outlined in Chapter 2 and the new institutional framework developed in the previous chapter. This chapter considers ways in which new institutional concepts and the reflexivities they demand of development practitioners have figured into the transformation of the institutional fields of development to frame the analytic and normative doctrines that now constitute its orientation to governance. As Bourdieu notes, fields are reflexive and relational in a range of practical and logical ways – systems of thought and the relations that shape actual practice are co-constitutive (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 96-97; also see Swartz, 1997). The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to trace the institutional reforms and unravel the structural complexities of the development field, both of which remain under-theorised and empirically under-analysed. This discussion will provide a better understanding of the contexts and

constraints on development coordination regarding the case of the United Nations Inter-Agency Project (UNIAP).

The structure of my argument is as follows. From the late 1970s, the Keynesian welfare state and its institutional arrangements had been under increasing attack as overly bureaucratic, fiscally unviable, and inefficient (Brenner, 2004). Institutional reforms based on neoliberal principles (which are understood here in terms of Bourdieu's theory of the *doxa*) and new public management (described as an *orthodoxy* related to the wider neoliberal *doxa*) were widely introduced in both developed and developing countries. These reforms emphasised downsizing, privatisation, measurable targets, and outsourcing through competitive contracts, all of which were designed to enhance performance and accountability. As the reaches of these reforms extended to include development, there was a pronounced emphasis on dismantling the conventional hierarchical basis of public administration and minimising the role of the state. In a number of aspects, these changes moved the state closer to the market or at least remade the nature of state-market relations in a way that made market actors relatively more powerful. These reforms also had effects throughout the wider development field. In new institutional terms they are described as isomorphic, a condition where the structures and practices of different sectors within the same environment come to resemble one another (see Powell & DiMaggio, 1991).<sup>27</sup>

At the heart of these changes, the disaggregation of the roles and tasks of the state absolved some of their responsibilities as the primary agents of development, and realised a redistribution of power among states, markets, and civil society (Mathews, 1997; Newman, 2004). Institutional relations were remade as modes of governance, fractured and multiplied. Changing practices were organised and new practices generated as the traditional roles of the

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<sup>27</sup> Bourdieu, in turn, argues fields are homologous (e.g. see Bourdieu, 2000, p, 103; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Other writers have drawn parallels between these two themes – the homologous structure of fields and isomorphism in new institutionalism (e.g. Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Swartz, 1997, 2003).

state, international agencies, and NGOs became rescripted in new arrangements of hierarchies, markets, and networks. States did not go away, but international agencies, NGOs, private sector organisations, and market relations took on new roles in terms of ‘partnering’ relations with state agencies (Pieterse, 2001, Ramia, 2003). NGOs emerged as non-profit service-providers and contractors to government and UN programs. The UN was subject to the same criticisms as individual states. Criticised as inefficient, unresponsive, bureaucratic, non-transparent, and bloated, it came under increasing pressure to implement management, financial, and administrative reforms. In this chapter, I argue that consequent UN reforms bore considerable resemblance to new public management reforms introduced in both developed and developing states. In essence, development agencies, from the UN to NGOs, had no option except to respond and adapt to these changing relations.

Numerous scholars agree that these reforms had unanticipated consequences, both particular and systematic. They introduced path dependencies related to fragmentation, interdependence, and complexity, which in turn engendered the need for greater coordination through networks and partnerships, and ultimately for wider modes of strategic harmonisation and alignment (e.g. Bache & Flinders, 2004; Bevir, 2005; Bevir & Rhodes, 2003; Craig, 2006; Craig & Porter, 2006; Newman, 2001; OECD, 2005). In this regard, the current emphasis on inter-agency cooperation can in part be seen as what Bourdieu calls a *heterodox* response to the growing complexity of the development field. Both OECD public servants and development practitioners needed to find new practices with which to coordinate their work and wider engagements. Development thinking and practice increasingly focused on issues of institutional strengthening and reform, now intricately woven together under the notion of (good) governance. Currently at the forefront of development practice, the (good) governance agenda is largely the result of a confluence of orthodox and heterodox discourses, in which “softer” institutional practices of partnerships and participation are being embedded within

“harder” new public management and market institutional arrangements (see Craig & Porter, 2006).<sup>28</sup> I argue that these later institutional reforms enacted in recent years were prompted, if not necessitated, by the earlier round of new public management reforms. I also contend that these reforms resulted in a profound, but often unnoticed, reconfiguration of the development field, adding new layers of density and complexity that require even more agility to coordinate. It is these complexities that the United Nations Inter-Agency Project (UNIAP) has to negotiate.

The chapter begins with a reconsideration of Bourdieu’s perceptions of doxa, orthodoxy, and heterodoxy, which will enable an understanding of how the institutional arrangements and underlying visions of development – as a broader *field* – took the forms they did and with what consequences. It then examines the rise of neoliberalism as the current doxa, emphasising the spread of new public management as a connected orthodox reaction, which served to reinforce the neoliberal project. These reforms, however, had a number of implications, which complicated the development field and introduced their own inefficiencies and problematics. In the next part of the chapter, these unintended consequences are explored in connection with the subsequent shift towards joined up governance, networks, and partnerships, which emerged, in part, as a heterodox reaction to the wider impacts of these reforms. In the development field, issues of time and other logics internal to the field meant that orthodox and heterodox discourses surfaced simultaneously. Good governance emerged as new public management was being extended into the field – after a long period of top-down driven, disciplinary rationalities of structural reform processes. They appeared together as a necessary logic for strengthening institutions and governance. Finally, this chapter examines the nature of the development field as it is now,

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<sup>28</sup> There are resonances here of what Peck and Tickell (2002) have termed the ‘roll-out’ moment of neoliberalism, which has followed on from the harder, more market driven ‘roll-back’ period of neoliberal reform.

focusing specifically on the reform of development agencies, particularly within the UN system, which has changed the roles and relationships of various actors and increased the need for greater coordination.

### **Theory and practice in development**

#### ***Reflexive relations between field and doxa, orthodoxy, and heterodoxy***

Development, in Bourdieu's terms, is comprised of numerous, and often overlapping fields, within which coordinative, cooperative, and competitive interactions and exchanges among international agencies take place. For Bourdieu, fields are considered to be "a network, or configuration, of objective relations between positions" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 97). The existence and limits of a field are always at stake, and its boundaries uncertain and contested. Delineating the structure of a field is a matter of empirical investigation (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Fields are structured, but contested, arenas or spaces, in which agents and organisations struggle over positional interests (i.e. power, forms of capital, visions, hierarchical standing, etc). The United Nations system or the UNIAP style coordination can be fruitfully investigated as fields themselves. Taken together, these subfields constitute just part of what Bourdieu refers to as a "whole social field" or a wider "meta-field", within which all development practice occurs (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Moi, 1991; Swartz, 1997; Webb et al, 2002). I argue that the arena of development is such a field, within which all development thinking and practice occurs and is organised.<sup>29</sup>

The notion of the field is both an organising and mediating concept according to Bourdieu because he argues that "to think in terms of a field is to think relationally" (Wacquant, 1989, pp. 38-39). This relational dimension has several aspects, including

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<sup>29</sup> In many respects, the idea of the "whole social field" or "meta-field" is one of Bourdieu's most under-theorised thoughts. In some works, he refers to the meta-field as the state. In others, he suggests that the meta-field has the same properties as a regular field, but is the preeminent structure of all other fields. As such, the meta-field has a formative structuring effect on each subfield. Of course, it is easy to see how these ideas are related. However, given this conceptual ambiguity, I have chosen instead to refer to the *development industry* as a whole simply as the wider/broader field of development.

isomorphic ones, wherein entities operating in the same field are affined to the others. The structure of each field, Bourdieu (2000) maintains, is distinctly defined through its established doxa. Although the idea is not as comprehensively defined as some of Bourdieu's other concepts, he defines the doxa as the "self-evident and natural order" of the field (Bourdieu, 1977a, p. 166). Because there is an unconscious dimension to the doxa, Bourdieu contends it is largely "taken for granted" (p. 166). Thus, for the most part, the doxa goes unquestioned, constituting our principle understandings of how the wider development 'works' or, put differently, the 'way things are' in the field. When the doxa is called into question, however, both orthodox (reinforces the doxa) and heterodox (counters the doxa) opinions are expressed and articulated (Bourdieu, 1977a, 2000). In spite of this, however, Bourdieu argues, "all those who are involved in the fields, whether champions of the orthodoxy or heterodoxy, share a tacit adherence to the same *doxa*" (emphasis in the original, p. 102). This is because the doxa is internalised through the habitus of each individual practitioner (Bourdieu, 1977a; 1990a). As a result, these logics underlie the planning and practices of programs, projects, and activities in development.

Development is a field in which doxic representations produce strong normative assumptions that legitimate policies and practices. In this regard, the historical conditioning of the doxa is inextricably tied to, and reinforced by, shifts in the wider international political economy, for example, the successive rounds of liberalisation and policy driven pro-market reforms championed by powerful states (e.g. USA and Britain) as well as multilateral development agencies (e.g. International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank). For this reason, it can be argued that the doxa dominating the wider development field over the

last quarter century is neoliberalism (Bøås & McNeill, 2004; Brohman, 1996; Chopra, 2003; Craig & Porter, 2006; Kothari & Minogue, 2002; Rankin, 2004).<sup>30</sup>

It is important to distinguish what is meant by the neoliberal doxa. Neoliberalism, as it is used in this thesis is not defined in a narrow sense as advocated by the previous conservative governments of Thatcher and Reagan. In development, the emergence of good governance indicated a shift from “conservative neoliberalism” (withdrawal of the state from the market, free trade, privatisation, and deregulation) to what David Craig and Doug Porter (2006) refer to as “inclusive neoliberalism” (creating an enabling environment for markets through state institution-building, empowerment, and participation) or what Nikolas Rose (1999) calls “advanced liberalism” (state functions through the market, individual, and community). Nevertheless, neoliberalism has contributed a number of core elements to development’s current doxa. These include the following assumptions and related practical logics: a) markets are central to growth; b) the main task of institutions is to enable markets through regulatory frameworks; c) such frameworks must primarily protect property and individual rights; d) the role of services is to empower individuals to participate in markets; e) separating the role of the policy and operations, funder, and the provider of services produces better accountabilities, while competition, voice, and exit in human services produce better outcomes than single (state) provider approaches; f) delivery of services can be decentralised in various ways, including outsourcing, and accountabilities can be governed through contracts and similar market exchanges (and low transaction cost) modalities; g) NGOs, private providers, and other local agents can be (best) relied on to deliver a variety of services; and h) overall, the field of operations is taken to be complex and contingent, populated by multiple actors, and therefore demanding of risk management approaches including i) those

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<sup>30</sup> Bourdieu (1998b) himself asserts that neoliberalism represents the pervasive doxa (also see Wacquant, 2005).

involving narrow specification of outputs (or ‘results’) and principal agent obligations (see Craig & Porter, 2006).

Although highly doxic, neoliberalism is no simple set of presuppositions; rather, it comprises a shifting set of doctrines and related practices, many of which have been carried out, but also challenged, within the fields of development. Within neoliberalism, critical thinkers have drawn attention to various historical shifts or different phases (e.g. Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Craig & Cotterell, 2007; Craig & Porter, 2005, 2006; Peck & Tickell, 2002). What their contributions demonstrate is that the concept itself is open to debate, and though highly influential, neoliberalism is not a unified discourse; instead, it can be seen as a “loose and malleable aggregation of concepts and practices” (Campbell & Pedersen, 2001, p. 270; also see Larner, 2000; Sparke, 2006). Additional critiques reveal that the neoliberal paradigm is fraught with tensions and contradictions (e.g. Craig & Porter, 2006; Soederberg, 2006).

In a number of core donor countries, especially Britain for example, a counter narrative or heterodox reaction has emerged, which argues for networks, joined-up governance, a level of shared strategy around social outcomes, and partnerships in reaction to the fragmenting effects of neoliberal marketisation and new public management reforms. Informed by (new) institutionalist understandings of networks and norms, notions of partnership might seem in opposition to competitive, market-led approaches of dealing with NGOs and other private service providers. However, in practice, both competitive and cooperative arrangements are found within in the fields of development as neoliberal doxa has moved towards a positive liberal phase of inclusion (Craig & Porter, 2006). These shifts have resulted in a hybridisation of orthodox and heterodox reactions as new institutional modes of governance have become more diffused in development practice

The current preoccupation with governance in development emerged largely under, as well as in reaction to, the political and ideologically dominant agenda and practice of



neoliberalism. As explained above, when a challenge materialises against the doxa, Bourdieu (1977a) argues that both orthodoxy (defends the doxa) and heterodoxy (an alternative reaction to the doxa) will manifest, constituting a “*field of opinion*” (p. 168). Bourdieu argues this process is an “awakening of the political consciousness” because through these divergent discourses, the doxa can be revealed and analysed (p. 170).<sup>31</sup> In wider discussions of governance, it is apparent this process is currently taking place.

### ***Neoliberal doxa of the wider development field***

Neoliberalism, as an ideological and political project in international development, has had broad, powerful doxic effects. The new ethos of neoliberalism largely became known in development as the Washington Consensus. Coined by John Williamson in 1990, the phrase represented a package of standardised reforms targeting Latin American countries and focused on economic liberalisation, fiscal discipline, deregulation, privatisation, and basic human services expenditures, which he thought reflected the agendas of the main international financial institutions (e.g. IMF and World Bank) in Washington, DC.<sup>32</sup> Despite what others observe as enormous overlaps with the neoliberal agenda (Held, 2005), Williamson himself has argued that the Washington Consensus was not neoliberal (at least in the narrow sense he understands the term, see Williamson, 1997). Objections notwithstanding, the phrase Washington Consensus became, in the mouths of influential critics including former Chief Economist of the World Bank, Joseph Stiglitz, interchangeable with neoliberalism and globalisation, much to Williamson’s disappointment.

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<sup>31</sup> Numerous scholars have recognised that discourse analysis has much to offer our understanding of development (e.g. Crush, 1995; Escobar, 1995; Ferguson, 1990; Mohanty, 1991). Throughout this thesis, but particularly in this chapter as well as chapter five, I use discourse (through the notions of doxa/orthodoxy/heterodoxy) as a mechanism to explore the internal workings of the development field.

<sup>32</sup> In retrospect, Williamson (2000) stated that the Washington Consensus was “...an attempt to summarise the policies that were widely viewed as supportive of development at the end of the two decades when economists had become convinced that the key to rapid economic development lay not in a country’s natural resources, or even its physical or human capital, but rather in the set of economic policies that it pursued.” (p. 254)

In retrospect, a major problem with the Washington Consensus was its failure to recognise the importance of institutions in enabling markets (Fukuyama, 2004). Fukuyama contends that it was only amidst the tensions of the post-Cold war era of the 1990s, and especially after the 1997 Asian financial crisis, that this realisation gained central importance. Reacting to the crisis, Stiglitz argued for a post-Washington Consensus, which as Ben Fine (2001b) points out, built upon, and extended, ideological shifts emerging within the World Bank itself. He commented:

Trying to get government better focused on the fundamentals – economic policies, basic education, health, roads, law and order, environmental protection – is a vital step. But focusing on the fundamentals is not a recipe for a minimalist government. The state has an important role to play in appropriate regulation, industrial policy, social protection and welfare. But the choice is not whether the state should or should not be involved. Instead, it is often a matter of how it gets involved. More importantly, we should not see the state and markets as substitutes... the government should see itself as a complement to markets, undertaking those actions that make markets fulfil their functions better. (Stiglitz, 1998, p. 25; also see Fine, 2001b, p. 3)

The main differences between Washington and post-Washington Consensus were two-fold. First, the new rhetoric opened the door for interventionist state strategies in market-led reforms; second, greater importance was placed on promoting societal cohesion and interaction through notions of social capital (Fine, 2001b; also see Kuczynski & Williamson, 2003). In short, the emphasis shifted from a minimal state to building a stronger, more effective state through an inclusion of institutions and governance in the policy prescriptions of the World Bank (Phillips, 2006). Referred to as “second generation reforms” (Naim, 1994), the importance of institutional reform was now widely acknowledged. To conceptualise this new policy agenda, however, a different framework was needed, one that could provide a “middle ground between champions of the market and the defenders of the state” (Bates, 1995, p. 27). In this regard, new institutionalism, Bates argues, offered a way of

understanding both the economic and political sides of the reform agenda. The *new institutional economics* within new institutionalism became particularly influential (see Chapter 3; also see Cameron, 2004; Craig & Porter, 2006; Harriss, et al., 1995, Nugent, 1998; World Bank 1997, 2002; 2004). As John Toye (1995) explains, new institutional economics presented “the set of tools to inform this kind of institutional design” (p. 58).

### ***Influence of new institutional economics***

Although still heavily influenced by neoliberal concepts, the development community was gradually recognising that fostering institutions and building an effective state was critical to the processes of economic growth and market oriented reforms. Cast in these terms, the convergence of new institutional economics and the thinking of multilateral development agencies, in many ways, was a natural fit.<sup>33</sup> It offered an alternative paradigm to neoclassical thought that underpinned both neoliberalism and structural adjustment programs (see Chapter 3). In broad terms, institutions are defined as the written and unwritten rules, norms, and constraints that are devised to reduce uncertainty as well as transaction costs (Ménard & Shirley, 2005, p. 1). Yet, as Ménard and Shirley point out, new institutional economists are not just concerned about institutions, they are equally interested in the interactions *between* institutions and their organisational arrangements, or in other words, the modes of governance, which are designed to support production and exchange (i.e. markets, firms, contractual arrangements, behavioural traits, etc). The prominence of new institutional economics cemented social and cultural dimensions in economic and governance reforms. As a result, notions of *good governance* succeeded in becoming a new orthodoxy underpinning market-led economic growth and development thinking (Leftwich, 1993). As Craig and Porter (2006) note, the good governance agenda derived much insight from new institutional economics. But what prompted this serious interest in governance from the 1990s onwards?

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<sup>33</sup> The influence of the new institutional economics in development, however, began much earlier (1989), as the special journal edition of *World Development* 17(9) reveals.

Leftwich (1993) suggests the reasons were four-fold: the disappointing results of the structural adjustment programs (SAPs), the collapse of the Berlin Wall and communist regimes, pro-democracy rises in developing countries, and the resurgence of neoliberalism in the Western countries.

### ***Good governance and the importance of the public sector***

In the 1980s, neoliberal structural adjustment programs were introduced into developing countries, only to be refined after disappointing results to include policies of good governance. Influenced by new institutionalist thinking, the concept conceived by the World Bank in 1992 has different meanings in different development contexts. Broadly defined, good governance means “strengthening the ‘institutional framework of government’” (Woods, 2000, p. 825; also see Harriss, 2002; Rankin, 2004).<sup>34</sup> With its strong correlation to institutionalised values of democracy, human rights, rule of law, and a more transparent, efficient public sector based on *principles of new public management* (discussed below), the acceptance of good governance approaches suggested the development community was beginning to recognise that even in a marketised state, *institutions mattered* (e.g. World Bank, 1997; 2002; 2004). Here, a number of working definitions of institutions circulated, from the sharp, narrower new institutionalist definition offered by North (where institutions were construed as “the rules of the game in a society, or more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interaction” (North, 1990, p. 3)) to more familiar conceptions that considered institutions to be core agencies and functions of the state, such as public finance or budget planning arrangements, or the bureaucracy and state sector service deliverers. Within this wide ranging practical application of institutionalist ideas and concerns, all of the above would come in for ‘institution building’ attention, again under the broad label of ‘good governance’.

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<sup>34</sup> For different definitions of good governance/governance among development agencies, see Weiss (2000).

This new orthodoxy about the role of the state in economic development, which incorporated a greater focus on institutional structures and governance, was formally unveiled in the 1997 World Bank Development Report (WDR) *State in a Changing World*, which laid out the agenda for public sector reform.<sup>35</sup> The report underlined the conviction that “an effective state is vital for the provision of the goods and services – and the rules and institutions – that allow markets to flourish and people to lead healthier, happier lives” (p. 1). However, it was the World Bank WDR (2002) *Building Institutions for Markets* report that explicitly identified good governance as central to poverty reduction. Assessment against these kinds of market oriented good governance standards is now a lending requirement of the structural adjustment policies of both the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). Although the World Bank was the first to articulate principles of good governance, other international development organisations (e.g. IMF, OECD, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), etc.) soon followed suit. Interpretations of governance broadened, and increasingly good governance policies and programs among international development agencies evolved to promote reforms in all realms of the public sector. However, observers commented that the governance reform agenda became not just “overwhelming”, but also “deeply problematic” as a development framework (Grindle, 2004, pp. 527; 525). Merilee Grindle elaborates:

Getting good governance calls for improvements that touch virtually all aspects of the public sector – from institutions that set the rules of the game for economic and political interaction, to decision-making structures that determine priorities among public problems and allocate resources to respond to them, to organizations that manage administrative systems and deliver goods and services to citizens, to human resources that staff government bureaucracies, to the interface of officials and citizens

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<sup>35</sup> The first reference to the notion of ‘good governance’ was in a World Bank (1989) report on Africa. Following this, the World Bank published two subsequent reports, which also addressed governance issues: *Governance and Development* (1992) and *Governance: The World Bank’s experience* (1994).

in political and bureaucratic arenas. ... (it) is unrealistically long and growing longer over time. (pp. 525-526)

The good governance agenda, along with its requirements, provided the impetus for new approaches in public sector governance in development from the late 1980s onwards (Larbi, 1999). However, there was one particular approach to public sector reform that was widely introduced and adopted globally. It consisted of a group of orthodox ideas and practices known as *new public management*.

### ***The orthodox rise and spread of new public management***

From the 1990s onwards, international development agencies promoted (and continue to promote) good governance agendas, aiming to reform economic, political, and social institutions, which complemented the neoliberal doxa underpinning their policies and practices (see Jessop, 2002). Developed and developing countries across the globe committed themselves – some voluntarily, others through isomorphism and other pressures – to instil key tenets of an institutional framework based on a model of competitive-market exchange, private property rights, and free trade, which arguably would serve the best interests of society (see Harvey, 2005). As neoliberalism marketised the state, public sector reforms under the new public management model became part of a wider shift to align governments closer to the market. In this light, new public management techniques may be seen as the means through which the state was marketised.

From the late 1970s onwards, in tandem with the rise of neoliberalism, an orthodox “managerial reform movement” was burgeoning, partly in response to the transition towards market-based economies (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992; also see Hood, Scott, James, Jones, & Travers, 1999, p. 189; Kamarck, 2004). Concomitantly, there was strong political interest among government administrations to promote fiscal responsibility and accountability, prompting several states to undergo massive public sector reforms. New Zealand and Britain were among the first to adopt bureaucratic reforms influenced by new institutional economics

and managerialism, which came under the rubric of new public management (Boston, Martin, Pallot & Walsh, 1996; Hood, 1991; Rhodes, 1996). Rhodes (1996) distinguishes between the two. Managerialism introduces private sector approaches and problem-solving into the public sector, emphasising strategies that involve ‘letting managers manage’, clear standards and focus on results, measuring performance, and value-added measures (Boston, et. al, 1996). New institutional economics (outlined earlier in this chapter and Chapter 3) introduces incentive structures through marketisation, competitive outsourcing and contracting out through a range of suppliers, including outside the state sector, and consumer choice. In short, new public management introduces private sector managerial styles and accountabilities into the public sector (Rhodes, 1996).

The model gained wide political appeal during the 1980s, where its advancers emphasised downsizing government bureaucracies through privatisation and deregulation to foster greater accountability, efficiency, and resource allocation (Hood, 1991). Another defining characteristic of new public management is the disaggregation of functions and responsibilities, specifically by introducing various institutional separations or splits (i.e. policy/implementation or outcome/output splits, purchaser/funder/provider etc.) to increase the focus on outputs and measurable targets (Boston, et al., 1996; Craig, 2006; Dunleavy & Hood, 1994). It should be clear, as the popularisers of these ideas, David Osborne and Ted Gaebler (1992) state, “the job of government is to steer, not row the boat” (p. 25). Governments should develop clear policies and frameworks, but not engage in directing implementation. Other market-based agents, such as nongovernmental and private bodies selected through competitive tendered processes, were better suited to carry out operations. In this regard, the logic of new public management fit nicely with the prevailing neoliberal efforts to downsize the state.

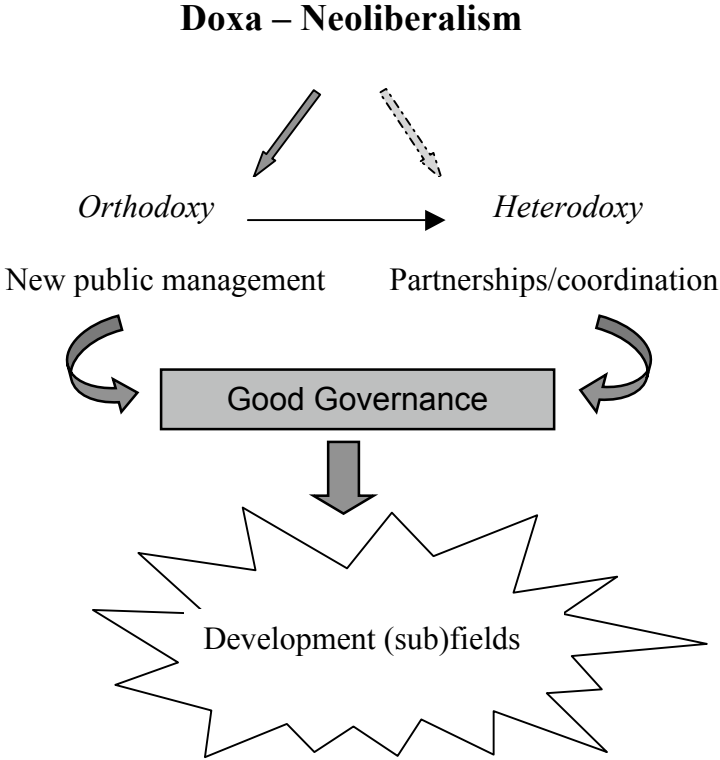
In practical terms, the application of economic and political reforms under the good governance paradigm continued to rely on the precepts of new public management as the model forms of governance, which some scholars saw as a wider application of new institutional economic principles (e.g. Barzelay, 2002; Craig & Porter, 2006; Hood, 1991; Lane, 2000; Manning, 2002; Rhodes 1996). At the least, new institutional economics, with its primary orientation to market transactions, was an important contributor. Regardless of the debates, the impacts of these reforms should not be underestimated (Turner & Hulme, 1997). Of course, some argue that the impact of new public management has been more prominent on a rhetorical level than a practical one (e.g. Manning, 2002; Polidano, 2001). But even sceptics like Nick Manning (2002) concede “it has undoubtedly left its mark” (p. 305). Despite concerns, the impact of new public management movement is undeniable, raising an important question. Why has the new public management movement been so significant?

The powerful influence of new public management, which Hood (1991) referred to as one of “the most striking international trends in public management”, appeared to coincide with four other related trends (p. 3). The first trend related to efforts to decelerate government spending and reduce staff. Next was the shift towards privatisation and service provision, whereas the growth of information technology was the third trend. Last, according to Hood, was the emphasis on an international agenda targeting better public administration and intergovernmental cooperation. As an orthodoxy, new public management may have been identified with the neoliberal doxa, but its tenets of bureaucratic reform also were well-suited to market related notions of good governance, a contributing factor to its continuing influence. Put differently, orthodox notions and practices of both new public management and good governance are themselves part of the doxa of neoliberalism (see Figure 6). As Rhodes (2000a) offers succinctly, “‘good governance’ marries new public management to the advocacy of liberal democracy” (p. 57). Although some writers insisted good governance



marks a departure from neoliberal market reform (e.g. Ebrahim, 2005), others argued good governance is largely an expression of neoliberalism (e.g. Brodie, 2005; Khan, 2004; O’Brien, Goetz, Scholte, & Williams, 2000).

Figure 6: Doxa of the wider development field



Although it is critical to understand the construction of the good governance concept, equally salient to this thesis is how neoliberal and new public management reforms worked out in practice.

***Heterodox reaction to neoliberal fragmentation: The discourse of partnerships***

Rhodes (2000b) argues that new public management, contracting out, and neoliberal marketisation involved more than just a shift from a hierarchical model of government to market-type mechanisms because these reforms had unintended consequences and fragmenting manifestations that changed governance patterns and practices (for an in-depth discussion of this counter narrative, see British new institutionalism in Chapter 3). Referred to as the ‘governance narrative’, Rhodes tells a story of fragmentation, complexity, and

interdependence in Britain, which led to network-based forms of governance and coordination (also see Bevir, 2005; Clarke & Glendinning, 2002; Kooiman, 1993; Rhodes 1997, Sterling, 2005; Stoker, 1997, 2000; Pierre 2000; Newman 2001; 2005). Another related effect, however, of this growing ‘institutional fragmentation’ is the increased participation of private, public, and voluntary organisations through the rise of partnerships and joined-up governance approaches (Sterling, 2005). Now, largely institutionalised, multi-organisational partnerships as a mode of governance constitute a heterodox discourse, which challenges orthodox notions of new public management in Britain and elsewhere (i.e. New Zealand, United States, etc).

Given these shifting institutional modes of governance in OECD countries, it is unsurprising that both these orthodox and heterodox discourses moved into international development discussions. The discussions above described the rise of neoliberalism and new public management, which came to be expressed as doxic and orthodox opinions among powerful political leaders, academics, and international development organisations. The heterodox notion of partnership and cooperation in development, however, emerged somewhat later during the mid 1990s (Robinson, Hewitt, & Harriss, 2000). At a meeting in 1995, members of the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee (DAC) recognised partnerships as an important institutional response for sustainable economic and social development in what was referred to as the “new global context” (OECD, 1995, p. 1). Two years later, the British Department of International Development (DFID), in their 1997 White Paper on International Development, followed suit in promoting partnerships and cooperation among governments, NGOs, and the private sector (Lewis, 2001; Robinson, et al., 2000). Since then, partnership approaches have become key pillars in development policies and practices. But as Robinson et al. (2000) argue, “the language of ‘partnership’ often masks a complex reality, which is that relationships take many forms, and that these vary widely in terms of the ways in which power, interest, and substance and so on are organized” (p. 13).

Here we find some inherent contradictions between the orthodox and heterodox discourses situated within the wider field of development.

Unlike the governance narrative in Britain, the discourse of partnership or cooperation did not emerge in specific reaction to unintended fragmentation of neoliberal marketisation and new public management reforms. In development, *both* the orthodoxy and heterodoxy were perceived as essential to the achievement of good governance, institutional reforms (including setting up a market system), and poverty reduction for two different, but commonly linked, reasons.<sup>36</sup> Hard institutional aspects of new public management were seen as a means to improve the efficiency and responsiveness of the public sector, whereas soft institutional aspects of partnerships, joined-up governance, and networks were seen as means to give choice and voice to the poor, empowering them to have access to the market. Put differently, networks needed to be established alongside hierarchies and markets.

Although these perceptions were arguably guided by insights and experiences of OECD countries, Hewitt (2000) argues the “widespread diffusion” of multi-organisational relationships in development is clearly attributed to two related but separate trends (p. 51). He explains:

On the one hand is (sic) the forced interactions between organizations that have come about through the policies of neo-liberal governments in the last two decades. ...The other trend, visible in many sectors and at odds with the above, is towards co-operation through inter-organizational relationships as a voluntary and positive move towards creating greater efficiency and effectiveness in social and economic transactions. (pp. 51-52)

Through these intersecting but competing discourses, Hewitt continues, we begin to see the strong ties and interconnectedness among notions of competition, coordination, and cooperation within development. New public management was introduced as a means of

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<sup>36</sup> Bevir (2003) reminds us that both the OECD and World Bank align themselves with neoliberal conceptions of governance.

achieving greater competition between public and private service providers to increase efficiency and effectiveness. At the same time, more market based competition has rearranged the boundaries of political, economic, and territorial spaces, changing governance processes and relationships in development. These institutional forms based on competitive contractual agreements are often labeled partnerships. Of course, the term ‘contract’ does not offer the same feel-good effect as the language of ‘partnership’ (Robinson, et al., 2000, p. 10). Building on these ideas, Hewitt (2000) suggests that these three types of inter-organisational relationships (competitive, coordinated, and cooperative) generally map onto the differing modes of governance (markets, hierarchies, and networks). But because plural modes of governance co-exist and continuously interact with one another, partnerships or collaborative strategies often combine these differing institutional arrangements (Hewitt, 2000; Lowndes & Skelcher, 1998; also see Chapter 6 for shifting, hybrid modes of governance within the UNIAP).

In development, these conflicting discourses come together, not just in dominant conceptions regarding policies and planning of the international development agencies, but in their practices as well. For instance, as the state continued to align closer to the market on account of neoliberal policies and new institutional reforms in the public sector, so did the activities of donors, development agencies, and NGOs through the utility of short-term renewable contracts and competitive project tenders (see Cooley & Ron, 2002). Although primarily aimed at the state, these reforms had wider implications, bringing about a reconfiguration of individual roles, responsibilities, and governance arrangements throughout the entire field of development. At the same time, long established path dependencies were reinforced. Yet, the effects of these shifts, as this chapter argues, are not fully appreciated, and sometimes they are even overlooked.

## *Significance of institutional reforms in development*

### *The proliferation of NGOs*

The rise in numbers of NGOs in development during the 1980s and 1990s is well noted in the literature (e.g. Edwards & Fowler, 2002; Edwards & Hulme, 1995; Ebrahim, 2005; Farrington & Bebbington, 1993; Gardner & Lewis, 1996; Lewis, 2001; Reimann, 2006; Turner & Hume, 1997; Weiss, 1999). There is consensus that new public management – with its emphasis on funder/provider splits to create better incentives and enhance performance, and contracting out to strengthen accountability and transparency through quantifiable outputs – is a key contributing factor to the proliferation (e.g. Craig & Porter, 2006; Lewis, 2001; Turner & Hulme, 1997). As government administration, roles, and responsibilities diminished, the traditional roles of NGOs began to shift, and new prospects opened up for NGOs to operate as contractors in service provision (Lewis, 2001).

In the past, the main role of NGOs was to question and influence the government (Korten, 1990). Now, acting as private contractors filling roles previously held by the state, NGOs were increasingly seen as vehicles for development and democratisation. At least in theory, the central assumption was that civil society and democratic processes would be strengthened through the presence of NGOs, promoting a more efficient, accountable state (Lewis, 2001; Ottaway & Carothers, 2000; Sampson, 1996). Large amounts of funding (economic capital) and other resources, which before had been channelled through the state, flowed to NGOs to carry out activities, provide services, and/or implement projects. Subsequently, the shift led to greater competitiveness among the NGO community for official support. What is more, the funding of NGOs to deliver services represents a fundamental change in their relationships with donors, from one of partner to one of contractor, in which NGOs carry out the funder's (i.e. government, UN agencies, etc) agenda (Edwards & Hulme, 1996).

NGOs were not just a private contracting substitution for the state. During the 1990s, donor governments and international agencies also contributed financial and institutional support to NGOs, which strengthened their roles and increased opportunities for participation and influence in terms of world politics (Weiss, 1999). In exchange, Weiss continues, NGOs assisted UN agencies by serving as a direct link to grassroots communities, acting as subcontractors and project executors, pressuring governments on various issues, and participating in intergovernmental processes. These new roles and responsibilities became institutionalised within the UN system through a series of UN global conferences and subsequent programming (Reimann, 2006). Because of these shifts, the development field became denser, with NGOs proliferating at an exponential rate. According to the Yearbook of International Organizations, there were 14,333 listed NGOs in 1989. In just five years, this number rose to 20,928. It is important to note, however that new public management-type reforms have left both states and NGOs more dependent on these forms of relationships and exchanges. Many NGOs, for example, cannot carry out their activities without the support, cooperation, and involvement of the state, highlighting how these institutional changes have altered conventional roles.

***Reinforced path dependencies in project modalities: fragmentation & competition***

The increased prominence and engagement with NGOs led not just to their rapid growth, but also to a dependency on donor funding. This reliance on official aid, as Alan Fowler (2002) points out, has moved NGOs more towards the “dysfunctionally ‘projectized’ way of working” (p. 15). It is not just NGOs that have become more involved in project modalities. Despite the various shifts in development theories and strategies over the years – including the recent emphasis on sector-wide (SWAs) or program-based (PBAs) approaches – short-term development *projects* have endured since the 1960s as a principal means to deliver development assistance (Craig & Porter, 1997; Hira & Parfitt, 2004; Sampson, 1996;

Turner & Hulme, 1997).<sup>37</sup> Project modalities arguably are still the preferred approach for most development organisations, including UN agencies. Because project modalities are based on inputs and outputs, they provide better control over the management of funds and enhanced accountability. Given the orthodoxy of new public management approaches, development projects remain the “bedrock of the development industry” (Edwards, 2004, p. 70). Over 40 years ago, Albert Hirschman (1967) in *Development Projects Observed*, referred to “projects as the privileged particles of the development process” (p. 1). His analysis of several World Bank funded projects was that “all projects are problem-ridden; the only valid distinction appears to be between those that are more or less successful in overcoming their troubles and those that are not” (pp. 1-3). According to the Aid Harmonisation and Alignment Website, donors are supporting more than 60,000 development aid projects worldwide, with some countries receiving as many as 800 new projects per year.<sup>38</sup> In practical terms, this expansion carries enormous implications.

From an idea’s conception to the stage when a project becomes operational is often a long and complicated process in today’s fragmented, disaggregated development field. Many different agencies are involved - in diverse ways - at different stages of the project.<sup>39</sup> Given the autonomous nature of UN agencies, each has developed policies and procedures for

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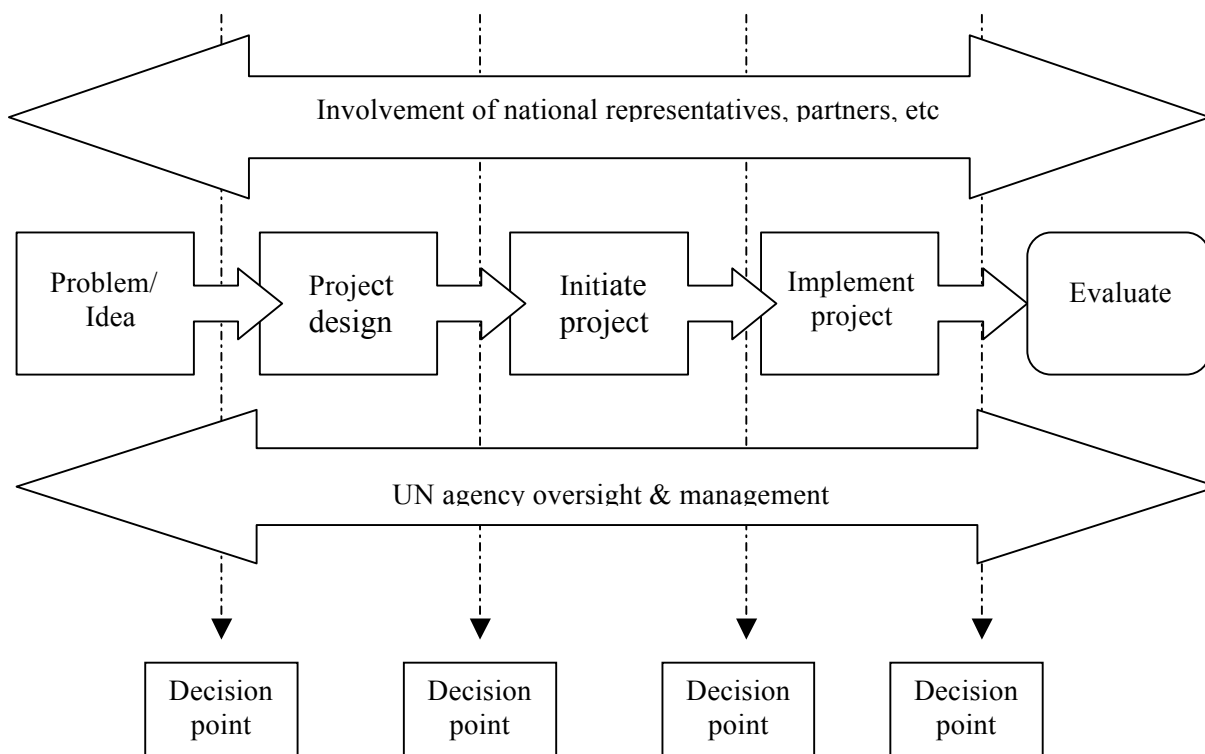
<sup>37</sup> The OECD (2006) distinguishes between the two: PBAs are broader and based on formalised donor coordination for nationally owned development program, sector program, or thematic program of a specific organisation, such as Thailand’s national human trafficking (2003-2009) strategy. The host country or organisation provides leadership, oversees a single comprehensive program and budget, and uses local systems for implementation. Alternatively, SWAs are PBAs operating at the sector level.

