IV. Empirical Findings – Data Analysis

4.1. Introduction
This chapter forms the vantage point for the development of theory on teams and groups in an intergovernmental organisation. The analysis procedure of 50 qualitative, semi-structured interviews followed the grounded theory and constant comparative method approach as formulated in the methodology and methods part.

As argued throughout the previous chapters, at the heart of qualitative research and data analysis is a rich description. Therefore, emphasis will be put on the explanation of the development of patterns and their implications.

This chapter will start with answering the question whether or not group/team work exists in the investigated Organisations of the United Nations. The aim is to provide a definition for the constructs revealed during this research. Furthermore, the factors which enhance or hinder team/group work in this specific context will be explored and described. Moreover, it will be tested whether phenomena discovered in a non-governmental environment are also valid in an intergovernmental environment.

Finally, results of the findings of the analysis will be aggregated into a conceptual model.

4.2. Team or group work? A typology grounded in the data
The first research question ‘Do teams/groups in the United Nations exist and if so, what are they like?’ forms the point of departure of this research. The stories told by 50 individuals working in five different Organisations in the United Nations were analysed in detail to clarify which kinds of team and group work are practised.

The explanation of how team and group work is perceived in five United Nations Organisations will be developed in a threefold manner. Firstly, those characteristics will be explained that the majority of all interviewees relate to team and group work. Single quotes that best capture the content of these characteristics will be used as illustrations. Secondly, this study reverses the direction of discussion by evaluating characteristics of team and group work which were reported to be missing. Thirdly, the characteristics reported will be compared with theoretical definitions of team and group work. The analysis concludes in a typology of constructs.
Step 1: How do individuals perceive team and group work

The first step of data analysis revealed that the basic question “Do you work in a team or group” could not be answered straightforward. The most common approach interviewees chose to answer the question was to describe the hierarchical position of both co-workers and supervisors and to list the different nationalities interviewees work with. The following quote is a typical sample for a response:

Well, I had a supervisor from Sweden and then from Belgium. [...] And my colleague from Haiti has been here for a while as well. (P9:06)

Another pattern which emerged in this first step of analysis is that interviewees tried to position themselves as a specific type of member of a team or group. The narratives would start with ‘I am …’ and result in a self-categorisation of interviewees as either a member or a leader of a team or group.

I work with 5 technical officers in a group and in collaboration with another officer. (P20:19).

I am a group leader. (P26:17)

I am a team leader of 5 persons. (P35:11)

I am part of a planning team in a project. (P41:13)

90 % of interviewees then described their tasks and responsibilities. They were of a very different nature depending on the Organisation the interviewees

Source: author
worked for and depending on the type of staff the interviewees belong to. However, and regardless of the function of interviewees, two patterns emerged. On the one hand, interviewees highlighted the importance of management as the main factor of whether or not team and group work functions. Interviewees referred to the responsibility of a team and group leader to develop processes within the team and group to make it work. These processes are among others the communication style, the extent to which information is shared among staff, the coordination of tasks or the way how decisions are made. The quote below refers to how the likelihood of conflicts has been reduced by setting up specific processes:

I have learned to direct certain team processes right from the beginning before team work degenerates into chaos and conflict. (P19:28)

The narratives around management were numerous and extensive and will be explained in more detail in the course of the data analysis. On the other hand, an element of team and group work alludes to personality of individuals as a factor of whether or not team and group work is construed, and how it is accomplished. All interviewees reported at some stage that the personality of co-workers was a crucial element in group functioning. Personality was explained to be a stronger factor of influence than nationality and hierarchy. Personality too will be explained in more detail in the further course of this analysis.

The first step of data analysis further showed that around 60% of all interviewees interpretations of team and group work can be categorised around two intertwined behaviours which interviewees relate to team and group work: communication and coordination. According to the majority of the interviewees, communication involves the exchange of information and knowledge among the members of a team and group.

In my view, collaboration in teams stands for transfer of thoughts and knowledge. (P17:22)

A distribution of information provides each member with the information that is necessary to fulfil a task. The interviewee below accentuates equal treatment of all members in a network:

... equality for all, everyone gets information on anything and participates. Whether or not they are able to participate is another question but there is no separation of information. No. there is a network in which everyone is equal. When we plan a project all of our colleagues
work on it, everyone adds a part and everyone corrects the others… (P29:26)

Moreover, the exchange of information is described as being intensive in order to gain as much background as possible:

It is a process, which consists of a lot of exchange with the person that stands between XX and the American who does the analysis. Also, there is a lot of exchange because this person has been working here for a long time and knows a great deal. He is Austrian. And I personally, try to understand the background of everything and to develop myself because I have not been working here for a long time. This means for me constant questioning why things are the way they are. […] the rest is operational work which I do all by myself. (P11:120)

The means of communication may vary from email to written reports or meetings (reported by 90 % of interviewees).

The extent to which team and group members share information among themselves depends on the coordination of the team and group with regard to tasks and resources:

Each person is allocated specific tasks. For example a press conference is being organised – I need to inform the media, I have good contacts with Austrian and international media. Interviews need to be organised and the TV stations as well. Each person always has the same task and knows what to do. (P21:08)

As described by the majority of interviewees, coordination is executed in a top down approach. The example below derives from a high ranking employee who is responsible for the strategy and development of a project:

Well, I have another responsibility now in a coordinators role, called human security. […] on one hand, I develop strategies, strategies for the house, what does UNIDO do in this area, which services do we offer, what impact do our programmes have and on the other hand it is project development. And here we work together with technical departments and this means teamwork. Teamwork on another level; meaning that we develop a project together. (29:08)
Step 2: What is missing according to individuals?

When I asked interviewees ‘How do you define team or group work?’ they became aware of the difference between the two concepts. However, despite this awareness, the terms *team* and *group* are words that were used very loosely: the majority of interviewees predominately used the term team, a considerable number mainly referred to the term group but most of the time interviewees used the terms interchangeably in the course of their narratives. Even when explaining the concepts it became clear that the simple use of terms does not mean that the concept beyond it corresponds to the terminology used. Individual work does not become group work simply because it is called so nor does group work become team work for the very same reason (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993).