<sup>38</sup> See [www/aidharmonization.org](http://www/aidharmonization.org) (Aid Harmonisation and Alignment website, which is part of the Joint Progress Toward Enhanced Development and Effectiveness: Harmonisation, Alignment, and Results – Overview)

<sup>39</sup> The following section is based on my experience working with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Regional Centre for East Asia and Pacific in Bangkok (2000/2001). The diagram is adapted from the UNDP user guide. The actual process is more complex than discussed or presented in the diagram, but the purpose is to provide a general sense of how development project processes work.

project planning and management, which must somehow be satisfied.<sup>40</sup> Generally, though, the project cycle is as follows:

Figure 7: UN project cycle



As Figure 6 illustrates, the first phase of the cycle involves the identification of a problem or formulation of an idea representing a high priority for a particular country or region. This activity may be done ‘in house’ (within a single UN agency), or short term consultants may be hired. Feasibility is assessed in terms of the implementation capacity at the national level, financial and other resources required, appropriate fit with organisational mandate, and country plans. If the idea is well received at the national government level and the headquarters of the executing UN agency, the idea is drafted, often by a consultant, into a formal position paper (or project idea document). This development of a position paper constitutes the cycle’s second phase. Sketching of the design may involve partner agencies who have already been lined up to take part. Or, it may involve leaving several possibilities

<sup>40</sup> See Dijkzeul (2003) for an overview of the internal program management procedures at UNICEF.



for flexible or modular components to be included after funding is secured or provided by other actors later in the cycle.

The third phase, which is arguably the most crucial, is to either assess funding interest and/or secure funding commitments for the project. The fragmentation of the field becomes crucial because it is where coordination must now necessarily be practised. With funding bases and other forms of capital dispersed throughout the field, financial and other support for a new project normally comes from a combination of different sources (bilateral & multilateral agencies, foundations/funds, international NGOs, global funds, private bodies).

Figure 8: Funding flows of the UNIAP Phase I (including COMMIT)

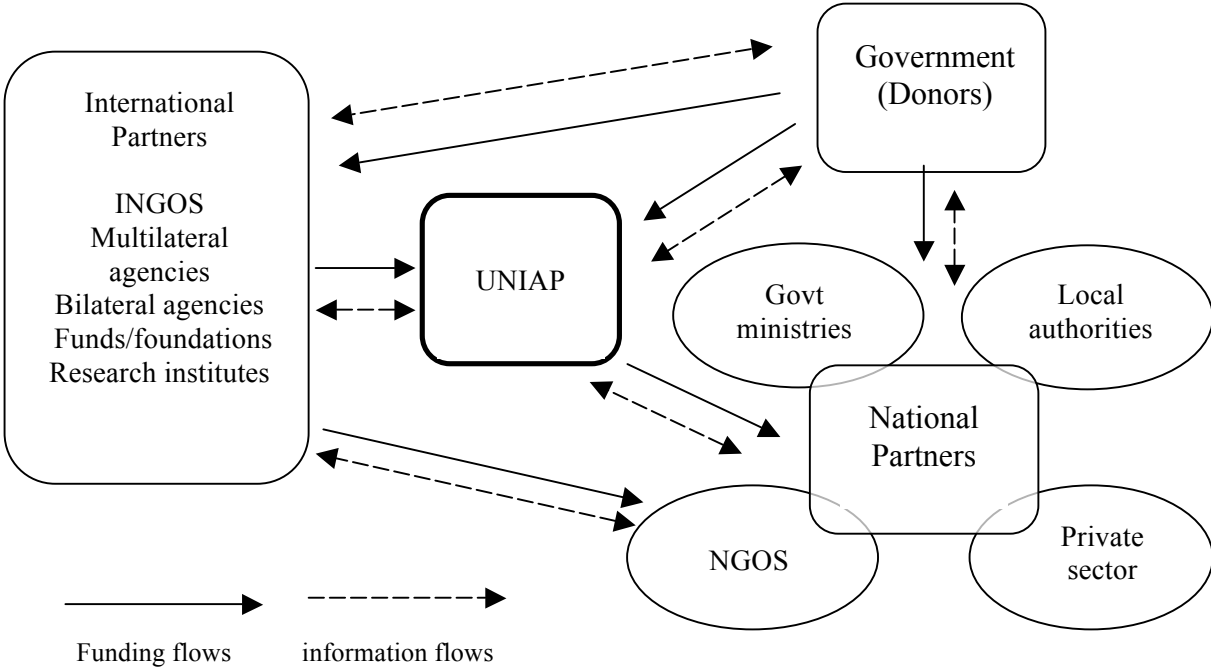


Figure 8 depicts the complex funding (and information) flows and mechanisms of the UNIAP during Phase II, which includes the agencies that provided parallel financial support

contributions for COMMIT process (see Chapter 5, Table 7) for a breakdown donor contributions to UNIAP's core costs).<sup>41</sup>

Most financial support for UN projects and programmes is channelled bilaterally (e.g. from national donor contributions such as New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID) or Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA)), or through earmarked multilateral funding (which might come channelled through the UN or intergovernmental organisations, e.g. IOM). However, a project may seek additional, different kinds of funding arrangements. For example, *parallel funding* is an arrangement where funds are contributed to a project, but administrated separately. Put differently, these funds are not put into the project's core budget, but are earmarked for a specific purpose (i.e. particular region, activities, etc). The activities funded appear under the project's logo, but they may be implemented by a separate (contributing) organisation. Another example can be seen in cost-sharing arrangements, in which funding or other resources from government ministries or departments, who act as national counterparts and are required to meet particular obligations in terms of project implementation, are integrated into the project budget. A third and final example is the contributions made in kind from other UN agencies as part of their existing programs. Of course, there are other types of financial arrangements, but the key point here is that projects, such as the UNIAP, often need to mobilise funding and resources from a vast array of traditional and non-traditional sources before the next major stage of the project cycle can occur, which is implementation. As Chapter 6 will show, this is no easy feat, and the transactions costs for those involved are high.

The fourth stage of the project cycle is implementation, which involves the actual development of the official project document (again, usually contracted out to a consultant); setting up the project structures/project implementation units (PIUs); appointment of a

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<sup>41</sup> For example, the estimated cost to host the first and second senior officials meetings and the one day inter-ministerial meeting in 2004 was \$133,033, which had to be raised separately from the core costs of the project.

national coordinator and other staff who will be responsible for the planning and implementation of the project's national-level activities.<sup>42</sup> Even at the implementation stage, however, financial problems may be encountered. If a project begins to suffer from diminished funding (as will be seen in the case of the UNIAP), the project (or the executing agency) will have to justify its existence to current donors or look for new funding sources. The last stage is the final project evaluation, which is designed to assess the outputs, outcomes, and impacts. If the project is deemed successful, preparations and planning for the next cycle will begin, usually with a goal of bringing the project into a second phase. This phase may have a new group of donors, contributing quite different components to the modular structure (see Chapter 6 for a description of how Phase II was affected in this way).

The strong dependence on project modalities to implement development strategies both enacts and contributes to high levels of donor fragmentation and duplication. As mentioned above, to ensure effective project management and implementation, temporary organisational structures, referred to as project implementation units (PIUs), are regularly established for each project to increase the capacity of agencies, but often in isolation of government structures (see ADB, 2005). According to a 2005 report by the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development, donors and international NGOs were carrying out more than 700 land sector projects in Cambodia; consequently, there were over 1000 project implementation units (PIU)/steering committees and stand-alone working groups (Talvela, 2006). The example underscores the degree of complexity and fragmentation produced through project modalities. With at least 100 human trafficking projects being carried out in Cambodia, the plural nature of the development field becomes clearer. Another example of fragmentation associated with project approaches is that official aid is regularly earmarked for specific regions or program areas, limiting the internal flexibility of how these funds are

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<sup>42</sup> A PIU (project implementation unit) is responsible for the administration and implementation of the project.

spent. In the case of the UNIAP, the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) earmarked \$24,000 US for Lao PDR to implement country-specific human trafficking activities, restricting the project management's ability to prioritise interventions based on their potential impact or regional need.

### *Other implications of project modalities*

Donors are concerned about fostering sustainability through local ownership; however, this can be hindered when governments do not have the capacity to handle multiple projects. Because of the large international development community presence in Cambodia, government officials spend approximately 50% of their time in meetings, hosting missions, or writing reports (Talvela, 2006; also see OECD, 2005). The large number of overlapping, parallel procedures or requirements means high transactions costs are an inescapable facet of development practice. An example of these costs is illustrated through personal experience. When I worked with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), one focal official was assigned per country to execute five separate law enforcement based projects implemented through our office. Collectively, we competed to have the same small group of senior level officials partake in our individual workshops, seminars, meetings, or field visits. Continuously pulled in different directions, arguably our multiple projects undermined the institutional capacity, which was what we were trying to strengthen.

Despite its documented weaknesses, the traditional project approach is an entrenched institutional arrangement within the development field, creating a series of path dependencies in any given sector, and indeed in the entire development field. A number of inherent mechanisms reinforce the path towards project or similarly discrete, vertically integrated program modalities, aside from the emergence of new public management with its emphasis on performance indicators, accountability, and contracting out to NGOs as service providers. First, individual projects increase donor visibility, influence, and control over direction.

Second, other aid modalities, such as SWAps or PBAs, require the commitment of large scale partnerships in addition to an integrated planning process. Calculated costs – in terms of meetings, negotiations, expectations, and coordination – are, as a result, higher. Moreover, compromises are inherently challenging with different organisational structures, operating procedures, and conflicting interests at play. Third, shifts in the orthodoxy from old public administration (traditional Weberian hierarchical form of bureaucracy, top-down accountability) to new public management (horizontal steering/management, principal/agent relationships, narrow/vertical bottom-up accountability) have themselves reinforced and indeed sharpened the project philosophy.<sup>43</sup> Thus, the project orientation causes problems, but the mechanisms established to fix them only manage these problems, and do not solve them.

***Outcomes: A marketised, complex, and uncertain development field***

Within development, institutional shifts and their cumulative effects (i.e. expansion of NGOs; governments, UN agencies, and donors contracting out; shifting roles and power relations among actors; and the strength of project modalities) intensified pressures arising from within the field. The broadened scope and density of international agencies, coupled with the prevailing new public management orthodoxies situated within the wider neoliberal doxa, has meant a greater reliance on principles of marketisation. As Cooley and Ron (2002) argue, the international development community is:

...increasingly issuing short-term, renewable contracts for discrete aid projects, requiring aid contractors to bid competitively and demonstrate concrete results. ...donors, moreover, seek to fund projects, not administrative overhead, hoping that this will push INGO contractors to rationalize procedures, demonstrate effectiveness, and slash overhead. (pp. 11-12)<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> For detailed distinctions between old and new public management, see Dunleavy and Hood (1994); Peters and Pierre (2003).

<sup>44</sup> INGO (international nongovernmental organisations)

Indeed, as Peter Hoffman and Thomas Weiss (2006) purport, the growing marketisation and privatisation of development aid are a direct effect of the influences of neoliberalism. Development aid, they continue, is now often perceived as a “deliverable” (p. 21), with its outputs or results conceived in narrower, more specific new public management terms, even as agendas have shifted to embrace global problems and expanded mandates. Although intended to maximise efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability, it is becoming increasingly clear that the marketised environment amplifies competition and rivalries among agencies within the field (e.g. Cooley & Ron, 2002; Hoffman & Weiss, 2006; Loescher, 2001; Smillie & Minear, 2004). “In today’s humanitarian world”, Ian Smillie and Larry Minear (2004) point out, agencies engage in “dog-eat-dog competition that is relentless as it is unproductive” (p. 184).

The marketisation of the aid system exacerbated not just competitiveness, but also power asymmetries inherent in the development field. Exercising their power, agencies seek to manipulate and lay claim to resources crucial to the success of projects and programs (Sampson, 2003). The expansion of mandates entrusted to the UN since the 1990s has not been matched with the capital to turn responsibilities into broad yet practical outcomes (Hüfner, 2003). Although the UN’s financial problems largely stem from the unpaid dues of member states, the fragmented nature of programs, projects, and activities in an increasingly pluralised system of global governance had led to a dispersal of capital throughout the development field. As a result, development agencies are forced to invest time, energy, and other resources to secure financial support. In this regard, marketisation can result in counterproductive behaviour as well as the waste of resources (Hoffman & Weiss, 2006).

Chapters 6 and 7 will show that development agencies dedicate an enormous amount of effort to raising organisational profiles, enhancing prestige and influence, and ensuring

their work is visible in the wider development community.<sup>45</sup> Development agencies need to attract donors *and* sustain their interest by producing measurable outputs, particularly if the intention is to continue for a second phase. Invariably, they engage in this pursuit with funding from their original donor(s).<sup>46</sup> But as I will illustrate in the case of the UNIAP, projects forced to change donors encounter a number of problems (see Chapter 6). For instance, the UNIAP was forced to appeal to donors that were new to the sector, which resulted in most of the project's resources (staff, funding left over from the first phase) being devoted, once again, to fundraising.<sup>47</sup>

### ***Growing concerns: aid effectiveness and coordination***

Practitioners, donors, recipients, and outside observers are adding their voices to the chorus purporting that the current field of development is fraught with complexities, fragmentation, and high transaction costs (e.g. ActionAid, 2005; Burall, Maxwell & Menocal, 2006; Christiansen & Rogerson, 2005; Craig & Porter, 2006; Easterly, 2002; Groves & Hinton, 2004; OECD Rome Declaration, 2003; Sampson, 2003). As Karin Christiansen and Andrew Rogerson (2005) from the Overseas Development Institute argue, “the wide range of actors, interests, operational modalities, approaches and assumptions may be simply undermining others’ objectives” (p. 1). These concerns are not just about aid effectiveness, but also the lack of coordination.

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<sup>45</sup> In Bourdieu's term, these are all forms of symbolic capital (see chapters, two, six, and seven).

<sup>46</sup> Examples of human trafficking projects that have moved into a subsequent phase with the support of their original donors in the Greater Mekong Subregion are: 1) the Mekong Sub-Regional Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women through the International Labour Organisation International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO/IPEC) (funded through DFID), and 2) Asia Regional Trafficking in Persons (ARTIP) Project (funded through (AusAID) the Australian Agency for International Development).

<sup>47</sup> I am indebted to Phil Marshall for these last points on donor funding. Given this reality, projects and programs are keen to defend themselves against critical evaluations conducted in other than new public management output terms. In fact, this was the main reason I had access problems. The UNIAP was concerned that the results of my research might have a negative impact on their ability to raise financial support (economic capital) for Phase II.

Current debates on reform emerged in the early 2000s, and the current trend focuses on finding ways to improve the alignment of development processes, procedures, and practices. For example, the consensus that emerged from the 2003 Rome Declaration on Harmonization was clear. It read:

We in the donor community have been concerned with the growing evidence that, over time, the totality and wide variety of donor requirements and processes for preparing, delivering, and monitoring development assistance are generating unproductive transaction costs for, and drawing down the limited capacity of, partner countries. ...We recognize that these issues require urgent, coordinated, and sustained action to improve our effectiveness on the ground. ...We acknowledge that while our historical origins, institutional mandates, governance structures, and authorizing environments vary, in many instances we can simplify and harmonize our requirements and reduce their associated costs, while improving fiduciary oversight and public accountability and enhancing the focus on concrete development results. (OECD, 2003, p. 10)

High level forums, such as the one in Rome (2003) on harmonisation and Paris (2005) on aid effectiveness, are steps forward, but facilitating better donor coordination is just one part of the picture. Burall et al. (2006) maintain that UN reform processes are equally important for improving effectiveness of the aid system. They argue that, with an enhanced mandate, the UN has the potential to play a central coordinating role for the wider field of development. The UN system, however, has been grappling with reforms since its beginnings after World War II (Luck, 2004).

Aside from fragmented resources dispersed throughout the field, the expansion of mandates and growing complexities has continuously raised questions about the ability of the UN to cope with these new demands. States themselves, undermined in terms of sovereignty and even operational capacity, also have to respond to complex regional agendas, which require new levels of coordination. States increasingly turn to the UN for assistance to build an institutional base because it is through these complex forms of multilateralism that trafficking must be addressed.



Given international agencies, including the UN, are operating in a neoliberalised development field structured along new public management lines, the critical question is whether there is sufficient momentum for further reforms to change its institutional architecture, to the point where it can both coordinate its own activities and respond meaningfully to coordinative agendas urged by member states. Put differently, are the heterodox discourses of harmonisation and coordination strong enough to dominate orthodox discourses of new public management? There is no question the heterodoxy is equally salient; yet, as this chapter argues, the power of the doxa is pervasive. The remainder of this chapter examines the UN and its ongoing reform processes. Through this examination, this section provides important background information for later empirical chapters.

### **New institutional reforms and the impact on the UN system**

#### ***The case for reform: Overcoming systemic fragmentation***

Founded in 1945, the United Nations system is an intergovernmental organisation of 191 sovereign states, bound together by the principles of the UN Charter. Built on notions of peace and security, its central mandate is to ensure friendly relations among states and “*achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character*” (Article 1(3), UN Charter, 1945). Equally important, according to the words of the Charter, the UN was meant “*to be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in attainment of these common ends*” (Article 1(4), UN Charter, 1945). Over the past 62 years, however, the UN has had to react to an ever-changing and increasingly complex environment (Krasno, 2004a). As a result, its missions and agendas have expanded since the post-Cold war period in response to the pressures of an interdependent, globalised world. Originally envisioned as a venue for dialogue on collective security, the UN agenda now includes a wide range of global issues such as human rights, environmental protection, assistance to refugees, terrorism, and various forms of trafficking. Through its six principal

organs and a system of affiliated organisations, funds, programs, specialised agencies, and bodies, the UN carries out a plethora of roles and responsibilities beyond its original mandate, including the clearance of landmines, acting as the world's nuclear inspectorate, peacekeeping missions, and coordinating the response to AIDS. Its relationships have also expanded, and the UN currently works in partnership with NGOs, community-based organisations, and the private sector. As a result, coordination, not just among states but within the UN system itself, has become increasingly complex.

Despite the continual evolution of the UN, there are still concerns that the system is not working as well as hoped. As the organisation attempts to implement its expanded mandates, the UN is increasingly constrained by its own administrative structures and processes that undergird these roles, responsibilities, and activities (Gurstein & Klee, 1999). Thus, for critics and supporters alike, how to reduce the current fragmentation, overlapping of mandates, and duplication of projects, programs, and activities within the UN system is a core focus of the reform debate (Fues, 2007). In 2006, former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan established a High-level Panel on System-Wide Coherence to examine how the UN system could overcome fragmentation and work more effectively in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance, and environment. Still, six decades of previous reforms attempts have shown “recurring patterns” and “largely predictable results” (Luck, 2005, p. 407). Even Kofi Annan acknowledges that “reform is a process, not an event... The UN is not a house in which revolutionaries flourish” (as cited in Mingst & Karns, 2007).

Given previous reform attempts, deep structural changes will be an immense challenge, a point amplified as follows:

A renewal of the United Nations must have as its goal to shift the Organization from the patterns and culture of the ‘old’ United Nations, those of stalemate, compromise and the Cold War, to that of a ‘new’ modern United Nations, effectively organized and

managed to execute the broadened and globally critical mandates that have been assigned to it. (Gurstein & Klee, 1999, p. 44)

Organisational change is a process impeded, or at least shaped, by embedded ideologies, institutional cultures, and current bureaucratic structures (Weaver & Leiteritz, 2005). For example, Weaver and Leiteritz found in the case of the World Bank, recent reform initiatives unfolded in a slow, path dependent fashion. What is more, change was contingent on the relationship the World Bank had with its wider institutional environment. Thus, to what extent UN reform prescriptions are adopted, as Peterson (2006) contends, is greatly dependent on a number of different factors. In large intergovernmental organisations, such as the World Bank or the UN, translating proposed reforms, even if agreed upon in principle, requires the political will of its member governments if there is to be any hope of achieving significant change (Birenbaum, 2007). Peterson (2006) elaborates:

Political institutions, no less than political actors, operate in the context of a broader social system, and organizational features that work well in one sort of context fail in another. Thus the shape of the UN in the future will be determined not only by the organizational preferences of particular actors, but also on the features of the international system (p. 140).

In this regard, to understand current ongoing UN reforms, it is necessary to present an overview of the principles the structure of the UN system is built upon in order to appreciate how aspects of the organisation are already adjusting to current doxic and orthodox shapings of the wider development field (Mühlen-Schulte, 2007).

***Foundational principles of the UN system: State puppet or autonomous actor?***

The United Nations was established at the end of World War II when leaders of the allied forces (the United States, Great Britain, Russia, France, and China) and representatives from 45 other governments meeting in San Francisco pledged their commitment to maintain

global peace and security.<sup>48</sup> After intense deliberations, the United Nations Charter was drafted and signed, and the intergovernmental organisation came into existence on October 24, 1945.<sup>49</sup> The adoption of the Charter and its provisions institutionalised a number of fundamental liberal principles and tenets, which remain embedded in the present UN system (Puchala, Laatikainen, & Coate, 2007; Mingst & Karns, 2007). The most important principle is the sovereign equality of states (Mingst & Karns, 2007). This tenet is closely linked to related principles of self-determination, political independence, territorial integrity, non-intervention, and the settlement of disputes through peaceful means (also see Knight, 2005). Because its foundations are based on traditional Westphalian notions of state sovereignty, the UN is subject to the wills and decisions of member states about what the organisation is allowed to do and what resources they will provide (Mingst & Karns, 2007). From this point of view, the international organisation is only as effective as its member states. However, as both governments and the UN have become involved in finding solutions to the proliferating challenges, demands, and complexities of a changing global environment, these founding presumptions have shifted. No longer is it accurate to speak of the UN as a state 'puppet' (see Strange, 1998, p. 215).<sup>50</sup> Each agency is an actor in its own right; pioneering the ideas of development and influencing the agendas of nation states (Emmerij, Jolly, & Weiss, 2001; White, 2002). Furthermore, the Secretary-General and other high UN officials often act outside the delegated authority of member states (Mingst & Karns, 2007).

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<sup>48</sup> See Krasno 2004b; Mingst and Karns, 2007; Weiss and Daws; 2007; Weiss, Forsythe, Coate, and Pease, 2007; for discussions of the United Nations system.

<sup>49</sup> The charter was signed in San Francisco on June 26, 1945.

<sup>50</sup> Much of the existing literature on international organisations comes from the field of international relations (IR), which is comprised of influential and competing theories of world politics. Grounded by state-centric frameworks, theories found within IR have expanded our knowledge of the international system. Only recently have IR scholars begun to develop new theories on the behaviour of international organisations, recognizing them as independent actors (e.g. Barnett & Finnemore, 2004, 2007; Weaver, 2003)

The relationship between the UN and its member states raises questions about who has authority over whom, and who has delegated powers by whom? Nonetheless, it is in this context that the UN must operate, drawing on the sovereign powers of the state and acting on its inherent advantage as an arena for facilitating multilateral agreements. Although some larger powers remain ambivalent towards the international organisation (i.e. United States), for most of the middle and smaller powers, the opportunities offered through affiliation with the UN system are vital to their identities and national interests. The UN offers opportunities for weaker governments to enhance their legitimacy and exercise influence in international affairs (Mingst & Karns, 2007). Thus, in many respects, both member states and the UN system are dependent on the other's political commitment and participation in promoting their respective interests. What is more, nation-states are recognising the unprecedented nature of problems at the global level, which cannot be solved through independent, unilateral action. Governments acknowledge they must work together through a strong multilateral system. Arguably, the UN represents one of the most important instruments for multilateral diplomacy. Its main strength and influence rest with its ability to facilitate cooperation among member states (Barnett & Finnemore, 2007). At the same time, these intergovernmental processes are the vehicle through which legitimacy (and mandated authority) is conferred upon the UN. In this regard, as the case of the UNIAP will illustrate, what the UN "does or does not do in global affairs...cannot be separated from the proclivities of its members" (Puchala, et al, 2007, p. 7).

Another result of the changing role of the state in the international political economy has been the rise and expansion of the number and range of other actors. NGOs and private companies are now heavily involved in multilateralism. Traditional, state-centric notions of multilateralism are no longer embodied within the UN system, nor are UN agencies operating in a field structured solely by the interests of state actors. Demands for effective global

governance has led to a transition best described as “complex multilateralism”, which accounts for the shifting power relations and roles of non-state actors (O’Brien, et al. 2000). Although state sovereignty remains a core principle affirmed in the UN Charter, it continues to be challenged and eroded through increasing interdependence, new forms of multilateralism, and demands for greater international cooperation.

What does this mean in light of UN reform? As Luck (2004) argues, “to put it crudely, much of the reform debate, at its basest level, is a struggle over political turf, over who is perceived to gain or lose influence within the Organization if the proposed changes are enacted or implemented” (p. 364). Thus, it is hardly surprising that there are strong political disagreements among member states about the types of reforms needed and for what purpose, specifically in terms of the structure of the UN system (Luck, 2004; Mingst & Karns, 2007). Yet, if the international organisation is to fulfil its expanding mandates effectively and efficiently, the weaknesses of the UN system must be confronted. In many respects, however, it is still unclear how the UN should adapt and respond to an increasingly complex set of global challenges (Weiss & Daws, 2007). Given these new threats, it is understandable that reform has figured prominently in discussions since the mid 1990s, but as Luck (2007) reminds us, the UN evolves much more effortlessly to changing circumstances than it implements structural reform.

### ***The structure of the United Nations system***

#### ***An “alphabet soup”: UN programs, funds, and specialised agencies***

There is no doubt the UN is a complex, bureaucratic system in need of reform. Some of the most persistent problems, which involve coordination, financing, and management, stem from the institutional weaknesses of its own internal structure (Dijkzeul, 1997; Mingst & Karns, 2007). Predictably, the governing structures of UN agencies reflect the thinking of the time (Dijkzeul, 1997). As Kaufmann (1971) writes, “the UN system as a whole, reflects the

governmental organisation in most countries. The specialised agencies are set up along sectoral lines which generally copy the sectoral divisions between ministerial departments in most governments” (p. 943). This contention still holds in part, though as we will see, by no means in full. The current organisational structure of the UN system is comprised of six principal organs (Security Council, Trusteeship Council, General Assembly, Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat), all of which have undergone reforms at different times (see Franda, 2006; Luck, 2004; Mingst & Karns, 2007). Although these bodies form the main core of the intergovernmental organisation, there are a number of autonomous and semi-autonomous specialised agencies, programmes, funds, and related bodies associated with the UN system through mutual agreements.<sup>51</sup> Because of this situation, the UN system that exists today has been described as a “bewildering alphabet soup” of individual agencies, a reflection of its polycentric and decentralised nature (Weiss, et al., 2007, p. 270). Funds and programs have their own governing bodies (elected through ECOSOC), budgets, and specialised mandates: UNICEF protects women and children; UNHCR assists refugees and internally displaced persons; UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) aims to protect the human rights of individuals; UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) fosters gender equity and women’s empowerment, and so on.<sup>52</sup> An Executive Director, with a direct reporting line to the General Assembly, is appointed by the Secretary-General to lead each fund or program.

In addition to the funds and programs, the UN has 14 specialised agencies that function independently with their own constitutions, governing bodies, secretariats, and

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<sup>51</sup> For example: UN Development Programme (UNDP); UN Environment Programme (UNEP); World Food Programme (WFP); International Labour Organisation (ILO); Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO); World Health Organisation (WHO); UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF); UN Population Fund (UNFPA)

<sup>52</sup> For an overview of the specialised agencies, programs, and funds responsible for economic and social development within the UN system, see Bergesen and Lunde (1999); Fomerand and Dijkzeul (2007); Mingst and Karns (2007).

budgets. Some of the specialised agencies actually pre-date the establishment of the UN, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), founded in 1919. In the Greater Mekong Subregion, most UN agencies have some form of representation. Thailand hosts the largest number, with 24 separate organisations actively engaged in the country. The specialised agencies, funds, and programs carry out the UN's main operational projects and activities, which are either largely or wholly supported through the voluntary contributions of governmental and nongovernmental funding sources. Because of the voluntary nature of funding (all funding in UN funds and programs is based on voluntary contributions), short term, donor-driven, field-level projects comprise a large part of the UN budget (Salomons, 2003). Of course, extending the geographical reaches of agencies through more programs and projects at the field level often results in greater organisational pluralism, fragmentation, and competition. As former United Nations Ambassador Jonathan Moore (1996) bluntly points out, "the UN's thoroughly fragmented and feudal nature is a big liability for critical programmes in the field" (p. 29). Accordingly, strengthening the institutional capacity of the UN system represents an essential part of the ongoing reform agenda.

### ***UN reform highlights since 1997: Ten years of renewal***

Given the intricate web of agencies and affiliated bodies, it is understandable how the UN system is plagued with problems of fragmentation, duplication, and overlapping responsibilities (Fues, 2007). During the 1980s, the conservative governments of the Thatcher-Reagan era called into question the effectiveness and legitimacy of the UN (Jones & Coleman, 2005). Largely distrustful of multilateralism, the US scaled back its UN involvement and withheld financial dues, thrusting the intergovernmental organisation into financial crisis.<sup>53</sup> As Robert Falk (2002) affirms, it was apparent western advocates of neoliberalism had united to curtail the programs and activities of the UN, which were

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<sup>53</sup> The US is the largest financial contributor and owes millions in back dues. See Hüfner (2003) for a discussion on the role of the US in financing the UN.



promoting equitable development in a climate of economic globalisation. In short, the Reagan administration demanded the UN reform along neoliberal lines. Although some concessions were made by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, comprehensive reforms proved difficult (Müller, 2001). Until the mid 1990s, however, there was little motivation for change.

When former Secretary-General, Kofi Annan was appointed in late 1996, he found himself under immense pressure from Western members, particularly the United States, to implement reforms swiftly and effectively (Müller, 2001). He revealed the most comprehensive UN reform agenda put forth since its inception with the release of the 1997 report *Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform*. In the document, Kofi Annan remarks how “the institutional context in which all international organizations now operate is so much more densely populated by other international actors, both public and private, than it was in the past” (p. 13). To be effective, he continues, the UN must adapt and respond to this new institutional field. Yet, many expressed scepticism. Weiss (1998), for example, argued that the reforms would do little to address the current challenge facing UN operations and actions, which was how to initiate cohesion among a collection of independent agencies working under the auspices of the UN system and alongside a plethora of NGO subcontractors.

Over the course of his leadership, the former Secretary General continued to sketch out numerous ambitious reforms, which he unveiled primarily through three additional key reports:

- 2002 – *Strengthening of the United Nations: An Agenda for Further Change*
- 2005 – *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*
- 2006 – *Investing in the United Nations: For a Stronger Organization Worldwide*

Given the orthodoxy of new public management, it is not surprising the influence of the approach reached the UN system and its specialised agencies (Dijkzeul, 2000; Geri, 2001,

Ramia, 2003). Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a comprehensive examination of ongoing UN reforms, gleaned highlights from different reports, it is apparent that features of neoliberalism and new public management have salience in the agenda (see Table 6). Of the many issues emanating from the reform agenda, its main features emphasise: restructuring management structures and systems; improving overall efficiency; strengthening oversight and accountability mechanisms to achieve better results; fiscal responsibility through budget reforms; enhancing procurement plans; emphasis on service delivery; and building effective partnerships with the private sector and civil society.

One important example of new public management reforms, relevant to this thesis (see Chapters 5 & 6), is the growing emphasis on UN *service delivery* since the 1980s and 1990s (Smith, 2003). Here, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) is an intriguing example of the UN itself acting as a service provider. Created as a separate entity of the UN system in 1995, UNOPS (or the Office of Project Services (OPS) as it was originally called) was originally under the auspices of UNDP (see Dijkzeul, 2000). The OPS was established in 1973 as its UNDP executing arm as a result of recommendations from the Jackson report, which meant in addition to being a funding agency, UNDP would assume overall management responsibility and accountability for project implementation. As Dijkzeul (1998) argues, the other agencies were not impressed with this new arrangement, maintaining that UNDP “had become both judge and jury assigning projects for execution” (p. 97).

Table 6: New public management-type reforms within the UN system

NPM characteristics	UN reform recommendations and/or examples
Measurable performance standards and targets	<p>“This report recommends that an effective executive management committee be established by the Secretary-General. ...It its role to strengthen accountability within the Secretariat and support the governing bodies on evaluation of performance and achieved results, the executive management committee would focus on key items such as managerial accountability, results-based management, performance monitoring, risk management, oversight, management reporting, and change management.” <i>Source: A/60/883/Add.1 (August 2006)</i></p>
Focus on outcomes and results	<p>“There is strong evidence that properly implemented results-based management provides the basis for greater transparency, more effective budgetary decision-making, and therefore improved working practices between governing bodies and executive management. This report strongly advocates the continuance and strengthening of such practices in the future.” <i>Source: A/60/833/Add.1 (June 2006)</i></p>
Decentralised organisational structures	<p>“Requests the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system to examine ways to simplify further their rules and procedures and, in this context, to accord the issue of simplification and harmonization high priority and to take concrete steps in the following areas: the <i>decentralization and delegation of authority</i> ....” <i>Source: (United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld Library A/RES/56/201)</i></p> <p>Various agencies, such as the FAO, OHCHR, UNESCO, etc., have moved to decentralise offices and operations with mixed results (see below).</p>
Policy-operations splits	<p>United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) – created in 1995 – is a branch of the UN system, which provides operational management and the provision of services to clients in the public and private sector (i.e. executing development projects). It focuses on the operation side and does not carry out any policy formulation on its own behalf (see Dijkzeul, 2000).</p>
Emphasis on cost-cutting measures & better use of resources – budgets that support these changes	<p>“The UN’s system of budgeting was transformed from focusing on a detailed description of inputs and resources to one that identified intended outcomes and measurable indicators of achievement.”</p> <p>“In the 2004/5 budget cycle, nearly 1000 reports and activities were consolidated or discontinued and resources redeployed to higher-priority areas of work.” <i>Source: UN reform highlights since 1997- UN website</i></p>
Stress on private sector managerialist styles – managers “free to manage”, greater flexibility in hiring, etc.	<p>“Programme managers are now empowered to select their own staff...”</p> <p>“Department heads are responsible for achieving predetermined programme performance objectives, as well as key human resource management targets. ... to hold them more effectively accountable, a Management Performance Board, chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General, was established in 2005 and is tasked with ensuring that managers comply with the performance targets conduct standards and manage their staff effectively.” <i>Source: UN reform highlights since 1997 – UN website</i></p>

UNDP argued that direct execution (DEX) was an administrative support role, and therefore did not impinge on the other agencies' autonomous nature.

Believing that OPS hindered UNDP's coordination role, former Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali, in 1995, made OPS an independent service delivery organisation. This self-financed unit is part of the UN system with a mandate to provide operational management, contracting, and procurement services to a range of *clients* based equally in the public and private sectors.<sup>54</sup> Framed in new public management language, UNOPS is an example of the policy-operations split, providing operational management as well as the provision of services to clients in the public and private sector (i.e. executing development projects). It focuses on the operation side and does not carry out policy formulation on its own behalf (see Dijkzeul, 2000). Moreover, it adopts a *results-oriented* approach in the *provision of services*. Somewhat ironically, UNOPS undertook its own set of new public management reforms shortly after its establishment as a separate UN organisation (see Dijkzeul, 2000). Nevertheless, UNOPS still faces a number of challenges, some of which are revealed in later discussions of the UNIAP (see Chapter 5). During its first Phase, the UNIAP was executed by UNOPS, which had profound consequences for the project. Even more ironically, though, UNDP re-established its DEX modality in 1998, becoming a direct competitor to its offspring. An example of this competitive relationship can be seen in the UNIAP when UNDP assumed direct execution of the project in its second phase.

Despite ongoing attempts to strengthen UN administration, the system is plagued with problems of organisational complexity, inefficiency, and fragmentation brought about by the vast number of UN bodies and the expansion of existing mandates. Of course, it is apparent from the discussion above that some elements of these issues have existed since its beginnings. My argument is not that new public management-type reforms have caused this

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<sup>54</sup> [www.unops.org](http://www.unops.org)

competitive behaviour among UN agencies. Nor is my argument that the UN system has wholeheartedly embraced a new public management reform agenda. Rather, my argument is that the adoption of new public management-type reforms within the UN is *exacerbating these inherent bureaucratic pathologies* (i.e. duplication, competitiveness, territoriality, etc), which, in turn, contributes to the failure of coordination attempts within the UN system (see Taylor, 2000). Not surprisingly, then, how to facilitate more effective coordination within the UN system has been a question on the reform agenda.

### ***Coordination in the field: UNDP and the Resident Coordinator system***

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the “global development network” of the UN system, coordinating and providing technical development assistance in 166 countries (see Klingebiel, 1999; Murphy, 2006).<sup>55</sup> Through the Resident Coordinator system, UNDP is the main UN program responsible for system-wide operational planning and the coordination of field activities. It was established in 1966 through a merger of two agencies, the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance for Economic Development of Underdeveloped Countries (EPTA) and the United Nations Special Fund (Klingebiel, 1999). Three years after its creation, however, UNDP commissioned a study of the entire UN system (*Study of the Capacity of the United Nations System*), widely known as the “Jackson Report”. Directed by Sir Robert Jackson, the report recognised the UN system faced a number of structural and organisational problems that fuelled rivalries and competitiveness among the family of specialised agencies.

A package of recommendations were put forth that called for a complete restructuring of the UN system. When UNDP was first established, the program was designated as the central financial, controlling, and coordinating mechanism for the UN’s country-level operations (Klingebiel, 1999). In the words of the Jackson report, the key to coordination was

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<sup>55</sup> See [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)

a strengthened UNDP that “gathers together in one comprehensive and integrated pattern all the interdependent processes which together constitute the development co-operation of the UN development system” (as cited in Bergesen & Lunde, 1999, pp. 85-86). But as Joachim Müller points out, the specialised agencies were once again reluctant to relinquish their treasured independence. Consequently, UNDP never succeeded in fulfilling these responsibilities because most reforms recommended by the report were not carried out, including the centralised funding role for UNDP (Klingebiel, 1999; also see Fomerand & Dijkzeul, 2007).

One of the most important developments, which arguably stemmed from the report’s recommendations, was to assign all UNDP Resident Representatives with a “split personality” (as one person aptly put it in a research interview). This split personality was achieved by appointing them as Resident Coordinators under the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) System (interview, June 3, 2004). The UNRC system encompasses all agencies of the UN system that deal with operational activities at the field level. Each Resident Coordinator works closely with national governments and aims to improve efficiency through inter-agency coordination, while advocating the interests and mandates of the UN as a collective whole. Although the state is ultimately responsible for coordination based on its national strategies and priorities, the role of UNDP is to facilitate an enabling environment for this coordination by improving the effectiveness of UN operational activities in the field through greater harmonisation among agencies (ACC/1995/1).

The UN Resident Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative is a prestigious and powerful position, which stems not just from the person being at the centre of the UN system, but also from the strong connections the position inherently brings (Murphy, 2006). In Bourdieu’s language, the UNRC is a source of symbolic capital and power. The UN Resident Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative is typically the top UN official and is two or

three phone calls away from any particular person in the country (interview, June 3, 2004; also see Murphy, 2006). Although the UNRC is good in theory, there are tensions with having one person wear two critical ‘hats’ (see Chapters 5 & 6). As Jacques Fomerand (2004) contends, “in this competitive environment, the dual functions of the UNDP country head as representing both UNDP and the UN system creates another layer of operational difficulties” (p. 181). UNDP is not seen as an impartial or honest broker; instead, it is considered as having its own interests, which may hinder its coordination role.

Having overall responsibility for coordination, the UNRC system is a form of top-down (hierarchical) steering, leaving the other agencies to row (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). It is an attempt to consolidate the UN’s field presence, facilitate a common UN position, and reduce fragmentation, although so far, as Chapters 6 & 7 will illustrate, the agencies largely resist centralised control. The focus on the achievement of results means field projects are initiated through the direct approval of government officials or donors, regardless of their goodness of fit within system-wide priorities determined by the UNRC (Fomerand & Dijkzeul, 2007). Despite this inherent weakness, there have been continual efforts to strengthen the UNRC system, particularly during the tenure of former Secretary-General, Kofi Annan. Scepticism about the effectiveness of these reforms remains. Fomerand and Dijkzuel (2007) comment that despite ongoing reforms, the UN system is “highly fragmented, rife with competition, and certainly not a harmonious cooperative whole” (p. 561). Similar to other bureaucracies, these experts argue, UN agencies put their own organisational interests first. As a result, the harmonisation of procedures, program cycles, and activities has been slow. Further, the number of agencies the UNRC is mandated to coordinate in the field is a nightmare. Thus, if the UNRC struggles to ‘herd all the cats’, one can imagine the challenges a small, under-resourced, under-staffed, inter-agency project, tasked with the coordination of UN agencies, six governments, and a plethora of NGOS, will face.

Despite the obvious problems, the UNIAP's positioning under the auspices of the UNRC system gave it a number of advantages: legitimacy, prestige, and power (symbolic capital and power). However, this conferred symbolic stature has its limitations. In practice, member agencies are equally wary of the project's coordination efforts. As a result, the UNIAP suffered from problems similar to those of the Resident Coordinator, even though the project is supposed to facilitate a more unified approach among human trafficking agencies in the region (see Chapters 6 & 7). Because of the competitiveness inherent in the development field, UN systemic interests are overshadowed by territorial concerns, suspicion, and UN agencies putting their organisational interests first (Fomerand & Dijkzeul, 2007).