At the same time, some interviewees realised that – according to their very own definitions of team and group work – some major characteristics might be missing in their current work situation to make it a team.

One of these elements reported by interviewees is performance measurement. Around 25 % of interviewees reported either a lack of performance measures or the wrong means of measurement:

They [management] should look at what they [group/team] achieved and set indicators to measure their performance. (P18:12)

There are performance indicators for projects but they have relatively little implications. (P19:93)

Of course there are performance evaluation reports for the individual. One can say that one has developed this and that but that does not say anything about the success of the project whatsoever. This is definitely missing. (P29:35)

Around 10 % reported a lack of participation in the decision making process:

They (the supervisors) say that we can participate in the decision making process but in the end only for non-essential issues. (P40:20)

Another 10 % of interviewees remarked that the overall structure of the United Nations Organisation is based on a hierarchical model and therefore does not allow team work.

Consequently, a summary of the first two steps of data analysis on how individuals construe team and group work delivers the following insights. Narratives on team and group work are in 45 out of 50 interviews associated with organisa-
tional characteristics such as hierarchy and bureaucracy. The work situation is described by referring to the organisational context which comprises a diverse workforce with diverse national and cultural origin. Almost 90% of interviewees explain team and group work by relating it to hierarchical positions and functions of individuals in those positions. Despite the fact that interviewees were not provided with a definition for the terms ‘team’ and ‘group’ work but rather had to try to define the constructs themselves, more than half of all interviewees acknowledged that some elements which may characterise real team and group work might be missing in their daily work lives.

Step 3: Comparison with theoretical constructs of team and group work in academic literature

In the next step of analysis I compared the explanations of the interviewees with regard to team and group work with theoretical concepts in academic literature. This step comprised a comparison of definitions of the terms ‘team’ and ‘group’ to determine which type of work – group and/or team work - exists in the United Nations Organisations under investigation.

A clear definition for the underlying concepts needed to be provided, hence, the simple but comprehensive definition by Katzenbach & Smith (1993) seemed appropriate for this research setting.

Definition of the term “team”:
A team is a number of 2 or more people who are committed to a common goal which is specific and different from each team member’s individual goals. Team members work collectively to reach this goal. They share leadership roles and follow a collective decision making process. Furthermore, the solution to problems is found in the course of collective discussion. The outcomes of the team work are subject to collective performance measurement.

Definition of the term “group”:
A group is a number of 2 or more people who are committed to a common goal which is similar to the broader organisational goals and each group member’s individual goal. Group members work individually to reach their goals. The leadership role is centralised at one person who is also responsible for the decision making process and who delegates individual tasks. Finally, the outcome of group work is subject to individual performance measurement.

Table 5 summarises the main differences between a team and a group:
Table 5: Team vs. group requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific goal which is exclusively de-</td>
<td>Goal is the same as the broader organisational mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>livered by the team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared leadership roles</td>
<td>One strong leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective decision making</td>
<td>Centralised decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective work-products</td>
<td>Individual work-products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective discussion and solution of</td>
<td>Delegation of individual tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective performance measurement</td>
<td>Individual performance measurement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: adapted from Katzenbach & Smith (1993)

This clear distinction between the terms team and group allowed for a typology of what kind of team and group work exists in the United Nations Organisations under investigation.

A comparison of the interview data with the requirements for team and group work showed that the individuals’ work environment is strongly influenced by hierarchy and bureaucracy. As a result, highly ranked staff within the hierarchy is in a position of power, makes decisions and delegates tasks. Task specialisation permits individual performance measurement. Thus, formal requirements for team work are not met. The data however refer to the existence of group work.

Based on the different definitions and underlying explanations of interviewees, three typologies of group work could be established and are grounded in the data. In the following, task forces, project groups, and collaboration and their categorisation into a typology of group work will be explained in some detail and illustrated by sample quotes.

**Task forces**

When the organisation needs something special to be done, it creates a small group to do it. This small group is brought together temporarily for a specific purpose and exists only until the problem is solved. Management literature calls these task forces ‘temporary groups comprising people with complementary
skills who work to a common purpose for which they are collectively accountable’ (Child, 2005, p.102).

Task forces are flexible. They can focus on whatever problem of immediate importance. They often bring together people from different sections or divisions of the organisation to work on a cross-functional purpose. In this way, task forces use information and knowledge from several sources which may induce new ideas and generate new directions. Rules and regulations may sometimes be simplified for task forces. There is a dedicated leader of the task force. Decision making is based on hierarchical position. All of these characteristics are grounded in the interview data and illustrated by sample quotes. Task forces are explained to be set up for two specific purposes: non-routine purposes and emergency events.

Interview 31: Task force for non-routine purposes

There were ad hoc groups, hundreds of them. These ad hoc teams could be found in the whole UN. High ranking officials were responsible for the important issues. They gathered for non-routine purposes which - in my view - were much more interesting. (P31:26-28)

There were also special teams for annual meetings. The special advisor had a supporting team as there was tremendous administrative work which had to be done under extreme time pressure while certain formal standards had to be maintained. A well functioning team was therefore very important. (P31:38)

Interview 42: Task forces for emergency events

It works like this: there is a catastrophe. Let’s take the Tsunami as an example. We then needed many people, 50 or so, and once again, we break it down to 5 people, 5 people are a team which works somewhere in coordination. […] and then we select the team here. Our office is responsible for this and one of us here […] leads this team most of the time. We – senior people – lead the teams. (P42:24)

Our administration just called. They work for us in a simplified way […] we do not have to go through the same administrative system like the other agencies. This is emergency response and all our deadlines and rules for recruiting and sending off people into the field and applications for money are shortened. […] recruitment can be done within 48 hours. (P42:48)
Project groups

A project group according to the interviewees is established for the duration of a specific project. There are certain rules how to apply for a project, how to develop project work plans, and about the duration of projects. Furthermore, reports about the progress of the project have to be delivered on a regular basis. Once the project is completed, group members are reassigned to new projects or their contract is determined. If the goal could not be reached the project may be extended. These project groups have a designated project leader. Tasks are distributed according to specialisation.