The UN agencies, however, are just one group the UNIAP is mandated to coordinate. Facilitating coordination among the six governments of the Greater Mekong Subregion is equally important and forms a vital part of the wider UN mandate. As one UN practitioner aptly states:

The word mandate – people use the word mandate to confine themselves. Some people use the word mandate to announce what their territory is. But we can use the common mandate of the UN to bring people together. What is our mandate of UN staff? What is our mandate of the United Nations? (interview, November 2, 2004)

As we will see, the future impact of the UNIAP depends on its ability to draw upon the symbolic capital of the UNRC, in consort with the commitment of the six governments to work through the UNIAP to develop an effective overarching mechanism (the COMMIT process that will ultimately facilitate coordination among governments, UN agencies, and NGOs.

### ***Conclusion***

There is no doubt the wider field of development is changing. The rise of orthodox notions of new public management in the public sector during the 1980s and 1990s, under the doxa of neoliberalism, meant that the sovereign power and influence of the developed and



developing states has declined. On one hand, shifting power relations contributed to rise of non-state actors (Mathews, 1997). Non-profit and private sector organisations have proliferated in terms of numbers; furthermore, they are playing more important and influential roles in development. On the other hand, neoliberal marketisation and new public management reforms produced unintended effects such as fragmentation. The field of development is now more dense and complex. As boundaries blurred between the state, NGOs, international agencies, and the private sector, the differing forms of capital (resources) became more dispersed and diffused within the field. Competition is rife; paradoxically, there are growing independencies among development agencies. These changing social, economic, and political trends shifted modes of governance from hierarchies to markets to networks. Yet, new public management reforms, through the expansion of new and existing networks, engendered a greater need for forms of joined-up governance and coordination (Bishop & Connors, 2003; Considine & Lewis, 1999; Rhodes, 2000b).

In development, orthodox notions of new public management and heterodox notions of cooperation through harmonisation and coordination form the basis of (good) governance agendas promoted by donors and international agencies. Increasingly, though, these orthodox and heterodox discourses are seeping into the reform discussions of the international agencies themselves. Recognising its potential role as leader and convenor, the UN has strived to adapt to this changing environment. While speaking about “delivering as one” and “coherence” to overcome systemic fragmentation, which implies better “performance, efficiency, accountability, and results” within the system itself, the UN is concomitantly speaking the language of new public management (UN, November 2006, p. 1).

Here, another important element of new public management reform is contracting out, which means the UN has had to acknowledge, embrace, and widen participation to include non-state actors (Alger, 2007). In this regard, new spaces and opportunities have opened up

for NGOs and other actors to interact in UN processes, programs, projects, and activities. “Today NGOs deliver more official development assistance than the entire U.N. system (excluding the World Bank and International Monetary Fund)” (Mathews, 1997, p. 53). Consequently, these shifting roles and relationships have created what Alvarez (2007) refers to as “a symbiotic relationship between NGOs and the UN system organizations. Each needs the other for legitimacy” (p. 68).

Equally notable is the rising importance of global issues, such as human trafficking, which cannot be solved by individual states acting in isolation. Global priorities have expanded the mandates of development agencies and states, creating new realities of interdependence in a field where capital is fragmented and dispersed across a wider range of stakeholders. Coordination, therefore, is more than a mechanism for strengthening cooperation among member states; “it is a catalyst to enable the UN system to deliver what member states need, with positive impact and at the least possible cost” (Idris & Bartolo, 2000, p. 120). Member states now rest a wide range of responsibilities squarely on the shoulders of the UN agencies, which are then eclipsed by their lack of commitment and inadequate funding support (Mathews, 1997). Nevertheless, the intergovernmental nature of the UN system is still a defining feature of the organisation, even with the gradual erosion of state sovereignty and the expanded participation of non-state actors. The UN system was founded to facilitate cooperation among member states. With this fundamental purpose engrained in the Charter, the legitimacy of the UN is still clearly enhanced by, and arguably very much dependent on, the support of its member states (see Chapter 7).

With states no longer the sole actors in processes of multilateralism, the UN has had to devise new approaches to reconcile, not just incompatible objectives and underlying assumptions, but differing operational structures and modalities among key actors largely at the field level as the international development community strives for better coordination,

harmonisation, and alignment. But as Christiansen and Rogerson (2005) inform us, the tendency is to develop new mechanisms in order to solve old coordination problems, particularly when addressing new global agendas. At the same time, existing agencies and/or mechanisms continue in parallel with the others. Certainly, the UNIAP is an excellent example of this phenomenon. Within the human trafficking field, new coordinated and cooperative strategies are being put into place (i.e. joint and co-sponsored programs, thematic groups, and inter-agency processes) to facilitate coherence and harmonisation within the UN system, and in partnership with other national and international actors. In reality though, the effectiveness of these cooperative strategies is still being tested, and the implications of the complex institutional forms through which these partnerships are enacted lack understanding.

The next chapter will explore one region in particular where the UN is attempting to coordinate across a vast array of UN agencies, donors, NGOs, and governments working to combat human trafficking. It will describe the human trafficking context of the Greater Mekong Subregion, demonstrating why the UN agencies operating in the region thought an inter-agency project was necessary in the first place. A detailed description of the UNIAP is provided to establish the background for the remaining empirical chapters, and it will discuss the conceptualisation, planning, and implementation of Phase I and Phase II of the project from 2000 onwards.

## **Chapter 5**

### **The human trafficking field in the Greater Mekong Subregion:**

#### **Regional realities and institutional responses**

In recent years, the international development community has become increasingly concerned about the global phenomenon of human trafficking. Progress has been made by scholars and practitioners in improving our understanding of human trafficking by targeting research and developing more effective counter trafficking measures. Yet, the reality is that we have only begun to comprehend the scope of the problem. The purpose of this chapter is to define and describe the nature of the human trafficking field in the Greater Mekong Subregion. Its tone, therefore, is more descriptive than other chapters, aiming to provide an overview of a complex situation, but also background material for understanding the more intricate details analysed in the remainder of the thesis. The discussion also highlights the point that human trafficking projects, programs, and activities being implemented through different UN agencies, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), donors, and governments are embedded within the wider institutional development field. If there is an analytic point to be made (and most are made in other chapters), it is that the United Nations Inter-Agency Project's (UNIAP) history is a story of a small project struggling to establish itself in the institutional field of development, far removed from the field of everyday trafficking practices. This is important because, despite the linkages between the two, these separate fields are often in contestation with one another. As I will illustrate, the growing pressures and demands of a marketised development environment mean that practitioners, including those involved in the UNIAP, are more strongly influenced, and therefore aligned, with the institutional field than the human trafficking field.

The chapter begins by presenting some of the historical underpinnings of the definition of trafficking. I then discuss some of the overlapping, but also conflicting debates, generally

surrounding human trafficking. Human trafficking is not a monolithic field (see Bourdieu; 1991; 2000). Rather, it is a set of divergent, but often overlapping discourses, shaped and influenced by a diverse range of interests, interpretations, and perspectives. Despite having an internationally accepted definition of human trafficking, for example, I will illustrate that differing interpretations have implications in how the problem is approached by development agencies and governments. I then describe the distinct trafficking situation in the Greater Mekong Subregion. Next, a sample of the main counter initiatives that have grown in response to the phenomenon are discussed, focusing specifically on the ways in which development agencies in the Greater Mekong Subregion are addressing the problem. Here I explore further the ways in which the development community has framed human trafficking in this particular regional context, suggesting that each conceptualisation offers a different framework in terms of stakeholders, funding sources, and overall strategies to combat human trafficking.

In the third part, I present the historical background of the UNIAP. As noted in the previous chapter, an important theme of new institutionalism, particularly historical institutionalism, is that temporal issues matter (Pierson, 2000). Thus, by looking at the historical trajectories of the UNIAP, it is possible to understand how its structural arrangements were shaped, but also constrained, by its institutional context. As the remaining chapters of this thesis will illustrate, the UNIAP evolved through each phase shaped by field, but also in a path dependent fashion, influenced heavily by decisions taken in earlier stages of the project. Here, it is important to re-emphasise that the UNIAP is divided into three distinct phases: Phase I (June 2000 – May 2003), Phase II (December 2003 – June 2006), and Phase III (December 2006 – November 2009), with interim periods of six to seven months respectively bridging each phase. Approximately three months after Phase II of the project began, I commenced my research into the UNIAP. Although the data largely reflect this

phase, I maintained contact with project staff because new documents and other information related to the study continued to emerge. The chapter concludes with brief descriptions of Phase I and II of the project to provide a context for subsequent chapters, which will deal more fully with the implementation and outcomes of Phase II.

### **Defining human trafficking**

Despite growing attention from development practitioners, advocacy groups, researchers, and the media, human trafficking is not a new phenomenon. Feminist movements against sexual slavery, prostitution, and trafficking of women can be traced to the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, a period of widespread European revolutions, which gave rise to liberal notions of freedom and human rights (Sullivan, 2003). A number of international agreements regarding trafficking were forged between 1903 and 1949, the last being the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (1949). Couched within the UN's familiar discourses of universal human rights, the convention did not however explicitly define trafficking, and its focus was on prostitution as a form of exploitation.

Wryly described as the 'oldest profession', two counterpoised western theoretical discourses emerged in late 1970s concerning the 'nature' of prostitution, and they remain entrenched today.<sup>56</sup> One view is that prostitution is a legitimate form of work, where sex workers can benefit and even be empowered by the work they do, but should be protected from discrimination, exploitation, and violence under existing labour laws (see Bindman, 1998; Chapkis, 1997; Doezema, 1998; Kempadoo & Doezema, 1998; Kempadoo, 2001). Here, distinctions are made between forced and 'voluntary' sex work. An opposing perspective is presented by some feminists, who argue that prostitution is simply a

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<sup>56</sup> Wendy Chapkis (1997) provides an excellent discussion of these two positions in her book, *Live Sex Acts: Women Performing Erotic Labor* (see Chapter 1). Also see Weitzer (2007).

representation of male domination and female subordination. Advocates of this idea support an abolitionist approach to prostitution, rejecting the element of ‘choice’ (Barry, 1984, 1995; Dworkin, 1987; Jeffreys, 1997; MacKinnon, 1987, 1989). No woman, they argue, would freely enter into prostitution as a profession; therefore, all sex work is a form of slavery and constitutes trafficking.

The abolitionist approach has been the orthodox conceptualisation that guided international debates about human trafficking; however, as Kamala Kempadoo (2005) observes, shifts in perceptions and thinking have occurred. She contends that trafficking practitioners, largely in Asia, are reconstituting a new human trafficking discourse based on grassroots realities and experiences. These discussions, Kempadoo points out, recognise that human trafficking has parallels with migration and other forms of labour, and not just with the sex trade (Kempadoo, 2005). For example, David Feingold, Coordinator on HIV/AIDS and Trafficking for the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) in Bangkok, Thailand, suggested that recent evidence in the Greater Mekong Subregion challenges the notion that most victims are trafficked into the sex trade (see Feingold, 2005). He continued to argue that the “worldwide market for labor is far greater than that for sex” (p. 26).<sup>57</sup>

### ***Sex trafficking versus other forms of trafficking***

Although the number of persons trafficked is contestable because of the difficulties in collecting reliable statistics, a study released by the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2005) estimates that 9.5 million people are victims of forced labour in the Asia-Pacific region, the majority being subject to various heterodox forms of economic or agriculture exploitation. Interestingly, as Feingold points out (2005), commercial sexual exploitation only comprises 10 percent of the total forced labour in the region. In other words, the

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<sup>57</sup> See the UNESCO Bangkok Trafficking in Persons Statistics Project at [www.unescobkk.org](http://www.unescobkk.org)

orthodox notion of sex trafficking is only one component of the situation. It is not my intention to detract from the seriousness and deplorable nature of sex trafficking because even one victim is one too many; however, a number of myths and stereotypes exist, including the assumption that most trafficking occurs for the purposes of prostitution.<sup>58</sup> Simply put, we *do not know* the extent of the problem. During one of my interviews, I had a fruitful discussion about the collection of reliable human trafficking data:

Let's be honest, nobody has undertaken a study on trafficking... doing a survey and especially a situation analysis on trafficking is extremely difficult because of the trafficking concept. You can only identify trafficking at the place of destination. Only then, you can determine if it was trafficking because very often it starts with labour migration. ...So it makes it extremely difficult to really do a proper situation analysis on this issue because it means that we need to go everywhere throughout the world to identify [trafficking victims]. We do have some information on trafficking but it is all based on repatriated or returned trafficked persons or children and that makes it very difficult. We think that it could very well be the tip of the iceberg, but that doesn't give any overview picture (interview, July 1, 2004)

Even with such critical discussions and discursive developments, the exploitation of women and girls through prostitution related trafficking remains the orthodox discourse of wider human trafficking. Although an important aspect, it represents only one dimension of human trafficking. In contrast, relatively little is written about heterodox forms of trafficking, such as labour trafficking or trafficking in men (for labour exceptions see Bastia, 2005; Richards, 2004).<sup>59</sup> A valid question is why the focus on prostitution? There are a number of explanations commonly posited.

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<sup>58</sup> A discussion of these myths is beyond the scope of this thesis. Three excellent resources that tease out some of the stereotypes are edited/written by Kempadoo (2005); Feingold (2005).

<sup>59</sup> There is a larger literature on sex trafficking, which predominantly surfaced from 2000 onwards (e.g. Agathangelou & Ling, 2003; Berman, 2003; Bertone, 2000; Brown, 2001; Miriam, 2005; Samarasinghe & Burton, 2007; Weitzer, 2007).



First, feminist thinking and advocacy groups have traditionally driven the trafficking research agenda, and their championing placed violence against women and trafficking firmly on national and international platforms (Piper, 2005). The second reason, as Sullivan (2003) explains, reflects the fact that distinctions between trafficking and smuggling have become gendered. Women and girls are seen as vulnerable and are trafficked, while men are able to exercise a degree of choice and are smuggled. Third, sexual exploitation is not just more visible than other forms of exploitation (e.g. domestic servitude, sweatshop labour, etc), it is a highly emotive and politicised issue fuelled by horrific stories of women and girls deceived or tricked into the sex trade. Not surprisingly, sex trafficking attracts more media attention and funding than other forms exploitation; moreover, it garners consideration from policy makers, donor officials, and religious and political groups.

### ***The Trafficking Protocol: Human trafficking defined***

Despite the ambiguity surrounding terminology, coupled with the contentious conflation between trafficking and sex work, the international community has agreed on an official definition of human trafficking, and it is found in Article 3 of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (hereinafter the Trafficking Protocol).<sup>60</sup> The Trafficking Protocol, which supplements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000), states that “trafficking in persons” shall mean:

the transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means recruitment, of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud or of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced

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<sup>60</sup> The Trafficking Protocol received its 40<sup>th</sup> ratification at the end of September 2003, bringing it into force later that year on Christmas day.

labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. (p. 32)

Children (defined as 18 years of age or under) are an exception to this designation as the means set forth in the definition above are waived.

Several analyses of the Trafficking Protocol (e.g. Doezema, 2002; Gallagher, 2001; Jordan, 2002; Sullivan, 2003) emerged shortly after the Transnational Organized Crime Convention opened for signature in December 2000, and the majority of writers considered it a triumph that the international community had agreed upon and formalised a definition of human trafficking. Despite its inherent weaknesses, coupled by the fact that many of its provisions are a reflection of compromise among negotiating parties, reviews of the Trafficking Protocol tended to be positive. This result is partly because the most powerful potential critics were engaged early on, that is, both pro-choice and abolitionist feminist groups were key players during the negotiation process of the Trafficking Protocol, and both had a significant impact on the text. Nonetheless, problems exist, such as the one of definition. For example, as Anne Gallagher (2001) notes, the Trafficking Protocol fails to define key terms such as ‘slavery’, ‘forced labour’, and ‘servitude’, although the former two were defined by previous UN conventions.<sup>61</sup> Other terms remain vague and subject to interpretation, including the ‘exploitation of the prostitution of others’ and ‘sexual exploitation’. Jordan (2002) points out that neither concept is defined in the protocol or by other international agreements.

Criticisms of a similar nature suggest the Trafficking Protocol does not take a concrete stance on the link between sex work and trafficking (Sullivan, 2003). As a result, the definition of human trafficking is once again open to interpretation, which reopens old debates. For instance, Sullivan (2003) points out that the Coalition against Trafficking in

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<sup>61</sup> See the 1927 Slavery Convention; the 1930 Forced Labour Convention; and the 1957 Supplementary Convention on the Elaboration of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery.

Women (CATW), founded by Kathleen Barry, contends the definition outlined by the Trafficking Protocol suggests that trafficking and prostitution cannot be separated so consent is not possible. Sullivan also presents the interpretation made by the Global Alliance against Trafficking in Women (GAATW). In contrast, GAATW claims the wording of the Trafficking Protocol means that human trafficking involves exploitation and forced labour, but that not all prostitution is trafficking.

Beyond official definitions, practitioners engender representations and understandings of human trafficking conducive to their organisational mandates, objectives, and interests. What counts as trafficking, in other words, is shaped by the plural, contested nature of the institutional and geopolitical field itself. For example, in their work on how the notion of ‘refugee’ is discursively constituted in the British refugee system, Nelson Phillips and Cynthia Hardy (1997) found that “each organisation has a particular agenda with respect to refugee determination, and each works to implement this agenda by influencing the resource flows and discursive practices surrounding the ‘identity’ of refugees” (p. 160).

Agencies in the Greater Mekong Subregion used certain conceptualisations of human trafficking to their strategic advantage in order to leverage funding. Most of the donors I spoke to in the Greater Mekong Subregion, for example, positioned human trafficking as a human rights problem, expressing a strong commitment to *women and children* in particular because they are more vulnerable than men. This interest in women and children has meant that agencies such as United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Save the Children UK, and International Labour Organization (ILO) fare well in terms of project funding. All three of these agencies are implementing large regional anti-trafficking projects targeting children. For example, the ILO’s Mekong Sub-regional Project to Combat Trafficking mainly focuses on girls and boys (10-14 and 15-17), but also includes young women (until 24 years of age). Cast in these terms, ILO’s approach to trafficking is consonant with the orthodoxy. It is in the

organisation's best interest to perpetuate orthodox understandings because of the link to resource-based symbolic power. Arguments are being advanced, however, for the inclusion of men (e.g. Assis, 2005; Marshall, 2005; Piper, 2005; Skeldon, 2000), and a discursive shift could potentially threaten the comparative advantage these agencies have over others. Because new arguments challenge orthodox constructions, the human trafficking field will remain a discursive battleground for practitioners, donors, researchers, and policymakers.

Despite its acknowledged flaws, the Trafficking Protocol, in consort with a globally recognised definition of human trafficking, has created some cohesion among organisations working to combat trafficking. Almost all organisations that participated in my study, except a few NGOs, adopted its definition. I asked one NGO practitioner how her organisation defined trafficking, and she replied:

It is defined according to the UN Convention. We feel that it is comprehensive enough. It is an internationally agreed definition...we are aware there are variations, but they pretty much say the same things. Within the UN definition, I think there are certain things that are open to interpretation and so the definition can fit many issues. (interview, July 19, 2004)

The governments of the Greater Mekong Subregion, on the other hand, have been slower than NGOs and international agencies to adopt the definition, and most continue to use existing ones that pre-date the Trafficking Protocol. Moreover, with the exception of Myanmar, most of their legislation accounts solely for women and children, and laws frequently have a strong emphasis on trafficking for sexual exploitation. It is important to note, however, that the dated definitions have not restricted the development of internal policies (e.g. Thailand) or agreements between countries. For example, the governments of the Greater Mekong Subregion, in October 2004, confirmed their commitment to address all forms of trafficking through COMMIT (Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking – see below for further discussion) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and they have started

to shift to the Trafficking Protocol definition in their legislation, bilateral agreements, and national actions plans.

Despite the relatively consistent adoption of the Trafficking Protocol definition, conceptual and operational discrepancies continue to persist. The NGO practitioner quoted previously believes the UN definition was not just subject to interpretation, but that it allows for different conceptualisations. Human trafficking is an issue that can be understood or approached from differing perspectives – human rights, gender, migration, labour, health, law, – to name a few. Given the multiplicity of positionings, trafficking falls under the mandate of most organisations and government departments, which in turn is a key contributing factor to growing complexities within the field. Because each mandated interpretation interlinks, all are part of a broader web, and this interrelationship is important to a comprehensive understanding of the global phenomenon as well as the development of effective counter strategies.

A key question, then, is how human trafficking fits into organisational and government mandates. Obviously, agencies will approach the issue according to their respective mandates, which explains why cooperation is not only important but essential if a harmonised, intersectional approach is to be realised. But as trafficking projects continue to proliferate regionally and globally, mandates overlap and conflict, so it is important to discern what implications this situation might have for international cooperation. In the next section, I review a sample of the major approaches agencies are taking to combat trafficking throughout the region. My intention is to provide a snapshot of some of the current initiatives being implemented through development agencies at national and regional levels, but prior to discussing these initiatives, it is useful to present an overview of the human trafficking situation in the Greater Mekong Subregion.

### ***The Regional landscape: Recent trafficking trends in the Greater Mekong Subregion***

Rich in natural resources, the Greater Mekong Subregion is an ethnically diverse, agricultural-based region comprised of six countries: Cambodia, the People's Republic of China (specifically the Yunnan Province of Southern China), Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Map of the Greater Mekong Subregion<sup>62</sup>



Despite recent economic growth, poverty is widespread, and the region continues to face a number of mounting challenges. Disparities between urban and rural communities continue to expand, ethnic minorities remain marginalised, and high levels of internal and cross-border migration, coupled with limited legal channels, increase the risk of humans being trafficked as well as the exploitation of migrant labour. In spite of these generalities, there are major divides between the countries in terms of language, culture, history, and socio-political context, but also economic and social development. For example, the small land-locked

<sup>62</sup> From *United Nations Cartographic Section* (2004). Retrieved August 17, 2005, from <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/mekong.pdf>

country of Laos, with a population of approximately 6.5 million people spread across 236,800 square kilometres is tiny compared to its neighbour China, which covers 9,596,960 square kilometres and has a population of over 1.3 billion (U.S. Department of State, 2007). Not surprisingly, then, there are major differences in terms of trafficking patterns and trends among the six countries.

The Greater Mekong region is well-researched in terms of human trafficking (Piper 2005), predominantly because of the strong international community presence. In many ways, it is distinct from other parts of the world because human trafficking occurs amid high levels of *internal and cross-border* migration. As Ron Skeldon (2000) notes, few migrants actually leave the Asian region. With limited legal channels open for migrants, most are classified as illegals; as a result, they are more vulnerable to trafficking. Marshall (2001) concurs with this assessment, pointing out that the movement component of trafficking is frequently voluntary as people seek out employment opportunities. It is the exploitative outcome, he argues, that defines certain cases as trafficking. Estimates about the extent of the problem are imprecise, but the IOM approximates that 200,000 to 450,000 people are trafficked from, and within, the Greater Mekong Subregion each year (as cited in Huguet & Ramangkura, 2007). Largely, these numbers refer to women and girls because the collection of statistics on men and boys is more difficult because they are not categorised as ‘victims’. On a global scale, the United States (US) government presents a more conservative approximation of 800,000 people across national borders, but this excludes the millions who are trafficked internally (see US Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP), 2007).

### ***Categories of human trafficking***

Neoliberal economic reforms have had a significant impact on developing countries. Structural adjustment programs (SAPs), export-driven trade policies, and market-based service provision have led to growing unemployment, shrinking opportunities, and widening

gaps between the rich and poor (see Chapter 4). Both migration and trafficking are clearly rooted in the phenomenon of economic globalisation (Sassen, 2002). Individuals from developing countries are increasingly compelled to seek out opportunities abroad, to the extent that the movement of people has become an import-export business in and of itself. Market demands for formal and informal labour have progressively incorporated women. Gender dimensions, such as structural inequalities, lack of citizenship, marginalisation, and limited education, to name a few factors, contribute to their vulnerability of being trafficked. Yet, strong evidence exists among members of the trafficking community that large numbers of men and boys, in addition to women and girls, are falling victim to these economic forms of trafficking (see Archavanitkul, 1998). As Skeldon (2000) maintains, men are “the invisible dimension of trafficking” (p. 17). Exploited by unbearable conditions, little or no wages, excessive working hours, and debt-bondage, the labour category constitutes the largest form of trafficking outcomes.

The second category, according to Marshall (2001), is high profile trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Argued by many to be a legitimate form of labour, the relationship between prostitution and human trafficking is a contentious issue. Distinctions between forced and non-forced prostitution are often messy, and not all women in the sex trade are victims awaiting rescue. However, it is the third ‘catchall’ category that is perhaps the most intriguing because of its lower profile as well as its proliferation in the Greater Mekong Subregion. In addition to sex work, there is increasing evidence of young children trafficked to beg or sell flowers on the streets, brides trafficked across borders or within countries, and babies trafficked for adoption (Archavanitkul, 1998; Marshall, 2001; Piper, 2005). Thus, as can be seen by these examples, human trafficking is not a straightforward issue. Key terms such as ‘exploitation’ remained undefined, and this lack of definition contributes to the conundrum. As Marshall (2001) argues:



It is often hard to tell where trafficking begins and ends. Some cases involving the sale or abduction are clear cut and very much to one end of the trafficking continuum. But in others, the distinction between (poor innocent) trafficking victim and (nasty) economic migrant is much less clear. (p. 3)

In some circumstances, trafficking ‘victims’ may not even consider their situations as exploitative. Despite long hours and low wages, some persons may believe they are better off in the current situation than in small villages or conditions left behind. Now they are able to feed their families, providing a better life for their children. In such contexts, human trafficking is reduced to a series of complex questions. What is exploitation? Who defines its parameters? When does someone have the right to intervene in a situation in what an outsider may perceive as exploitation? What are the consequences if we do not intervene? The answers to these queries are important although a full discussion of possible solutions is not within the scope of this thesis. However, as economic pressures mount and the impact of globalisation is felt, both legal and illegal human flows across borders will increase. It is possible, then, that we will see a shift between these three main categories of trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion. Already, new source countries, such as Vietnam and Cambodia, have emerged (Piper, 2005), creating unique dynamics that may impact the scope and importance of the categories described in this section.

### ***National and cross border human trafficking trends***

Before the 1990s, human trafficking was an emerging concern and reported cases were virtually non-existent. Today, this is clearly no longer the case in any country. The six countries of the Greater Mekong Subregion are diverse in terms of trafficking sources, transit, and destination countries. Although it is a challenge to summarise current trafficking trends, there are notable movements, within and across borders, that deserve mention. The major movements between countries as well as abroad are illustrated on a map published by the UNIAP in 2004 (See Figure 10).

Figure 10: Map of Greater Mekong Subregion trafficking routes



Cambodians, both women and men, are trafficked to Thailand for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and, more recently, into the construction, agricultural, and fishing industries.<sup>63</sup> There is also evidence of seasonal migration to Vietnam for temporary labour or street begging, although the extent of the numbers who fall victim to this form of trafficking remains vague. Children are exploited as well. Taken from familiar surroundings, they frequently are dumped on the streets of Bangkok and Ho Chi Minh City where they are forced to beg for money that is confiscated daily. Scandals of baby trafficking also have emerged, precipitating countries such as the US and Britain to ban international adoptions from Cambodia. Finally, there is evidence of internal trafficking to bolster a burgeoning sex tourism market, which has witnessed an increase in the exploitation of children.

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<sup>63</sup> For a recent report of trafficking in Cambodia, see Preece (2005)

Despite the problems of some Southeastern Asian countries, such as the case of Vietnam described above, the country most identified for its internal trafficking problems is China. The most populous country in the region, China's sweeping economic market reforms have made its economy the fastest growing in the world. However, much of the Chinese rural landscape remains underdeveloped, and it is not surprising that its trafficking victims are predominantly from the poorer regions, such as Yunnan Province. A report written for the ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) in 2002 acknowledges that forced marriage and adoption account for the majority of internal trafficking in the Yunnan Province of China, although the number of women and girls trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation is growing, particularly to other countries. My interview with a government official in Beijing supports this assessment. "This year we rescued some women from Malaysia...and cooperated with South Africa," he explains. Moreover, "there is increased number of [sexual exploitation] cases involving the neighbour countries such as Vietnam, Thailand" (interview, August 4, 2004).

Evidence from the human trafficking community in Beijing also suggests that both women and girls are falling victim to trafficking as they migrate from rural villages to larger cities, mainly to work in low pay, low-skill types of employment such as domestic service, factory work, or waiters. Both sources also report cases of cross-border trafficking in Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam – the former two countries for sexual exploitation and the latter for forced marriages. Unfortunately, because the Chinese government only considers trafficking of women and girls as a criminal offense, little information is available about male victims.

Landlocked Laos is the only country in the region that shares its border with all five countries. With 41.2% of the population under 15 years of age in 2004 (UNDP, 2006), the majority of trafficking victims embark on their journey as migrants, generally undocumented,

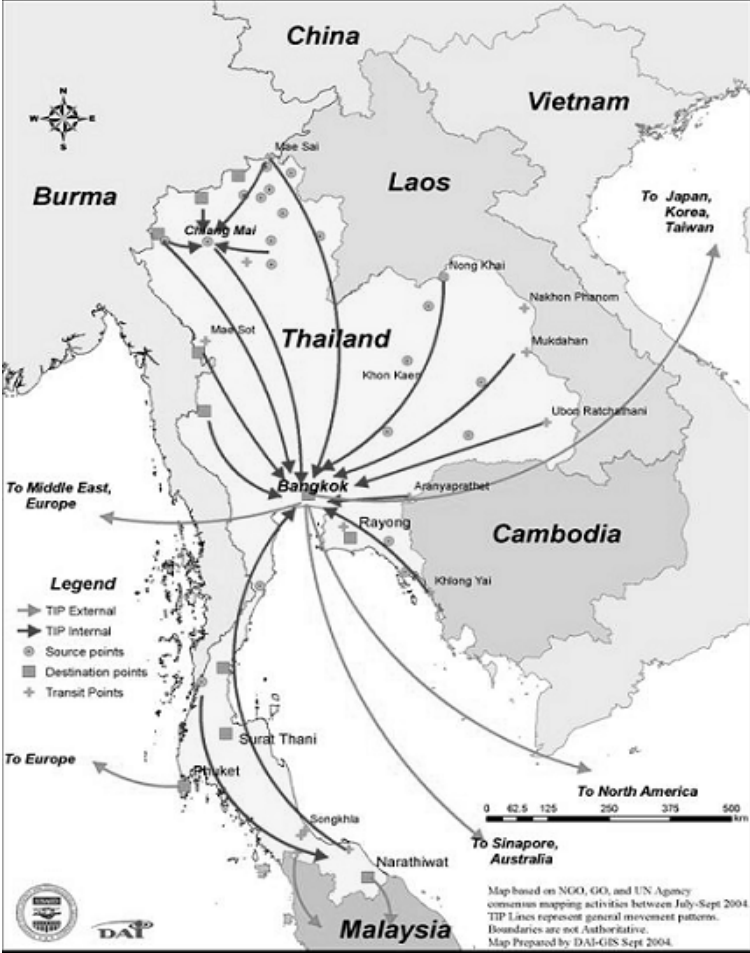
towards its rich Thai neighbour in search of seasonal labour. The flow of people across the Thai-Laos border is long established, assisted by cultural and language similarities between the two countries. Although there is an increasing number of legal migratory channels for persons 18 years or older, processes are expensive, slow, and often offer insufficient protection. As with some other countries in the region, Laotians require permission to enter Thailand and to exit their country, leaving the majority susceptible to exploitation as well as criminal prosecution, even from national authorities.

Similar to Laos, Myanmar is predominantly a source country, with the majority of victims trafficked into Thailand for the purposes of forced labour and commercial sexual exploitation. The combination of repressive control by the country's military regime coupled with the economic impacts of sanctions imposed by the United States and the European Union, has meant that the people of Myanmar, specifically those from ethnic populations, are tempted by the possibilities presented by its economically prosperous neighbour; subsequently, they are vulnerable to traffickers. Thailand, however, is not the only destination. According to the 2007 TIP Report, victims are trafficked to Japan, Malaysia, South Africa, Bahrain, Australia, Taiwan, Singapore, Europe, Canada, and the United States. Although it is a main destination, Thailand also is a major transit and sending country in the region, as shown by the 2004 Development Alternatives Inc (DAI) map below (See Figure 12).

In the 1980s, trafficking in Thailand tended to be restricted to two major cities – Bangkok and Chiang Mai – so the problem was mainly an internal one. Women and girls tended to be recruited from poorer Northern and Eastern provinces, many without citizenship status, to fuel the sex industry (Derks, 2000). A decade later, trafficking routes expanded to include Thailand's four bordering countries, and the types of exploitation encompassed other

forms of labour such as begging, domestic servitude, construction, agriculture, and factory work.

Figure 12: Thailand trafficking routes



The economic pull of Thailand is unlikely to diminish soon, and the government must grapple with its trafficking problems in consort with the flow of illegal migrants. In the past few years, the Ministry of Interior made efforts to regularise unauthorised migration, registering 1,280,000 workers from neighbouring countries in July 2004, the majority from Myanmar (Huguet & Punpung, 2005). However, trafficking and migration are separate but inter-related issues. The lack of legal channels available to work in other countries indicates that people who seek opportunities abroad do so as a means of survival, but also to balance growing inequalities within society, leaving them more vulnerable to traffickers. Despite Thailand's

relative prosperity, Thais sometimes are lured by promises of employment in more developed countries, and persons end up trafficked to a wide range of regional and global locations.

Human trafficking only recently emerged as a problem within the final country of this group of six. According to the UNIAP (2007) website, two major routes characterise Vietnamese trafficking patterns. Women are trafficked to China for the purpose of forced marriage or prostitution, with the southern provinces such as Yunnan and Guangxi as primary destinations. Transported over land border crossings, the majority of women and girls originate from the Northern Delta and Central Vietnamese provinces. In the southern regions of the Mekong Delta, women and children are trafficked to Cambodia into the sex industry or taken further abroad into Thailand or Malaysia. The UNIAP also identifies another pattern, which involves forced marriages to foreigners, particularly with Taiwanese men, and the adoption of children through intermediaries. Little information is available about internal trafficking practices, although there is evidence of women and children being trafficked from rural villages to urban areas. Because Vietnamese legislation refers only to women and children, no data are available regarding the number of men or boys trafficked either internally or to adjacent countries.

To summarise, the ethnically diverse peoples of the Greater Mekong Subregion have recently witnessed substantial social and economic growth, with Thailand and China leading the development. The dense population means the reality for many persons embodies some form of movement – either legal or illegal, internal or cross border – to seek opportunities that better their lives. Consequently, the situation in the region poses challenges for agencies and governments working to counter human trafficking. Trafficking is not a new phenomenon to the region although recently much bilateral and multilateral assistance has been directed toward this part of the world. The result of this funding influx is a remarkable increase in the number of anti-trafficking projects and programs as well as attention from researchers.

## ***Responses to human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion***

Anti-trafficking strategies at the national and regional levels take the form of prevention, protection, and assistance of victims, including the return to and re-integration in their home countries. Law enforcement strategies ranging from drafting legislation to strengthening judicial capacities also have been enacted. The majority of activities currently being implemented by governments and agencies are *short term project-based* initiatives made possible through donor support. Overwhelmingly, counter-trafficking approaches in the Greater Mekong Subregion fall into the *prevention* and *protection* categories, which target potential trafficking victims at the community level through awareness-raising carried out via a variety of information campaigns and materials (pamphlets, films, radio programs, etc.), peer group activities, and school-based education programs. The aim is to inform communities about the risks of migration along with raising consciousness about trafficking itself – what trafficking is, who traffickers are, various techniques used, etc. – to reduce a person’s vulnerability to trafficking.

The majority of these initiatives focus on the supply side of trafficking, and they frequently attempt to discourage migratory practices by creating opportunities and choices within communities such as vocational training, micro-credit programs, and other fundamental development activities (Marshall, 2005). Marshall argues little evidence suggests these types of interventions are effective at reducing trafficking occurrences locally or even regionally because of their emphasis (also see the ADB Guide to Trafficking, in press; Marshall & Thatun, 2005). It is not the purpose of my research to evaluate the achievements of these pro-active strategies, but how we assess outcomes and the overall ‘success’ of projects in the development industry is an important question for all concerned with the issue. Impact evaluations, which extend past the basic measurement of outcomes to assess the effects of activities on individuals and communities, are rarely conducted due to complexities

in data gathering and analysis procedures as well as costs (Pitman, Feinstein, & Ingram, 2005; Taschereau, 1998). Even simple tasks such as counting the number of victims assisted by counter-trafficking programs can prove challenging. As one professional remarked:

I was here a couple of years ago studying the Regional Return and Reintegration project, and I could not get an accurate number of who had returned how many people where because everyone [development agencies] was taking credit across the board for different numbers...when it came down to push and shove, everybody's claiming the same people! (interview, August 24, 2005)

Difficulties in the monitoring and evaluation of anti-trafficking interventions are compounded when a variety of agencies and government departments are involved, as illustrated with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Regional Return and Reintegration of Trafficked Women and Children project, which facilitates the safe return and reintegration of trafficked and other vulnerable migrant women and children, and frequently collaborates with other agencies and governments in different countries.

The remainder of counter-trafficking initiatives predominantly involve capacity-building strategies that target the six governments. With these strategies, agencies work with identified local and national ministry counterparts to carry out individual projects. Their aims are: raise awareness about human trafficking and promote government action through advocacy campaigns; train officials how to identify and assist trafficked persons; strengthen national frameworks, plans of actions, and legislation; develop bilateral and multilateral MOUs; and conduct follow-ups on regional processes and international conventions. A handful of agencies target the law enforcement sector, mainly to enhance the capacity of professionals – police, judges, and prosecutors – through training, research, and information materials. Others are involved with the support of shelters or the repatriation and reintegration of trafficking victims. Of the 12 intergovernmental organisations agencies, four government ministries, nine NGOS, and three donor agencies that participated in my research,



I estimate that approximately 90% of their anti-trafficking strategies fit broadly within the first two categories: prevention/protection and capacity-building.

Agencies recognise the need for a regional approach in their efforts, particularly because trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion cannot be addressed adequately without an acknowledgment of its cross-border nature. In addition to the UNIAP, there were four other regional projects being implemented in 2004 by the IOM: Save the Children UK (SCUK), the ILO, and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). Given current government conceptualisations regarding orthodox notions of trafficking, coupled with the specific interests of donors, it is understandable that the former three addressed only women and children (as discussed above). Although differing approaches should translate into each agency having a comparative advantage in the field, the reality is that mandates and initiatives overlap, and rarely are strategies implemented as a coordinated response. Formal agreements, such as the partnership forged between SCUK and the ILO exist, but the majority of cooperative efforts are *informal*, which is one of the reasons why the UNIAP was created.<sup>64</sup>

In the next section, I examine the UNIAP's history, in particular how it came to fruition and how it evolved during its second phase. Given the pressure to overcome institutional fragmentation through a stronger commitment to coordination, harmonisation, and joint alignment of priorities and practices, the UN must reinvent itself in the face of increasing complexity and competition among agencies in the field. A question of importance is: will the UNIAP attune itself to the human trafficking field and the nature of the problem in the Greater Mekong Subregion or will it attune itself to the new institutional field, including its own institutional arrangements and politics?

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<sup>64</sup> In July 2003, ILO and SCUK signed a cooperative framework agreement that aims to strengthen collaboration between the agencies' anti-trafficking projects and derive benefit from their comparative advantages. Both speak highly of the partnership and several joint activities have already been implemented.

## **Situating the UNIAP within the regional landscape**

### ***The creation and history of the UNIAP***

The previous chapter examined how the foundational principles and structure of the UN system influence its current roles, responsibilities, and practices. The history of the UNIAP is equally crucial to understanding the nature of the project and its relationships with member agencies as it stands today. Despite the industry's large turnover due to development practitioners moving between postings and contracts, I was able to meet with a small group of professionals who were integral to its original planning phase. During interviews, each contributed a piece of the puzzle until I eventually had a solid understanding of the project's history.

The beginnings of the UNIAP can be traced to the 1990s when human trafficking re-emerged on various international platforms, including the UN General Assembly and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China (see Gozdziaik & Collett, 2005). The end of the Cold War brought renewed international awareness and increasing engagement of state and non-state actors with global concerns such as environmental degradation, the rights of women, social development, population, and health (see Emmerij, Jolly, & Weiss, 2001). Possibilities of global governance emerged as intergovernmental and nongovernmental organisations broadened their mandates and activities to incorporate issues of migration, internally displaced persons, and trafficked women and children. The increasing proliferation of NGOs, motivated largely by institutional reforms in development, also contributed to a growing number of non-state organisations becoming involved with human trafficking. Facing new political and social realities, the UN extended its global efforts and adopted a more multidisciplinary approach to development (Jolly, 2007).