Project groups are reported to be found in technical units like the IAEA as well as in UNDP. The following quotes illustrate the findings:

Interview 20: Project group in IAEA

The application for the current project idea started in Sep. 2005. We are currently evaluating the applications, and at the end of 2006 we will visit the country and prepare a detailed plan of work for the next 2 years. The project will start in 2007 and run for 2 years. After 2 years you decide to extend the project or not. It depends on whether they reached their goals or not. But there will be reports every 6 months to see how the project is going. (P20:19)

For example we need to talk to farmers. I don’t actually do it myself, the scientists there are responsible for it. But we bring a certain technology there and hope that it is successful. (P20:11)

I work with 5 technical officers in a group and in collaboration with another officer. (P20:15)

Interview 13: Project groups in UNDP

The work in small groups is running. There are 120 persons and they work in groups of 5 to 10 persons, there are project manager, decision makers and supporting staff, another 5 persons who do the paperwork etc. Every 6 weeks there is a huge meeting which is more like an informative management meeting. (P13:77)
Collaboration

Wagner (1995) defined collaboration as a ‘wilful contribution of personal effort to the completion of interdependent jobs’. This form of work was reported by interviewees within all five Organisations under investigation. Typically, this form of collaboration involves communication and exchange of information among individuals. However, there is not necessarily a common goal collaborating individuals work for. Their collaboration might be a result of work in the same division or under the same manager.

Interview 4: Collaboration and Management

Everyone is involved, everyone has to describe his/her job. XY is the quality manager who supervises everything. (P4:45)

Interview 23: Collaboration and Co-Workers

For technical requests an Austrian technician is responsible, he is my contact person and I work very closely with him. (P23:04)

Interview 38: Collaboration and task

It is repetitive, a lot of routine, the process and the workflow is very well defined. (P38:16)

The typology presented shows that the extent to which group work takes place strongly depends on two factors: the timeframe and the degree of task specialisation. Task forces operate on non-routine tasks and are set up at an ad-hoc basis for a short period of time. Project groups work on well defined tasks for a longer period of time. Collaboration implies high task specialisation and unlimited timeframe.
Figure 3: Types of group work

In a follow up conversation with five selected interviewees from different hierarchical positions and organisations I presented the typology of groups that evolved from the first part of data analysis. This feedback loop was very important to make sure that the narratives of interviewees and my interpretations of them do not digress. The typology was approved by the control group of interviewees. After interviewees were provided with a clear definition for the term team and the term group as shown in table 2, all of the five interviewees acknowledged the difference between the two concepts. Moreover they agreed that team work by this definition does not exist in the five United Nations Organisations under investigation due to structural restrictions of the overall organisation, which will be explained in the next part of analysis. Table 3 illustrates the typology of group work which emerged in the course of data analysis and by relating the data back to theory. The table gives an overview of all findings:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of group</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Most significant quote</th>
<th>Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task Forces</td>
<td>For non-routine events or emergency events. Highly knowledgeable and/or especially skilled staff is assigned fully to an event. E.g. peacekeeping teams or high-level staff teams</td>
<td>It works like this: there is a catastrophe. Let’s take the Tsunami as an example. We then needed many people, 50 persons and once again, we break it down to 5 persons, 5 persons are a team which works somewhere in coordination. [...] and then we select the team here. Our office is responsible for this and one of us here [...] leads this team most of the time. We – senior people – lead the teams. (P42:24)</td>
<td>Trained emergency tasks e.g. earthquake or military mission. Highly intellectual tasks and/or political decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project groups</td>
<td>Established to fulfil a specified task or project within a certain time frame. On completion members are reassigned to new projects or end contract (modification based on Child, 2005, p.105)</td>
<td>The work in small groups is running. There are 120 persons and they work in groups of 5 to 10 persons, there are project manager, decision makers and supporting staff, another 5 persons who do the paperwork etc. Every 6 weeks there is a huge meeting which is more like an informative management meeting. (P13:77)</td>
<td>Clearly specified in project outlines, interrelated tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Wilful contribution of personal effort to the completion of jobs (based on Wagner, 1995, p.152)</td>
<td>For technical requests an Austrian technician is responsible, he is my contact person and I work with him very close. (P23:04)</td>
<td>Routine tasks, well defined, individual goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3. Properties of group work

The first major step of data analysis revealed that group work summarised in three broad typologies is practised in the five United Nations Organisations under investigation. In a further step the properties of group work will be explored. All properties are derived from the interview data. Some of them emerged in the first step of analysis towards a typology; others emerged in the course of iteration and constant comparison.

The properties can be grouped around three main categories which emerged in the course of analysis, the first being the organisational level of the overall United Nations System comprising the Organisation’s structure and processes. Second, the group level incorporates employee-management relationships and employee-co-worker relationships, and third, the individual level comprising personal attributes of individual employees represents another property of group work. Moreover, boundary spanning activities were identified to act as a moderator.

Figure 4 shows the process of how the categories emerged and led to generate a conceptual model. Each category which represents a property of group work will be explained in more detail in the remainder of this chapter which will conclude with the presentation of the conceptual model. Propositions will be deduced from the empirical analysis and formulated at the end of this chapter.

Figure 4: Emergence of categories

Source: Data analysis
4.3.1. Organisation

4.3.1.1. Structure of the organisation

Like all organisations, the United Nations Organisations have a structure, lines of authority, formal communications, formal policies and formal rules (Beigbeder, 1987). In other words, the structure of the organisation is determined by hierarchy and bureaucracy.

According to Child (2005), hierarchy, as part of the structure of an organisation, is depicted by different positions of power within the hierarchy and adjunctive authority as well as reporting lines. The specialisation of tasks takes place according to functions like units, groups and roles. Furthermore, the structure of an organisation contains procedures to clarify to staff what is expected from them. This is translated into rules and standards (bureaucracy).

4.3.1.1.1.Hierarchy

Hierarchy is a fact of both human and organisational life. The bigger an organisation the more hierarchically structured it usually becomes. This way, organisational members can distinguish between different levels of responsibility, authority and power. It also identifies accountability.

In a conventional organisation, hierarchy is characterised as follows (adapted from Child (2005, p.61):

- Positions are structured into clearly differentiated levels
- People at higher levels have greater authority and responsibility and take decisions that are riskier and more complex
- People at a higher level have the authority to give instructions or request to those lower and are ultimately responsible for the people at lower levels
- People at lower levels have the right to ask for guidance or instructions from the ones above them
- Leadership is exercised top down through command, coordination and control
- People at the higher level receive information before it is passed down to the lower level

A purposeful way to explain the hierarchy of the United Nations Organisation is by using the United Nations Systems’ salary structure which mirrors the hierarchical structure of the entire organisation.

The United Nations salary system comprises 15 ranges of salary. The number of ranges is dependent on the number of hierarchical levels in the Organisation. The skills which are required for a job, the responsibilities of the employee, the supervisor or subordinate status of staff are determined by the level they occupy in the structure.
The majority of the affiliated Organisations of the United Nations System are divided into 15 ranges. Only recently, select Organisations were consolidated into four main ranges or so called bands (Fernandez, 2005) as shown in the figure below:

Figure 5: Hierarchy of Staff in UN

Source: modified from Fernandez, 2005, p. 149

Band 4 staff (or D-staff) is divided into two Director Levels (D1 and D2) as well as the levels of Assistant Secretary-General and Under-Secretary-General in some organisations and Assistant Director-General and Deputy Director-General in others. D-staff represents the highest level of staff within the hierarchy. Job duties involve, for example, strategic and / or political responsibilities. Band 3 staff (P-staff) or professional staff comprises three grades: P3, P4, P5 whereas band 4 comprises two grades, namely P1 and P2 (includes also JPO, Junior Pro-
fessional Officer). These middle and junior management positions involve management activities and are quite frequently based on contracts with a specific date of expiry and therefore have to be renewed from term to term. Thus, the principle of rotation applies to all of the bands described so far. Furthermore, staff on the professional and director level usually are recruited internationally and are paid on the basis of salary scales which were established by the General Assembly and apply worldwide.

Finally, band 4 (G-staff) in the General Service comprises seven levels from G1 to G7. General Service staff is recruited locally and broadly speaking is responsible for administrative tasks. G-staff traditionally holds permanent contracts which are not subject to renewal. Overall, each band is connected to specific tasks, responsibilities and job related specialties such as the rotation principle.

Both the traditional as well as the broadbanded structure show that there is a strong hierarchy within the United Nations Organisations System. The existence of a strong hierarchy is also emphasised by the individual perceptions of 90% of all interviewees:

[..] what strongly characterises the UN is that there are strong hierarchies. Well, it is all ... work is in line. Yes. The hierarchies are very strong. (P30:12)

The hierarchy is very strict, I personally find that this is not beneficial for the outcome...let’s put it this way. That does not mean that I really want to complain about it but it is a fact that it is very hierarchical here...yes, there is a section head, from an actual head to director general and back...so it is all very hierarchical. (P39:39)

A point which might need to be considered which is negative is this strong hierarchical system...that everything works according to fixed rules...it is very narrow and one does not have a lot of freedom, almost any step is given somewhere and has to be respected ...but whether this is good or bad is not up for discussion. (P2:22)

4.3.1.1.2. Bureaucracy

As touched upon briefly above, hierarchy often arises hand in hand with bureaucracy expressed by rules and regulations. The idea of bureaucracy is generally traced to Woodrow Wilson’s (Wilson, 1887) influential article ‘The study of administration’ and Max Weber’s work (Weber, 1922, 1962, 1978). To Weber, bureaucracy was a system of administration carried out on a continuous basis by trained professionals according to prescribed rules (Beetham, 1996).
The key features of the ideal type of bureaucracy according to Weber are (Allison, 1984):

1. Official functions organised on a continuous basis and regulated through a system of rules and procedures
2. A division of labour so that each function has its specific sphere of competence
3. A hierarchical structure providing for the supervision of lower offices by higher ones
4. Technical rules and norms – their application requires that officials have received appropriate training, thus possess technical qualifications
5. A separation of the property of the organisation from that belonging to the official as a private individual
6. A written record of all administrative acts, decisions and rules

Bureaucracy is a means to describe relationships between organisational members in two ways: on the one hand as a relationship of power and on the other hand as a relationship of care (Sewell & Barker, 2006). When bureaucracy works through the operations of hierarchy and rule based conduct, it forms a relationship of power. Consequently, bureaucracy can be seen as an instrument of power and control dominated by the top level of a hierarchy.

Complementary to this, bureaucracy may also be seen as a means to protect the organisation and its individuals from adverse actions of managers or co-workers. This ambiguity is also reflected in the interview data:

... in the UN many bureaucratic steps are undertaken because we need to control each other... [...] the bureaucracy in the UN is based on mutual distrust, which, yes, this is sometimes important to say because control is sometimes better than trust. (P13:39)

Well there are many many things one needs to know and which might be considered as bureaucracy in the broadest sense. But I think that this is indispensable. If an organisation is a certain size, this organisation needs a framework, a structure, which can be controlled and which people can work within. Unfortunately it does not work otherwise. (P29:48)

The bureaucracy of the United Nations System is a rather old bureaucracy in comparison with other intergovernmental organisations like, for example, the European Union. Thus, the United Nations System has experienced a lot of re-
forms since the foundation of the system in 1945. These reforms were due to the dramatic operational expansion of the United Nations Systems throughout the years (Annan, 2006).