By late 1997, responsibility for trafficked persons had expanded to include a range of UN organisations, but without a coordinating focal point. The United Nations Development

Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative at the time decided to form a UN inter-agency working group on human trafficking, and it was from this group that the idea for the UNIAP was spawned. This initial group

... brought together representatives from ten different UN agencies... We talked a lot about the fact that at that moment in time different UN agencies were being approached by different donors to focus on the issue of trafficking. Each one of us had received small amounts of money to do some initial research, to set up small pilot activities to combat trafficking in the Mekong Subregion. We all felt there was a need to coordinate better our interventions because it felt like everyone was duplicating the efforts of others. The UN working group was initially there to share information on what each one of us was doing and to share, very importantly, our plans in terms of what we were going to do in the future. The idea being that we should try and coordinate those future planned activities so as to save human and financial resources and get products that are better quality by simply doing things together. That was the original idea. (interview, September 16, 2005)

The concept was crafted into a draft proposal, but things started to go wrong. When participants were asked about this, fingers were pointed at UNDP. A participant identified one of the problems as follows:

UNDP hijacked this draft proposal and finalised it through two consultants and without sharing it with any of the members of the working group. It was sent to the Ted Turner Foundation in New York, who communicated back to them: “We’re interested in this inter-agency proposal. We’d like all the names of all these UN agencies and one third of the budget needs to be spent on direct assistance”. That requirement was not immediately communicated. All these members were led to believe that this was going to be a project with a sole focus on improving coordination and the idea was that the money we would generate would be spent on improving coordination mechanisms in the six countries of the Mekong Subregion, and to improve coordination at the subregional level in Bangkok. (interview, September 16, 2005)

As another UN practitioner reflected, “it was never signed by any of the UN agencies, but UNDP. Our names were all on it, there were expectations, but it was never signed,”

(interview, June 25, 2004). Frustrated by the lack of transparency and the shift in the project's focus away from coordination towards direct assistance, the majority of agencies were not pleased. A typical statement expressing this frustration was given by an interviewee, who said:

Many UN agencies as a result of that had a bit of resentment in the start-up phase of this UN inter-agency project that was then compounded by a very complicated recruitment process for the manager of the UN inter-agency project. (interview, September 16, 2004).

The recruitment process was another cause of contention. Working collectively, the agencies devised a short list of competent candidates for the project manager position, then interviews were conducted and a hiring decision was made. But as one professional frustratingly recalled:

Then everything came to a standstill and nobody was quite sure why. Finally, an offer was made to this person after a great delay and it turned out he had accepted another job because so long had past. I think originally people were told they would hear in two weeks or something like that, and for thirty-three weeks this went on! ...A lot of the agencies were ready to walk out. (interview, June 24, 2004)

In October 1999, the top-ranked candidate declined the offer, largely due to the long recruitment process; instead, the person accepted a position with another UN organisation that was about to start up a large regional human trafficking project covering the Greater Mekong Subregion. Because consensus could not be reached on a suitable replacement, it was determined a second recruitment round was required. A project manager was finally hired in mid 2000, but relationships among the agencies continued to be contentious, especially around issues related to coordination, and in relation to the project's execution and operations.

The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) in Malaysia was designated as the direct executing agency for the project, which meant it would oversee the financial and administrative aspects of the project's implementation (see Chapter 4). Informants recalled,

however, the arrangement was a disaster from the beginning. “UNOPS is a completely hopeless organisation,” said one UN practitioner (interview, June 24, 2004). Much to the dismay of those involved in the project, the structural arrangement added an impenetrable layer of bureaucracy that stood in way of implementation activities. Additionally, the release of funding (including staff pay being delayed) drained time and patience, and compounded the frustrations of the UNIAP staff and its member agencies. Reflecting on Phase I, one sympathetic practitioner commented, “if [the project manager] had not had these internal struggles, there would have been more time, even with a limited budget, to focus on improving coordination” (interview, September 16, 2004).

Despite these ongoing battles with UNOPS, the skeleton team of three regional UNIAP staff worked with national staff, government counterparts, and other member agencies to implement the activities proposed under Phase I, with a budget of just over \$2.3 million US dollars.

### ***UNIAP Phase I: Project objectives & components***

The 2002 Phase I midterm evaluation report gave the following summary of the proposed goals and objectives:

To reduce the incidence of trafficking of women and children in the Mekong Sub-Region (Cambodia, China (Yunnan and Guangxi Provinces), Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam) by enhancing the capacities of organisations and persons (especially women) and improving sub-regional and national communication and co-operation. (Caouette, 2002, p. 8)

Structured around orthodox understandings of trafficking of women and children, Phase I of the UNIAP was designed as an over-arching mechanism to facilitate effective communication and coordination among community-based organisations, UN agencies, and governments at national and regional levels. The original plan for Phase I included three components: 1) reinforce existing and develop new dialogue, action, and mutual support systems; 2)

support/develop innovative approaches to community-based initiatives through capacity building; and 3) increase subregional and national capacities and cooperation in law enforcement, policy, and legislation (internal project document/RAS/98/801/A/IV/31). After a one-year development phase, the original project document was revised. The focus was tightened so that it was more congruent with the growing number of anti-trafficking responses throughout the region:

Enhance the capacity of organisations and persons and improve sub-regional and national communication and co-operation with a view to reducing the incidence and severity of trafficking of people (especially women and children) in the Mekong Sub-Region. (Caouette, 2002, p. 9)

The project's components also were teased out. The above objective was now to be achieved through:

Data Collection, Information and Research: To strengthen the knowledge base and enhance understanding of trafficking among project partners and decision-makers through improving the quality, quantity and accessibility of information on trafficking patterns, trends and responses in the Mekong Sub-Region;

Country and regional initiatives: Support and strengthen existing initiatives and develop new pilot interventions on prevention, protection, recovery, and integration of trafficked persons:

Legal remedies and human rights: Explore opportunities to combat trafficking through law enforcement strategies and to protect the human rights of victims;

Strategic analysis and impact evaluation: Encourage dialogue on the conceptualization of trafficking, what can be achieved, and how this can be measured, ensuring the outcomes are reflected in future project/program development

A midterm evaluation, conducted in 2002, further narrowed the objectives and components of the project, clarifying the coordination role of the UNIAP in preparation for Phase II (see

Chapter 6).<sup>65</sup> Given that most of Phase I involved the establishment of agreements with government ministries in each of the six countries, and the fact that financial procedures took up an excessive amount of staff time and energy, it is unsurprising the report made recommendations for Phase II changes. As one professional remarked:

I think in that process it was quite evident that people saw elements of value in UNIAP, but didn't necessarily provide a strong mandate for the project to do this coordination they kept talking about....So we sort of restructured the project based on a lot of the comments made in the external evaluation. Rather than being this overarching mechanism where you're supposed to know everything about this highly complex issue and direct traffic, or give projects or organisations advice on what to do, being much more sort service-oriented project. It was born out of the inter-agency working group so it should serve the working group's information needs or whatever it needs that the working group itself decides should be the priorities. (interview, July 23, 2004, emphasis added)

A seven-month period commenced aimed to secure financial support, obtain renewed support from the six governments, restructure the country offices, and align the project's strategies with the report's suggestions. One of the most notable differences between Phase I and Phase II was a shift from UNOPS to direct execution through UNDP.<sup>66</sup> Change also was prompted by the decision of the project manager not to continue with Phase II.

### ***UNIAP Phase II: Project objectives and components***

Phase II of the project expanded the scope of the UNIAP, but also changed its nature in a fundamental way. The overall goal of the project is to facilitate a more coordinated response to reduce the severity and harm associated with human trafficking (no longer focused solely on women and children) in the Greater Mekong Subregion. In response to the

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<sup>65</sup> In Chapter 6, I discuss in detail the ideas and assumptions behind the planning and design of Phase II. The discussion includes an analysis of the lessons learned in Phase I as well as the changes made to the project's structure and focus during the transition period in preparation for Phase II.

<sup>66</sup> UNDP re-established its DEX modality in 1998, becoming a direct competitor to its off-spring UNOPS (see Chapter 4).

changing institutional field and increasing fragmentation (six regional trafficking projects were in operation, see Chapter 1, Table 2) and in an attempt to give itself a clear role within a wider post new public management context of policy-operations splits, the project now identifies itself as a *service-provider*, and articulates this proposed role through four new project components identified in the Phase II project document. They are:

*Building the knowledge base:* Strengthen the regional response through improved knowledge, effective collaboration, and better targeted action.

*Strategic analysis and priority setting:* Identify, raise, and support action on high priority issues related to human trafficking.

*Targeted interventions and catalytic research:* Support interventions that respond to gaps in the regional response to human trafficking.

*Advocacy:* To respond as the UN to concerns related to human trafficking and to provide advocacy support to country offices, ministries, and partners.

Planned activities under each program area, such as the development of a database or facilitation of cross-sectoral collaboration between and among ministries, provide a blueprint for action. Ultimately, the meanings of these objectives, including strategies for implementation, are open to interpretation, particularly with inter-agency approaches. Framed according to their respective mandates, how the various actors make sense of the project's purpose and objectives, as well as the implications these interpretations have for cooperation, is the focus of the next two chapters.

### ***Main Phase II project activities***

Having spent 10 months researching the UNIAP, I discerned that its staff, both at the national and regional levels, concentrated their efforts on a specific set of activities, with the COMMIT process consuming the bulk of time. COMMIT stands for the Coordinated Mekong Initiative Against Trafficking, and it is a government led process that resulted in the adoption of a sub-regional MOU and Plan of Action that sketches out a cooperative regional response to address human trafficking (see Chapter 7 for an analysis of the COMMIT



process). The UNIAP serves as the Secretariat, and includes the support of its member agencies. The process, which began with the decision to launch the initiative in 2003, progressed through a series of ongoing discussions among the six governments and supporting partners. Throughout 2004 and early 2005, three Senior Officials' Meetings (SOM) were held, together with an inter-ministerial meeting that involved the signing of the MOU on October 29, 2004 in Yangon, Myanmar. I witnessed the negotiations of the first two meetings as well as the one day signing ceremony. Multilateral negotiations are time-consuming, with strict rules of procedure, but it was intriguing to watch how and when governments were willing to compromise as well as the incessant battles over wording.

Between preparations for the COMMIT SOM1 and SOM2 in 2004, the UNIAP country offices worked to identify sector and geographical gaps in counter-trafficking responses by mapping national initiatives. Pertinent documents, such as new publications and national legislation, were collated in order to establish a regional website and database that could be accessed through national libraries and centres on human trafficking. Most of this information is now available on the project website, and as one professional remarked, UNIAP hopes to be "the one-stop-shop for information on trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion" (interview, June 9, 2004). Listservs are also run by each country office to disseminate information to member agencies and other interested parties. Finally, the UNIAP organises quarterly inter-agency meetings nationally and regionally, which provide venues for member agencies (NGO, intergovernmental, and donors) to share information and raise issues of interest. Smaller working committees/taskforces bring together agencies interested in specific issues such as child beggars, birth registration, and trafficking vulnerability to facilitate collective action and consolidate advocacy efforts.

The project's broad regional mandate permits the UNIAP to integrate different approaches to trafficking. With its presence in six countries, it brings together agencies that

may not have traditionally worked together in the past; equally important, the project possesses the ability to complement and build on the strengths of its member agencies. Put differently, its mandate, regional presence, and structure enable the project to work fluidly with a wide range of government ministries and development agencies; however, as I will demonstrate in later chapters, these factors can also constrain cooperation.

### ***UNIAP Phase II Project Structure***

The UNIAP is housed under the auspices of the UN Resident Coordinator (UNRC) System, which encompasses all UN organisations that deal with operational activities for development (see Chapter 5). Its main objective is to improve efficiency and effectiveness through coordination at the country level. Resident Coordinators work closely with the national government, lead the UN country team, and are representatives of the Secretary-General for development operations. They also act as the Resident Representatives for UNDP, which sometimes creates tension among UNDP and other agencies (see Chapter 6). Many individuals, even those within the UN system, do not fully appreciate the distinction between the two roles; consequently, it can be difficult to distinguish which “hat” is being worn (private talk at UNIAP orientation, May 5, 2004). Despite these challenges, the UNIAP, like other inter-agency processes such as UNAIDS, fits within the UNRC. One Resident Coordinator explained why:

Conceptually, the Resident Coordinator’s office is a much better base to deal with different ministries, gain access to different ministries, and to seek to persuade them. The Resident Coordinator in any country, for all our problems, has great access. Actually, we are quite well respected as a system...So it is a much better platform for the project. (interview, June 3, 2004)

The UNIAP regional management office is based in Bangkok and reports directly to the Resident Coordinator for Thailand (see Chapter 1, Figure 1). The regional office currently is staffed with five permanent professionals – project manager, deputy project manager,

information officer, financial officer, and administrative assistant – although consultants are periodically recruited for short term tasks such as assistance with the COMMIT process. At the national level, country offices have been established in each of the six countries where offices are staffed with a coordinator, information officer (with the exception of Laos and Vietnam), and project assistant. Expatriate project advisors also support Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam, and they add a distinctive dynamic to those country offices. As one UN professional explained, individuals, whether they are local or expatriates, “feel more comfortable speaking with people with the same cultural background” (interview, July 1, 2004). Communication, common ground, and rapport are factors that enable cooperation. I was often told that a combination of national and expatriate staff fostered stronger relationships between and among different agencies.

Country offices work closely with government counterparts, and initiatives associated with the UNIAP vary according to the trafficking situation as well as the activities of other agencies in each country. The regional management office in Bangkok provides direction and support as does the Resident Coordinator in certain countries, depending on the extent a hands-on approach with the project is selected. Guidance is offered through an inter-governmental project steering group that meets annually as well as the quarterly inter-agency working group in Bangkok, which brings together all member agencies choosing to participate. Several donor agencies consider themselves as involved members, and they participate in the UNIAP inter-agency meetings and/or working committees.

In spite of the UNIAP’s ongoing funding problems, by July 2004, Phase II of the project was fully funded, having reached its target of \$2.5 million (US dollars). As

highlighted in Table 7, several countries support the UNIAP financially, with Sweden and New Zealand leading the way.<sup>67</sup>

Table 7: UNIAP donor support

	Donor	Date received	Amount	
			Local Currency	USD
1	Netherlands	30-Sep-03		22,500.00
2	New Zealand (NZ Aid)	17-Jun-03	NZD 600,000.00	344,827.59
3	Norway	27-Jun-03		99,970.00
4	UNDP	12-Aug-03		300,100.00
5	Netherlands	8-Oct-03		1,250.00
6	US	12-Dec-03		100,135 <sup>68</sup>
7	India (REACH)	28-May-04		99,000.00
8	Sweden (SIDA)	17-Jun-04	SEK 9,500,000.00	1,282,323.00
9	Netherlands (for Laos)	23-Jun-04		24,000.00
10	New Zealand (NZ Aid)	05-July-04	NZD 600,000.00	388,370.00
	<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>2,662,475.59</b>

Donors are attracted to the UNIAP for a number of reasons. The protection of human rights is a priority in many government agendas; as a result, support is enthusiastic for counter-trafficking initiatives. However, some donors indicate another motive for the attraction to the UNIAP – its cooperative approach. As one donor simply stated, “we have a strong

<sup>67</sup> Table 7 does not include contributions for COMMIT. The table reflects core project costs only.

<sup>68</sup> US support is divided into two components – \$52,508 supporting the UNIAP activities and \$47,627 given as a sub-grant to World Vision – Myanmar through the UNIAP.

commitment as an agency to coordination” (interview, September 23, 2004). Another concurred by pointing out that the agency’s mandate is to promote multilateral cooperation:

We have been encouraging UN agencies to cooperate all the time. We can see that there are efficiency losses because they do not work together...and that is very costly for us. But, it is also that we can see that probably the funding could be used better if there was better cooperation. (interview, September 22, 2004)

Given the present human trafficking situation in the Greater Mekong Subregion, donors are right to believe the region needs greater cooperation. If the majority of counter-trafficking initiatives aim to prevent and protect vulnerable populations, funding could be more effective if agencies worked together. Commitment is a key factor to effective coordination, but dedication to the UNIAP, in addition to levels of involvement, differs among the project’s member agencies, donors, and governments. In Chapters 6 & 7, I further investigate these relationships, analysing the extent that they enable or constrain cooperation.

### ***Conclusion***

The Greater Mekong Subregion has undergone immense economic and social transformations, which has engendered new inequalities and widened the gap between the rich and poor. The new global labour market is being shaped by unprecedented flows of migration. Prosperous economic countries, such as Thailand, offer enticing opportunities to those who are looking to generate better lives for themselves and their families. The majority of migration stories do not end in trafficking; yet, the lack of information about the risks and realities of migration, limited levels of education, restricted legal channels, improper documentation or citizenship registration, and gender discrimination are just a handful of factors that contribute to a person’s vulnerability of being trafficked. Given the horrific experiences of many trafficking victims, it is hardly surprising the international development community has rallied to combat the issue. Most anti-trafficking strategies have taken the form of prevention, protection, and assistance of victims, including the return to and re-

integration into their home countries. Law enforcement strategies, ranging from drafting legislation to seizing key assets of perpetrators, also have been carried out. Despite these efforts, it is important to point out that these strategies seldom are implemented simultaneously or as a coordinated response. But as experts in the region have pointed out, despite increased attention at local, national, and international levels, policy-makers, researchers, and even development practitioners believe that incidences of human trafficking are on the rise (Gallagher, 2001; Marshall & Thatun, 2005). As a result, there have been efforts to clarify the discourses about human trafficking within development in order to design better counter trafficking programs.

Indeed, growing concerns about human trafficking have changed, not just the discursive human trafficking field, but the institutional field as well. As one informant commented:

In Myanmar, UNIAP was struggling to bring the issue onto the agendas of UN agencies, NGOs, and governments during Phase I. Now that is no longer the case. Agencies are fighting to take trafficking up – some because it is a sexy issue which donors will put money into and some because they believe in it. (interview, November 9, 2004).

Human trafficking is now part of the mandates of several UN agencies, NGOS, and government ministries. The expansion, compounded by overlapping mandates, has important implications for coordination as the field becomes more complex and fragmented. NGOs no longer operate outside UN agencies and governments; they are now seen as necessary partners (or contractors) in the implementation of mandated activities, and this layering adds to the complexities of coordination. Each has specific concerns, approaches, and arguably comparative advantages, to trafficking – ILO on labour; UNICEF and SCUK on children; UNIFEM on women (and children); IOM on migration flows; UNESCO on minority rights; and OHCHR on human rights. The UNIAP is uniquely, but not necessarily easily positioned,

to bridge these differences, although it is intriguing to note that staff have managed to manoeuvre certain heterodox perspectives into the mainstream. For example, women and children are still the sole focus on many anti-trafficking projects, but the vulnerability of men is becoming an increasing concern, largely because of the efforts of the UNIAP staff at regional and national levels.

Although the interests and interventions of international agencies, NGOs, governments, and donors, both shape, and are themselves shaped by, the discursive field of human trafficking, these discourses and practices are situated within the wider field of development (Escobar, 1995). This chapter initiated a description and analysis of how, within a particular case, human trafficking interventions are not always determined by the trafficking patterns or the social, cultural, and political contexts of the host country. Rather, human trafficking interventions are determined by many factors, including the institutional structure and arrangements of the field itself. An examination of Phase II will continue to reveal how the UNIAP expanded its scope in response to the changing nature of the institutional field (resorting to service provision) rather than the human trafficking field per se. We will see that the success of the UNIAP ultimately will be assessed on its ability to gain legitimacy through its mandate, and through its ability to align itself with the institutional field. But what exactly does a coordination mandate mean? The next chapter will illustrate how conceptual clarity must be brought to bear on the nature of coordination, and I will examine the ways in which the UNIAP and its member agencies understand the roles and responsibilities of the inter-agency project. To this end, Bourdieu's notion of habitus becomes important because it permits us to gain appreciation of the everyday practices of development practitioners. I am interested here in their perceptions and aspirations, but also the institutional strategies and conceptual frames embodied in their individual habitus. Being the first project of its kind, member agencies and governments have high expectations for the UNIAP. The problem is

that since its beginning, the project has struggled not just to leverage the appropriate forms of capital (resources), but also gain the legitimacy required in asserting its authority as a coordinating mechanism. Will the UNIAP be successful in its ability to transform itself and take on the shape of the institutional field? Chapter 6 delves deeper into this question, with the goal of understanding the capacity of the UNIAP to reduce the severity and harm associated with human trafficking while undertaking the enormous task of regional and national level coordination.



## Chapter 6

### Negotiating a field of misunderstanding and uncertainties:

#### Development habitus and capital in transition from Phase I to Phase II

Partnership is a dynamic relationship among diverse actors, based on mutually agreed objectives, pursued through a shared understanding of the most rational division of labour based on the respective comparative advantages of each partner. Partnership encompasses mutual influence, with a careful balance between synergy and respective autonomy, which incorporates mutual respect, equal participation in decision-making, mutual accountability and transparency. (Brinkerhoff, 2002, p. 21)

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Coordinated, partnership approaches are increasingly seen as a key ingredient to successful development projects. More organisations, particularly the United Nations (UN), are progressing towards strategic partnerships as a means of addressing global issues. However, history and tradition paint a bleak future for cooperation. Joint development efforts frequently fail to live up to their potential despite the intentions of the agencies involved (Kjellman, Harpviken, Millard, & Strand, 2003). So why is the gap between rhetoric and practice so apparent? The simple answer is that the rhetoric of partnership, which typically frames the practice in terms of some pre-conceived ideal, masks the practical realities and uncertainties on the ground. As the discussion in previous chapters demonstrated, institutional reforms enacted in recent years often resulted in profound transformations within the development field, which make partnerships imperative, but offer little immediate guidance about what they require. For example, many agencies redefined their roles, strategies, and tactics in response to both the changing structural and power relations among development players and the current institutional orthodoxies. Their interventions and activities also expanded, often beyond the reaches of original mandates, to address the proliferation of global problems such as human trafficking. This expansion means the

development field is increasingly crowded, with a growing presence of agencies. The necessary and consequent interdependence among international agencies, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), and states has engendered new diverse relations and partnerships. This heightened interdependence, however, also coincides with growing competition as resources become scarcer in a marketised development field.

The current emphasis on coordination, harmonisation, and alignment is tightly woven into this unfolding institutional complexity. Here, demands for networked modes of coordination, such as the United Nations Inter-Agency Project (UNIAP), reflect the fragmented, complex structure of the development field. Being the first project of its kind, there was no precedent for this initiative. As one UN professional told me, “no project any place in the world had the number of agencies that this project had involved in it” (interview, June 29, 2004). As a result, the UNIAP needed to establish credibility, authority, and legitimacy as an inter-agency mechanism in the eyes of donors as well as member agencies and governments, that is, if it hoped to implement effectively its vast mandate to coordinate the overall response to human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion. Having gone through various restructurings, the UNIAP is, according to the 2006 external evaluation, coming into its own as it enters into Phase III. This brings us to the nature of the process in which ideas, such as the need for greater coordination and coherence, become institutionalised into development practice, and in particular, into the practical logics of those practitioners who must enact this process.

At the outset, the UNIAP involved a small number of UN agencies, but over the course of its lifespan (1999 onwards), national and expatriate professionals from different realms of the development community had influential roles in the project’s direction. Coordination is negotiated and fostered by individuals, and development practitioners come from diverse backgrounds, bringing their own characteristics, personalities, and behaviours

from different parts of the development field. The question then becomes, when development practitioners encounter new problems, what institutional frames, or in Bourdieu's (1977a) words "conceptual schemes", are used to make sense of and respond to the situation (p. 118)? Here, the concept of *habitus* becomes helpful, in particular when analysed in relation to his other notions of the *field* and *capital* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). According to Bourdieu (2000), habitus-formed strategies used in the field are powerfully influenced by the sets of relationships (social capital) as well as the kind and amount of resources (economic, human/cultural, and informational capital) available to each agent.

This chapter explores the conceptualisation, planning, and design of Phases I and II of the UNIAP by examining the shared habitus of professionals involved in the project, along with the constraints emerging from the development field. Its aim is to provide insights into how specific sets of dispositions, conceptual frames, and schemes are deployed in the development field. What will become apparent is that these conceptual frames and dispositions embodied in the habitus of the development professional reflect the institutional structure of the field itself. Consequently, this chapter also examines the implications these decisions had on the outcomes of Phase I.

The narrative proceeds chronologically, presenting a detailed analysis of the end of Phase I (June 2000 – May 2003). It then turns to the seven month transition period (June 2003 – December 2003), when the UNIAP underwent several restructurings in preparation for Phase II (January 2004 – June 2006). The chapter closes with the end of the transition period, with Phase II ready to start. Before proceeding, however, it is necessary to revisit some of Bourdieu's key concepts (also see Chapter 2). His theoretical arguments explain how certain institutional processes have become entrenched as common sense and are enacted through the everyday practices of practitioners. Thus, there are several analytical insights to be gained

through the application of habitus and other conceptual tools of Bourdieu to the processes and practices of development.

### ***Bourdieu revisited***

Habitus is best understood as a system of durable, transposable dispositions that structure the practices and representations of agents in a particular field (Bourdieu, 1990a). Largely a product of historical circumstances, the habitus provides an agent's familiarity or orientation towards his or her environment. It affords the agent with the knowledge, skill-sets, and strategies (the frame/conceptual schemes) for how ideas or problems are defined, and how decisions are made in new contexts. Habitus, then, enables agents to produce similar ways of understanding and acting in the field, implying that new situations are interpreted through familiar forms and past experiences (Swartz, 1997). This is not to say that agents never improvise in uncertain situations, but the *range of improvisations is determined by the habitus*, which ultimately emerges from its encounter with the field. From this perspective, the processes of institutional reproduction become more evident. On one hand, the field determines and maintains one's habitus (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). On the other hand, the habitus constitutes the field as a meaningful environment, providing agents with acquired schemes of perceptions, thoughts, dispositions, scripts, and practical logic that generate behaviours and actions (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; also see Bourdieu, 1990a, 1993). Bourdieu (1990a) maintains there is a "dialectic between *habitus* and institutions", that is "the habitus is what enables the institution to attain full realization" (p. 57). Hence, a focus of this chapter is to examine the institutional construction of development through habitus.

Bourdieu argues (1977a) that one of the fundamental effects of habitus is "the production of a commonsense world endowed with the *objectivity* secured by consensus on the meaning (*sens*) of practices and world, in other words the harmonization of agents' experiences and the continuous reinforcement that each of them receives..." (emphasis in

original, p. 80). This would suggest that agents within a particular field commonly develop a *shared* or *collective* habitus, which acts as an organising structure for their actions. Habitus, in other words, emerges from finding one's way around a field; therefore, it reflects the field's structure. As Bourdieu describes, homogeneous conditioning results in homogenous dispositions, which produce homogenous practices (Bourdieu, 1987). Thus, together with *illusio* – the notion of believing in, and belonging to, the game specific to the field, and recognising its stakes – the habitus generates not just a way of thinking and acting, but it also provides a “sense of one's place”, as well as a “sense of the place of others” (Bourdieu, 1989b, p. 19). Habitus, therefore, is a valuable concept for assessing the conceptual schemes – the perceptions, aspirations, expectations, reactions, and strategies – of professionals involved with the UNIAP use to negotiate their uncertain emerging field. Equally important, habitus is useful for revealing the configuration of institutions that shape the field itself.

Premised on the principle that the field structures the habitus, a central argument developed in this chapter is that the UNIAP evolved through each phase, heavily influenced in particular by the shared habitus of the development professionals involved with the project. This influence forged a certain kind of path dependence (new actions are strongly shaped by what has gone before) and isomorphism (activities across the field take a similar form) (see Chapter 3). The theories of path dependence and habitus have strong parallels, emphasising the recursive nature of social and institutional reproduction. Underpinned by habitus, dispositions and behaviours are adapted to the field, predisposing agents to recurring patterns of action and restricting their available paths or responses (Jarzabkowski, 2004). Challenged in terms of developing the ‘best approach’, those who were involved drew upon the skills-sets and knowledge of existing development modalities integrated into their shared habitus in order to provide an institutional platform for inter-agency coordination. “People were experimenting,” one UNIAP official stated (interview, November 9, 2004), but they were

doing this in what Bourdieu would have immediately recognised as a series of ‘necessary’ and ‘regulated’ improvisations, drawing heavily on habitus (Bourdieu, 1977a).

As Bourdieu (1993) points out, there are differing dimensions of the habitus, which implies that agents may have stronger affinities to certain dispositions. Examples from the interviews will show how development professionals struggled with a range of skill-sets and modalities of their shared habitus to the point that the collaborative aspect – what we might call their *cooperative habitus* – became underdeveloped relative to development of their *institutional habitus*.<sup>69</sup> As we shall see, the UNIAP planning team had no alternative except to align the UNIAP with the institutional field. Under the *doxic* influence of new institutional reforms, the core of the field is based on projects structured along new public management lines and marketised mechanisms for service-delivery, in an environment fraught with complexities, instabilities, and contradictions. Project planners internalised these core sets of principles to form their dominant institutional habitus, which they unconsciously but collectively brought to the new task of coordination, with what I will show were interesting results.

Through personal testimonies, I illustrate that the development professionals involved in the planning of the UN inter-agency project were ill-equipped to coordinate effectively the different human trafficking agencies operating in the region because of their habituses. Faced with a new and uncertain situation – the demand for new levels of coordination – practitioners assumed that existing modalities might deliver it. The planning team adopted coordination strategies that derived partly through principles of new public management (the grant mechanism, described below), partly through donor influence and ideas about the norms and practices of ‘partnership’, and partly towards the traditional UN hierarchical system. All this is the *habitus in action* – generated strategies that have integrated past experiences and

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<sup>69</sup> I am not the first to use empirically the term *institutional habitus* (see Thomas, 2002)

enabled them to navigate previous fields. Habitus in turn enables agents to cope with unforeseen situations (see Bourdieu, 1977a). As I will describe, Phase I and the preparation period for Phase II offer numerous, poignant examples of the habitus at work. Through most of Phase I and the transition phase, however, the UNIAP was under-resourced and under-prepared, which powerfully shaped and limited its ability to coordinate. Capital related uncertainties grew and reached near crisis point. Towards the end of Phase I, the project neither had the resources nor the capacity to undertake activities independently.

The chapter also shows how these unintended consequences, culminating at the end of Phase I, led to further experimentation and to some extent a shift from a vertical (hierarchical) form of coordination to more a horizontal network based on coordination by consensus at the start of Phase II. Following a model drawn from the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the project was redesigned to function as a regionally based service provider. Here, the notion of capital, and its mobilisation, conversion, and exchange again becomes important (see Chapter 7 for a full analysis of capital).

Bourdieu reminds us that underlying the self-interested strategies of field agents is the accumulation of various forms of resources. Redefined as a service-provider for Phase II, the UNIAP materialised as a platform to enable initially the mobilisation of cultural and social capital (see Bourdieu, 1993). For Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital involves (among other things) expertise and information, while social capital means access to an institutionalised network sustained through ongoing recognition, which offers its members access to collective capital and provides a forum for material and symbolic exchanges required in cooperative settings (see Chapter 2). Yet, as the remaining part of this thesis will show, cohesion is easily disrupted through internal competition for recognition (symbolic capital) and influence (symbolic power).

Finally, this chapter illustrates how the nature of the institutional field, combined with its embedded habitus, constitutes a series of path dependencies and constraints on ensuing activities. Here, the institutional modalities assumed by the development practitioners, including the blueprint of UNAIDs, were derived from a field fragmented by new institutional reforms. In this context, the UNIAP was ill-equipped to deal with the complexities of the field, and could for a time only establish itself as a repository of social capital, which in turn helped facilitate cooperative relationships among UN agencies, governments, and NGOs built on capital exchanges. In other words, the development of genuine cooperation and harmonisation, which ultimately involves elements of coordination, would require more than their existing shared habitus. How much more the next two chapters will show.

### ***Struggling with uncertainties: My arrival in Bangkok***

This chapter and the next chapter present the core of my ethnographic findings. In many respects, my arrival in Southeast Asia was timely and informative. My research began shortly after the new coordinator had arrived and Phase II of the UNIAP had begun. As I asked questions, listened, and observed over a period of 10 months, I witnessed the evolution of the project during this particular phase. I draw upon this experience to provide insights into the institutional field in which development professionals struggle to combat human trafficking through concerted action. What is more, my experiences during the actual research process have much to reveal about the institutional complexity of the development field.

The start of my fieldwork, as illustrated in Chapter 1, presented a number of challenges related to project access and information. In retrospect, these early months were a period of negotiation, not just for me as a researcher, but also for project staff. Their thoughts were communicated to me via email through the former project manager, who had been assisting with the negotiations on my behalf, just 48 hours before I boarded the plane for Bangkok:



The news is not very good I'm afraid. The Project is currently a bit overwhelmed by some fairly major priorities, not least of which is fund-raising, but also with a new regional manager and 3 new country managers starting in the last month. This has been exacerbated by partner agencies taking the opportunity of a new manager to complain about this, that and the other thing. Against this background, there is quite a bit of concern among the staff about the research becoming a defacto evaluation of the UNIAP. There doesn't seem to be enough potential upside for the Project to balance this all up. There is a general willingness among the staff to be cooperative, but within the constraints noted above. Don't worry too much - both trafficking and UN cooperation are such rich areas that I am sure a way ahead will emerge from discussions once you are here. When do you arrive? (email, February 27, 2004)

My research coincided with the arrival of the newly appointed project manager for Phase II in 2004, so it is not difficult to understand why we were struggling with uncertainties. The new manager inherited a project with no funding and minimal support, not just from its member agencies, but some of the existing project staff as well. His arrival brought a new management style in comparison to his predecessor; moreover, he came from a strong NGO background, another factor that seemed to elicit mixed feelings. This was not just a new phase for the UNIAP; in essence, it was a new project that was trying to define itself and carve out a niche. "I think we suffer from a bit of an identity crisis, but this was a lot worse during Phase I," one UNIAP official told me (interview, April 28, 2004). The habitus, however, has a "power of adaptation" in new and unforeseen circumstances, and it would be this power of adaption that was put to the test throughout the UNIAP's phases (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 87).

### **The beginnings of Phase I: The habitus of development practitioners**

An identity crisis was nothing unusual for the UN inter-agency project. From the start, the UNIAP presented a unique challenge to the original planning team of UN agencies who developed its structure. They were creating something that had not existed. "In Phase I, really nobody had any idea. We had never done this before," explained one UN informant

(interview, June 24, 2004). Because of its uniqueness, Phase I was conceived by means of experimentation. To a certain extent, the prevailing ideologies underlying the development field provided the planning team with some sense of reasonable and appropriate strategic possibilities. Everyday practice, Bourdieu (1977a) reminds us, is “the ‘art’ of the *necessary improvisation*” (p. 8). Their shared habitus led them to “‘choose’ the best possible match, in view of the hand that one has been dealt” (Lamaison & Bourdieu, 1986, p. 113). Certain stakeholders chose to exert their symbolic power during the planning process, however. As a result, the manner in which the project was conceived and funded meant that Phase I was fraught with problems from the outset.

### ***Laying the groundwork for implementation***

In 1999, a group of key UN agencies, through the Inter-Agency Working Group in Bangkok, produced a plan for a UN inter-agency project that would provide an overarching mechanism for coordination of counter trafficking initiatives being undertaken by a wide range of UN agencies, governments, and NGOs working in the Greater Mekong Subregion (see Chapter 5). The total project budget was \$US 2.835 million, in which the UN (Turner) Foundation pledged \$US2.315 million and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) about \$US800,000. National execution has long been the preferred and dominant modality for the implementation of projects and programs by the UN system. As a result, one of the project’s central components was to build national ownership and strengthen the capacity of government agencies working to combat human trafficking in each of the six countries.

Deciding on the best organisational structure to build national ownership, however, proved challenging as well as problematic. One of the reasons was that little was known about human trafficking at the time. Governments were either reluctant to recognise its seriousness or simply unaware that such a problem existed. “So how do you set up a structure

in this region?” one UN member asked rhetorically (interview, June 24, 2004). The chosen arrangement, which was to function as a model for all countries in the Phase I, was based around experiences in Thailand, where the stronger principal role of the state meant that coordination could be achieved from within government ministries. “You had ministries that worked together, not that there’s not sometimes problems, but they at least acknowledge each other’s existence as opposed to some other countries,” the informant continued with a chuckle. In addition to this political reality, Thailand’s long reputation of working with, and through, NGOs appealed to the UN Foundation. Thus, the model was chosen largely for path dependent reasons. Highly contextual, the selected arrangement took little account of the political and social situations in the other participating countries. Governments elsewhere were not able to offer this coordinating mandate. A UN practitioner involved from the outset supported this point by saying:

You couldn’t take that model to Laos because there were no NGOs. Burma had to be completely different. You could not have the Burmese government sign onto the project or else the ILO would have to, under its Charter, drop out. It took FOREVER for Vietnam to sign on. In China, there was a terrible mistake made, forced on UNIAP by the UNDP and UNICEF, and that was to place the project in Beijing. By the time [the project manager came on board] it was already a fait accompli. It was very, very bad because you cannot run a project in Yunnan from Beijing. (interview, June 24, 2004)

Ultimately, different countries had distinct project structures, and as described later, the structural design of the UNIAP proved to be a serious hindrance in Phase I. However, the situation of disparate country structures was not the only problem the project faced.

Phase I of the UNIAP was originally conceived by the UN Inter-Agency Working Group as an overarching mechanism for coordination, but as explained in Chapter 5, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) moved faster with the project than other UN agencies anticipated. “It was a shaky beginning because UNDP started this with no

experience,” one member of the original planning team commented (interview, June 25, 2004). Consequently, most of the strategies discussed during joint consultations were not incorporated into the project document, which informants referred to as the “bible” for the development project. The main reason was that the lines of thought developed in Phase I were strongly articulated by the UN Foundation, the main donor alongside AusAID.

In the absence of clear direction and practice, donor influence and control powerfully drove the process. The best example of this power was the suggestion to provide small amounts of funding to local organisations. The UN Foundation wanted to see visible, tangible results at the grassroots level; thus, through consultation with UNDP, a grant mechanism was incorporated into the design. Conceivably a reasonable course of action at the time, it was quickly established that the grant mechanism would have greater implications than simply to mitigate a shift in the project’s focus.

### ***The grant mechanism as a tool for cooperation***

In this section, I analyse the impact of the decision to accept the UN Foundation’s insistence of a grant mechanism. To appreciate this chapter, it is important to understand that central funding for the project came from the UN Foundation. A condition of the grant was that the UNIAP would in turn implement a grant mechanism, funding small NGOs to deliver certain kinds of (specified) outputs. Via this grants mechanism, as we will see, the UNIAP delivered a certain kind of coordination, but it also changed the basic purpose of the project. It turned the project into one which was primarily oriented to implementing, via contracted NGO partners, rather than one primarily coordinating members and states. Acting in this implementing and subcontracting role, it became a competitor rather than a coordinator with other UN agencies, thus undermining its core.

The 1990s were marked by the rise of programs and multilateral-bilateral NGO partnerships of various kinds, many with a reach into whole new areas of development and

international coordination. The partnerships orientation arose in aid for a range of reasons, including those stressed by then Secretary-General Kofi Annan (e.g. UN, 2001 August – *A/RES/58/129 Towards Global Partnerships*). Partnerships were seen as essential for taking on global public good issues (e.g. UN, 2001, April – *SG/SM7783 Press release*). At the same time, there was a shift towards results-based management across development, a shift impelled not the least by the new partnerships and the ways they were established (see Chapter 4). It was in this context that the UN Foundation was created in 1998, using a billion dollar gift from Ted Turner to strengthen the UN’s capacity to address “real problems and the needs of real people worldwide” through grassroots (read NGO) implementation (UN Chronicle, 1999). In part reflecting its private sector provenance, its key funding criteria demanded results-based management as a tool for implementation and a collaborative approach to build partnerships between the UN system and NGO partners on the ground.

As we have seen, the notion of coordination originally constituted the project’s foundational dimension. To enable this coordination in a new public management contracting context, and in order to secure much needed economic capital, a grant mechanism became one of four central components of Phase I (see Chapter 5 for background of both Phases). In this mechanism, both general notions of partnership and the particular imperatives of new public management style management and (contract based) coordination came together, with particular kinds of development outcomes.

Under this grant mechanism, NGOs could receive funding to support and strengthen existing initiatives and develop new pilot interventions to counter human trafficking. This project’s particular grant mechanism, then, added to the imperatives for coordination, but at the same time demanded ‘results’ from NGO partners receiving funds under that mechanism. Coordination would be possible, but only where NGOs undertook to deliver certain kinds of result outputs, an arrangement dictated by the principles of the UN’s grant mechanism.

In this context, the grant mechanisms were largely seen as facilitating a form of cooperation between local NGOs and the UN, aimed at building the capacity of community-based organisations in particular (internal UNDP document, March 2000). But because of the breadth of small, one-off initiatives, the grant mechanism arguably exacerbated fragmentation in the human trafficking field. Equally important, grants were administered through a subcontract arrangement, which meant the relationship more closely resembled a principal-agent model rather than an actual partnership. Under new public management terms, principal-agent frameworks create tangible outputs for donors, while at the same time offer incentives to coordinate in the tradition of new institutional economics. For the UN Foundation, they provided an instrument to generate visible results. In actual effect, the grant mechanism created further uncertainty about the role of the UNIAP, imposing a range of unforeseen constraints (discussed below) without contributing much in terms of practical coordination. The grant mechanism amplified the influence of new public management in development, which led to an increasing emphasis on measurable outputs, outcomes, and impacts to ensure effectiveness and accountability. Even in this context, however, the kinds of 'outputs' required were neither clear nor quantifiable.

Although donors like to see coordination, measuring its benefits is inherently difficult. A recurrent theme that emerged during my research was that when coordination is operationalised, it is generally shrouded in invisibility. The focus on outputs and outcomes, together with inputs, in project delivery implies setting quantifiable performance indicators (e.g. number of regional workshops held per year, creation of a website, quarterly newsletters, etc.), but often these benchmarks are neither adequate nor sufficient to measure the extent or the value of coordination or the quality of any ensuing cooperative arrangements. What would constitute quality in partnership, however, is rarely defined, except in idealist terms. Brinkerhoff (2002a), however, maintains that a key question in the evaluation of partnerships

is: what did the agencies involved in the partnership attain, which would not have been attained if they had acted independently? Measuring the specific contribution of a project's activities in attaining intended results is particularly challenging when there is no baseline to describe the situation (i.e. the human trafficking situation or the level of coordination among agencies) before the UNIAP began (see Kusek & Rist, 2004). Even a focus on the perceptions of change among member agencies or the value added of coordination is fraught with problems given the competitiveness and rivalries that exist between the UNIAP and its member agencies.

The impetus in development to have an impact at the grassroots level, coupled with result-based management and partnership approaches, means that donors have increasingly supported community-based NGOs as service providers. Commonly, though, funds are indirectly disbursed through an intermediary agent, as in the case of the UNIAP, because of high transaction costs associated with administrative procedures. Although this arrangement provides a means to see visible outputs within a short or limited time, it puts the emphasis on donor control, often at a high expense to the NGO or intermediary agent in terms of flexibility and autonomy.

Even when enacted in the name of partnership, core new public management funding and contracting mechanisms can themselves make coordination difficult (Bevir, et al., 2003; Peters & Savoie, 1996). For example, although the grant mechanism was seen as a practical tool to promote cooperation with NGOs, little thought was given to how the initiative would be carried out. As commonly happens in development, the practitioners on the ground, the staff of the UNIAP, were left with the difficult task of trying to implement this impracticable component (see Ferguson, 1990). A major practical problem was, for example, that UN contracting regulations stipulated a retrospective payment system, which meant local NGOs initially had to incur the costs of the activities themselves (internal UNDP document, August

2001). This system presented an enormous challenge for recipients such as the Healthcare Center for Children, a small Cambodian NGO with limited financial capacity. Although the grant mechanism represented an important output for the project, the new public management approach clashed with the rigid bureaucratic procedures of the UN system, placing a major constraint on the ability of the grant mechanism to be implemented properly and efficiently.

Completely reliant on external support in a tight funding environment, the UNIAP was co-opted to comply with the imposed conditions. As one UN professional commented, the UN Foundation “wanted to see something more concrete on the ground, which many donors do. Fair enough, but it was not strictly within the principles of what the project was trying to achieve” (interview, July 23, 2004). Part of the situation was familiar, part was not. In the next section, using the notion of habitus, I will explore how the practitioners dealt with this situation. As we will see, it was not without a number of further false steps and further confusion.

### ***Contradictions and tensions: The UNIAP emerges as a competitor***

Although the purpose of the grant mechanism was to fill gaps in the response to human trafficking, reactions to this role were mixed, and uncertainties remained. Some member agencies considered it to be an added strength (including nearly all of the recipients), but others believed that the UNIAP should not be allocating financial resources or be involved in the implementation of activities at the national level. As a result, there were tensions regarding the project’s primary responsibilities as well as the principal-agent arrangement. One member of a UN agency talked about the confusion:

What is not so clear – what you do as a coordination group and what you do as implementing agencies? When does UNIAP do things on its own? When is it in fact competing with other organisations or doing things that are not really in its mandate, or doesn’t have the strength or the advantage to do that work? (interview, July 13, 2004)



On the ground, then, the implementation of activities, the perceived encroachments on territorial interests, and the lack of clarity regarding the project's aims and objectives meant the grant mechanism positioned the UNIAP in competition against its member agencies. These tensions were exacerbated because the UNIAP was also principally seen as a UNDP project rather than one under the auspices of the UN Resident Coordinator. A member of one UN agency concluded that the UNIAP "became a competitor to all the other 10 agencies that were already doing these small activities on prevention and combating trafficking" (interview, September 16, 2004). Another UN professional explained further:

In the first Phase, they were ultimately suspicious of it and saw it as a bit of a rival for competitive resources, which is quite characteristic. Therefore, they saw to keep under control. To clip its wings a little bit. They saw it as another wheel on the car, encroaching on their operational activities. (interview, June, 3, 2004).

Additional interviews revealed a majority of member agencies believed the grant mechanism merely diverted funds and human resources originally intended for improving coordination processes in the Greater Mekong Subregion.

In satisfying donor requirements by including the grant mechanism, member agencies believed that, at the least, the UNIAP was being subverted in terms of its intended purpose. At the worst, such decisions, which initially may have seemed innocuous, entrenched certain competitive patterns of behaviour between the UNIAP and its member agencies, and set the project on a *path* that was inherently difficult to change. For example, in the UNIAP Phase II Summative Evaluation report, completed in March 2006, the reason given for why member agencies believed "project staff should attempt to spend additional time in collaborating with the UN agencies" was: "the level of natural competition and resources in human trafficking among the different anti-human trafficking actors" (Bugnion, 2006, pp. 23-24). These perceptions of member agencies were a result of the project's historical past as well as the structural influence of the field.

At the end of Phase I in May 2003, neither the UN Foundation nor AusAid showed interest in providing support for a second Phase.<sup>70</sup> Although the project succeeded in bringing human trafficking issues to the fore of government, UN, and NGO agendas, it was clear that, for the most part, Phase I failed as a coordination mechanism.<sup>71</sup> The concept itself, it was widely felt, had merits, but in retrospect, most conceded that the project's impact was constrained by structural and financial limitations along with idealistic expectations. Confronted again with financial vulnerability, but without the push and pull of donor influence, staff resolved to use the transition period as an opportunity to reflect on the lessons learned in Phase I and start from a clean slate. Participants conceded that the existing project structure and mechanisms were not conducive to establishing an effective institutional frame for coordination. Other approaches seemed possible. This time, the planning team drew on a different range of skill-sets, instruments, and practical logics of habitus. In the remaining section of this chapter, I will argue that during this transition period a shared development habitus unconsciously aligned Phase II even more closely to the institutional field.

### **The transition period: Recognising the field**

#### ***Reflections of Phase I: Habitus mismatches***

##### ***The Phase I midterm evaluation report***

On December 6, 2002, the Phase I midterm evaluation (June 2000 – November 2002) was released. The report described a number of positive achievements and argued that, as a result, the UNIAP had comparative advantages in terms of coordination. It claimed a number of recent shifts had occurred in the field that would further cement the need for cooperative

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<sup>70</sup> One of the reasons for this disinterest was that the Australian Government was in the process of launching its own human trafficking project. The Asia Regional Cooperation to Prevent People Trafficking (ARCPPT) covered Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand and aimed to strengthen national judicial capacities as well as cross-border coordination. The three-year initiative finished in March 2006, and the Asia Regional Trafficking in Persons (ARTIP) project began just five months later (2006-2011). Conversely, according to the UNIAP documents, the UN Foundation was unable to provide further funding due to a stock market downturn.

<sup>71</sup> For example, informants repeatedly credited the UNIAP Myanmar office for getting the government to recognise human trafficking as a priority.

action at the national and regional levels. Three trends were cited in particular: 1) a growing number of human trafficking projects benefiting from an increase in focus and funding; 2) a broader understanding of the complexities and linkages involved in human trafficking; and 3) the increased commitment towards coherence, harmonisation, and alignment for improved aid effectiveness among the UN and donors. With governments also pushing for increased efforts in harmonisation, alignment, and managing for results, the report declared that the “need for UNIAP’s co-ordinating role is more apparent now than ever” (Caouette, 2002, p. 5). The evaluation report, however, also recognised numerous obstacles and frustrations encountered during the first phase, underscoring the point that the original project document had already undergone one revision midway through in October 2001 to tighten its focus and objectives. It seemed clear to the evaluation team that the UNIAP’s coordination role was “best defined as ensuring the strategic use of resources backed up by an enabling policy environment” (p. 23), which in retrospect was a narrow conception that focused heavily on the use of human/cultural capital. The report went on to state that the UNIAP could achieve this result through four target areas: strategic analysis, priority setting, advocacy, and information dissemination (p. 5). Although the evaluation report made a number of concrete suggestions, the language, like much of development discourse, remained vague. It was largely left unspoken how these recommendations should be operationalised, within a field where the UNIAP’s mandate, relationships, and other capacities to achieve these objectives were by no means clearly defined.

Over the seven-month transition period, a succession of discussions followed between the UNIAP officials and the UN Resident Coordinator for Thailand concerning the project’s restructuring. The time afforded individuals the opportunity to step away from their immediate involvement with the UNIAP and use the evaluation comments as a point of departure for reflection, analysis, and interpretation. Discussed at a series of meetings during

the transition phase, it became evident there were conflicting perspectives about the best means to create this enabling environment. It was here that the planning team encountered the most frustration. In relation to the one of the problems encountered during the transition stage meetings, a UNIAP professional offered succinctly, “nobody has defined what coordination means” (interview, August 31, 2004).

### ***(Re)Defining what coordination means***

The fact that coordination had not been defined by this stage might be surprising; but given the evolving complexities of habitus and field, it might not be surprising at all. Throughout this thesis, I have resisted offering a definitive definition, preferring to let the practical realities of the UNIAP determine its elements. Eventually, though, the time came when the project team attempted to define what was meant by coordination. Coordination in development is, in many ways, a vacuous term. It is easy to say, or even believe, that joint or coordinated efforts are critical ingredients to successful interventions, but often there is little reflection on the conceptual and operational challenges associated with the process. While many development situations require coordination, few have actually defined or operationalised the concept. Here, as we will see, coordination can be seen as having vital (but distinct) vertical and horizontal dimensions. Which of these dimensions matter most, and which should be used, are questions that are seldom thought about in development. Furthermore, notions of coordination have both normative and value-laden dimensions, which become embodied in decision-making (Bennett, 2000).

In a rare and somewhat promising departure from static definitions, Antonio Donini (1996) presents a ‘levelled’ approach to the notion of coordination. He argues that coordination within the UN system, for the most part, falls into three categories: 1) coordination by command, which involves strong hierarchical leadership and authority, perhaps through a carrot or stick approach; 2) coordination by consensus, which involves

horizontal leadership aimed at mobilising action around common objectives and priorities; and 3) coordination by default, which takes place without a formal coordination body and involves basic exchanges of information and haphazard division of responsibilities among stakeholders (p. 14; also see Donini & Niland, 1994; Øverland, 2005; Weiss, 1999). Certainly the first two, and perhaps all three categories are featured in the UNIAP context.

In these terms, the UNIAP, during its first Phase, focused on hierarchical approaches, which translated to coordination by command, but in the absence of legitimation (symbolic capital) and other resources, the arrangement proved unrealistic. “[B]ashing heads with other agencies saying, ‘You should be doing this’, but also criticising what they are doing because we had this best practices element as well”, as one UN practitioner put it, wasn’t working (interview, July 23, 2004). The staff re-evaluated what the project should and (more importantly) could achieve. Certain members of the UNIAP planning team thought there was a better way to facilitate cooperation among agencies in Phase II, suggesting coordination by consensus. Here, the UNIAP wanted a clear agenda to serve as an overarching coordination mechanism, but with no authority or power to control its member agencies, the management team had to shift its focus.

By the end of Phase I, it became clear that coordination was more about relational networks, or in Bourdieu’s terms, social capital, which in turn can reduce transaction costs and make the most of limited capital available in the field. This was more of a horizontal approach than a hierarchical one, and hence the language of partnership abounded. “For us to be able to operate,” one UNIAP professional commented, “we need the support of our partners. Without their support, there is no need for an inter-agency project” (interview, November 9, 2004). This kind of coordination was not just about the ‘right’ structural arrangements, it was also about people and social capital related trust, as one UNIAP professional pointed out:

I think the big issue in the first phase with UNIAP is that it wanted to have the mandate to coordinate, and it took two years to realise that you don't get a mandate to coordinate people. It isn't a right; it is a privilege you need to earn. (interview, August 31, 2004)

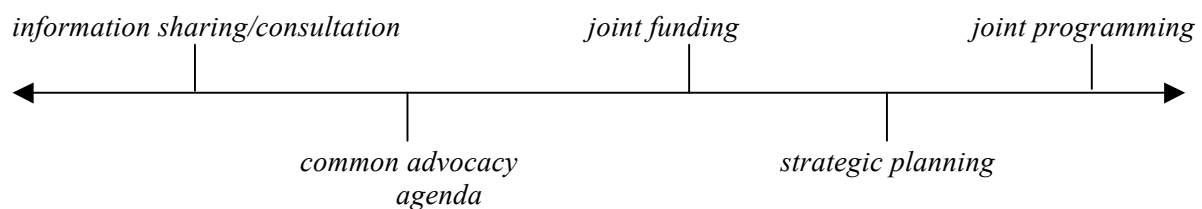
Here, the intensely personal aspects of trust in a field such as human trafficking become apparent. Although there are hundreds of international organisations, donors, and NGOs carrying out counter human trafficking projects and programs, the field in the Greater Mekong Subregion is a small, tight knit community. This means agencies, even larger ones such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) or the International Labour Organisation (ILO), are often identified through a single person. Not surprisingly, then, it is widely agreed that people, not organisations, make coordination and partnerships happen. Problems arising from conflicting personalities and ideological tensions can sever a relationship with an organisation. "We had no contacts with ILO for a year because we did not talk to their two key human trafficking people," one UNIAP official confided. "We criticised them and then it was done – an important partnership between UNIAP and ILO" the person chuckled (interview, August 31, 2004). Another colleague agreed by saying. "Some of the relationships are not that great. It comes back to roles about mandates and how people behave, but that is always going to happen. *It is just part of the game*" (interview, April 28, 2004).

### ***A continuum of coordination?***

Both horizontal and vertical modes of coordination can also be defined through understanding the levels of intensity and mutual partnership involved. In a continuum of coordination, from mere association to 'joined at the hip' collaboration, a number of interactional factors come together. Better information exchange is one end of the continuum (see Figure 13). If you move further along, common advocacy agendas, strategic planning, and the joint funding of activities can be realistic achievements. At the furthest end of the

continuum, however, is joint programming, which is difficult given the bureaucratic pathologies of development agencies, particularly those within the UN system. As one UN member argued, “joint collaboration is very difficult to achieve because you are really encroaching on independence” (interview, June 3, 2004). What is being suggested is this form of coordination is akin to the fear of merger and the loss of agency. In spite of potential benefits, coordination at this level involves high transaction costs and considerable risk to the agencies involved.

Figure 13: Forms of coordination



The further along the continuum, the deeper the difficulties. In Phase I, the UNIAP tried to be an overarching coordination mechanism, the difficulties described above made the planning team more realistic about what could be achieved in Phase II. There, the UNIAP was restructured so it engaged more in the first two stages of the continuum (i.e. information sharing and advocacy).

***How would the field make coordination difficult?***

Having defined what coordination meant, it is useful at this stage to situate this problem more broadly within the wider development field by considering why agencies resist coordination: what makes it hard, what obstacles, personal and institutional, habitus and field based, exist. I asked the informant quoted in the previous paragraph to elaborate on this issue, noting specific aspects of the complexity of the field itself as important obstacles:

It is partly institutional and partly human nature. It is institutional in that people want the right to develop their organisation in a way that will expand it, increase the funding, increase the range of activities, and no doubt promote their own career. The

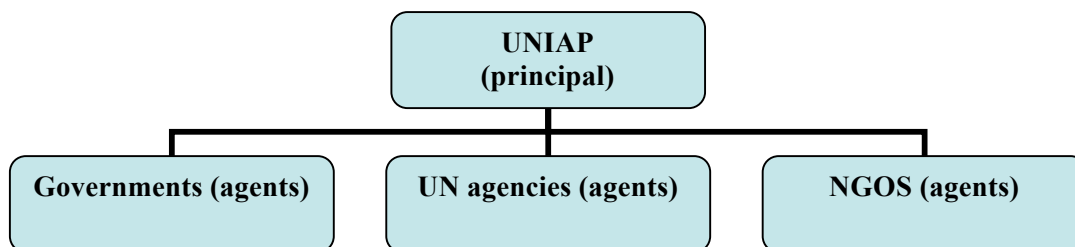
people operating within an organisation tend to be more interested in the career they have than the issue itself. That is human nature. There are a lot squabbles. If you keep your eye on the issue, many things can be solved better. But, most people approach it through the prism of their own career, their own job, their next contract extension. Can they be seen to raise money from the Brits or the Swedes. (interview, June 3, 2004)

This quote, and others found in Chapters 1 (p. 5) and Chapter 6 (p. 253), show the institutional and human propensity to be uncooperative, which is an example of institutional versus individual habitus. The behaviour of development organisations is a complicating factor to both vertical and hierarchical modes of coordination. From a practical perspective, diverse mandates, activities, funding sources, budget cycles, governing bodies, and administrative procedures make it challenging for coordinating mechanisms to extend beyond information sharing and consultation.

#### ***Vertical coordination: Hierarchical modes of governance***

Returning to the UNIAP's history, during the first Phase, the UNIAP took a more hierarchical approach to coordination, in line with the traditional structure of UN system, but also the ideational frames of reference commonly associated with coordination in development (Robinson, et al., 2000; see Figure 14).

Figure 14: UNIAP hierarchical structure (Phase I)



The project paralleled principal-agent relationship structures drawn from new institutional economics, which was a tenet of the orthodoxy at the time. However, principal-agent relationships are fundamentally flawed and rife with contradictions (see Chapter 3). “As in all relations of authority, an agent’s fulfillment of a principal’s directives cannot be taken for



granted” (Cooley & Ron, 2002, p. 15). Most member agencies in Phase I, however, refused to acknowledge the top down coordination the UNIAP was mandated to provide as an overarching mechanism. Meanwhile, the UNIAP professionals continued to operate in the hierarchical way they were familiar with, claiming both mandate and the cultural capital ability to identify ‘best practice’ in coordination:

[the first Phase manager] was always talking about coordination, which was built on a paradigm of bashing heads with other agencies saying, “You should be doing this,” but also criticising what they are doing because we had this best practices element as well. If UNIAP is going to come in and criticise, it is not a process that I can see leading to constructive outcomes, to go at loggerheads and expect people to commit to things by signing off. It is just not a realistic position to argue from. (interview, July 23, 2004).

As another frustrated worker commented:

I really get pissed off with some of the reform processes coming from New York saying, ‘Naughty! You UN agencies just do not work together properly so here is another new procedure in order to ensure that you do,’ without any real understanding that we are just behaving according to the system as designed. (interview, June 3, 2004)

But even here challenges remained, in that there was no clear hierarchical mandate readily available. Rather, the right to coordinate, as stated above, had to be earned.

Nevertheless, for some planners, this strategy or approach was deeply inscribed in their habitus. The hierarchical structure embedded in the traditional UN approach was still their preferred mechanism. Others accepted the need for some of this, but wanted it articulated more consensually, through a set of basic coordination/cooperation principles that would promote accountability and establish explicit roles and responsibilities for everyone involved: in short, a formal agreement that spelled out “clearly what you can do together and how you can do it together” would be in place (interview, September 16, 2004).

### ***UNIAP principles of coordination: The 14 commandments***

Under the former project manager's guidance, the UNIAP inter-agency working group in Bangkok developed the 'UNIAP Principles of Cooperation', nicknamed the 'Fourteen Commandments', towards the end of Phase I. It was created around the time the draft proposal for Phase II was being drawn up in mid 2003 (see Figure 15). I asked one UNIAP staff member what the rationale was behind this degree of formality. The reply was:

The 14 Commandments were developed in response to concerns expressed by one or two of the larger UN partners that UNIAP needed to do more in the way of coordination. UNIAP considered that there were a number of prerequisites for this in terms of what was required of its partners and that these should be made as specific as possible to avoid any uncertainty. The Commandments were the end product of this. (email, July 27, 2007)

Informants suggested that the principles were created largely out of exasperation at what seemed to be an inability on the part of member agencies to recognise that successful coordination was dependent upon their willingness to cooperate effectively. Because efficient coordination involves shared norms of behaviour, the Commandments evolved as a first solution to this problem. In new public management terms, agreement on responsibilities is a practice designed to reduce transactions costs associated with coordination by reducing the constant need for negotiation, clarifying roles, or monitoring behaviour (Brinkerhoff, 2002b). For Bourdieu (1977a), however, it is somewhat deeper. Codes of practice are commonly translated into written guidelines to reduce uncertainties associated with the habitus. But in this case, most of what was being agreed related to the sharing of information: in Bourdieu's terms, the sharing of cultural capital. Here, as Bourdieu (1977a) maintains, "particularly skilful strategies can make the most of the limited capital available" (p. 214). Sharing cultural capital was a start, but would it be an adequate mechanism for real operational collaboration?

Figure 15: UNIAP Principles of Cooperation (14 Commandments)

*Members of the UN Inter-agency Working Group undertake to:*

***Information and Knowledge Management***

1. Appoint a representative to be the knowledge management focal point to and from UNIAP.
2. Share relevant information with UNIAP in a timely manner.
3. Provide partner agencies, through UNIAP, with up-to-date information on trafficking activities, on a quarterly basis, covering progress/achievements and forthcoming activities/plans.
4. Advise partner agencies, through UNIAP, of any new human trafficking interventions being planned and new funding received.
5. Advise partner agencies, through UNIAP, of new research activities being planned and undertaken.
6. Send a copy of each completed research report to UNIAP.
7. Provide input into the UNIAP Newsletter, *Step-by-Step*, as well as the new regional trafficking E-mail list.

***Networking***

8. Send a representative to each quarterly meeting of the Inter-Agency Working Group.
9. Draw on the comparative advantages of partner agencies and serve as facilitators/resource people in each other's workshops where appropriate and possible.

***Strategic Planning and Priority Setting***

10. Articulate in writing, the agency's comparative advantages in the area of human trafficking, and commit to focusing within these areas of comparative advantage.
11. Participate in a semi-annual inter-agency strategic planning and prioritisation exercise.\*\*
12. Modify, as appropriate and feasible, existing and planned programmes to take account of the agreed priorities.
13. Refrain from using in their publications, statistics which cannot be traced to an original, first-hand source.
14. Engage UNIAP members in planning of new trafficking interventions.

\*\* Initially, this will simply involve working group members. As a next step, we will look to involve partner governments in this process.

The idea was to have member agencies formally adopt these principles, which they did, but most expressed reluctance to assume the accompanying responsibilities, including those agencies that gave initial support. Confronted with the role of an *agent*, member agencies reacted instinctively to an arrangement that was not congruent with their habitus. As a UN professional explained, “at the UN agency level, nobody is in a position to sign off on those commandments without going through these bureaucratic processes themselves because you are freeing resources” (interview, July 23, 2004). Although this assertion is partially true, the Fourteen Commandments constituted more of an informal understanding based on trust than a formal contract that would necessitate consent from an agency’s headquarters. The key obstacle in achieving a clear commitment from members had to do with incentives and the behaviours engendered by their shared or isomorphic habitus. An informant captured this idea, which resonates throughout this thesis because it points to the centrality of capital, by saying:

We participate. We want to have input. We don’t want to be seen as an agency that’s not supportive of a coordinated approach, but we want to be recognised for our area. So this is I think the biggest challenge, and I’m not convinced yet that the inter-agency project is able to address that challenge. I am not entirely convinced of what their value-added role is. (interview, August 24, 2004).

Although hierarchical arrangements are seen as a way to encourage people to work towards a common purpose to reduce transaction costs, individualistic behaviour patterns often remain intact. In truth, the contractual arrangement of the Fourteen Commandments, coupled with top down coordination, would have likely made the project more fractious and less oriented towards relational exchanges. It was only now becoming apparent that there were alternative approaches to coordination.

### ***Missing incentives and unrecognised transaction costs: Hindrances to coordination***

It could be argued that members of the first Phase planning team made a critical mistake, although, at the time, it was not necessarily easy to discern because of their developing habitus. Missing from Phase I was a key incentive needed for development cooperation – the opportunity to access forms of capital that would otherwise be inaccessible (also see Brinkerhoff, 2002a). Member agencies needed to commit themselves, but the UNIAP needed to offer incentives for them to follow through on this commitment. Local NGOs benefited from the grant mechanism, but there were few incentives to entice commitment from the UN agencies. People will invest in coordinative approaches, particularly through conventional principal-agent arrangements, if it is in their best interests to do so. Of course, strong incentives are not the only motivation, but they can help reduce transactions costs and uncertainties associated with coordination.

During interviews, I always asked about perceived hindrances to coordination, and as in the previous quote, participants' responses revealed considerable insights into the structural nature of the development field. Professionals repeatedly brought up the issues of time and capacity as the largest constraints to their participation and support. As one discussion unfolded, I learned from an informant that she had recently been approached to chair one of the national level inter-agency working meetings. Although highly committed to the project, she refused. She explained her decision as follows:

I have enough on my plate. If I do it, I want to do a good job. It requires a lot of time and I don't have the time available. So I'd rather decline than taking it on, not being able to put enough time. It really requires time because it is extremely difficult, the whole coordination of the UN. It is not easy. (interview, July 1, 2004)

Rarely measured, the high transaction costs involved with coordination mechanisms were a recurring theme among member agencies. Spending more time and effort in meetings was often seen as a waste of capital (human/cultural capital) without guaranteed returns. Many

thought the transaction costs in Phase I were too high and the returns too low, which directly affected their commitment to the project. For one member agency, the UNIAP represented just “another one of those UN inter-agency meetings” (interview, August 25, 2004). “I get very frustrated with these inter-agency processes where it is just a bunch of UN bureaucrats blathering on. They don’t do anything!” she continued in exasperation. “The number of groups and meetings now that we are part of in the region is growing, so just time wise it is very difficult,” another UN professional based in Bangkok stated (interview, June 25, 2004). In such an environment, it is hardly surprising development agents were exasperated by the endless meetings, processes, and theme groups that produced little concrete action. Moreover, various organisational pathologies (territorial competitiveness, duplication of mandates and responsibilities, etc.) stood in the way of effective coordination (see Barnett & Finnemore, 2004; Dijkzeul & Beigbeder, 2003; Murphy, 2006; Taylor, 2000). Although formal agreements, such as the Fourteen Commandments, can reduce costs in terms of time, energy, and resources required to negotiate continuously roles and responsibilities, the governance structure in Phase I was not able to support systematic coordination in such a complex environment.

***Steering problems: Leaky boats and struggles over symbolic power***

Principal-agent or hierarchical modes of governance derive from a particular (hierarchical) understanding of accountability. With the UNIAP’s limited capacity in Phase I, there was no mechanism to hold members accountable or monitor their behaviour. The transaction costs were compounded by the number of agencies and governments participating in the project. Hierarchical coordination, dependent on the status of the principal, demands symbolic power, which must work through accountability rather than top down command or direction. Member agencies resisted being held formally accountable, and in so doing refused to legitimate or institutionalise the UNIAP as a coordinating body. When authority is

institutionalised, it becomes a source of symbolic power. Because vertical coordination mechanisms tend to rely on hierarchical authority, legitimacy becomes a key dimension of power. Without these structural aspects of power relations, many UNIAP professionals expressed frustration. “We don’t have power to tell anyone what to do, yet we are in this role where people expect it,” one UNIAP informant told me during an afternoon coffee break (interview, June 9, 2004). Another agreed by saying:

During the first Phase, there was a great deal of effort to try to push coordination – like coordination has to happen – these 14 commandments and stuff. But to what extent can you actually enforce cooperation? I mean you can’t! (interview, November 2, 2004).

However, formal coordination bodies must be able to exert influence over other agencies to set priorities and operational strategies, mobilise and allocate resources, and assign responsibility for various tasks (Bennett, 2000; Jordan, Archer, Granger, & Ordes, 2001). Without this symbolic power, the UNIAP struggled with its role as the principal, just as the member agencies did with their roles as agents, illustrated through their unwillingness to forego power.

### ***The UNIAP: Neither steering nor rowing***

Under the influence of new public management, the project, in its original conception, was designed to steer (coordinate) rather than row (implement/deliver services). In practice, it was ill equipped to do either. In new public management terms, steering would have required that the UNIAP had the basic authority and competence to establish operational policies and practices (see Osborne & Gaebler, 1992, p. 25). For this arrangement to work, it entailed a shift in the structure of power relations within the human trafficking field, but the weak coordination mandate of the UNIAP gave it little leverage over the operational activities of member agencies. Some UN professionals were quick to emphasise what they thought was an important distinction, “UNIAP is not an *agency*; it is an inter-agency *project*,” an informant

offered succinctly (interview, June 25, 2004). In many respects, this was a critical point. “Agencies are not prepared to forgo what they want to do for the sake of a priority-setting exercise initiated by a UN *project* that, for as far as they know, could disappear in 2006” one UNIAP professional explained (interview, November 2, 2004).

This lack of faith in the UNIAP’s sustainability and role added new complexity to the struggles over knowledge and authority in the field. On one hand, UN agencies were being asked to cede some of their influence, but to a coordination project, which in turn threatened to treat them as its agents (though without a strong basis for being a principal). On the other hand, agencies were uncertain about the nature and ramifications of this project. Where were the lines of authority drawn? Would the project morph into a competitor? Because of the uncertainties surrounding these questions, member agencies were not keen on allowing the UNIAP to steer the car either. “There is a profound hypocrisy in this business,” one UN official observed. “Everybody wants coordination, but nobody wants to be coordinated. They do not want the kind of leadership that the inter-agency project was established to provide” (interview, June 3, 2004).

It is clear from the above discussion that no hierarchical principal-agent relationship existed. The absence of such a relationship confused behaviours and relationships in a field conditioned by the drive to secure funding and achieving the measurable results donors want to see. As one UN professional observed:

Their Regional Director or boss is saying, “How much money have you raised? What are you doing to promote UNICEF or ILO?” They are all the same. So the interagency project is not high on their list of priorities. ...I don’t believe the job description of my colleagues at the Head of Agency level would mention much about interagency collaboration. I am sure when they have their annual performance review with their bosses, it is barely discussed. (interview, June 3, 2004).

Simply put, agencies were unlikely to meet their responsibilities as members if the UNIAP’s activities were not incorporated into their work plans. The UNIAP itself had to become an



output, as it was for the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Member agencies were largely unwilling to pay the transaction costs, or to otherwise contribute in terms of time, energy, and different capital required to facilitate cooperation. It was easy for member agencies to say they were committed to coordination, but eliciting their commitment proved to be the challenge.

In summary, the UNIAP was coming to terms with the demands and complexities of coordination, as well as the realities of a field structured along new public management lines. The project was imagined in a traditional paradigm of coordination based on a hierarchical structure of control through power and authority, which institutionalists understand as principal-agent relations. Yet, it was not given such an institutional form. In its quest to coordinate through mandated power, it encountered difficulties unanticipated by the originating team. The UNIAP was envisioned to build cooperation and address the increasing duplication and fragmentation among development agencies in the human trafficking sector. Although the project succeeded in bringing human trafficking issues to the fore of government, UN, and NGO agendas, it was clear that, for the most part, Phase I failed as a coordination mechanism.

Some might argue that promoting human trafficking related issues was achievement enough considering the uncertainties and confusion that served as a hindrance. The concept of the UNIAP serving as a coordination mechanism itself was promising, although, in retrospect, most conceded that the project's impact was constrained not just by structural and financial limitations, but also by idealistic expectations. Systematic coordination of the UN system, one member of the planning team realised, "is completely beyond the scope of what realistically can be done with the project" (interview, April 28, 2004). The mid-term evaluation report confirmed these sentiments. The UNIAP had neither the resources nor the authority to carry out what it was set up to do. Phase I, in the terms of new public

management, had become a classic example of mission over-reach resulting in transformational under-reach in development (see Craig & Porter, 2007). The group concluded that for coordination to be effective, the UNIAP needed to offer something more. “Once we understood this,” one UNIAP person told me, “we started to call ourselves a *service-provider*” (interview, August 31, 2004).

### **Preparation for Phase II: Habitus adjustments**

#### ***Horizontal coordination: Network modes of governance***

Phase I ended in May 2003 with dwindling funds and waning support from some of its member agencies. The UNIAP consistently had difficulties in mobilising resources, but now the project was in a critical situation. According to the April 2003 Inter-Agency Working group meeting minutes, two international staff members left due to the funding situation. Some national staff members were working without contracts or guaranteed pay. It was suggested by UNESCO that member agencies support the UNIAP during its interim phase, but this proved unsuccessful because the separate funding silos of larger UN agencies offered little flexibility in what they could contribute for coordination. Due to donor restrictions, most members could fund the UNIAP activities, but not the core project itself. Despite the lack of support, the UNIAP staff believed it had no choice but to move forward. It was time to move the UNIAP in a new direction.

After endless discussions about what constituted coordination, coupled with the knowledge learned in Phase I, the transition planning team thought they were in a better position to make realistic decisions about the next phase. The team, largely comprised of staff from Phase I, including the UN Resident Coordinator for Thailand, devised a plan to ensure Phase II could start as anticipated in January 2004. This time frame meant securing funding, obtaining support from the six participating governments, restructuring the project and its country offices, and aligning the project’s strategies with recommendations from the mid-term

evaluation that was completed in December 2002. The project needed renewed legitimacy if it was to obtain the required resources and support that would enable a second phase. One interviewee described the situation and the challenge:

I think [the manager in the first Phase] built this up single-handedly to be something amazing, but unfortunately, in the last few months of his time, it was a mess in that there was no funding. So we need to re-build that again, and re-build our usefulness to members. (interview, June 9, 2004).

This time, the planning team looked to see if a comparable arrangement existed in the development field. The nearest parallel was UNAIDS; hence, it was decided to make the project, both conceptually and structurally, more similar to this joint UN program. It was thought that this model would not just bring together the efforts of member agencies, but also attract the resources needed to pay the transaction costs associated with coordination. Most agreed the best way to achieve this goal was through horizontal forms of coordination based on member interests, which drew support from basic elements of new public management such as the desire for better information exchange as a basis for cooperation. “UNIAP was born out of the inter-agency working group so it should serve the group’s information needs or whatever the working group itself decides should be the priorities,” an informant rationalised (interview, July 23, 2004). In essence, and again following new public management orthodoxy, member agencies wanted to establish a policy/provider split, which would separate the steering functions of the member agencies from the service activities of the UNIAP. Instead of being a principal, then, the UNIAP would act as an agent – an agent whose services were those of coordination. From coordination by hierarchy, the UNIAP had fallen to coordination through what might be called low hierarchy. This was achieved by taking a service role, which seemed to supply neither authority nor the symbolic capital/power the UN agencies relied on to carry out their mandates.

### ***Becoming a service provider: Information and coordination as outputs***

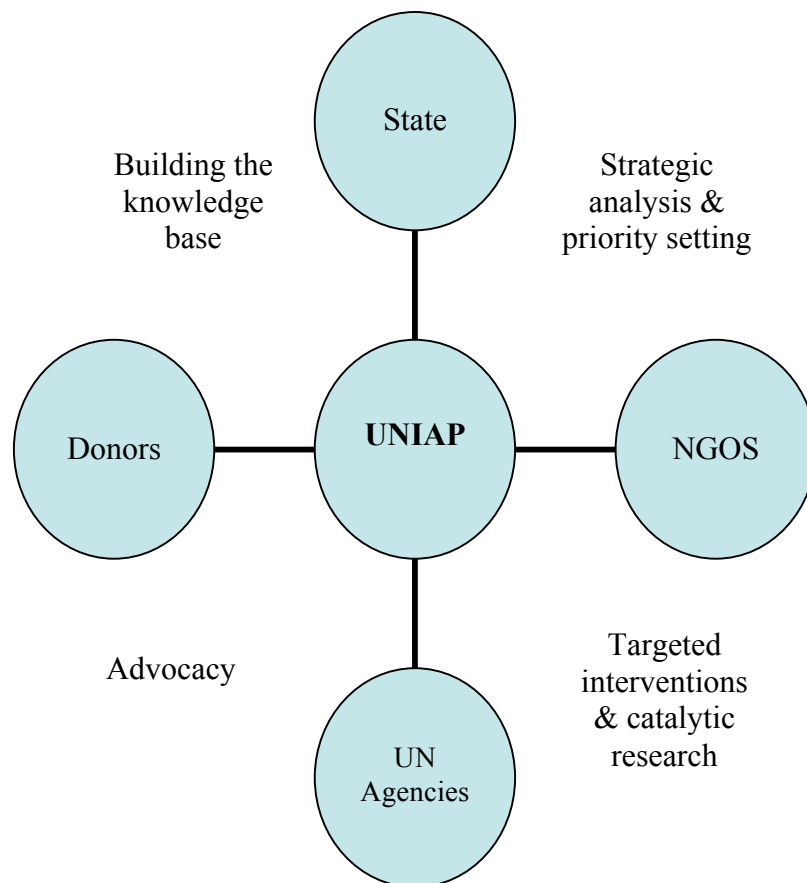
Meeting the existing information needs of members was just one output provided by the Phase II setup. Coordination itself would be defined in new public management terms as an output delivered by an agent. Instead of being an overarching hierarchically privileged mechanism, the project was now going to be a service provider to facilitate effective working relationships among agencies through horizontal and consensual coordination modalities (and forms of cultural and social capital) of better communication, information exchange, strategic analysis, mutual learning, and policy development (UNIAP, 2004). As suggested above, this arrangement was a radical departure for a UN project because coordination within the UN system typically occurs through top down governing structures such as the United Nations Resident Coordination (UNRC) system or the United Nations Development Group (UNDG). By contrast, the aim of Phase II was for the UNIAP to support and initiate programs, “then stepping back as our partners take them forward” (UNIAP website, 2007). Again, this mandate cast the project in a highly uncharacteristic role. Through this arrangement, the UNIAP was the agent while member agencies acted as multiple principals, even if their roles were not clearly defined. The project was given a basic mandate to provide assistance through better information. A key planning team member elaborated:

UNIAP should be a source of non-judgmental analysis of what is really happening. We should try to be better informed because many of these groups, including political moralists, come with very strong preconceptions. My mind is made up; don't confuse me with the facts! We should constantly be trying to know more about what is going on. (interview, June 3, 2004)

In habitus terms, the role had at least some familiarity. Jon Bennett (2000) observes that in the current institutional field of development, it is characteristic for field-based coordination bodies, at least in the NGO sector, to initially become service providers. With no hierarchical determination of power, authority comes from agencies that collectively have a vested interest

in using the body to further their projects and programs. This does not mean, Bennett continues, that there is no form of leadership or power dynamics in this type of arrangement. In the UNIAP case, most member agencies with whom I spoke, generally believed that “the UNIAP, as a *project*, should have some space to make their own decisions” (interview, June 11, 2004). Yet, there was also consensus that the UNIAP management team – because it was just an inter-agency *project* – should consult the core working group of UN agencies before making any final decisions on activities (interview, June 25, 2004). In this respect, member agencies could keep greater control over the project, and ensure they had the same, if not more, power in comparison to the UNIAP (see Figure 16).

Figure 16: UNIAP horizontal structure (Phase II)



Horizontal coordination mechanisms commonly assume one or more basic functions:

- a) member-oriented functions;
- b) information-oriented functions;
- and 3) task-oriented

functions (Van Brabant as cited in Strand, 2005). Under Phase II, the UNIAP would undertake all three functions. Meeting the needs of its member agencies, particularly through information exchanges and service provision, constituted a core part of the rejuvenated project, but so was the need to develop incentive-based strategies that built cooperation among agencies. For the first time, the UNIAP would be tacitly acknowledging that its coordination role would have to be based on a clear expression of the project's value added role, which was mobilisation of capital to promote the member agencies' interests. As one UNIAP official recognised:

Coordination is all about 'What's in it for me?' It is much better to say, 'We've got some areas where we want to coordinate, why don't you come in?' ...Coordination has to be issue or activity specific. They don't just coordinate out of the goodness of their heart; it is because they see that something would be better accomplished by working together. (interview, November 2, 2004)

Agencies are often cognisant of the contradiction, for example, between the language of partnership, coordination, and alignment and the institutional realities of funding. Donors still hold the symbolic power in the field, identifying specific areas or conditions for funding. This assertion of control over outputs has implications for coordination. Funding tied to short-term project approaches demanding quick, visible results is a practice that largely rejects viable forms of coordination. Agencies, therefore, might be committed to a coordinated or partnership approach, but at the same time, they are aware of their donor commitments, which are a reflection of hierarchical dependencies.

The ideas that were beginning to take shape brought Phase II into alignment with the recommendations from the mid-term evaluation, which stated the UNIAP should "play an advisory or consultative role," stressing again it was "a project and not a programmatic agency" (Caouette, 2002, p. 5). Moreover, the funding mechanism, which had established the UNIAP as a top down, hierarchical actor, but had thus put it in competition with other

member agencies, was dropped. “I don’t think the main advantage of a UN inter-agency project is helping individual people at the local level,” one UN member of the planning team conceded (interview, June 3, 2004). “Our particular advantage is our intergovernmental location and our very strong normative agenda. The inter-agency project can drive both, and promote UN values in terms of trafficking”.