In the course of reforms, several internal reports have repeatedly reported one major structural problem of the United Nations System as expressed in the following:

- UN rules and regulations are too complicated and too numerous to serve as clear guidance for staff (Beigbeder, 1997)

Despite numerous attempts to reform the bureaucratic system, complexity is still a fact of organisational life (90 % of interviews).

One interviewee argued that because of the long existence of the bureaucracy and the various changes due to reforms and changing general directors, the overall bureaucracy became even more complex throughout the years:

The UN bureaucracy has no logic. It has grown but the ones who make the bureaucracy only stay for 2 years and their successors do not look at what the people previously have done and so it all becomes quite illogical. (P13:81)

Or as stated by another interviewee:

It (the bureaucracy) is terrible! Each general director promises to reduce it but this never happens...it is absurd, there is practically no control in the web and you need 1000 signatures for even the smallest things. (P23:14)

Another staff member who worked for the United Nations 20 years ago, left to become self-employed and has returned to work on a 3-year contract remarked the following:

Well I have the feeling that it all slowed down. Purchasing for example used to be much faster in the past, now one needs much more time. Recently it has taken 4 month to order equipment. (P24:16)

There are too many subdivisions. Each huge organisation structures a lot, too much, the processes become very long. (P24:16)

In general, the interviewed staff perceived bureaucracy to be extremely strong and especially hard to learn when beginning to work at the United Nations Or-
ganisation. This point has been emphasised by the majority of interviewees who also mentioned the need to rely on the help of others to get acquainted with bureaucracy:

Oh, it is a disaster. The processes and protocols are amazing. It takes 400 times longer than learning the alphabet. But you know, they have to be accountable and there are so many projects that’s why they need all the protocols. So basically, I think it is all because of accountability. But the processes themselves are not clear. I am glad I have people I can ask. (P22:12)

Another interviewee described a feeling of being lost in bureaucracy by referring to being an apprentice who has to learn from scratch:

I have the feeling, well, I feel like an apprentice again. (P41:92)

The feeling of being lost in rules and regulations was also shared by another interviewee who has spent several years in the United Nations. The interviewee distinguishes between ‘official rules and regulations’ and ‘personal rules’ set up by individuals and not by the system. As touched upon earlier, the bureaucracy of the United Nations is a rather old one and has repeatedly changed, but also seems that it has been gradually built up over the years. These procedures are outlined in the following quote which helps to give a feeling for what awkward really means:

Up to now I still don’t know how and why things work and others don’t. There are different levels. On one hand there are relatively many rules, general rules and specific UNOPS rules which demand a lot of bureaucratic processes. And then there is the next level [...] I’d like to give an example: there are UN rules which state how to do the purchasing. If we have finally signed a contract, then, according to the rules, the producer has to send the original invoice. Why the original invoice...this originates from the old times ... supposing there was just one invoice which could guarantee that a) the invoice is correct and b) it is not paid twice. We still carry along the processes of the old system; we say that we need an original invoice. Well, we receive the original invoice; the project manager receives it, that’s only a personal thing that does not have anything to do with rules. The project manager copies the invoice and passes it on to his payment assistant; the payment assistant copies it for personal records and passes it on the finance. Finance holds the original. This means that paper load is
tripled but this is not a rule, it simply is like that because one day someone started doing it like this. If there is no original invoice because it came by fax it has to be approved by the division chief which does not make sense at all because a division has around 700 projects. And to know of 700 projects which one is an original invoice and has someone twiddled something does not make sense. [...] Anyhow, the invoice has to be signed and makes its way through many hierarchical levels. It takes a long time until it finally gets paid. Our task with this business process reengineering is to find out where do rules apply and where do we find processes which have developed over the years and became a habit. (P44:75)

However, the remarks about bureaucracy by the various interviewees should also be put into perspective. It is a kind of stereotype that public or intergovernmental organisations have particularly high levels of rules and red tape, hence bureaucracy. A number of studies have compared structural characteristics of private companies and public or intergovernmental organisations (Rainey & Bozeman, 2000). Opposing the existing stereotype, these studies did not report significantly different levels of red tape (Bozemmann & Loveless, 1987). This view was also shared by a few interviewees who have had working experience outside of the United Nations System:

...to be honest, in huge companies like Bertelsman or IBM or others it was the same, it has to be like that. You need the different checks and balances. (P16:13)

If something becomes big, all huge organisations tend to document everything, to streamline it and then you have all these procedures which one has to respect. Everything that becomes big becomes relatively inflexible, on the other hand it becomes manageable because of the process... (P9:44)

Hmm...the bigger the company the more bureaucratic it becomes. It was the same when I worked at Ericsson, people had enough to do without producing any output. They were so occupied internally that no one would notice that there is no output. (P2:93)

Regardless of whether differences or similarities were highlighted throughout various studies, it was found that any activity related to personnel administration typically faced much more red tape in government organisations (Bozemmann,
This topic will be investigated in more detail in the following section as it was a significant factor in the interview data.

### 4.3.1.2. Human resource management

A general objective of Human Resource Management is to find staff who match the abilities and attitudes desired by the organisation to provide just compensation and benefits and to guarantee continuous career management (Fernandez, 2005).

Being an international, intergovernmental organisation with 191 member states challenges the Human Resource Management of the United Nations System as each member state shall be represented proportionally in the various United Nations Organisations and gender equality shall be provided (UN, Charter). The subsequent implications are structured in the following into topics such as recruiting, contracts, career development and termination of contracts.

#### Recruiting

The United Nations System has strict recruitment policies to ensure transparency, equality and fairness. These policies are reflected in very detailed job descriptions. Furthermore, the venue and length of advertisements is clearly specified and the selection of personnel is subject to strict rules. Overall, the recruitment procedures are indeed complex and lengthy. On average it takes 174 days from the time a vacancy is announced to the time the candidate is selected (Annan, 2006).