The UNIAP was in fact tapping into something powerful, which was the wider UN system’s coordination mandate. As we saw in Chapter 4, this mandate is to promote cooperation among states in solving international problems and act as a centre for harmonising their actions. The strength in the UN system lies in its normative role, which stems from its intergovernmental nature, but also its function as an arena for facilitating regional and global frameworks of cooperation, conferences, international agreements, conventions, and treaties on internationally recognised problems (Müller. 2001). Thus, acting in a catalytic role, Phase II would focus on four components of service provision: (1) building the knowledge base; (2) strategic analysis and priority setting; (3) targeted interventions and catalytic research; and (4) advocacy (see Chapter 5).

### ***Restructuring the project: Shifting under the UN Resident Coordinator System***

Shifting the overall focus of the UNIAP was neither the only recommended change nor the most significant in terms of the project’s longer term trajectory. It was decided the entire project, along with country offices, had to be restructured. Under Phase I, such a modification was deemed too broad. As described previously, each of the countries had a different model in terms of where the project was based and how it was structured. Though technically under the auspices of the UN Resident Coordinator System, each country office had what was called a Principal Facilitating Agency (PFA). Here, the UNIAP staff tried to solve its principal-agent problem by establishing one of its UN members as a principal (as a PFA) in each of the countries (see Chapter 5). This left the partner agencies in control,

managing the processes of accumulation of capital, receiving the symbolic capital recognition, while nonetheless coordinated within a UNIAP context. The ILO was chosen as the PFA for Thailand and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was selected for Vietnam. The remaining countries – Cambodia, China, and Myanmar – were assigned to UNICEF. According to an UNDP semi-annual report, the role of the PFAs was to coordinate the planning and implementation of trafficking initiatives in their respective country-level groups (internal UNDP document, March 20, 2000). As one UNIAP professional explained:

In principle, it was supposed to nurture collaboration – owned by the UN system – and not one specific agency. Absolutely marvelous in theory, but in practice it provided a lot challenges many agencies were not prepared to take on. (interview, November 9, 2004).

The PFA model was embraced unevenly at the country level, creating unintended side effects (and counter coordination jealousies), which emerged when the PFA agents themselves blurred principal-agent roles, and became their own implementers of the UNIAP. Designated to take the lead, a few of the agencies assumed the role of subcontractors, implementing aspects of the project without the involvement of others. This meant, one UN official explained, “UNICEF or ILO took it and ran with it as one of their projects, which undermined the UN inter-agency nature,” as well as the “UNRC and the UN country team” (interview, June 3, 2004). Nearly everyone I spoke to thought the structure was ineffective.

As a solution, it was proposed to bring national level structures in line with regional level structures, and a long established mode of UN hierarchical coordination, which would allow country offices direct access to the UN Resident Coordinator. In truth, Phase I had always been under the United Nations Resident Coordinator (UNRC) system, but few member agencies knew this relationship due to other elements of the project’s original design.

The new arrangement would align the UNIAP both nationally and regionally with the existing UN structure, creating the potential to re-establish it as the principal actor for



coordination through the powerful mandate and auspices of the UN Resident Coordinator. On a theoretical level, however, it shows the planners' habitus had reverted to more engrained institutional dispositions in the UN structure, revealing once again the dynamic relationship between the habitus and the field. Since the mid 1970s, UNDP has been an important mechanism for coordination of operational activities at the country level (Klingebiel, 1999; see Chapter 4). Thus, for the UNIAP team, the shift made perfect sense. As one staff member explained, "there are six regional trafficking projects, but we have that linkage through the Resident Coordinator, which makes it a bit more punchy and powerful than the others" (interview, April 28, 2004). Another informant agreed by pointing out, "I think most of the drive has to come from the core project" (June 3, 2004). In the language of new public management, the Resident Coordinator gave the UNIAP the mandate and capacity to *steer*, a crucial variable missing from the Phase I.

The proposed arrangement, however, had at least three further implications. First, it would bring into question the whole nature and function of the project. This meant the UNIAP and member agencies would have to fulfil dual and potentially contradictory roles, as both principals and agents. Second, it pulled the UNIAP's national offices out of individual government ministries, with the exception of Myanmar office. From the start of Phase I, the Myanmar office was located within UNICEF. The main rationale for the pull out from five remaining governments was to give the UNIAP direct access to and influence over a wider range of ministries at the ministerial or permanent secretary levels. Many believed this was critical to achieve longer term institutional change in support of genuine coordination, collaboration, and information-sharing. The proposed plans, therefore, involved more than a simple shift back to the UNRC system; it meant a move out of government, which had profound implications not just for local ministry staff, but also in terms of an overall commitment to the project.

Third, because most national UNIAP coordinators were seconded from different government departments, and because they had multiple responsibilities, officials could dedicate only minimal attention to the project. The national project coordinator in Laos, for instance, was also the focal official for five other projects. Additional complications ensued when staff attempted to reach beyond their respective ministries, particularly to more powerful ones such as the Ministry of Interior, to facilitate cooperation. “Even if you are in a pretty good government department,” one UN official stated frankly, “you can be in the wrong one” (interview, June 3, 2004). These arguments – the lack of government capacity, competing priorities because of multiple focal points, the under-reach of weak ministries, and the desire to bring greater coherence – formed the rationale for the restructuring. Although the UNRC system was likely a better platform for the UNIAP, many, including some donors, did not look favourable upon the proposed shift.

***Facing resistance: Old habitus dies hard***

Much of the resistance centred on concerns about sustainability and ownership, two popular buzzwords in mainstream development thinking (see Cornwall & Brock, 2005). According to some informants, the new structure undermined the capacity of the state, which was an essential component in strengthening coordination at both national and regional levels. “The basic ingredient to successful development is national ownership,” one development professional claimed (interview, June 3, 2004). The project might be effective in the short term, but there was little chance at building long term coordination and cooperation mechanisms if the UNIAP was not anchored in the governments. These concerns began to discourage some of the donors who had expressed interest in offering financial support. By this time, however, the six governments had endorsed the transition and the process was already in motion, much to the dismay of one donor. “UNIAP has to understand development lingo. It is very clear [no one] has that development background,” the official stressed

(interview, September 22, 2004). When I raised this issue with a member of the UNIAP, she strongly criticised this logic:

There is such a simplistic international attitude about development ownership. You get these people who say it has to be placed in a ministry in order to demonstrate national ownership of a project. I don't understand what placing something in a national ministry means in terms of ownership. It means that you have signed up to provide a bunch of money to that particular ministry. You sign up to become a cash cow. Ninety percent of the projects after they run out of funding die right there. So is this building national ownership? (interview, November 2, 2004)

The above discussion illustrates what happens when two or more subfields – donor and UN systems – intersect. The result is what Bourdieu refers to as a “divided” or “torn” institutional habitus (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 127). On one side, the donors believed that government ownership and participation was of the utmost importance. “Governments are something we have to work with, not around!” one donor exclaimed in irritation (interview, September 22, 2004). On the other side, the UNIAP thought that the UNRC system was conceptually a stronger base, which would allow the project more access to different ministries and facilitate cooperation. There will be differences of opinion in development, which may emerge from a divided habitus; however, such debates become vacuous when power asymmetries exist. The UNIAP was still struggling for capital, having been unable to take advantage of funding from some of the other donors.

There was another reason for the opposition to the new structure, which was described by one UN official as “institutional chauvinism” (interview, June 3, 2004). Explaining further, the official contended that government ministries derive benefit from development projects. Access to a car, affiliation with the UN system, and salary supplements are valuable forms of capital that make governments and their officials reluctant to relinquish control. In some of the interviews, it was apparent there was lingering resentment. As one government official told me bluntly, “now, I get nothing!” (interview, June 29, 2004). Whether the

surrender of the UNIAP to the UNRC at the national level represented a genuine concern for the health of the project or the retention of a sinecure is debatable. Despite resistance to the plan, the matter was not going to be discussed further. As one UN professional put it, now “it is the right design. It was the wrong design the first time around” (interview, June 3, 2004).

### *A hybrid mix: Phase II emerges*

The restructuring plan produced certain tensions, but by the end of the transition period, the planning team believed that compared to Phase I, they were “more focused now in Phase II” (interview, November 9, 2004). Another UNIAP staff member agreed by saying, “Phase II for me is like a roadmap, which is not an easy one but at least it provides structure based on our actual power rather than a perceived power” (interview, June 9, 2004). Thus, with the new ‘roadmap’ finalised, the final critical issue was to mobilise resources.

A suitable candidate was needed for the post of project manager. There was a strong group of candidates, and the hiring committee struggled over the qualities the person should possess. “Do we need a centre fielder or a figure skater?” one member of the hiring team explained (interview, June 24, 2004). Different candidates brought different characteristics, but who would be the best person to overcome the bureaucratic and political obstacles the first Phase had encountered? The final choice – an applicant with a strong NGO habitus – was somewhat surprising, even to the candidate himself.

I was expecting that there was going to be some UN insider lined up to get it, but I guess people watched [the former manager] pain for so many years that they decided to leave it alone. To his credit, [the former manager] cleared out a lot of the underbrush, moving the project out of the ministries and into the UN Resident Coordinator’s office. It seems to me that for all the discussion about how a UN inter-agency project [should be], *there was a whole bunch of things that the originators of this thing didn’t in the slightest anticipate.* (interview, November 2, 2004)

With the transition phase ending, Phase II was ready to begin, even though the project had no funding. Donors had expressed interest in the reinvigorated project, but the UNIAP

found that most of the available funding was earmarked for projects delivering direct outputs at the country level. “Donor agencies give priority to funding direct action and lack possibilities to fund regional projects and/or indirect technical support intended to enhance the effectiveness of the direct action,” one internal donor assessment memo affirmed (internal communication, April 27, 2004, p. 17). As a result, a limited number of donors had small amounts of short term funding available for regional project arrangements such as the UNIAP. It would be mid-2004 before the project was able to obtain full funding for Phase II. But as the next chapter shows, the UNIAP was working on an initiative that was not originally included in the Phase II project document. The Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking, or the COMMIT process, would finally endow UNIAP with the legitimacy and influence it needed to steer as well as the capacity to mobilise further resources over the next Phase.

### ***Conclusion***

Phase II brought about major changes in both the structural design and proposed program areas and objectives, largely as a result of anticipated consequences during Phase I. By the end of Phase I, the planning team realised they were in an impossible situation. The hierarchical coordination mandate it was supposed to implement was beyond the power of the project. Conceived and planned in Phase I as an overarching coordination mechanism of anti-trafficking initiatives in the Greater Mekong Subregion, it proceeded on the assumption member agencies were capable of coordination, but it transpired that they were unwilling to cede power, capital, and individual interests in reaching a common goal. For this reason, it was understandable that the habitus based practical logics of the planning team led them to believe that a hierarchical arrangement was most appropriate. It was assumed the project would, like other UN agencies, be able to act as a principal, setting the rules for the agents, holding them accountable, and directing funds to the agents, including both NGOs and UN

agencies through contractual arrangements. Clearly, however, it could not because it controlled none of the forms of capital needed for such a role. The capital it did possess was limited. Here we see how habitus, as Bourdieu (2000) succinctly states, “is nothing other than a specific mode of thought” (p. 99)

Although this rationale initially made sense, it became evident as Phase I unfolded that coordination (or even cooperation, for that matter) was not well integrated into their shared institutional habitus. Having an appropriate habitus is a precondition for effective coordination, and any effort to orchestrate cooperative action “has to reckon with the dialectic of dispositions” (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 59). Although shared values (the *illusio*) – belief in the fight against human trafficking – acted as the foundation for collaborative relationships, the individual habitus of the different agents cannot be dismissed.

Despite being favourably inclined towards collaboration, factors including organisational pressures to meet project outcomes and outputs, donor driven agendas, and the need to secure adequate funding and mobilise other *resources/capital* all give rise to individualistic strategies that establish various competitive advantages in the field, but which may hinder the undertaking of cooperative practices.

The UNIAP was itself trying to do just this, but without resources, while trying to coordinate in good UN hierarchical manner. As Bourdieu reminds us, the categories of knowledge and perceptions inscribed in the habitus are “themselves largely determined by the social and economic conditions of their constitution” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 136). Put differently, the habitus develops through continuous struggles to acquire and secure different kinds of capital; however, in serving its own interests, the UNIAP was able to exercise only minimal influence, power, and authority over member agencies, which encumbered its ability to perform as an effective coordinating body. In Phase II, thus, there was an effort to wipe the slate clean by restructuring the project, but those involved in the

reform of the UNIAP for this phase later reverted to the schemes, skill-sets, and modalities drawn from their institutional habitus and the field.

As this chapter has highlighted, the “feel for the game and the game itself”, is not infallible, especially in new contexts where the real game is different from the one imagined (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 151). It has the ability to produce an infinite number of thoughts, perceptions, schemes, and actions, but it is limited by the historical and social conditions of its production (Bourdieu 1990a, p. 55). It does not present people with ‘ready-made’ or ‘fixed’ solutions to challenging situations (Weiss, 2003). Furthermore, Bourdieu (2000) maintains the “habitus is not necessarily adapted to its situation nor necessarily coherent” (p. 160). It continuously changes (within limits) in reaction to new situations, which suggests that the habitus can be “torn by contradiction and internal division” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 160). Perhaps the most important point in this discussion is that “dispositions are subject to a kind of permanent revision, but one which is never radical, *because it works on the basis of the premises established the previous state*” (emphasis added, p. 161). Put differently, the habitus constantly changes, but it evolves in a path dependent way that replicates the structure of the field.

Development coordination is often an attempt to regulate its fragmented, competitive environment (Bennett, 2000). If we follow Bourdieu’s thinking, it can be argued that most of the project’s activities or initiatives were implemented by project staff that had a conflicted habitus, torn between institutional dispositions and cooperative dispositions. Indeed, as this chapter has shown, development practitioners were more comfortable following the schemes of their institutional habitus, which, in turn, embodied the core aspects of new public management (project modalities, competitive, short term contracts, output driven processes, etc) in line with the field’s structure. The following comment from a UN practitioner, quoted above, is worth repeating:

We are paid to deliver certain outputs at a certain point in time. I think there is a lot of insecurity in tenure as well. Most of us in this work on trafficking are all temporary. People move in and out. Because we deal with projects, we're trying to raise funds, we're trying to deliver. People have projects up to the next year. So what do they spend their time on? They are going to spend their time trying to do some more project documents to support the next project. It becomes like a job creation agency. (interview, July 13, 2004)

The idea of coordination, particularly when led through a development project, runs against the grain of the field as well as the habitus of the practitioners. New public management emphasis on performance and results-based management tools means objectives, indicators, inputs, and the expected outcomes are determined during the project or program design phase, with little consideration given to what might be other essential elements or qualities of the coordination processes. Under pressure to meet these outcomes in a timely fashion, practitioners become involved in coordination processes if it is the most efficient means to fulfill their projects or produce program results. Otherwise, from these agencies point of view, cooperation can be seen as inefficient, drawing on staff time and other forms of capital agencies are not willing, or able, to spare.

In the case of the UNIAP, existing narrow, vertical accountabilities, measured in terms of inputs/outputs rather than on results or impacts remained intact, and member agencies remained accountable to their respective organisational program donors, thus undermining wider accountability and ability to commit to the UNIAP or other members' agendas. Designed as a project in the context of a complex and fragmented field, the UNIAP was flawed from the beginning. Projects, in these situations, can only aggravate coordination problems, drawing attention to competitive aspects latent in the field, and offering only narrow bases for moving beyond them. What is more, long term institutional change in the direction of established coordination is almost impossible to accomplish using short term project modalities, particularly when faced with consistent funding problems. During Phase I,



the UNIAP was not equipped to resolve these transaction costs or deal with the complexities embedded within the field. Furthermore, the institutional habitus of the donor organisations themselves proved to be a powerful organising factor.

But the situation is more complicated than described so far. What this chapter makes clear is that practitioners must have the ‘right’ dispositions integrated in their habitus, as well as the ‘right’ amount of capital, particularly economic capital. In Phase I, the UNIAP was severely constrained by its lack of capital – economic, informational, symbolic, or otherwise – and was left to struggle, largely on its own, for its survival. Out of necessity, the project became a competitor against its member agencies, suggesting its decisions developed in a path dependent fashion orchestrated through the interaction of the habitus and the field.

After encountering a number of political and bureaucratic obstacles in Phase I, the UNIAP staff decided the best strategy was to redesign the project. Most thought the decision to bring the entire project under the UN Resident Coordinator system was a key reform, which would give the UNIAP more of the (hierarchical) mandate and legitimacy it lacked, but needed, for coordination. As well, the shift was intended to expand the scope of the project, conferring more power onto the UNIAP to work with a wider range of government ministries. The project planners also realised that modes of governance, which refer to the forms of coordination (vertical vs. horizontal), were important. The traditional principal-agent framework, which was based on a combination of market and mandated hierarchical modes of governance, had its limitations. In this context, it failed to balance the high transaction costs tied to coordination with adequate incentives. Only after the first Phase terminated did the UNIAP management team realise that the problems associated with Phase I stemmed from what Bourdieu (1984) refers to as “the structural mismatch between aspirations and real probabilities” (p. 144). Systematic coordination was a deliverable that was beyond the reach of the project. However, it was possible to restructure the project in such as way that

maximised the self-interest of member agencies in a field rife with competition. As a result, UNIAP was conceived in Phase II of the UNIAP as a service provider.

In the eyes of the planning team, the UNIAP, through vertical direction and control, would create networks for its member agencies to access and exchange different types of capital. For Bourdieu (1986), these institutionalised relationships or networks represent social capital. But given their perceptions, would member agencies continue to see the UNIAP as just another competitor in the human trafficking field? As Ferguson (1990) aptly notes, “pointing out errors and suggesting improvements is an integral part of the process of justifying and legitimating ‘development’ interventions. Such an activity may indeed have some beneficial or mitigating effects, but it does not change the fundamental character of those interventions” (p. 285). Clearly defined as a service provider, Phase II set out to support closer, more effective working relationships through better communication, information exchanges, and strategic analysis. In the next chapter, I explore the extent to which the UNIAP was able to implement what it was designed to accomplish, particularly in terms of its role as Secretariat for COMMIT, a process that would combine the efforts and resources of member agencies and governments to combat human trafficking at the regional level.

## Chapter 7

### Phase II and the COMMIT Process: Reckoning with the realities of the field

The COMMIT Process is an extraordinary example of the cooperation and coordination between countries in the Greater Mekong Sub-region, UN agencies, non-governmental organizations and international organizations. ...For the first time ever, a Sub-regional agreement, the outcome of high-level policy discussions, is about to be signed which combines a multi-sectoral approach, with a strong targeted regional focus. ~ Excerpt of remarks by Mr. Charles Petrie, United Nations Resident Coordinator at the opening of the COMMIT Ministerial Meeting on October 29, 2004 in Yangon, Myanmar

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On October 29, 2004, the six governments that comprise the Greater Mekong Subregion – Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam – endorsed the first regional Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on human trafficking in the Asia-Pacific as part of the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking, or the COMMIT process. As cameras flashed, six ministerial representatives simultaneously signed the agreement affirming their political intentions to jointly address this serious concern. After months of intense preparations, it was a major achievement for the governments and the United Nations Inter-Agency Project (UNIAP). The signing ceremony carried great symbolic importance; consequently, it marked a critical juncture for the project.<sup>72</sup> Not only did the COMMIT process, which included a Subregional Action Plan, institute the regional *overarching* coordination mechanism envisaged by the original planning team who first designed the UNIAP initiative (internal Phase III Project Document, 2006, p. 1), it also created a platform to foster collaboration and resource mobilisation among governments, international and national human trafficking agencies, and donors. In doing so, the UNIAP

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<sup>72</sup> See chapter three for critical junctures in the new institutionalism literature.

established control over both the process of combating human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion and the field's resources, which gave the project a large concentration of *symbolic power*. More important, COMMIT conferred legitimation and recognition, which Bourdieu refers to as *symbolic capital*, upon the UNIAP because its member agencies, including the six governments, gave prominence to the process. However, getting to this stage proved more difficult than one might have expected, as we began to see in the previous chapter.

This chapter describes how, during Phase II, through the COMMIT process, the UNIAP emerged from a series of weaknesses and failings to become the Secretariat of the sole regional platform for combating human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion, attracting the technical expertise (human capital) and financial support (economic capital) of UN agencies, intergovernmental organisations, bilateral donors, and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs). From the beginning of the project in 2000, most governments, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), and UN agencies expressed confusion, not just about the UNIAP's purpose, but also about its value-added status. As we saw in Chapter 6, in Phase II (December 2003 – June 2006), the UNIAP was redesigned as a *service provider*, a modification that continued to present challenges and uncertainties. Intent on changing the nature of the project, the UNIAP would not come into its own as a central player in the human trafficking field until the COMMIT process was well underway. To understand how this process unfolded, it is useful to divide Phase II into three stages. The first stage (December 2003 – July 2004), the start of Phase II, was a period of transition that involved the reconstitution of the project's identity and its relationship with member agencies. Much like the struggles seen in the first Phase, translating the abstract concept of being a service provider into some form of practical understanding and action proved equally problematic.

As a result, the way the project was portrayed differed from the way it was perceived by member agencies.

The second stage represents the period leading up the first Senior Officials Meeting (SOM I) held in Bangkok in July 2004. Although COMMIT was not envisioned in the initial Phase II project document, the process came to dominate the UNIAP's focus. But as this chapter will illustrate, this stage also represented a period of uncertainty. Although the COMMIT process was clearly appropriate for the mandate of the UNIAP, some member agencies regarded it as an attempt to further solely the interests of the project. Most were unclear about their roles in the process, and therefore expressed apprehension about the project's new direction. What is more, for reasons that will be revealed later, restrictions were placed on who could participate in the first SOM, and because of these restrictions, some members felt excluded from the process. At the time, it was perceived that the UNIAP wanted its member agencies to support the COMMIT process financially, but not participate in other ways. On this basis, member agencies were often less than fulsome in their commitment and support.

The third stage (August 2004 – October 2004) encompasses the preparations for the second SOM prior to the Inter-Ministerial meeting where the MOU was signed. The three-day event, in which the signing ceremony was the penultimate moment, equipped the UNIAP with the means to attain the legitimacy and recognition it had sought from governments, UN agencies, and even NGOs in order to be an important player in the field. "Because of COMMIT", one development practitioner recently commented, "UNIAP is now possibly the most well known project in the region" (interview, August 23, 2007). Only through the COMMIT process was the project able to resolve the uncertainties that persisted from its previous phase. The critical question, then, is why was COMMIT the process that worked? Although there were several reasons why it was a success, what an analysis of COMMIT

exemplifies is the centrality and importance of material and symbolic resource mobilisation and exchange in the development field.

The UNIAP succeeded because it established a platform for what Bourdieu (1990) recognised as the exchange of various forms of capital – an “operation of alchemy” through which the sacrifice of economic and human capital was not lost, but transformed into the most sought after form of capital, symbolic capital (p. 125). Bourdieu (2000) writes, “one of the most unequal of all distributions, and probably, in any case, the most cruel, is the distribution of symbolic capital, that is, of social importance and reasons for living” (p. 241). Interestingly, this alchemic process of transformation occurred not just for the UNIAP, but for all those involved.

### ***Structure and argument of this chapter***

The purpose of this chapter is to present the story of Phase II and the evolution of the COMMIT process through these three, distinct, but overlapping stages. It is important to stress that my research was carried out over a ten-month period from the beginning of March to the end of December 2004; hence, the stages correspond to this specific period. Phase II continued for a year and a half after I left the field. Nevertheless, the division of Phase II into three distinct stages still proves useful for this analysis. Gradually, over these stages, we will see that the UNIAP – through the COMMIT process – became not so much a service provider as a platform for the mobilisation and exchange of resources or capital, to use Bourdieu’s term (Bourdieu 1986, also see Chapter 2).<sup>73</sup> In the development field, resources are crucial building blocks. To understand why development practitioners cooperate (as well as compete), we need to have a better understanding of the different forms of capital that are valued and exchanged in the field. As this chapter will show, it is the drive to accumulate resources that motivates and shapes both cooperative and competitive behaviour as well as the

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<sup>73</sup> The term ‘capital’ and ‘resources’ are used interchangeably.

strategies of practitioners in the field. One of the reasons why member agencies came to support COMMIT was because they were able to capitalise on the actual and potential resources embedded within the process to further their own programs and organisations. Of course, there are other, more altruistic, motivations for cooperation, such as the desire to prevent duplication or to increase efficiency, but I argue that the desire for capital is more of a factor in shaping cooperative and competitive patterns of behaviour.

This chapter makes an important contribution to my argument that the wider institutional field of development (see Chapter 4) has changed dramatically in recent decades. In the context of neoliberal marketisation policies and new public management reforms, concerns with efficiency and effectiveness resulted in an increasing focus on outputs, results, and fiscal responsibility in development programs and projects, which has encouraged rivalry and competition within the ‘aid market’ even as collaborative agendas have become essential. Dichter (2003) argues that the field is now a “global ‘marketplace’” in which funding has become “the driver rather the fuel” for development agencies (p. 194, 291). Indeed, most development practitioners would be able to recount firsthand the economic constraints agencies continuously face. Yet, other kinds of capital, in addition to economic capital, are equally valued and coveted by development agencies. Legitimation, recognition, and reputation – *symbolic capital* – is arguably the most important form of capital (see Ebrahim, 2005). Put simply, symbolic capital, according to Bourdieu (1991) is “the *recognition*, institutionalized or not, that [is] receive[d] from a group” (p. 72).

As this chapter will illustrate, other forms of capital, such as the flow of information (informational capital), skills and expertise (cultural/human capital), and connections/relationships with people, groups or networks (social capital) are important in the development field. The key point here, as Bourdieu (2000) writes elsewhere, is that “every kind of capital (economic, cultural, social) tends (to different degrees) to function as symbolic

capital” (p. 242). Different forms of capital are converted or transformed into symbolic capital when the habitus of an agent perceives it as important, suggesting that different forms of capital are field specific. That said, a level playing field with an equal distribution of capital among agents does not exist:

When powers are unequally distributed, the economic and social world presents itself not as a universe of possibles equally accessible to every possible subject – posts to be occupied, courses to be taken, markets to be won, goods to be consumed, properties to be exchanged – but rather as a signposted universe, full of injunctions and prohibitions, signs of appropriation and exclusion, obligatory routes or impassable barriers, and in a word, profoundly differentiated. (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 225)

Conflicts, therefore, are rooted - at least partly - in a development practitioner’s awareness of how his/her agency’s share of resources measures up against another agency’s share (Couldry, 2005). For these reasons, “the whole international aid circuit becomes a force to reckon with when it comes to collaboration. It creates tension between agencies,” one person responded aptly concluded (interview, August, 24, 2004). The accumulation of capital is critical, but so is the protection of one’s autonomy and reputation, which agencies rely upon as a resource.

There is a growing literature in development, mainly focused on NGOs, that acknowledges the importance of the fiscal, material, and strategic interests in motivating behaviour of organisations in this increasingly competitive and interdependent environment (e.g. Cooley & Ron, 2002; Ebrahim, 2005; Farrington & Lewis, 1993; Pishchikova, 2006; Siméant, 2005). “To survive in a competitive world,” Ron and Cooley (2002) purport, organisations “must justify their existence to donors, secure new contracts, and fend off competitors” (pp. 38-39). Consequently, development organisations are continuously engaged in struggles over resources (Ebrahim, 2005), which suggests competition is the intrinsic motivation. The pervasiveness of this competition and conflict among development agencies over different kinds of capital will emerge in this chapter. Although inter-organisational competitiveness is a central tenet of new public management (Moore, 2000),



this chapter also will show that the *desire to mobilise and exchange different forms of capital can serve as a basis for cooperation*. As others have argued, cooperation may be used as a competitive strategy (e.g. Gibbons, Limoges, Nowotny, Schwartzman, Scott, & Trow, 1994; Hewitt, 2000).

It is important to note that the basis of these strategies – both competitive and cooperative – is power, or what Bourdieu refers to as symbolic power. According to Bourdieu (1986), the distribution of capital is a major determinant of ‘success’ in a particular field because capital is the source of power. Symbolic power, he argues, is defined in terms of the nature and amount of accumulated capital, principally symbolic capital, an individual or organisation has (Bourdieu, 1986; 1989). Conversely, the more power agencies have, the greater chance there is to accumulate additional forms of capital. Symbolic power legitimises existing relations in the field because it is defined by those who exercise it and those who are subjected to it (Bourdieu, 1977b). In other words, symbolic power lies “in the very structure of the field” (p. 117).

Brinkerhoff (2002a) points out development agencies operate in complex environments where power dynamics are constantly changing. These tendencies result in both cooperative and competitive strategies, which are, in turn, driven by their reliance on resources. The human trafficking agencies working in the Greater Mekong Subregion are no exception. Thus, in the final analysis, this chapter will show that the institutional structure of the field, through isomorphic pressures, ultimately set the path the UNIAP would take. As a project under the United Nations Resident Coordinator (UNRC) system, the UNIAP was not able to be a service provider. According to its Charter, one of the main responsibilities of the United Nations (UN) is to promote multilateral responses to national, regional, and international problems based on the national interests of member states. In this respect, the COMMIT process was perfectly aligned, not just with the structure of the UN system, but also

the structure of the development field in terms of its ability to provide a platform for the mobilisation and exchange of resources or capital.

### **Stage I: The reinvention of the UNIAP**

#### ***From overarching mechanism to service provider***

My arrival at the UNIAP regional project management office in Bangkok in March 2004 caused uneasiness among staff. I learned later that much of this dissonance related to uncertainties inherent in the project. Phase II of the UNIAP began in January 2004 as the culmination of lessons learnt from the implementation of the previous phase. Unlike other human trafficking projects in the region, the UNIAP was no longer situated within specific government ministries at the national level. The entire project, including its country offices, had moved under the auspices of the UNRC, and it was now managed and staffed (except for China) with full time national project coordinators and assistants. At the regional level, the project management office also had significantly more staff support. In Phase I, the former manager, for the most part, had run the project himself with the help of an administrative assistant, junior professional officer (JPO), and the national country offices. When the new project manager for Phase II assumed the position in the third week of January, five key staff members, including a deputy manager, were already in place. Compared to Phase I, these were significant shifts (see Chapter 6). Equally important, the role and focus of the project changed.

The midterm evaluation report recommended that the UNIAP “build on its existing coordinating role” in Phase II, which according to the evaluation, meant a new approach centered around “the strategic use of resources” (p. 23). Rather than being an overarching mechanism, the project would now operate as a service provider to its member agencies. It would act as a catalyst for collaborative relationships, generating opportunities for counter trafficking agencies to enhance their initiatives, generate new knowledge about human

trafficking, and gain access to different resources. Combing through the large black binders that lined the shelves of the small UNIAP office in Bangkok for information on the project, I felt somewhat bewildered about what this all meant. However, I soon learned that I was not the only one who was having difficulties understanding what Phase II was about. In addition to the new regional project manager, four of the six country offices had new project coordinators (except Cambodia and China). In this regard, Phase II resembled Phase I in that most staff members were starting new positions; everyone faced uncertainties, which they dealt with through their existing, but insufficient, shared habitus. When I asked one coordinator to reflect on her first eight months with the project, she recalled, “I mentioned that other people might get confused about what roles UNIAP play, I was confused! Really very confused, and I asked myself everyday what I was doing” (interview, September 20, 2004). It seemed everyone I spoke with from the UNIAP was struggling to articulate what service provision work entailed.

***The Phase II orientation retreat: Who we are and who we are not***

In the first week of May 2004, an orientation retreat was held in Bangkok to ensure both new and old staff understood, as the deputy project manager put it, “who we are” and “who we are not” (field notes, May 3, 2004). But with the project failing to attract the funds needed for its second Phase, the task was certain to be challenging. Financial uncertainties, or the lack of economic capital, were beginning to undermine the potential for any resemblance of a fresh start for the project. “There is very little for an organisation that comes with no money, but technical expertise,” one UN member commented (interview, September 20, 2004). Approximately \$1.5 million dollars had to be raised if Phase II was to continue.

However, the donors who were dedicated to combating trafficking had already committed funds to other large projects in the region.<sup>74</sup>

Tensions mounted towards the end of Phase I between UNIAP and some of the larger UN members who had received substantial funding in trafficking related areas. Although sympathetic to the project's conundrum, most indicated they could not assist the project in this time of crisis because of funding conditionalities. Offering financial assistance to the UNIAP was possible if the economic capital went to support its activities, that is, its new public management style outputs, but not the institutional core costs of the project for coordination. Consequently, the UNIAP was faced with identifying non-traditional donors to the human trafficking sector. But, as I noted in the previous chapter, most donors expressed concerns about supporting a project of this nature. "UNIAP is a unique animal," one practitioner explained, making the inter-agency project a hard sell politically in part because of the new public management focus on results, not processes (interview, April 28, 2004). Another agreed. "It is not like a Minister will come through, visit UNIAP, be overcome with emotion, and pledge five million!" (email, August 9, 2006).

On the third day of the retreat, it was announced that the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) had decided to provide support for the three-year period of Phase II, on the condition that the management team develop a credible strategy regarding government ownership and participation. Even though the difficulties associated with the coordination of a complex regional issue such as human trafficking were recognised, SIDA was not pleased that the UNIAP had pulled out of government ministries. Exerting their influence, the official written decision from the Embassy of Sweden in Bangkok stated that by the end of the project, each government should be in a position "to take responsibility for the national inter-agency committees, and thus coordination of the various anti-trafficking actors

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<sup>74</sup> The following discussion is based on an interview follow-up with an informant via email in August 2006.

in each country” (internal SIDA document, April 27, 2004). “Otherwise,” the regional donor representative added, “we will not pay the money next year” (interview, September 22, 2004). Shortly after this ultimatum, the UNIAP devised a ten-page sustainability and ownership strategy outlining its engagement with governments to prove the UNIAP is “pro-active in pushing this plan to build true national ownership of anti-trafficking efforts” (email, April 24, 2004). Fortunately, the COMMIT process was underway at this stage; hence, it could represent the core of the government ownership and participation strategy. COMMIT, the project manager stressed at the orientation retreat, was an initiative of the Greater Mekong Subregion governments themselves. But, in this first stage, however, the UNIAP was still attempting to define itself as a service provider to the anti-trafficking community.

The first day of the retreat was spent discussing the continuities and changes from Phase I to Phase II, but also the realities of what it meant to be an inter-agency project. It was stressed by deputy project manager that the UNIAP is neither an agency nor a project of one particular agency, but a project of the UN system (field notes, May 3, 2004). There had been tough times in Phase I, but it was thought that Phase II could overcome the barriers to cooperation through its new focus on service provision. After some debate, the group decided that service delivery work implied better support to member agencies through communication and information, in addition to advocacy work and task orientation to deliver outputs in a timely manner (field notes, May 3, 2004). These thoughts were summed up succinctly on the UNIAP website:

As a service provider, UNIAP provides a platform for action on trafficking. The approach in supporting and initiating programs and then stepping back as our partners take them forward, ensures that full-scale responses to trafficking are implemented by those best placed to do so. In short, UNIAP facilitates closer, more effective working relationships, and act as a catalyst for these relationships to translate into action.

The project would then ‘step forward’ to work with its member agencies through a partnership approach (field notes, May 3, 2004). “We have lots of internal expertise, but human trafficking is a fluid and changing problem,” one UNIAP staff member reminded participants at the orientation retreat. “Our partners expect UNIAP staff to be the experts, informed of what is going on” (field notes, May 3, 2004). Yet, some UNIAP staff members I spoke with were sceptical, as one participant suggested:

We want to see ourselves as the vanguard on research and analysis, but other people don’t necessarily think we are better positioned to do that than anyone else. I think everyone would like to see themselves as the brains on trafficking. We are all a bit like that. We all want to take credit for things like that. (interview, April 28, 2004)

Although the retreat had been beneficial, most staff members still felt uncertain about the service provider role. One reason was that it was not clear what sort of authority the project had over its member agencies. As a project with a coordination mandate, was the UNIAP supposed to direct its member agencies in terms of collective priority setting and implementation of strategies to ensure these activities filled existing gaps? Or, was the UNIAP simply a convener, to act as a catalyst for collaboration, leaving agencies at their discretion to use the project as a network for social capital building?

### ***Different forms of capital: What really mattered***

In this section, we will see how various stakeholders in and around the UNIAP recognised (and misrecognised) certain forms of capital as the major incentive for coordination and the basis of the project. Motivated by self-interest, struggles intensified as the agencies attempted to determine the “exchange rate between the different kinds of capital” (Bourdieu, 1998a, p. 34). This, in turn, was dependent on the possible basis for legitimation, or put differently, maximising the highest symbolic return from the other forms of capital contributed to the COMMIT process.

A month after the orientation retreat, I sat down over coffee with one of the regional UNIAP staff members to discuss how the idea of service provision was translating into action. “It is a tough role to play for us,” the person commented. “We are supposed to be providing services to all the agencies, supporting them, working on gaps and overlaps, but it is really hard when you don’t have any power behind you to tell people what to do,” (interview, June 9, 2004). “So, what would you say if one of your member agencies asked what UNIAP was doing at the moment,” I queried. The person responded:

A good proportion of our time is spent on developing the website and doing the mapping exercise, like an actual matrix of human trafficking specific to the GMS. We hope to be the ‘one-stop-shop’ for information on trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion. COMMIT is consuming a lot of our time. The countries are coming together and forming their task forces, doing background papers on where they stand on trafficking. Part of our time is spent on developing a training course on trafficking, which will hopefully be picked up and taught. What else can I say? Bringing people together for the working committees and the working group meeting, providing venues for people to come together and exchange information. (interview, June 9, 2004).

Providing support and offering services to its member agencies was proving to be challenging for the UNIAP. It was clear that to be successful, the project have to offer something of value to its member agencies beyond information capital. But it was working against other powerful agencies in the region. Playing the game with just one or two kinds of capital (information and social), the project was struggling to stake out its comparative advantage in the field.

Situated under the auspices of the UNRC system, the project’s activities largely depended on its convening role, which left few options other than organising meetings. As such, the UNIAP had relatively little intrinsic value to its member agencies other than as a means for self-promotion, networking, and information management. Reflecting upon the regional inter-agency meetings held approximately four times a year in Bangkok, one UN

professional commented, “most people come to either to sell their own goods, or explain what they are doing, or to keep a watchful eye on everyone else rather than with real concern about what the inter-agency project *should* be doing” (interview, June 3, 2004).<sup>75</sup> As part of the 1997 reform agenda to bring system wide coherence and coordination, principally among the operational agencies at the country level, the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) was created. Theme groups became important tools for information-sharing under the Common Country Assessments (CCA) and the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF).<sup>76</sup> Yet, once again, the issue of transaction costs, in terms of wasted time, surfaced, expressed as follows:

Everybody has limited resources, so nobody wants to do the same stuff as other agencies. We don’t want to duplicate that work. People want to be efficient or effective, that kind of attitude enhances or facilitates inter-agency collaboration. But it is a double-edge sword, it can double the work because collaboration takes time. Information sharing takes time, and sometimes attending meetings doesn’t add value to your work. (interview, June 11, 2004).

Another UN professional, who had extensive experience working with coordinating bodies, agreed. Discussing some of the frustrations in dealing with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), the person commented,

They are trying to coordinate us, but they don’t have implementing capacity themselves. So in the end, it’s like “Why do we have to keep reporting to OCHA? Why can’t we just get on with our program? What’s the value added? It becomes frustrating for the agencies involved because they don’t see what they are getting out of it. Coordinating mechanisms need to offer the agencies something as well. What they do is they gather all the information on what the agencies are doing and then go

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<sup>75</sup> These meetings were largely attended by UN agencies and donor representatives, although at times there was a relatively strong NGO presence. Government officials were never invited. Inter-agency meetings were also held in each of the six countries at the national level. Meetings, however, were sporadic in some countries (i.e. China, Vietnam).

<sup>76</sup> For more information, see <http://un.intnet.mu/rc/unreform.htm> or [www.undg.org](http://www.undg.org)



out and present it to the world coming from them, taking away the individual voices of the different agencies. The agencies say, “We could have done that ourselves! We would have gotten the credit for it being our work!” (Interview, August 25, 2004)

These comments capture how several member agencies perceived the UNIAP. Chaired by the Resident Coordinator himself, the regional inter-agency meeting offered a low level of symbolic capital: exchanging knowledge with other human trafficking practitioners, being recognised for doing something valuable in the field, receiving legitimation from the UN Resident Coordinator who represents the top UN official at the field level, and perhaps access to opportunities for sharing economic or cultural capital for joint activities. Predominantly though, it was a chance for member agencies to showcase achievements, which were a reflection of the other forms of capital the agencies’ possessed. After attending a couple of these meetings, it became clear which agencies held the existing symbolic capital, and hence the concentration of symbolic power. The prominent voices – International Labour Organisation (ILO), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Economic, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) – were the biggest regional players in the human trafficking field. Their assertions were taken more seriously and given more legitimation.

Other agencies, particularly the smaller, less powerful ones such as the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM), saw that the meetings offered an opportunity to amass and exchange (or obtain legitimation through contributing to/building/giving/receiving) a different kind of capital – social capital – intrinsically built into the structure of the human trafficking field. Social capital, for Bourdieu, is accrued through a practitioner’s network of relationships. The UNIAP’s value in this regard was highlighted by a staff member, who said:

One of its strengths is to be able to draw on the resources – when I say resources it could mean material or non-material resources – of other agencies. It has set itself up as a strategic hub within the UN system. I think that is a big strength of the UNIAP. (interview, September 20, 2004)

Another UN professional affiliated with one of the smaller UN agencies concurred. “If we wanted to access a network of people working on trafficking we could immediately. They’ve created a network for other people to use,” she said in an interview (July 7, 2004). Although informational capital and social capital are inextricably linked, sharing information represents a low level form of coordination (see Chapter 6: Figure 13). Social capital, on the other hand, offers a stronger basis for coordination, a point made here:

At the UNIAP meetings, there are new people who come, and some come more often than others, but there is a core group of people who haven’t changed since the beginning of the project. That’s very important. When [my colleague], for example, found these groups of Wa girls from China that had been sitting in Baan Kredtakarn for nine months trying to get home, she knew who to call at the IOM to make sure they hadn’t fallen through the cracks. (interview, June 24, 2004)<sup>77</sup>

The UN representative, able to speak their dialect, worked together with the IOM to collectively pool the resources of their organisations and repatriate the girls.

As shown in the above quote, social capital is defined in terms of the benefits gained from participating in a network or group, and it illustrates how social capital is transformed into symbolic capital. What is interesting about notions of cooperation is how they are often based on certain principles deemed as essential to form the ‘ideal’ arrangement – mutuality, trust, reciprocal accountability, joint-decision making, two-way information exchanges, and long-term commitment (Lister, 2000, p. 228). Often these norms are encapsulated in the language of social capital in relation to development cooperation. For example, trust, the exchange of information, and norm building underlie the contributions of Robert Putnam, which remain highly influential, particularly in the World Bank (see Chapter 2). Bourdieu’s ideas about social capital are largely unacknowledged in development, however. As a result,

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<sup>77</sup> Baan Kredtakarn Protection and Occupational Development Centre for Girls, in Bangkok, run by the Thai government through external assistance, is a shelter for trafficked women and girls. The Wa are an ethnic minority group found in the southwest part of the Yunnan province in China, situated near the Myanmar border.

there is a partial misrecognition of how these social networks might transform individual recognition into more explicit forms of cooperation. Rather, it is believed symbolic capital is gained through the achievement of outputs (e.g. the number of people repatriated). Perhaps what is most intriguing in this case is that building trust was more important to UNIAP staff than to its member agencies.

Whatever we have accomplished, we did because of the trust you build in people. Trust at all levels. Trust in your capacity to carry out tasks, trust in building partnerships, and trust in ensuring that your partner will be able to fulfill their mandate through their collaboration with you. Your partners trusting that whatever you do together, the credit goes to them. This is the whole concept of UNIAP. If anything goes wrong it's because we didn't do our job right. If anything goes right, that's because your partners were there to work with you. That has always been my belief. When you actually believe in that, and when what you do shows that off, then that trust gets stronger. (Interview, November 9, 2004)

Robinson et al. (2000) argue that “levels of trust and self-organization in any context are strongly influenced by the incentives and opportunities created by the prevailing institutional frameworks” (p. 274). After listening to how development agencies talk about cooperative relations, it became apparent that the decision to support the UNIAP was largely based on an incentive to do so, which centred on their desire to further organisational interests and activities rather than the agenda of the project. An agency member revealed:

I'd like to increase our participation on the basis of actual project or activities. I tend to be more practical. If we're doing something very specific together then let's work and contribute around an activity, not really working too much on concepts or directions. We have our own agendas. We just have to understand each other's agenda; try to see what we can just do together in very concrete ways. More and more that will be the nature of our own participation with the UNIAP. (interview, July 13, 2004)

“We have to be pragmatic,” another UN professional said. “What is pretty clear is that coordination has to come around issues, it has to come around specific activities. If we don't

lose sight of that then we can do successful coordination by aligning better with agencies over goals” (interview, November, 2, 2004). There was much discussion about aligning coordination around explicit activities, but the reality was each project or program had its specific activities, which practitioners would execute via new public management modalities with or without the UNIAP’s presence. These outputs may have conferred legitimation, but it was not what motivated practitioners to become involved in coordination mechanisms, such as the UNIAP. The project’s potential added value was not coordination around specific activities; instead, it was fostering agencies to leverage and accumulate differing forms of capital, of which symbolic capital was the most important.

### ***The UNIAP’s symbolic capital deficit***

At this stage in Phase II, the project had limited resources, aside from informational and social capital, and needed to reinforce its own symbolic capital, including its status and reputation, before member agencies would recognise an added value. As one NGO representative aptly stated:

UNIAP has to have enough resources that it can come to the table as an equal player and be able to do a more effective job. Let’s be honest, money in the end carries weight and importance. A resource strapped organisation creates all sorts of difficulties. (interview, September 14, 2004).

Still being judged by its history, member agencies remained somewhat unclear about the nature and purpose of the project. “At the moment, the UNIAP is trying to define itself and develop its own identity,” one UN member remarked. “It is also trying to raise resources, which is understandable. It needs to do that. How can it listen to other people in a sympathetic way when it is still trying to survive?” (interview, July 13, 2004).

Despite being almost fully funded, the UNIAP was still experiencing anxieties and frustrations, which were tied directly to the lack of symbolic capital.<sup>78</sup> “We’re constantly facing a brand or logo deficit. Nobody knows who we are. Ask nine of ten people who are in the UN, ‘What is the UNIAP?’ They can’t tell you. I would be surprised if there are more than ten people in ESCAP who know who we are,” stated the UNIAP regional staff member. “Why do you think that is?” I asked. “They have no incentive to know who we are,” the informant responded (interview, November 2, 2004).

One of the biggest challenges for the UNIAP involved communicating the project’s purposes and objectives to member agencies. When the new coordinator arrived at the start of Phase II, the first several weeks were spent introducing himself to member agencies in each of the six countries and offering them an explanation of what the new phase entailed. In spite of these efforts, many workers struggled to tell me what the project was about. I posed this question to a participant over lunch. In between mouthfuls, the person answered:

I actually don’t really have an understanding of what UNIAP is. I do know that it is trying to bring together a number of UN agencies and bring about better cooperation... but to answer your question, no. I really don’t know clearly the vision and mandate of UNIAP. (interview, September 14, 2004).

This was a typical response. Phase II was supposed provide better support and assistance for its member agencies, but no one spoke of the project in terms of a service provider. Repeated references were made to coordination, however. I mentioned these comments to one UNIAP professional over coffee. “Yeah, we are out there as support, but whether or not I believe right now all of our members view us that way, I would probably have to say no,” the person said. “From other agencies’ viewpoints, I don’t know how much value we have added,” my

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<sup>78</sup> On June 15, 2004, the UNIAP learned that the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID) had agreed to support the project with an additional \$600,000 NZ for unrestricted core costs. This was in addition to an earlier contribution of \$600,000 NZ that was given to the UNIAP during the interim period in 2003.

informant continued. “For certain ones, yes. But for others, such as the ILO, I don’t know how much we have added value to their own projects” (interview, June 9, 2004).

Except in theory, the service provision role was never effectively integrated into the project. The UNIAP was not providing services other than organising meetings, which ended up being called on an ad-hoc basis. It attempted to initiate a series of smaller task forces or working committees to carry out advocacy work coming from the regional inter-agency meetings, but interest and engagement of member agencies, albeit after early success, gradually waned. According to one UNIAP staff, this was exactly why member agencies struggled to understand what the UNIAP was about. “The discourse of the UNIAP has nothing to do with the actions of the UNIAP,” my informant concluded. In some respects, I tended to agree with this assessment. The person went on:

We coordinate in the sense that we bring people together, but people have not been waiting for an inter-agency project to come together on different topics. It just happens that the convening power is with the UNIAP. If it was not UNIAP, it would probably be UNICEF or something. We are just another project in reality – another project that organises the working group, has a listserv, so that is just information exchange. When people need information I doubt that they come to us. We say we are service provider, but what kind of services do we offer? We don’t really offer services to people. ...You can put anything you want behind these words – coordination, partnerships. So I think there is a big gap between what we say we do and what we actually do. (interview, August 31, 2004).

For all the talk about service provision, the project had become more of a facilitator in the eyes of not just its member agencies, but some of the UNIAP staff as well. Information was being shared and exchanged at different inter-agency and working committees meetings, but the project was hardly a ‘one-stop-shop’ or clearinghouse for information on human trafficking. A coveted form of capital in development, member agencies were selective with the information they exchanged with the UNIAP. But anyone familiar with the project’s history would be not surprised by this situation.

In comparison to some of the larger, more prominent human trafficking projects, even a weaker project with few resources at its disposal, was regarded as a competitive threat because of its potential to draw symbolic capital away from the member agencies. Designed to be a neutral coordination mechanism, most UN member agencies were even more suspicious of the project, especially since it was now under the auspices of the UNRC system, and thus affiliated in many people's minds with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). "They forget that it is a UN inter-agency project, not the UNIAP standing alone," one member affirmed. It is clear from these comments that although member agencies may have considered the UNIAP 'merely' to be a project, the UNIAP staff members were beginning to work within the constraints imposed by the field. The informant continued:

It's ok to have activities that are UNIAP/UNICEF or UNIAP/UNESCO, but we have to think how we present it. It should be UNICEF as a member of UNIAP. We're struggling with this in UN reform. There is a sense of fear that UNDP is going to take over everything, be the visible one based on all our efforts. We don't have models for this on how to work it through very well. (interview, June 25, 2004)

Member agencies feared losing their symbolic capital to the UNIAP, or, most likely, to the UNDP. But at this stage, the UNIAP was hardly an equal player. The project needed to expand its outputs if it was to gain the respect of member agencies.

The UNIAP needed opportunities that would enable it to mobilise its own symbolic capital. Until this point, the project depended upon joint collaborations (and capital exchanges) with members to generate outputs. Working together with UNIFEM, for instance, the UNIAP produced a *Trafficking in Persons: A Gender and Rights Perspective, Briefing Kit*. Another output, highlighted in the midterm evaluation report, was the repatriation of victims in Laos to Myanmar through government counterparts, Save the Children UK, and World Vision because, at the time, the IOM did not have a mandate to carry out work in these countries despite having a large return and reintegration project (Caouette, 2002).

Coincidentally, the COMMIT process, which would be the critical turning point, was well designed to confer greater visibility and prestige on the UNIAP.

## **Stage II: The COMMIT Process**

### ***The germ of an idea: Beginnings of COMMIT***

The idea of COMMIT originated with the Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Combating Trafficking Children and Women in Thailand. As a former cabinet minister and senator, the Chair was an influential advocate for the rights of women and children, and she was widely respected, not just in Thailand, but in the other countries of the Greater Mekong Subregion. She told me that bilateral agreements between countries were not adequate to address a multisectoral problem such as human trafficking. “There is no one single body that can handle it alone,” she said. It was time, she believed, to get the governments in the region to “look at the larger picture” and “speak the same language” on human trafficking, through the support of the UN agencies, the IOM, and NGOs (interview, July 6, 2004).

For this idea to come to fruition, however, it needed the backing of an international organisation. The UNIAP was in its interim period when the manager was approached by the Chair. Drawing on her strong political connections in the Myanmar government, the interim manager brought the idea of a regional agreement on human trafficking to the attention of officials. The initiative resonated with the government, which was at the time drafting human trafficking legislation. With Thailand and Myanmar having pledged their support, the remaining four governments quickly followed suit.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> There are differing versions of how the idea for COMMIT came to fruition. This section is based on interviews with informants who were involved in the process in addition to an internal background paper about COMMIT. It was reported in the meeting minutes of the Bangkok inter-agency working group meeting in late February 2004 that China was the second government to pledge its support. The sensitive political situation in Myanmar could be one explanation for the discrepancy. Indeed, as we shall see later in the chapter, the fact that the inter-ministerial meeting in October was held in Yangon provoked controversy. Moreover, my research uncovered other instances in which the ‘official version’ did not match the ‘true’ story.



It was announced at the inter-agency meeting in Bangkok on October 20, 2003 that the Thai government had requested the UNIAP to host a regional inter-ministerial conference on trafficking in 2004 (internal meeting minutes, October 30, 2003). The interim manager stressed that the conference was not an initiative of the UNIAP, but rather a reaction to the Thai government's request. The UNIAP was to oversee the process, acting as a neutral Secretariat. On the whole, member agencies were supportive of the high level policy dialogues, believing that the UNIAP was now going in "the right direction" (interview, June 17, 2004). "UNIAP is trying to provide coherence to all the work on trafficking in the Subregion. That's very broad, so I can see why UNIAP would look at the COMMIT process," one UN member commented (interview, July 13, 2004). "Hopefully the COMMIT process will give them a sufficient platform to build momentum, build confidence, and offer a clear agenda in what the inter-agency project is going to do in the future. I believe things could really work out well," a second UN professional remarked. Even though the initiative has the blessing of governments, some UN agencies expressed scepticism about how the request had come about. "There are some very positive things happening now though COMMIT, but I'm a little cynical because I don't think it was initiated without prodding," one UN official said with a laugh. This view continued:

We can say 'they initiated this' but what was behind it? Sometimes we see what we want and then make sure somebody initiates it. I mean it is the way the UN works, the way politics work, and that's how you do it. I'm not saying there is anything wrong with that. Nobody was resistant, and I think that sometimes you have to do that to get something going. To have something at the ministerial level is really helpful, and it's this kind of project that can support that. (interview, June 25, 2004).

The intent was to have a SOM I in Bangkok at the end of July 2004 followed by a SOM II and an Inter-Ministerial meeting in Yangon, Myanmar in October. At the Steering Committee meeting in November 2003, an intensive plan was developed that requested each of the six countries to form COMMIT taskforces made up of government counterparts from at

least three different ministries to lead preparations at the national level. Government officials were to collectively prepare country papers on the human trafficking situation in their respective countries to present at the first SOM. In the meantime, the UNIAP would oversee this process, prepare and circulate a working draft MOU based on the inputs received from governments, and mobilise resources for the series of meetings. The plan seemed simple enough, but gradually the process became more complicated as well as more central to the project.

### ***Preparations for the first Senior Officials Meeting (SOM I)***

During these first few months of Phase II, a consultant was hired and interns recruited to assist with the organisation and administration of SOM I to be held from July 28-30, 2004. The UNIAP Secretariat prepared letters informing all governments of the details of how the COMMIT process would unfold. Taking advantage of the project's unique position by marshalling symbolic and political capital, the letters were signed by the UN Resident Representatives and sent to the most powerful ministries, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or directly to the Prime Minister's office. As previously discussed, the role of Resident Coordinators is one of persuasion and influence, and it soon became clear how critical this symbolic power was. The Resident Coordinator for Thailand had always been a staunch supporter of the UNIAP, and he required no urging to play a part in the COMMIT process. Others were detached from the process, and the effects were clearly seen as national coordinators struggled with attempts to mobilise their government counterparts. What is more, path dependencies from the previous phase remained strong. One government in particular refused to accept that the UNIAP had shifted under the UNRC system. As the UNIAP national coordinator explained:

I want to get closer to the UN Resident Coordinator, like Bangkok, so the Resident Coordinator will provide us with more support. The COMMIT taskforce gets stuck. I try to push many times, but they are not willing to listen to me. They provide less

respect because they think we are just one small project within the Ministry of Veterans and Women's Affairs. I say no, I am the UN project! If we are within the UN, they will think of us as bigger. (interview, June 29, 2004)

The same situation transpired in other countries. "The hardest thing is to get the support from the UNRC system," another national project coordinator lamented (interview, October 30, 2004). National staff members were covetous of the relationship the regional office had with the Resident Representative of Thailand. "Without his leadership role," one regional UNIAP staff member admitted, "we wouldn't have COMMIT" (interview, November 9, 2004). This comment highlights the value of the symbolic capital possessed by the UN Resident Coordinators. Although sympathetic, the regional project office was unable to transfer much of this power to the national level. Senior UNIAP staff had little power to exercise authority if other Resident Coordinators refused to pay more than lip service to the process.

***"How do we share credit?": Struggles over recognition and exclusionary boundaries***

Over 25 UN agencies are based in Bangkok; thus, the support and commitment given by the Resident Representative for Thailand brought visibility to the process. Consequently, member agencies sensed the importance of the event and wanted to be more engaged. Suddenly, as agencies became fearful of being excluded from the potentially powerful, symbolic capital rich UNIAP platform, old tensions that had not been resolved reappeared as some of the more influential UN agencies started to feel unsettled about the process. Expressing frustration, one UN member disclosed, "I think COMMIT is excellent, but often UNIAP, through UNDP, communicates with governments and then we're not copied or don't know about – that's not inclusion". The informant continued:

It took me three meetings. They kept saying, 'Oh, they are available.' I finally went and stood in front of the desk of somebody after a meeting and said, 'I am not going to leave until I see this letter!' It was not something we would have sent out. They went through a different route with governments and it created a lot of tensions. I would

have been better if there were some discussions. ...It worked itself out, but in some places the tensions are still there. (interview, June 25, 2004)

Concerns that the capital contributed to the COMMIT process would not be transformed into symbolic capital or recognition were amplified. One complication arose because the UNIAP was asking its member agencies for financial contributions, but the agenda and other preparations were being handled to the exclusion of others. Agencies contended there should be more explicit recognition. “Its fear of losing your agency’s identity,” one UN professional stated, or put differently, its symbolic capital. He continued:

It is going to be very difficult for us to just transfer funds over to the UNIAP when they act like they are a separate agency. Its own funds, regardless of how much work the Secretariat does, or the UNIAP, it is a Secretariat. We have to find ways to recognise the individual agencies that make up the UNIAP. (interview, June 25, 2004).

Another professional concurred. “We’re paying for it, but UNIAP is organising it. So whose movement is it?” the person stated bluntly. Indeed, the introduction of COMMIT seemed to resurrect disputes from the first Phase. The member explained further:

We specialise in cross-border issues, it would be seen as our role. But it is not always simple because of this competitive environment. In essence, it’s recognition of what you are doing. It’s what gets us support from donors and others. If we’re being funded by a particular donor to do a particular activity and it’s suddenly reported in the press and we’re not recognised, the donor’s thinking “What’s happening?” We may actually have done it, but if it is seen as UN inter-agency – I think that is why some agencies are less enthusiastic about participating than others. I mean within the inter-agency project, with ILO, UNICEF, IOM, we all have substantial funding and significant trafficking projects. Somehow tucking that under that under an inter-agency project is a bit unwieldy. (interview, August 24, 2004)

It is clear from these interviewee’s comments that the balance of power was slowly beginning to shift. The success of the COMMIT process was dependent upon the financial backing and support of UN agencies, international NGOS, and donors. Not surprisingly,

these members expected benefits in return, but at this stage, the project had little to offer in exchange for their financial contributions. Cognisant that the more powerful agencies could potentially come in with their funding, technical expertise, and influence, and destabilise the process, the UNIAP intentionally or intentionally, chose to restrict its involvement. One explanation for this course of action, it could be argued, was that the UNIAP recognised an opportunity for the project to seize upon its own symbolic capital. COMMIT was sufficient to establish its identity and position in the field.

Nonetheless, tensions persisted. Member agencies recalled not being kept in the loop as preparations for SOM I unfolded. “When staff from the Secretariat go to the country offices, I am not sure they always meet with the key UN agencies,” one informant asserted. Because this UN practitioner headed one of the regional human trafficking projects, she believed that its symbolic capital and power should be a deciding factor in determining access to particular privileges regarding COMMIT. The choice of the UNIAP not to include prominent agencies in a clear process of decision-making was a point of contention. “When they were presenting the whole COMMIT, the whole new phase, they never contacted people beforehand so people ended up completely surprised and didn’t show up to this meeting. They would have if they knew what it was about!” (interview, June 25, 2004). One UNIAP staff member responded, rejecting her protests:

Coordination is a two way street. If UNICEF wants to know what we are doing, or if UNDP, or UNODC, pick up the phone! We’ll reach out and do what we can, but I am not going to continue to reach out just for the purpose of reaching out when I have got a lot of other things to do. This is the thing that people don’t understand. ...People’s interests ebb and flow depending on their immediate needs. That’s fine, but don’t complain about it afterwards! (interview, November 2, 2004)

Although a fair point, the exclusionary approach was beginning to have consequences. The UNIAP understood the impact COMMIT could have on the project. “I have always believed that success breeds attention,” a UNIAP informant stated. “This COMMIT MOU

will probably do more for our image than anything else I could have said to people. If we are serious, we will do it first, then people will know who we are,” (interview, November 2, 2004). In development, perceptions are often directly tied to the degree of success. Projects and programs must ‘do something’ to be seen as successful, or at the least, a serious player in the field. Though perhaps somewhat cynical, success in development is not always gauged by the impacts of initiatives, such as the COMMIT process, which target a specific problem such as human trafficking. Rather, the measurement of success is often associated with funding sustainability, achievements, or even the ‘lasting power’ of a particular development project, program, or organisation. As Bourdieu (2000) argues, “capital in its various forms is a set of pre-emptive rights over the future” (p. 225). The UNIAP staff truly saw COMMIT as the goose that would lay the golden egg. “UNIAP is sustainable if we’re hooked to COMMIT,” one staff member argued. “If we’re hooked to COMMIT as the Secretariat, we’re sustainable because people will continue to fund the Secretariat as long as the process appears to have fuel” (interview, November 2, 2004).

But at this stage, the egg had not yet hatched. The UNIAP could not afford to push the larger, more powerful human trafficking agencies too far. Although the Secretariat was doing the lion’s share of the work, human capital and social capital were the only resources it had at its disposal. COMMIT had not been anticipated when the planning team for Phase II drafted the project document; thus, the funding received from SIDA and New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID) earlier in the year was earmarked for core costs of the project. As one NGO member succinctly put it, “it all comes down to the money” (interview, July 19, 2004). Economic capital is crucial in development, but it was the desire for symbolic capital that was fueling the competitive tensions between UNIAP and member agencies. Fearful that the project would be the only ones to reap the benefits if SOM I was successful, one member suggested:

Let's re-group, get the main players to come together, level expectations, have people working to contribute to this agenda, and let's get going. Ask five or six organisations, what can you really give? I'd like to hear from them what do they want us to give? Every time you ask people to contribute, whether it is technically or financially, what is in it for them? It should be a frank appraisal of where we stand as the UN, where we want to move forward as the UN, and what are our strategic partnerships and alliances. What can we bring to the table? How do we share credit? How do we share problems? I think if we can bring this to the table and discuss it openly, we would be better off. (July 13, 2004)

Consequently, an informal core group was formed, which was to provide technical input on the agenda and materials for SOM I. But as the meeting date crept closer, tensions flared again.

### ***The first Senior Officials Meeting (SOM I)***

The arrangements were made, the agenda finalised, and SOM I was set to take place from July 28-30, 2004 at the UN conference center in Bangkok, Thailand. Based on inputs received from government taskforces, the Secretariat prepared a working draft of the MOU. The aim was to discuss the draft document along with any outstanding issues regarding the next stage of the COMMIT process. A few weeks prior to its start, however, the Secretariat decided to limit attendance. Member agencies that had made financial contributions, but were not asked to attend, sharply criticised the decision. What is more, those that were permitted to attend would do so as observers.<sup>80</sup> The reason why, the UNIAP explained, was sensitivities on behalf of the governments. The Secretariat made it clear that this was an inter-governmental process, not a UN process. The decision created much displeasure, in spite of the fact that open attendance would have been unrealistic given the large number of member agencies at both the regional and national levels that were part of the UNIAP. In fact, what was happening was the nature of the relationships between UNIAP and its member agencies

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<sup>80</sup> I was allowed to attend SOM I as an observer and the second SOM II/Inter-Ministerial meeting as the Rapporteur.

was changing. The shift in emphasis meant that the primary constituents were no longer UN agencies. The six governments of the Greater Mekong Subregion were now at the center of the project, much to the pleasure of the human trafficking donors I spoke with who were based in the region.

Thus, the COMMIT process was altering the balance of power. Even certain international NGOS were playing different roles as a result of the COMMIT process. “It is quite interesting because our relationship with the UNIAP has, in many ways, come full circle,” the NGO representative noted. She continued:

UNIAP helped us out when we were trying to find a donor for a second phase of our regional trafficking program. We were looking for a very large amount of money, so we needed bridging grants. We did secure a major donor for our program. Now, UNIAP is involved in the COMMIT process and we’re in a position to give funds. (interview, September 14, 2004).

In total, just over 100 people, comprised of government delegates, international representatives, donors, and the UNIAP Secretariat attended SOM I. After three days of intense deliberations, 85% of the working draft of the MOU had been finalised, but key sections remained unresolved. Delegates were requested to take the draft back to their respective governments to finalise the document by September 21, 2004. This would leave four weeks for the MOU to be vetted and approved by the appropriate government processes before the signing ceremony at the end of October. Overall, the meeting had been a success, but with only three months before the next set of meetings, there was still the potential for credibility to be lost if the six governments failed to sign the MOU in an expeditious manner.

### **Stage III: The goose and its golden egg**

It was less than a year into Phase II, and the COMMIT process was consuming most of the UNIAP’s time and energies. “It is like the black hole of the UNIAP,” a staff member joked one afternoon (interview, November 2, 2004). Everyone was busy with preparations for



SOM II, which would be followed immediately by the Inter-Ministerial meeting in Yangon, Myanmar. First and foremost, the objective was to have the six governments endorse the MOU. Progressively though, the focus was shifting to the development of the Subregional Action Plan as part of the larger process of transforming the commitments into action. One UNIAP staff revealed:

It would be extremely interesting if we have a government determined priority plan with a set of activities that were negotiated by a wide bunch of international agencies and actors, some sort of joint proposal to the donors that not only the countries endorsed, but also the key international agencies endorsed. That would be quite powerful. (interview, November 2, 2004)

Indeed, this was the premise on which the entire COMMIT process had been based. The symbolic nature of the MOU was important, but it was the Subregional Action Plan that would serve as the framework for cooperation, building on, and complementing, existing anti-trafficking activities of both governments and member agencies. Through joint donor funding, member agencies would provide expertise and technical input to assist governments in implementing activities under the Subregional Action Plan. If finalised and approved, the COMMIT process would engender a platform for the mobilisation and exchange of capital, which in turn would facilitate the implementation of a regional cooperation framework set through strategic planning and joint programming of the different stakeholders involved. The potential existed for everyone to reap benefits in terms of funding, increased outputs, and recognition. Moreover, it would be the sole regional MOU that focused exclusively on human trafficking. In theory, this was the idea, but certain agencies were still somewhat apprehensive. Said one sceptic:

Despite being a member of the UNIAP, we haven't had lot of direct input into the COMMIT process. We are an observer to the meeting and would be expecting that whatever comes out of the meeting, we would be slotted into niche areas. ...In fact what I think they will do, rather than being a Secretariat that is behind the scenes and

supportive, I think it will just advance the UN inter-agency project because they will say, “We’ve done this. We’ve come out with this.” As a Secretariat, you help facilitate something. You don’t necessarily take credit for it. It’s an initiative of the governments and that is where I am a bit skeptical. It will come out as a UN inter-agency Memorandum, that’s how it will be seen. So that makes it difficult for the rest of the agencies because what will happen? Does that mean that the UN inter-agency project will be the repository of contributions that might go towards follow-up? Thinking as governments from the outside, how will they see it? My view is strictly Secretariat. We are looking for a body that has the presence and the capacity to put papers together, to run around, and do the menial work. But that remains to be seen. (interview, August 24, 2004).

Although I was not privy to internal discussions between UNIAP staff and member agencies, I sensed the tensions expressed during interviews were not being communicated publicly. It was clear the success of SOM I effected a further shift in power relations. For better or worse, member agencies came to realise the UNIAP, as the Secretariat, was firmly in control. “If you don’t come with your pool of money, you are out of the game so to speak,” one UN agency noted (interview, September 20, 2004). By this point, there were few options except to go along with the process. The agenda and venue for SOM II was confirmed by the governments at the last meeting. Now, the entire process was building momentum. Over \$350,000 US had been raised to support the process of developing, negotiating, and reaching agreement on the COMMIT MOU and Plan of Action through the contributions of eight different organisations (internal document, March 8, 2005).<sup>81</sup>

### ***Development politics: The controversial venue***

The most controversial issue concerning COMMIT was the choice of venue for the next meeting. The decision to allow the Myanmar government to host SOM 2 and the Inter-Ministerial meeting in Yangon ended up being a strong point of contention for some of the

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<sup>81</sup> The organisations were the following: AusAID, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Norwegian government, Asian Development Bank (ADB), IOM, and Save the Children UK.

member agencies, particularly the ILO. Despite having a liaison office based in Yangon, the organisation, in 2000, imposed sanctions on Myanmar over accusations of forced labour abuses.<sup>82</sup> As a result, the ILO could not overtly endorse the meeting, nor could it provide funding. Despite having participated in SOM I as an observer, resentment lingered that the UNIAP had not asked the ILO to contribute resources, economic or otherwise, for either of the two meetings. “We have not been approached,” one ILO official lamented. “I figured it is because of our Burma position, but the way to do it is to separate the process from the location. If you make that very clear, we can support the preparations, the taskforces. We have national teams,” the informant persisted. “So I ask myself why should I volunteer. We could have been more supportive because it is a UN process. We all have to feel we are part of the process, right?” (interview, July 13, 2004).

These hostilities were more than a question of exclusion; the issue was about accessing symbolic and other forms of capital and exercising symbolic power. Development agencies, programs, or projects with greater concentrations of capital (and hence symbolic power) hold greater influence. As we saw in the previous chapter and continue to see in this chapter, donors have tremendous influence in development because of the economic capital they control, giving them bargaining power with intergovernmental and nongovernmental organisations, as well as governments. The exercise of influence is not just reserved for donors, however. UN agencies, NGOs, and governments often seek to influence agenda setting and decision making by increasing the saliency of their position on human trafficking. As one UN official commented:

Agencies have different advocacy agendas, that why they exist. It is not necessarily bad. For example, UNICEF comes to the table concerned about children and trafficking. ILO comes to the agenda concerned about labour exploitation. UNESCO

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<sup>82</sup> ILO has since formed an Understanding with the Myanmar government on February 26, 2007 that enables victims of forced labour to see redress.

comes with real concerns about minority rights. IOM comes with concerns about the processes of migration and the management of the migratory flows. Each of these organisations is designed to plug a particular agenda. UNICEF won't spend much time worrying about adult trafficking. It is not actually what they get money for. ...So agencies are wary about where the project is going in terms of potential encroachments, what is called boundary management. (interview, June 3, 2004)

Being one of the more prominent agencies addressing human trafficking in the region, the ILO was capable of contributing to the COMMIT process through different means. Co-organised by the ILO and Save the Children UK, the Mekong Children's Forum on Human Trafficking was held from October 11-17, 2004 in Bangkok.<sup>83</sup> The event invited young adults from five countries (Myanmar excluded) to draft their own Subregional Plan of Action, which was presented to the delegates at SOM II. Because of the ILO's influence in the human trafficking field, the UNIAP was forced to take the event seriously, as well as the interests behind it.

### ***The coup: The COMMIT process threatened***

As the date drew closer, the deputy project manager left for Yangon to support the country office staff of three. I travelled earlier to Yangon, about 10 days before the event began, to conduct research interviews and assist with preparations. I had been invited in an official capacity to act as the rapporteur (aka minute taker) for the three day meeting, which meant for the first time the project would facilitate one of my field visits in terms of arrangements. When I arrived, the two room national project office located on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of the old Yangon International Hotel was buzzing with activity. The entire staff was putting in 12 hour days, which soon grew longer. Rumours of a coup started to circulate a week before SOM II and Inter-Ministerial meeting were due to start. Indeed, they were true. On October 19, 2004, Myanmar Prime Minister Khin Nyunt was put under house arrest by the State Peace

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<sup>83</sup> Funded by the same donor (UK Department for International Development (DFID)), the ILO and Save the Children UK have signed a formal partnership agreement.

and Development Council (the ruling military junta) and replaced by Lieutenant-General Soe Win, a former defence chief renowned for his tough political stance.

The ousting of the Prime Minister came as a shock. Tensions boiled over, not just politically, but internally within the UNIAP. Both the regional project manager and the deputy project manager had strong personal biases, which appeared to be influencing the situation at the political level. In between interviews, I returned to the national project office to watch events unfold. I later wrote in my field notes, “never have I seen a project so divided” (October 20, 2004). Neither the project manager nor the deputy project manager could separate strong personal convictions from their professional work. On one side were the supporters of the project manager, formerly a leading American NGO campaigner against forced labour abuses in Myanmar, who expressed concerns about going ahead with COMMIT. On the other side were the supporters of the deputy project manager, a Myanmar national, who had been laying the groundwork for this meeting since June 2003. Emotions flared, showing how individual beliefs and personalities can affect development efforts. Indeed, the potential existed for disastrous political consequences.

National project coordinators were instructed to consult with their respective government counterparts to determine official positions as to whether the meeting should proceed. Highly concerned about the political developments, the Thai government allegedly threatened to pull out of the meeting. It was believed by some UNIAP staff that the regional office in Bangkok was attempting to undermine the process, compelling the Thai government to renounce support.<sup>84</sup> There was much to be lost if the event did not happen. In an email exchange, the regional office conceded that the decision of the Thai Ministry of the Home Affairs “was not the final word, but one of at least six voices we need to hear from,” (email, October 20, 2004). An hour later, another email came through from the Cambodian project

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<sup>84</sup> This observation is based on informal conversations with national and international staff during the meeting.

office. The message read, “it all depends on the government of Myanmar. If they wish to host the Cambodian delegation will attend,” (email, October 20, 2004). In taking a stance, the Cambodians broke the silence of the other governments. China, Laos, and Vietnam agreed with Cambodia; if Myanmar was still prepared to host the event, their delegates would attend.

Seventy-four hours before the event, the Thai government finally announced it would send a delegation. In a clear political gesture, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security was sent to sign the MOU instead of the Minister of Home Affairs, as originally planned. In spite of conflicts and drama, the two-day Senior Officials Meeting and the one day Inter-Ministerial meeting transpired flawlessly. After two days of discussions around the Subregional Action plan, the MOU was signed shortly before noon on Friday, October 29, 2004. The champagne flowed and delegates from the six countries toasted one another alongside the UNIAP Secretariat and member agencies. Indeed, the event was a remarkable achievement. In just over 16 months, the first-ever regional MOU on combating human trafficking in the Asia/Pacific region and a Subregional Plan of Action outlining the policies and resources required for implementation had been produced.<sup>85</sup> Of course, the success of the MOU and Action Plan remains to be seen. At the least, the UNIAP finally achieved what it had been searching for since the project started in 2000 – the symbolic recognition and respect as a coordination project from donors, governments, UN agencies, and NGOS alike – which would enable it to mobilise the resources needed to progress into a third phase.

### ***Conclusion***

So why did COMMIT prove to be the critical juncture for the UNIAP? In short, if the UNIAP was to do more than just survive, the project had to align to the structure of the field. In a field structured along new public management lines, where capital or resources are

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<sup>85</sup> The Plan of Action was adopted at SOM III held in Hanoi from March 29-31, 2005.

disaggregated, coordination is built through capital exchanges. Whenever I asked development practitioners about what facilitated cooperation, directly or indirectly, the discussions came down to capital swapping. One UN agency described some of her collaborations with other agencies in the field. “UNICEF is amazing. All the individuals are good; they recruit really good people (cultural capital). They are also willing to give us money (economic capital) for things. Their substantive input (cultural capital) is fantastic and they have excellent contacts (social capital) at the country level”. Later during the interview, she elaborated on a relationship with UNDP:

We were doing work on HIV and human rights. I was saying, “Look, do you really want us to be a partner on this or just do it yourself?” They were like, “Yeah! We need you because the NGOs like you. If we partner with you, the NGOs will come.” (Laughs) So we said, “Sure, put our logo on!” (symbolic capital) There! We’re happy! (interview, July, 7, 2004)

My interviews were replete with these kinds of exchanges. As a service provider with little else other than convening power, though a form of symbolic capital, the UNIAP did not possess the capacity to facilitate cooperation, and agencies were disinclined to have the project tell them what to do. Path dependent effects from its first phase meant that even though the UNIAP has shifted its direction and focus, member UN agencies still saw it as competitor. Historical circumstances, coupled by the structural nature of the field, had “locked” the project into a historical path of development (see Campbell, 2005, p. 67).

Redesigned as a service provider, its activities were pared down to a bare minimum, mainly promoting the flow of information capital through social networks, which also served to legitimate the activities of its member agencies. Although such a role provided a low starting point for the legitimisation of the UNIAP’s activities, it was still insufficient for building cooperation among UN agencies in a competitive field. Furthermore, the UNIAP was more than a ‘neutral’ coordinating project. It was a player in the field, and to implement

its own mandate, the UNIAP needed to mobilise and establish control over resources and accumulate its own symbolic capital. But, from the beginning, the UNIAP possessed inadequate resources to function effectively. Operating in a capital constrained field, the project's sole option was to form joint collaborations between it and member agencies in order to exploit their capital, which enabled the UNIAP to produce the outputs donors demanded (i.e. through joint publications, trainings, etc). What is interesting is that no one questioned whether the service provision role was suitable for a UN project.

At the beginning of the second Phase, the UNIAP did not have access to the required symbolic power, or constituting legitimacy, required to provide coordination, even under the auspices of the UNRC system. After attempting to coordinate through different inter-agency committees, the project turned its attention to COMMIT. Building on expansive social networks at national and regional levels, as well as an increased staff, the UNIAP launched a series of high level dialogues (SOM I & SOM II, Inter-Ministerial meeting – known as the COMMIT process), creating a platform that gave the project, as its acting Secretariat, control over the process of combating human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion and the field's resources. By the end of the signing ceremony, the project had a large concentration of symbolic power because of its success.

The UN is an intergovernmental organisation whose primary stakeholders are governments (see Chapter 4). Recent reforms have attempted to promote system-wide coherence; nevertheless, the strength of the United Nations remains with its ability to mobilise government commitment. Thus, with all its uncertainties, it is hardly surprising that the UNIAP defaulted to what the UN is historically good at – acting as a centre for harmonising government action to attain common ends (see UN Charter, article 1). Most of the member agencies I spoke to, in spite of their ongoing frustrations, thought COMMIT added value to



their work. It was the legitimate or appropriate way for the UNIAP to operate in its environment.

What is most interesting about the comments highlighted in this chapter is what they reveal about the institutional structure of the development field. The politics of representation manifested in struggles over both material and symbolic forms of capital, which shaped the identities of the individual agencies, including the UNIAP. The UN member agencies, for example, were keen to attain the maximum output from the capital devoted to the COMMIT process. As a result, power relations were continuously shifting. Although I witnessed a number of successful collaborations among human trafficking agencies, attitudes were largely adversarial with respect to those who were seen as ‘equal’ players. The compatibility of personalities, beliefs, and interests proved less important in terms of coordination than the extent one is able to access the field’s resources.

The key point is that the ability to participate in the game (the mobilisation, conversion, and exchange of capital) is largely dependent on the type and amount of capital already accrued. Not all forms of capital are equal, nor are they equally distributed in the field. Nevertheless, most agencies are able to carve out a niche in this type of market or playing field. In the case of the UNIAP, it still had privileged access, through the UN Resident Coordinator system, to the symbolic capital and power of the UN “brand”. It also had access to the collective symbolic power of its member states. Through appropriation, the project was enabled to coordinate the only way it legitimately could – facilitating a platform, which fostered cooperation and resource mobilisation among governments, international and national human trafficking agencies, and donors, but one that allowed stakeholders (including the UNIAP) to promote their own interests.

## Chapter 8

### Contributions, implications, and conclusions:

#### Building platforms for coordination

The true measure of the success for the United Nations is not how much we promise, but how much we deliver for those who need us most. ... We need reform because we believe in the future. To revitalize our common endeavour is to renew our faith not only in the UN's programmes and purposes but also in each other. We should demand more of ourselves, as well as of our organization. ~ Acceptance speech to the General Assembly upon election of United Nations Secretary-General-elect, Ban Ki-moon, October 13, 2006

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The recent emphasis on coordination, harmonisation, and alignment, together with the proliferation of complex global problems, such as human trafficking, which such arrangements aim to address, represents a marked shift in development rhetoric and practice. The notion of partnership, as popularised in the 1990s, is no longer adequate to address the complexities of an increasingly fragmented field. Instead, donors, intergovernmental organisations, and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) focus attention on improved governance, system-wide coherence, and coordination. Initiatives such as the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness under the framework of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the eight "One UN" pilot projects of the United Nations (UN) are part of a new emerging paradigm. They are underpinned by the rhetoric of effectiveness and claims to deliver results more effectively at the national level. There are many reasons to question this rhetoric, but two are conspicuous in the narratives and subsequent analyses presented in this thesis.

First, such initiatives and their underlying objectives are undermined by the structure of the development field, which is fraught with complexity, duplication, heightened

competitiveness over scarce capital, and organisational insecurities. The marketised nature of the development field in particular involves, as I argued, both competition and cooperation built on capital exchanges. Thus, prospects for coordination are neither simple nor clear. The empirical evidence suggests that in the case of the United Nations Inter-Agency Project (UNIAP), which represents an example of development coordination, the problems highlighted above (duplication, competitiveness, and organisational insecurity) were evident both within and among participating organisations. Second, coordination across national boundaries is especially challenging because in human trafficking, movements are internal, cross-border, and transnational. The state remains a key institutional player as well as a pivotal source for symbolic capital. The existing rules of the game and prescribed strategies become ever more complicated because of the variegated boundaries of the field.