This was also pointed out by two interviewees:

> It can take months until one gets an answer. I applied for a job in May and it was September when I was informed that I would have an interview. (P21:28)

> HR is very slow, everything has to work according to specific rules...but I think this does not depend on the people but on the processes. (21:32)

A speciality of the recruiting system is that the United Nations Organisations generally look to promote existing staff before recruiting from the outside by, for example, reassigning staff from headquarters to perform various field jobs and project related work (Fernandez, 2005). This is possible because of the diverse workforce that exists within the whole United Nations System which is one of the advantages of intergovernmental organisations. One interviewee high-
lighted the advantages of this recruitment process and described the internal application process as well as the possibilities to climb the hierarchy as follows:

There is a tender which means that all posts are part of the tender. If I find an interesting job on our website I can apply for it, then I might be invited to an interview and maybe I get the job. This means I can always apply for something else. For example, my job is a G-4 position. If I have 5,6,7 years of work experience, that’s most of the time the minimum, and maybe my section head retires, then I will apply for his job, which is a G-5 job. (P9:76)

However, one of the downsides of staffing in intergovernmental organisations results from political appointments. According to two interviewees:

This is a political organisation. So there are 191 member states, they are governments; they are not people, so they have their own interests. [...] But then sometimes you know, member states lobby certain posts, high level posts, it is all a fact of life. So you have to take that into account. It is not only about performance. But that’s a fact of life in the UN. (P47:122)

Sure, the environment is very political here. But somehow it is just like in the public authorities…with a new government comes a new minister… (P39:70)

**Different contracts**

Another downside of the United Nations Human Resource Management is evident in the plethora of different types of contractual arrangements. On the one hand, they are difficult to administer as the contracts range from permanent to monthly contracts with enormous variations between and among contracts. On the other hand they create inequality and resentment between staff as it is a fact of life that staff work side by side in similar positions but receive different financial remunerations and services.

An interviewee makes the point:

When it comes to contracts there is extreme variety. There are people who handle themselves from one 3-month-contract to another and there are people who hold permanent contracts, quasi for the rest of their lives. And in between there are various nuances with regards to the length of a contract. There are people who do similar jobs but have very different contracts. (P44:39)
Yet another issue which arises as a result of differing lengths of contracts is reflected in the rotation of higher ranking staff which is due to rotation policy. The latter involves rotation of usually higher level staff between positions and locations on a regular basis (between 1-3 years). Interviewees explain that this rotation policy triggers constantly changing procedures:

I see a problem in the enormously strong change. The frequency is very likely one and a half years for international staff. Very often international staff is the high ranking staff which makes the decisions. And that’s where I see the big problem …because of a lot of rotation and changes in decisions. It’s just like if you work in an Austrian company and the persons who make decisions change every year, and then there are also problems. (P13:48)

The rotation policy is seen twofold: on the one hand a regular change of high ranking staff leads to consistently changing decisions and practices and hinders stability while on the other hand it seems to be indispensable when it comes to political issues. Furthermore, rotation does not only have negative aspects but also positive ones if, for example, it ensures continuous learning and progress. One interviewee highlighted the differences between the need for stability and the need for progress:

P-Staff have this rotation policy so they are in a continuous war because people want to keep their job. The personal interest is first priority. This is a problem but at the same time the rotation policy is necessary for 2 reasons
There should not be the same people all the time. New blood/new ideas bring evolution. You need to be always at the top of the technology and therefore you need new people with new ideas and that’s why it is fair. [...] And they should choose people on real competency. But of course there is political pressure from member states; they want to have their people in place. It is difficult to have a really competent base and a political system. (P18:09)

This struggle is also reflected in the following quote:

The big problem of the UN is the fluctuation that people leave because of the rotation policy. At the same time the system stabilises other and carries them along even though you would not need them any more. (P13:79)
Career development
The types of contract individuals hold directly influence their possibilities for career development. Furthermore, career development is obviously limited by education, skills and hierarchical position. Like in any other organisation, promotions may only be granted if the employee possesses the necessary qualifications. However, in the United Nations there are two more dimensions which influence career development: geographical origin and the existence of plan positions within the hierarchy. The staff interviewed perceive the issue of geographical posts as follows:

Permanent staff at the UN that’s geographical posts, you really need to come from an underrepresented country and you need to fulfill so many requirements to receive the job, it is not really your knowledge. (P43:44)

Some positions aren’t an option if you are the wrong nationality. But you have to live with it, it is the same in politics. (P29:64)

However, on the other hand, staff have a very realistic view of personal possibilities within the career path based on education and skills and the existence of plan positions:

A promotion, to get the job of my supervisor, is practically impossible because of my education and the fact that I am Austrian. I won’t make the next step. That’s not possible because for the job you need to be academic...only if you are the only qualified candidate then you get the P-post even though you are Austrian and under qualified. (P8:65)

I have limited career possibilities. Let’s put it this way...they are limited because a lot of planned posts have been cut. If there are no planned posts I can do five times the job of someone else who has a higher ranked post. If there are no posts there are no posts. And that’s the disadvantage of international organisations because if you work in an international company you boss can promote you more easily. That’s not possible here. (P9:62).

However, some staff feel disadvantaged in the promotion process and point this back to the management:

The management often does not place staff in suitable positions. People are not asked, suddenly there is a new org chart and some people
are shifted. One the other hand some people do not get shifted at all. (P27:33)

Termination of contracts
The termination of contracts, especially permanent contracts, is extremely diffi-
cult and tedious. At the same time contracts of politically appointed staff can
hardly be terminated because of their political nature. As a consequence, people
stay within the United Nations even though their performance is unsatisfactory.
The following comments best capture these insights:

You have to something really bad to be dismissed. It happens but very rarely. (P24:24)

That’s an absolutely huge problem. I don’t think it is possible to fire people unless you do something really really horrible and it ends up in
the newspaper. It’s very difficult to get fired in the UN. (P47:110)

In the end these people are put into unimportant positions and are car-
ried along by the system. (P13:75)

The issues covered above have been raised in different internal reports of the
United Nations over and over again during the course of the past decades. As a
result, several reforms have been introduced to solve these problems. One of
these reforms introduced in 2002 aimed at promoting staff on merit and compe-
tence and less on tenure and precedent (Fernandez, 2005). The outcome, accord-
ing to Fernandez (2005), has been a streamlining of procedures which reduced
the selection and recruitment process to 90 days.