The complex problems associated with development coordination are not new. Numerous studies have sought to describe and understand what enables and constrains successful cooperation in the field (e.g. Aubrey, 1997; Brinkerhoff, 2002a; Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2004; Gordenker, Coate, Jönsson, & Söderholm, 1995; Lewis, et al., 2003; Lister, 2000). This thesis makes a contribution by extending the literature, much of which tends to be descriptive rather than analytical, to emphasise both the external and contextual factors and the internal structuring arrangements that affect relationships. This extension of the literature also means that some previously accepted explanations of ‘successful cooperation’ are challenged. My primary contribution to the literature is to lay bare the nature of external and internal institutional arrangements that shape cooperative behaviour among international development agencies working to combat the global problem of human trafficking, and to reveal the theoretical and empirical implications of such arrangements for facilitating deeper coordination and developing more effective initiatives on the ground.

This chapter provides a summary of the research as well as a discussion of the main contributions, implications, and conclusions based on the analysis presented in this thesis. It concludes with recommendations for further coordination efforts. Before examining the important contributions and implications, however, it is necessary to consider some of the theoretical foundations that necessarily underpin such an examination, as the literature affirmed my conviction that coordination is too often under-theorised in development (see Brinkerhoff, 2002a 200b; Lister, 2000; Lowndes & Skelcher, 1998). Such an endeavour demanded an empirically grounded, but theoretically informed account, of the institutional restructuring of the development field as well as its impacts on the conceptualisation, planning, design, and implementation of the UNIAP.

The challenge was to reveal the institutional architecture of the UNIAP, expose the role of different social actors involved in the project, and document its practices to facilitate a more coordinated response to human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion. As a method of inquiry, institutional ethnography (Smith, 1987) was particularly well suited to produce insights into the individual, organisational, and institutional influences and constraints of international development cooperation. In the case of the UNIAP, the issue was how to explain the divergence between intentions and outcomes, a divergence that was inscribed deeply in the way actors approached the challenge of establishing the UNIAP and making it work. To generate an explanation, empirical and ethnographic observations needed to be integrated into theoretical frameworks capable of laying bare the major mechanisms of institutional formation, competition, and cooperation.

Throughout this thesis, I have argued that the complex institutional forms taken by these cooperative relationships are not well understood, and that this lack of understanding hampers efforts to achieve gains from cooperation in practice. Two reasons cooperative relationships are not well understood stem from a reliance on the part of researchers to use a

specific theoretical perspective or a single theoretical model for analysis. The endeavour to weave together several complex theories – aspects of new institutionalism and the sociology of Bourdieu, was in part an attempt to fill this particular gap. If such analytic work is neglected, as Brinkerhoff (2002a) warns, notions of coordination and partnership are “in danger of remaining a ‘feel good’ panacea for governance without a pragmatic grasp of what it is and how it differs from business as usual” (p. 20).

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first two sections reflect on the current structure of the development field, including how it evolved, and how we can use the case of the UNIAP to understand its institutional structure and arrangements. The first section discusses the theoretical and practical foundations of (good) governance in the wider field of development. The second section considers the current modes of governance – hierarchies, markets, and networks – through which coordination is achieved. It illustrates how these modes continuously shift, resulting in both cooperative and competitive tendencies (see Lowndes & Skelcher, 1998).

The third section examines how the UNIAP, in a field uncondusive to coordination, was able to engender a coordinated response among governments and other human trafficking stakeholders by acting as the Secretariat for the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT) – a government led process that established a consultative platform built on incentives that involved the accumulation and exchange of the differing forms of capital. The final section considers some of the implications for practitioners involved in coordination of the response to complex, multifaceted issues, such as human trafficking.

## **The structure and institutional arrangements of the development field**

### ***What is 'good' and what is 'governance'***

Drawing on and extending British new institutionalism, one of the main conclusions of this study is that *international organisations, both in their programming and in their own internal structural arrangements, now operate in a neoliberalised development field structured along new public management lines as re-articulated through the new orthodoxy of good governance and with the added burden of coordination around expanded mandates*. It is clear that governance, in the terms of new institutionalism and the good governance agenda in development, remains linked to the neoliberal narrative that promoted marketisation and new public management reforms in Britain and other western countries in the 1980s. Good governance reforms sought to facilitate new interfaces among state, international, and other modalities of organisation, with a particular focus on mobilising quasi-market mechanisms of public administration such as competitive contracting to deliver 'outputs' understood as 'services', but also with recognition of the roles of civil society and other networks, and of local participation. This model, joining competitive contracting of services to local communitarian approaches, became the orthodoxy across development, in areas as diverse as education, natural resource management, and human trafficking.

Like nation states, international organisations, including the UN, faced pressure to undertake governance reforms, again in a language largely derived from new public management, accountability, results-based management, transparency, and fiscal responsibility. Rarely, however, are these shifts understood in relation to wider, neoliberal reforms (for exceptions see Jolly, 2007). In practise, these institutional shifts opened up new roles and opportunities for NGOS and private consultancy firms. Both are now heavily involved in service provision to states, international organisations, and donors (see Edwards & Hulme, 1995; Lewis, 2001). They operate in a marketised development field characterised by

short-term renewable contracts, competitive tendering processes, and, arguably, “dysfunctional outcomes” (Cooley & Ron, 2002, p. 6). At the same time, however, they are also expected to network, engage in partnerships, and cooperative activities.

So conceived, governance became the key frame for understanding the ways that international organisations work with each other and for setting the cooperation agenda. The UNIAP case demonstrates this point, but it also shows that good governance ideas can be deployed to make positive change rather than simply beat the world into a neoliberal order – it depends upon the political project. The UNIAP, for example, realised the limitations of formal, hierarchical coordination with market-like features, and shifted towards a more network approach. In reality, however, networks also had limitations (as we see below). The UNIAP eventually considered that there was more potential for coordination through multilateralism and turned, instead, to the power of the nation-state. The findings of this thesis demonstrate that neoliberal doxa is now being challenged. Although orthodox ideas dominate, heterodox reactions are manifest in the development field, which offers evidence that the doxa is open to question, despite the continued tacit adherence to neoliberal principles. The potential for institutional change, therefore, rests with heterodox notions of joined-up governance and harmonisation becoming more orthodox, and being institutionalised as such. Yet, waking people up from their “doxic slumber” may prove to be difficult (see Bourdieu, 2000, pp. 173-174). Currently this new orthodoxy is neither fully articulated, nor analytically connected in ways that make its normative application a straightforward matter, but this does not stop agencies applying it normatively in everyday practice.

In new institutional scholarship, as in wider governance practice, there remains something of a contradiction between critical analysis of institutional fields and the normative prescriptions of good governance and associated rhetorics of participation, collaboration, and partnership. In development fields where the predominant ethic is to make positive change,

this contradiction is readily apparent and gives an added edge to practice as actors juggle competitive and collaborative tendencies. A closer theoretical examination makes it clear that the notion of governance is a long-standing, complex, and contradictory amalgam of normative and analytical understandings drawn from multiple positions. While its coherences and incoherences are poorly understood, the framework ‘as a whole’ is asked to explain too much. In its re-emergence from within new public management and public choice theory and its conversion into good governance via new institutional economics, it has come to configure that mix of the normative and analytical in a particular normative way. This particular interpretation of what is ‘good’ and what is ‘governance’ is now applied reflexively and normatively to everyday practice as well as state and other organisations and the development programmes that they enact. The normative aspects become embedded in further rounds of reflexivity, such that the realities and agenda of (good) governance become even more complex.

### ***Mixed modes of governance: Hybridity in the development field***

In the sections that follow, I revisit the case of the UNIAP to bring the multiple strands of this thesis together into a final portrait of the complexities associated with international development coordination and the lessons my findings have for practitioners. Before looking back on these accounts, however, it is necessary to re-consider some of the discussions presented in Chapter 4 to reflect on the implications of the wider institutional development field in which the UNIAP is a part.

One of the implications that stems from this theoretical discussion is the way in which the UNIAP was a product of the governance agenda. Chapter four described in practical terms how neoliberal marketisation and new public management reforms represented a shift from traditional *hierarchies* to *markets* as governance structures in an attempt to lower transaction costs associated with principal-agent thinking and subsequent principal-agent



contractual problems (Powell & Exworthy, 2002). However, emerging fragmentation in and of itself became an issue. In terms of new public management, the resultant fragmentation raised transaction costs and engendered principal-agent problems as the growing number and mandates of national and international agencies competed for restricted resources. These contradictions have been understood from above and below in a language of networks. In the wider field of development as well as the case of the UNIAP (as described in Chapters 4 and 6), building and fostering networks became seen as a strategy for addressing these problems. NGOs, advocacy groups, and UN agencies sought to build different types of formal and informal networks so as to foster cooperation and address issues stretching across regions and/or across their mandates.

Although widely regarded as a desirable mode of governance, networks themselves engender unique challenges (Bevir & Rhodes, 2003; Rhodes, 1997, 2007). At times, they can add a complicating dimension in the coordination of complex problems such as human trafficking. Rather than reducing fragmentation, networks can sustain it through various joined-up forms of governance (Craig & Porter, 2006). Managing the interactions among the various modes of the resulting governance structure therefore becomes essential because different combinations, coupled with shifting power dynamics between agencies, can generate both cooperative and competitive tendencies (Lowndes & Skelcher, 1998). These were the basic, though highly complex parameters, against which UNIAP's coordinative work had to happen.

To summarise, questions about what governance structures will best foster cooperation rather than competition among international organisations will continue to be debated. Processes of reflexivity involving both an institutional analysis of hierarchies, markets, and networks and the practices of 'good governance' themselves have seen new institutionalism and everyday practiced discourses of governance proliferate in development fields. Our

understandings of institutions have thereby become reflexively implicated in the construction of institutional governance practices. With respect to coordination mechanisms, however, as the case of the UNIAP shows, whatever the mix of differing modes of governance (hierarchies, markets, networks, or hybrid), each form of coordination has its own set of costs and benefits. Eventually, though, the transaction costs for coordination in a plural, fragmented field based on new public management reforms still need to be paid (i.e. the time and investment in informal and formal meetings). Indeed, the findings of this research show that the language of coordination may be widespread, but it only has appeal insofar as it furthers the interests, aims, and objectives of participating agencies.

It is in the development field context that new institutional arrangements have been established to manage this deepening complexity through greater coordination. Initiatives involving state and non-state actors, such as the UNIAP, which operates under the leadership of the UN, are one of the main outcomes of the changing policy agenda and shifting forms of governance in development. The story of the UNIAP narrated in this thesis shows that in an increasingly interdependent, but also fragmented and competitive international development context, actors may choose to cooperate with one another if for no other reason than it seems to be a rational response to the complexities of the field underpinned by the desire to forge avenues of progress (see Brinkerhoff, 2002). Missing in this explanation, however, is an understanding of what will engender better coordination.

***Habitus and its implications: Hierarchical coordination through principal-agent relations***

The empirical implications of this investigation (Chapters 5 to 7) follow from the use of a unique analytical framework to understand the workings of a distinctive coordination project. By adopting an ambitious analytical framework to examine the UNIAP, this thesis presents a novel portrait of the emergence of a coordination development initiative. I unravel a story of a project designed to achieve coordination from an emerging re-configuration of

development agencies' agendas and mandates. Trafficking is an issue that is vague and complex, with a number of agencies trying to do 'everything'. The research illustrates that practitioners are continuously negotiating and renegotiating their realities through the discourses of human trafficking and interactions among stakeholders.

Bourdieu provides a framework for analysing the way structures are constituted in and transformed through social practice. The habitus, for example, is *structured* by past influences and the field, but it is also *structuring* because it produces a system of dispositions, which we perceive are possible, reasonable, and appropriate ways to act in everyday situations. His analysis reveals that it is development practitioners who interpret what cooperation will entail in terms of their organisation's operations and activities. My research on the UNIAP and the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT) process confirms that cooperation is shaped and experienced in practice by the actions of development practitioners in the context of the institutional field in which they perform. For example, the heavy focus on delivering quantifiable program or project outputs and measurable results meant that practitioners developed results-based frameworks largely in isolation, focusing solely on their own organisational programs, projects, and strategies. Without an equal focus on all relevant member agencies' programs, any attempt at coordination quickly becomes limited. But what does one define as outputs in terms of coordination? How does one measure results of coordination? This study shows that the ideal arrangement is to develop a comprehensive, jointly prepared, inclusive plan of action (e.g. the COMMIT Subregional Action Plan) in which all stakeholders have a vested interest in reaching common goals and objectives.

As we saw in Chapters 5 and 6, however, this was new territory for the team assembled to design a coordination mechanism involving many agencies and countries. The UNIAP planning team turned to existing orthodox models and to the breadth of their

individual and collective experiences. In this way, both the path dependencies of development practice, the habitus of different actors, and institutional ideologies embodied in the habitus became manifest in modalities of action. The experience confirmed Ferguson's (1990) findings that "because of the way 'development' interventions are institutionalised, there are strong tendencies for programs to be mixed and marched out of a given set of available choices" (p. 259). The existing institutional habitus of the group presented few tangible alternatives. Although interlaced with cooperative impulses, the strategies and practices were oriented towards establishing and/or protecting the autonomy and identity of their own organisations.

At the start of Phase I, the project was modelled along a principal-agent relationship, with the UNIAP framed to act as a *principal* and the member agencies (including a number of grant recipient NGOs) as multiple *agents*. Both groups – the UNIAP and the member agencies – believed this overarching mechanism was suitable to enable coordination. It might be argued the original group of UN agencies who conceived the inter-agency project expected it to operate on this basis, so as not to undermine their programs and activities, but the orthodox manner in which the UNIAP was set-up was at odds with this interpretation. A weakness in the principal-agent model is it assumes principals are routinely able to harness coordination in a hierarchical manner through market-like incentives and subcontracting. In other words, any stakeholder can be empowered to act as a principal as long as outputs are delivered and the needs of the situation are met. The experiences of the UNIAP show the limitations of this frame, especially in terms of the needs and desires of the other stakeholders in the field, who themselves needed and wanted to act as powerful principals, and even more importantly, leverage the different kinds of capital the UNIAP required to fulfil this role. What the planning team failed to take into account when choosing this hierarchical mode of governance was that the member agencies were motivated by the desire to produce

deliverables and outputs for their own programs and projects as per a results-based management (RBA) approach. The team also failed to take into account the member agencies' desire to enhance their own institutional positions, or symbolic capital, within the human trafficking field itself. Most importantly, the team failed to take into account a classic principal-agent problem, which is that powerful principals (or even weak ones in the case of the UNIAP) are forced to compete with one another. As a result, the potential value-added of coordination was forfeited from the start.

Although agencies were not necessarily opposed to cooperation in principle, they did not want to cede authority or control to a coordinating project. Member agencies restricted their engagement. Others ultimately refused to invest in it other forms of capital (i.e. financial support, sharing information, providing knowledge or input, and sending representatives to meetings), weakening its power as a coordination mechanism. At the end of Phase 1, most had effectively disinvested from the project. As a result, the member agencies, through their lack of support, denied the UNIAP the most important capital of all – the symbolic capital of recognition and legitimation. The symbolic power of constitution required for coordination is premised on the possession of symbolic capital, which exists “only when it is distinguished...through knowledge and recognition” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23).

The solution to this problem, or so the UNIAP staff thought, was to foster support through obligation (the rough mix of coordination by consensus and command embodied in the 14 Commandments), but this did not address the power disparities. Their bid to establish and assert control over member agencies faltered because hierarchical coordination requires vast amounts of capital, particularly symbolic capital, and the project had little of this commodity. For the other agencies it was clear that active participation in the UNIAP involved more costs than benefits. Because the UN member agencies saw no visible signs of how the UNIAP added value to their projects or programs, business continued ‘as usual’.

### ***Becoming a service provider: Combining lesser forms of capital***

By the end of Phase I, the UNIAP was struggling for survival. Designed as a stand alone development project, the UNIAP was forced to compete with its members. But unlike on the ground prevention and protection projects and programs operating under other UN agencies (described in chapter 5), a *coordinating* project did not have the same appeal. Donors tend to respond more favourably to interventions that are directly ‘helping’ real or potential trafficking victims. Member agencies also were reluctant to lend economic capital, claiming the money was already earmarked for program activities. Financially vulnerable, the project turned to the achievements of member agencies as a source of legitimation to gain the much needed symbolic capital to raise funds for a second phase. It was unclear, however, how the symbolic capital appropriation of the individual programs could be achieved legitimately.

The failure of the principal-agent design in the first phase meant that the UNIAP needed to evolve and be adaptive to its field. It was obvious from experiences in the first phase that no one had specifically defined what inter-agency coordination meant. In an attempt to diffuse some of the tensions and conflict, the project staff attempted to move towards a network mode of governance based around coordination discussions and building trust and communication. In the midst of an identity crisis, it was clear to the planning team that for the project to function as a successful coordinating mechanism, it had to offer something of value. In response to field demands, the project became a *service provider* in order to demonstrate its ‘added value’. As a result, the principal-agent framework was reversed – member agencies as multiple *principals* and the UNIAP as the *agent*. Coordination itself was defined in new public management terms as an output.

The project assumed a market mode of governance in positioning itself as a service provider to other agencies. Coordination was a function to be outsourced, which meant

supporting and strengthening the existing initiatives of member agencies. What emerged was a hybrid between market and network forms of governance, which enabled the exchange of lesser forms of capital (markets), such as social and information capital, through different inter-agency working groups and taskforces (networks). My research findings corroborate the work of Lowndes and Skelcher (1998), who conclude that “multi-organizational partnerships have a particular affinity with network modes of governance, but that – at different stages of the partnership cycle – hierarchical and market relationships also assume importance” (p. 320).

The aim became to promote interactions among government departments, NGOs, and UN agencies through a series of inter-agency meetings and taskforces built around complementary interests. The UNIAP agreed to act as a convenor, not taking action itself, but supporting the visions and activities of member agencies. In this *reversed* principal-agent design, coordination was an output to be achieved through negotiation among principals (member agencies), aiming first to exchange valued information through discussion, then proceeding to the establishment of a common agenda through consensus. Coordination by consensus ensures diverse interests are taken into account because no organisation would support actions that conflicted with its institutional interests. Acting as the agent and key intermediary link, the legitimisation of the project would come from the facilitated negotiations and decision-making of its principals.

Because human trafficking is a complex and multifaceted issue, however, the inter-agency meetings were often too large to foster concrete action. Even smaller taskforces were mired by discussions about organisational interests (e.g. children in human trafficking), making it difficult to achieve a common advocacy agenda. This problem arose even though the attendees were working towards the same goal (albeit a broad one) of combating human trafficking. In this reversed principal-agent relationship, while the UNIAP tried to reach

consensus on strategic planning and joint programming, larger UN agencies remained divided by individual and competitive imperatives. Their inability to concur reinforced the subordination of the project. The UNIAP was now performing a subsidiary role with limited potential for added value. Transactions costs were high because of the time required to achieve consensus, and the UNIAP was effectively dependent on the voluntary goodwill of the member agencies to send representatives. As the agent, the UNIAP only had the power to regulate the exchange of lesser forms of capital (i.e. trust-building, information, cultural, and social capital through networks); but this power, again, had its limitations.

***Limits of networks and social capital: The need to foster symbolic capital in development***

This research illustrates the need to understand not just the way development coordination is rationalised, but also the interactions among the different organisations. In Phase II, the UNIAP attempted to achieve coordination through a set of voluntary forums on specialised issues related to human trafficking; however, networks are more about the exchange of information and influence than concrete action. The UNIAP's experience suggests that even in established network contexts, strong incentives are necessary to stimulate effective participation. The regional inter-agency meeting in Bangkok, for example, proved popular because it had substantial symbolic value. Not only did most UN agencies send a high level representative to these meetings, but the meeting was always chaired by the Resident Coordinator. These meetings were used by organisations to showcase their wares to a competitive audience. Visibility and image are both critical in development. Efforts to plan strategically, however, were rarely attempted because negotiations proved too time consuming.

Smaller NGOs in the project benefited simply through their affiliation with it and by their connection to the UN's symbolic stature. These associations open doors for community based organisations such as those that invested heavily in the UNIAP. However, the larger,



more established international NGOs or UN agencies already had sufficient funds, expertise, and reputations in the human trafficking field. They were less inclined to invest heavily in a turf-trodding project that offered few services. The establishment of the UNIAP neither ensured coordination nor the building of social capital. As Bourdieu (1986) observed, networks of connections are the product of investment strategies aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that will secure material and/or symbolic profits. Participating in the UNIAP working group meetings was strategic and designed to achieve particular aims or objectives.

Social capital, in these terms, is exclusive. It provides members opportunities to leverage symbolic capital and exercise forms of domination through a broader set of exchanges. As the UNIAP inter-agency forums demonstrate, participation benefits are unevenly distributed and can intensify existing power relations. The more prominent organisations with well-funded human trafficking projects accrued the most obligations (in terms of transaction costs, time, and commitment, etc.), but they also acquired greater opportunities to further their interests. They were only willing to pay partially the transaction costs. The full participation of NGOs was usually discouraged, reinforcing the hierarchical relations between the UN and NGOs. In this situation, social capital was deployed as an instrument of power (also see Harriss, 2002; Rankin, 2004).

In these terms, coordination and harmonisation are perceived by actors in terms of individual interests. However they are also reliant on obscuring power dynamics by fostering ‘the spirit of sharing’ and mutual/collective benefits of efforts. To work effectively at the point of this contradiction and extract its potential benefits for development projects, it is imperative to acknowledge the significance of self-interest as a *motivating factor*, and also to articulate what these interests are – *the access, consolidation, and exchange of differing forms of capital*. These factors were rarely considered in discussions of cooperative strategies

among the agencies taking part in my study. This finding challenges Putnam's influential interpretation of social capital, which largely ignores the distribution of resources (see Harriss, 2002; Chapter 2 in this thesis).

The UNIAP staff assumed member agencies preferred coordination by consensus, but neither appeals to 'partnership' nor endless low level service delivery arrangements were enough to generate the commitment or combined capital needed for coordination. The agencies, under the umbrella of the UNIAP, continued implementing their own human trafficking projects or programs, either directly or indirectly through subcontractual agreements with government counterparts or NGOs. For example, they continued to deal with other agencies independently, print information, education, and communication (IEC) materials separately, and draft new project proposals with little or no consultation. This behaviour produced duplication and competition, but it allowed agencies to fulfil their responsibilities and generate new public management outputs.

By fulfilling their responsibilities to the inter-agency project, member agencies believed they were trying to 'do it all'. They feared that coordination would undermine their efforts to combat human trafficking by 'stealing' credit or symbolic capital away from their organisational achievements. In one sense, the UNIAP was yet another human trafficking project, duplicating many of the members' efforts. The principal-agent design limited the project's ability to facilitate cooperation between the UN agencies, governments, and NGOs. Coordination would have to be imagined differently to extract its potential and sustain claims of success. To accomplish this reimagining of coordination, the UNIAP had no choice but to raise its image and profile, or build its own symbolic capital.

### ***Sources of symbolic capital and power in development***

In Phase II, the UNIAP was restructured and moved under the auspices of the UN Resident Coordinator (UNRC) system. The hierarchical authority of the UNRC system and

its coordinating mandate meant that the project was able to draw upon its symbolic capital and symbolic power. This arrangement provided it with elements of legitimacy, credibility, and authority – forms of symbolic capital not previously possessed by the project. Nevertheless, the UNIAP was still reliant on member agencies as a source for material and other forms of capital. Demands on the project continued to exceed its capacity for service provision and coordination. The institutional strategies (i.e. becoming an agent while the member agencies became the principals, facilitating the exchange of lesser forms of capital, service provision, etc.) enabled the UNIAP to survive in the field, but they constrained its capacity for coordination. It was crucial that the role of the UNIAP be defined in a manner that added value to the programs, projects, and activities of member agencies if the project was to be seen as legitimate. To achieve this goal, the UNIAP turned to the symbolic power of member states.

The six governments of the Greater Mekong Subregion were powerful actors in and of themselves although countries such as Laos and Cambodia were highly reliant on the international community for development assistance. Collectively, the governments were able to delegate authority to the project, enabling it to play a larger coordination role in the region. The suggestion that a sub-regional agreement on human trafficking be developed meant that the UNIAP, as an instrument of member states, finally had the legitimating authority and power needed to gain access to all the differing forms of capital. In turn, however, the state, as an instrument of the project, provided a means for consolidating power in a more exclusive (and therefore valuable) way. As I argued in Chapter 4, there is a complex relationship of appropriation between the UN and member states. Multilateralism is in part an exercise of appropriating, or borrowing, the symbolic capital (legitimation and prestige) others have to offer. Thus the government-led initiative (COMMIT) generated confidence among donors in the UNIAP because engaging with governments is the *reason* for development inventions.

COMMIT also generated confidence, but also an urgent desire for member agencies to be formally and symbolically associated with the process. Jealousies and resentment flared among members when it appeared they might be left out. At the same time, governments were keen to participate because COMMIT had the potential to enhance their profiles and gain other forms of material and symbolic capital in the form of development assistance.

On October 29, 2004, when the six governments made a commitment to address human trafficking and signed the COMMIT Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), both symbolic capital and power was appropriated to the UNIAP because it had acted as the Secretariat. Put differently, the COMMIT process consolidated the *collective symbolic capital* from the three sources (the UNRC, the six governments, and the prominent UN players implementing the main human trafficking programs) in its differing forms. It engendered a privileged platform for the consolidation, exchange, and appropriation of capital, establishing the UNIAP as the overarching coordination mechanism originally envisioned when the project was first designed in the late 1990s.

Instead of just playing a supporting role as a service provider, the UNIAP mobilised the will and mandate of its six sovereign member states (*hierarchy*) to become more of a platform to foster capital mobilisation and exchange among governments (*markets*), and to facilitate a range of other relationships and/or dialogues among international and national human trafficking agencies and donors (*networks*). In other words, the project was a hybrid mechanism in which each mode of governance was operationalised and governed in relation to the other. In the marketised and fragmented field of development, it provided a framework within which the UNIAP could operate effectively as a coordination mechanism. And in doing so, the UNIAP established control over both the process of combating human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion and the field's resources, which gave the project

a concentration of symbolic power. At the same time, this *new principal-agent platform* offered actual and potential symbolic and other forms of capital to other stakeholders.

The project was no longer dependent solely upon the UN member agencies. The COMMIT process allowed the UNIAP to escape the direct control of its UN member agencies, whilst leveraging their symbolic powers against the member governments. Accumulating this collective symbolic capital was an active exercise in negotiating power relations, and as much about creative moments of exclusion as it was about generalised inclusion. As Bebbington (2002) argues, social relationships are resources that can be deployed in ways that facilitate access to other resources while excluding others from such access. These social relationships are always political and must be actively and courageously won. Creative, temporary exclusions antagonised member agencies, but had the intended inclusionary effects. The project finally had the symbolic power to act as a principal.

Because COMMIT was successful, the interest and willingness of the UN member agencies to support the project increased significantly. The Subregional Plan of Action, negotiated at the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM III) in 2005, was designed to shift the planning process into implementation mode by assigning responsibilities for implementation based on the comparative advantages of the different member agencies. Thus, the MOU that the UNIAP had helped establish was not just useful for the project's survival and continuation, it established a framework that was valuable to the governments and member agencies. As a result, both member agencies and governments were now willing to act as *agents*, and their participation was promoted as a privileged form of agency. The UN agencies would be able to link their project and program interventions to the COMMIT process. In the pivotal game of institutional funding, they would be able to appropriate, loan, and contribute capital from their separate human trafficking interventions to an inter-agency process without losing credit or autonomy.

In turn, the UNIAP would obtain additional funding for member agencies and governments to implement COMMIT activities, letting individual agencies implement the outputs of the Plan of Action directly. The interests of each organisation would be met, including the UNIAP, by virtue of being part of the COMMIT process. And the UNIAP would generate its own, desperately needed, symbolic capital and legitimacy, enabling it to attract capital from other sources. In essence, then, the member agencies and governments were lending their capital to the project in order to enable it to accrue its own capital, particularly symbolic capital, without taking the spotlight off the others. It was a matter of enacting a temporary exchange, in which capital was loaned, often enhanced, and then returned with interest. Finally, the UN agencies had sufficient incentives and motivation to invest in a coordinating project.

The COMMIT process was an unintended consequence, albeit one which, in retrospect, emerged from the underlying structure of the development field. It was never envisaged when the project was being re-designed during the transition phase. It neatly illustrates, as Ferguson (1990) argues, that “it may be that what is most important about a ‘development’ project is not so much what it fails to do but what it does do; it may be that its real importance in the end lies in the ‘side effects’” (p. 254). Because COMMIT proved successful, the UNIAP project moved into a third phase (December 2006 – November 2009). Building on its role as Secretariat, Phase III largely involves the coordination and resource mobilisation to ensure the effective implementation of the COMMIT Sub-regional Plan of Action. COMMIT enables the UN to discharge its mandate to assist governments to translate the global norms established through multilateral platforms into policies and action at the national level (Müller, 2001). The MOU and Subregional Plan of Action are powerful instruments for combating human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion. Not only has human trafficking been firmly placed on the national and regional agendas of the six

governments and re-inscribed its place on the international development agenda, the UNIAP has brought new knowledge and resources to help combat the issue.

### **Implications for practitioners involved in coordination**

#### ***The need for platforms for capital swapping: Combining markets, hierarchies, & networks***

Although there are context specific implications that stem from the UNIAP experience, it is possible to extend several of the findings presented in this chapter to other development coordination situations, with the caveat, expressed previously, that one must be cautious in such extensions because of contextual situations. For example, although various paths are available, it is important to accept and work within the nature of the field, focusing on creating stronger incentives for coordinated and cooperative approaches rather than attempting ambitious, top-down, strategically developed institutional reforms that may run against the grain of deeply held assumptions.

Development cooperation is often seen as a means to access and make the best use of scarce resources (capital). Although economic exchanges are critical (i.e. donor-NGO or UN-government), Bourdieu reminds us that other kinds of capital are equally important, such as human/cultural (technical expertise), social (connections), and informational capital. Because capital, or what Bourdieu refers to as symbolic capital and power, is the basis of legitimacy in the development field, ‘successful’, international organisations need to mobilise resources. This thesis highlights the tensions and contradictions that occur in development cooperation exchanges, which involve mobilising and accumulating these forms of capital. It demonstrates the centrality of capital exchanges to the strategic practices of agencies in the development field. It shows how these exchanges occur in what appears superficially to be simply cooperative contexts, but which are in fact calculated market-like exchanges in that they reflect not a level playing field of partnership, but existing hierarchies of power. Thus, this notion of capital exchanges captures both the impulse to engage in cooperation and,

concurrently, to the structural requirement to behave in strategic, competitive ways. ‘Capital swapping’, where different forms of capital are exchanged outside a market but for mutual competitive gain, is thus ‘structured’. This dynamic, which occurs across asymmetrical power relations, is obscured by the discourse of cooperation.

Another implication is the need to reconsider the role of the state. The case of the UNIAP shows that the symbolic capital and power of the state is potentially a potent factor in orchestrating complex coordination. What the COMMIT process demonstrates, however, is that states do not necessarily have a centrally privileged position in these inter-organisational networks (see Rhodes, 1997, 2007). Instead, their position is partly defined through shared interests, coordination, and the need for resource exchanges. Markets and hierarchies continue to persist and coexist alongside networked modes of governance in the human trafficking field as much as in British Third Way governance. Interorganisational relationships are institutionalised through plural modes of governance. In the context of the UNIAP, it was a matter of determining what governing structure(s) works best in terms of the field’s structure.

The strength of the UN lies in its unique abilities to engender hierarchically mandated, but horizontally coordinated, activities among states and agencies dealing with expanded mandates. Thus, the findings suggest we must move beyond processes of market exchanges or networks toward a more realistic appraisal of hierarchies, markets, and networks as modes of governance and coordination. More precisely, the question becomes whether principal-agent models represent an appropriate institutional framework in development. As the COMMIT process shows, the answer is ‘yes’ if one is able to create the proper hierarchical and market arrangements, which take into account, but also serve the interests of existing stakeholders and *principals* in the field. Efforts should enhance rather than impede the non principal-agent kinds of exchange required to facilitate cooperation. For practitioners,



however, if coordination mechanisms adopt one mode of governance (i.e. a narrow principal-agent hierarchal mode of contracting, which just creates new rival principals) or the wrong hybrid approach (i.e. overlooks the legitimate interests of powerful actors or relies on information-sharing in networks), coordination becomes ever more difficult in an increasingly messy development field.

The experiences of the UNIAP reveal that development practitioners are often ill-equipped in their habitus to overcome the challenges of coordination. The collaborative strategies developed were built upon idealised definitions of cooperation, whereas the practices of practitioners are driven by new public management-type contractual and project approaches focused on delivering visible outputs and immediate results. For example, if practitioners had focused less on 'building trust' and more on offering incentives, cooperation might have ensued. Instead, this was largely misrecognised because of their habitus and the way it moulds perceptions and actions. In the UNIAP case, a different competitive form of cooperation was eventually achieved by mobilising self-interest rather than 'mutual influence' and 'equal participation'. The findings suggest that although the structure of the development field mitigates against it, there is potential for coordination if institutions are built based on incentives (the mobilisation, accumulation, and exchange of resources). Mutual trust, assumptions of neutral power relations, and commitments to ethics of participation are not enough in settings where independence and institutional territories are fiercely guarded.

It is critical the UN is well resourced to reconcile institutional complexities and act as an arena for reaching international agreements and establishing regional or global conventions (Müller, 2001, p. 277). I argue there has never been a better time to work towards a more robust UN. The UNIAP was able to facilitate coordination among development agencies with partly overlapping and partly competing mandates in a field dominated by competitiveness over scarce resources and organisational insecurities. It also succeeded by appealing to a

wider scale of influence. Although not fully conscious of what it was doing in these terms, the UNIAP recognised that small scale initiatives advanced through the project were unlikely to facilitate long term cooperation. It built a broader, more comprehensive framework that set priorities and timelines through a multi-sector, multi-agency approach to human trafficking. Lacking support from its member agencies, it achieved this objective by mobilising the symbolic power of the UN, which is able to facilitate high-level dialogue and political commitment among governments on issues of regional and global importance.

### ***Final conclusions and recommendations***

There are other lessons to be learned from the UNIAP's experiences. First, this study has shown that if the aim is to go beyond the reciprocal exchange of information among agencies, and narrow, short-term contract based alignments, coordination mechanisms or frameworks cannot simply be placed around existing projects or programs. If possible, it is better to build on existing coordination structures, such as the UN Resident Coordinator system, or develop a framework/agreement from scratch. Second, if coordination is to be successful in complex, fragmented, and competitive fields, it is critical to recognise that behaviour among development organisations is driven by self interest. Participation in coordination processes is based on an assessment of self interests, which lie in obtaining access to different forms of capital, particularly symbolic (reputation, legitimacy, status) and economic (funding) capital.

Third, adding value through coordination is contingent upon establishing a platform that enables the consolidation, mobilisation, and exchange of differing forms of capital. Equally important is building "common accountability platforms" that ensure the appropriate participation of stakeholders through proper accountability structures (see Craig, 2003; Craig & Porter, 2006). Most platforms in development are temporary in nature and fail to take into account the political realities of the field in which they operate. But without such platforms,

the institutional logics that constitute the shared habitus of development practitioners will revert to existing modalities in the field. Current development practice does not recognise the centrality of *self interest and access to resources*. Effective cooperation within and between international organisations must be built through new institutions that ensure different forms of capital are brought to *one* table. Furthermore, coordination mechanisms or bodies must be given requisite authority and capacity (symbolic power) to enforce and induce cooperation.

Fourth, at the moment the governance paradigm is in flux and fraught with contradictions. It is neither adequately understood nor adequately operationalised in development. The arguments presented in this chapter have shown there is much room for consolidation. Otherwise, ‘good’ governance will continue to generate more complexities with no guarantees of effectiveness.

Finally, whether the ‘success’ of the UNIAP’s COMMIT lasts is another question. I was told in a recent conversation with someone who has been closely involved with the project since its beginning that “history is beginning to repeat itself” (personal discussion, August 23, 2007). With almost an entirely new staff in place, it appears mistakes similar to those in earlier phases are being made. The UNIAP is now struggling to coordinate the implementation the Subregional Plan of Action. Institutionalised competitiveness is showing itself once more. Likewise, internal accountability mechanisms remain weak on the part of those involved in the process. Stakeholders (UNIAP, member agencies, governments, etc.) are still held accountable through new public management contractual outputs. Despite its augmented symbolic stature, it has minimal power to enforce compliance with the Subregional Action Plan. A key question for future research then becomes: what is it about the structuring principles of the development field that often makes its effects ‘misrecognised’? As one of the more pensive practitioners I interviewed said:

I think we need to recognise the difference between what is urgent and what is important. These are two different things. If we are really doing this reactive job day

in and day out, we hardly get time to do something that we ought to be doing. .... Sometimes we are busy running in the same place. We need to step back a little bit and ask ourselves why are we doing what we are doing. Provide us some time for reflective thinking. (interview, November 2, 2004).

The practitioner is right. Just how effective these arrangements are, or will be in the future, is unclear. This thesis has shown the importance of theoretical understanding from empirical analysis. Additional research, for example, which looks at another inter-agency project with a different emphasis to see if my findings are comparable, would be beneficial. Even further investigation into Phase III of the UNIAP might assist practitioners to become more aware of the constitutive effect of the field's structure on their actions. Muddling through was justifiable in the case of the UNIAP. The reality is that this approach will be inadequate in the future given the current emphasis on harmonisation, alignment, and in terms of the UN 'delivering as one'.

My research showed that the polycentric nature of the UN system makes coordinated governance more problematic. As in other fields in development, no single governance element (hierarchy, markets, or networks) is sufficient to secure coordinated governance. New institutional thinking is necessary, thinking that must acknowledge both cooperation and competition and the dispersal of capital across the field, as well as accept departures from pure new public management models. Here, there are implications for researchers as well as practitioners. This thesis has shown the importance of theoretical understanding from empirical analysis. To expand our analysis of institutional arrangements devised to coordinate practices, research must continue to adopt more elaborate analytical frameworks if we are gain an accurate understanding of the inherent complexities embedded within the field of development. There are too many inadequacies associated with singular approaches (i.e. using just Bourdieu or one strand of new institutionalism) to understand the layers of such a complex field. For example, historical institutionalism may reveal the effects of past

experience, but unlike rational choice institutionalism, fails to explain how behaviour is strategic, particular over capital and power. I argue that more integrated frameworks are necessary if we are to understand better the interactions among development agencies. The alternative is that practitioners will not be able to coordinate sufficiently in order to meet the demands of expanded mandates. Again, this is partly because few practitioners are in a position to conceptualise either the complexities of the field or their inter-organisational relationships in operational ways. Even when there is recognition, there is an assumption that notions of good governance are necessarily sufficient

Cooperation can be, in and of itself, a competitive strategy, a pivotal finding in the case of the UNIAP. The UN is struggling to overcome its fragmentation through better coordination so as to ‘deliver as one’. However, to achieve reform, it must overcome entrenched territorialism among agencies and put aside a history of political struggle and institutionalised practices of turf protection. Reform must be negotiated in a field that understands it as winning and losing along established lines of struggle, marked by established boundaries of influence. Luck argues that, “the past six decades have seen dozens of reform efforts, most following recurring patterns and producing largely predictable results” (Luck, 2005, p. 407). Bourdieu helps us to understand the conditions in which change must be won and that it will be conditioned by established practices, dispositions, and understandings as well as policy and strategy. Creating an enabling environment for coordination is important. For this to happen, though, the naturalness of the marketised and competitive field of development must either be *challenged* (i.e. recognised as just one dimension) or *accepted* (i.e. recognised as an integral aspect to be managed).

All this reflects the inherent contingency of institutions in the development field. Arrangements such as the UNIAP are vulnerable to challenges from the legions of actors who routinely scrutinise them in search of opportunities for reform, as well as changing policy

settings externally and changing personnel (both internally and externally). New public management normalises, promotes, and routinises reform. Development practitioners must engage in their own continuous, routine politics and practices of creative protection and reproduction to sustain successful projects through continuous improvement and the appearance of reform. Although, as Bourdieu has illustrated, achieving radical change is challenging because practitioners adopt schemas and ideologies embedded within the institutional structures with little conscious thought, progressive practices can be eroded without reinforcing these schemas and ideologies and buttressing the institutions that give them sense.

This thesis has shed light on processes of achieving international development cooperation among organisations, governments, NGOs, and donors, but there is more work to be done on both what is necessary to sustain such progressive changes and to ask whether projects to achieve coordination can take different forms in different contexts. The findings suggest, for example, that coordination will prove less useful for different agencies, and we should expect that also to mean in different settings. What can be said with confidence, however, is that if practitioners have a better understanding and recognition of the institutional influences and constraints of the field on international development cooperation, they will be better positioned to recognise the potential value of coordination.

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