In conclusion, I would like to refer back to the beginning of this chapter where I
described the strong hierarchy of the United Nations Organisation with its strict
categorisation of staff into different bands. As already explained and illustrated
by quotes, this hierarchy restricts the individuals’ possibilities for skill develop-
ment because certain training is only available for certain types of staff. More-
over, it limits career development as promotions are still based on seniority and
time in the position and not on performance or merit. This is also true for the
remuneration of staff as the current pay system is not sensitive to performance
but solely based on position within the hierarchy. This system triggers implica-
tions on motivation, competition, knowledge sharing and individual behaviour,
which will be discussed in the following section.
4.3.1.3. Moderator: Boundary crossing and boundary spanning

Another component of an organisation, according to Child (2005), is the boundary-crossing component which is traditionally concerned with drawing lines of exclusion between units and jobs by a clear specification of responsibilities and authority. It also involves networking as an alternative to hierarchies depicted by communication across an organisation’s boundaries. The latter is also known as boundary spanning. Generally speaking, boundary activities as described by Cross, Yan & Louis (2000, p. 843) are those ‘in which an organisational entity engages to create and maintain its boundaries and to manage interactions across those boundaries’. This organisational entity may be an organisational unit, a group or team or an individual.

Boundary spanning in literature is closely linked to bureaucracy and hierarchy and aims to reduce the amount of red tape as well as the number of levels in the hierarchy. One way to achieve this might be by implementing cross-functional or team-based structures (Denison, 1996).

On an individual level, boundary spanning may be related to networking, communication and exchange of information. Individual boundary spanning arises if communication across organisational boundaries is inefficient, time consuming or too costly (Katz & Kahn, 1966).

In the following I will first explain the triggers for boundary spanning in this specific context. Furthermore, I will illustrate individual boundary spanning activities by quotes before concluding with boundary activities enacted by the organisation.

Triggers for boundary spanning

Coming back to the initially cited report which depicted the problems of the United Nations System, the list established therein continues as follows (Beigbeder, 1997):

- There is a lack of both horizontal and vertical communication
- Institutional memory needs improvement

These two points address the double-edge sword characteristics of hierarchy which have already been referred to in the previous section. Although hierarchies are said to be better mechanisms to transfer knowledge than, for example, markets (Kogut & Zander, 1993), data analysis showed that this is not perceived in the five Organisations under investigation. On the one hand, hierarchy assures clear lines of report, responsibility and control. On the other hand, hierarchy restricts managerial efforts, career and skill development. Consequently, hierarchy limits information exchange, alas communication, and as a result, it limits knowledge transfer. Consequently, institutional memory can hardly be built up.
Knowledge as defined by Davenport & Klahr (1998) is ‘information combined with experience, context, interpretation and reflection’. Literature distinguishes between two types of knowledge: explicit and tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge can be coded and stored by writing it down while tacit knowledge is mainly in people’s heads and more difficult to capture and to make explicit (Polanyi, 1967).

This is reflected in the interview data as illustrated by the following quote:

It is much more bureaucratic than I had thought, much more hierarchical and each department cooks its own soup and the departments know relatively little about what is going on in other departments. And what I notice is that this organization lacks knowledge management. It simply does not exist here. For example if you search a specific document you are lost here. And the processes duplicate, I think this is because the departments do not communicate with each other. There is also no knowledge pool, no information pool to get information and knowledge from. (P41:37)

Another interviewee explains the lack of knowledge transfer to expectations related to different jobs, suggesting that in a certain position specific skills and specific knowledge are expected, and therefore there is little need to share or transfer knowledge:

We were the first ones in this office. It did not exist before. This means that everything was very confusing, there was nothing and I was expected to have the ability to manage this position and to work according to the terms of reference. Strickly speaking, one does not need training or knowledge transfer.

Interviewer: And your successor also did not receive any training?

No, I don’t even think that I will get to know him/her. I know the application process, it will take a long time until my successor will be here. I only have to finish my work so my successor does not have to work on it any more and I need to put all the data in templates on the PC. It will all be available on the computer and he/she will have to work with it. I only leave access codes and make a written handover. (P10:11)
Another interviewee points to the lack of communication and information sharing across organisational units:

What I have noticed is that there is rather competition than cooperation between the UN agencies. There are tasks which partly overlap, each department names it differently but in reality it is the same task. However, they all need donors. So the donors can decide who has got the better proposal and that’s the reason why the internal cooperation is not so strong. I for example was looking for a paper from UNDP and wanted to borrow it from the library. But they said that it is a paper and that I have to pay for it. Well, there is competition especially when it comes to funding of projects. It is always about money and each signature is probably about money as well. (P12:48)

Furthermore, to continuously ensure accountability, hierarchy is supported by bureaucracy with its rules and regulations. Power is given to those who can change the rules and regulations (D and P staff) but also to others who know how to apply and execute these rules and regulations (G staff).

As a result, exchange of information and communication becomes part of a game of power. In the worst case, knowledge is not shared. An interviewee makes the point:

G Staff is extremely important because it is not replaced. The people know why there are rules and how they work. Without G staff the organization would not work. G staff are a living memory, we leave after a couple of years but they stay. Motivated G-staff are extremely positive but at the moment when they become negative it becomes a hurdle per se. If they (G-staff) don’t help you, you make one mistake after the other. (P24:33).

4.3.1.3.1. Individual boundary spanning

To reduce their information deficit, and to work beyond hierarchical limitations, individuals start to span boundaries. Research has for example shown that external contacts are used to obtain information, support or resources (Ancona & Caldwell, 1988). Other research suggests that leaders can be the impetus for boundary spanning (Cross et al., 2000).

Overall, there are many ways to span and cross boundaries and each individual might follow a different approach and a different strategy. Some start to communicate outside the hierarchical lines of communication, others start to network and others build friendships and favour each other. The following quotes
are examples of different ways of individual boundary crossing and spanning in the United Nations Organisations under investigation:

It sounds funny but I just walk around and ask all the people and somehow I get the information I need. I always try to find it somewhere but I have to say that it is hard to find info on the intranet which we now have [...] I have realised that emails and telephone calls mostly are not so effective which means I just walk up onto the 5th floor and say I need this and that and then the people are always friendly and I get information provided they have the knowledge. (P41:41)

In my case it is easy, I know the people, I know where to go and what to do. (P21:27)

I have a great uni network and many connections. For example, you need an import licence for a device from the US. Still the are not allowed to send it to us so they send it to me at uni and we also have got it. If you want you can bypass anything. You can only make it through the networks the individuals have, the UN does not have it. The UN does not have the money to build up networks and resources that’s why the UN takes on the right people. The UN buys P-staff to fulfil specific tasks. (P24:26)

There are key people who are the link from one team to another. The informal network is much stronger than the formal network. It is much stronger than the hierarchy. (P42:50)

There is a discrepancy between hierarchy and its formal usage. There is a parallel system. (P39:44)

4.3.1.3.2. Organisational boundary spanning
In the organisational context of the United Nations System, the strongest indicator of boundary activities is manifested in various organisational reform processes. The Secretary of the United Nations articulated in various reports that the organisational structure needs to be reformed and to address new needs and requirements demanded of an organisation in the 21st century. New governance principles, a strong management, and horizontal coordination over vertical hierarchy are the primacies.

Yan and Louis (1999) see the main organisational forces to span or even bring up boundaries in de-bureaucratisation, the use of teams, a shrink of organisational...
tional slack, increased workforce diversity and advanced information technology.
The following quote illustrates activities in place in the United Nations System referring to de-bureaucratisation:

I have an internal project...business process reengineering. We look at processes and how to make them faster, more effective and more accountable. Some processes need a lot of time and energy without showing any effect so we try to open up the process at some point to make it faster. In the UN a lot of paper is being moved and we try to cut it and to introduce more intelligent systems. The problem often is that there are papers with seven signatures. This takes a lot of time and energy without having any effect so we try to implement faster procedures. (P44:43)

4.3.1.4. Culture of the organisation
A plethora of definitions of the culture of an organisation exist. In a most general description, the term refers to shared meaning suggesting that the culture of an organisation is carried in the values and behavioural norms of organisational members. Moreover, culture is a process and a product of people within an organisation. ‘People interacting in an organisation create their culture through their interactions with one another, culture is produced not for them but by them’ (Gortner, Nichols, & Ball, 2007, p.156)
A longtime researcher of organisational culture, Edgar Schein (1984), has proposed the following definition: ‘Organisational culture is the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the new way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems.’
Despite definitions, organisational culture is a concept which is hard to capture and the question is how to assess culture.
Research suggests that culture exists on several levels. Schein’s influential model (Schein, 1985) suggests that there are three levels of culture: the first level comprises observable manifestations of culture. These artefacts are for instance symbols, the physical arrangement of work spaces or the pattern of communications and how power is expressed. The second level comprises the values and behavioural norms which underlie these artefacts, and at the third level lay beliefs and assumptions. The latter ones are the core essence of culture according to Schein.
Figure 6 shows a slightly amended version of Schein’s model of culture which comprises all three levels of culture.

Source: adapted from Schein (1985)

In a similar vein, Hofstede (2001) for example summarises manifestations of culture in an onion diagram which comprises three layers, namely symbols, heroes, and rituals. At the core of the onion lie values. The three layers are visible to an outside observer while values are invisible and only become evident in behaviour.

This first level of organisational culture was represented in the interview data as quoted in the following:

The size of the office and the number of windows tell you quite a lot about the status of the person. (P39:79)

There is a difference between staff and delegates in this house...there are two discussion-cultures. (P1:17)
Moreover, culture becomes visible in the jargon and terminology organisational members use. This aspect comes into its own in the quotes of interviewees. All of them used at one stage of the interview expressions of a second language as a result of the mixed use of different working languages, especially English and German. Most of the time sentences were a mix of both languages as demonstrated in the following sample which is a quote by an Austrian staff member. Out of the 36 words of this single, supposedly German sentence, 10 are English:

In fact this is true for all international employees and the WIPO is a specialized agency of the UN so we are all part of the UN family, we have the same staff regulations and rules and management principles. (P40:47)

Another indicator for organisational culture is that it provides an intrinsic sense of belonging for the individual. Instrumental theory (Jiménez, Górinak, Kosic, Kiss, & Kandulla, 2004) argues that identification and the feeling of belonging are induced by perceived personal interests. In the case of the United Nations this is reflected in the belief of individuals that their belonging to this organisation and their work has a sense of meaning and impact. This is also called the symbolic-interpretive approach to culture (Geertz, 1973). According to Weick (2001) making meaning is also an issue of organisational culture. As expressed by interviewees:

I do work with a feeling that I have greater influence. The projects apply for so many countries and it is great responsibility because it gives help to people all around the world. (P22:25)

On this international level one has the feeling of being able to exert influence. (P14:69)

The second level of organisational culture is composed of the deeply held values, beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes that underlie behaviour. This level of culture is not as visible as the previously described level of organisational culture. However, it can be made visible when looking at shared meanings of individuals who work in a specific organisation. Key characteristics of shared meaning are amongst others communication patterns which influence the relationship between individuals and their managers as well as individuals and their co-workers. Hence, individual values and beliefs can be unfolded by looking at different types of relationships. This level of culture will be explained in the following section which focuses on the relationship between employees and management and employees and co-workers, and the individual who is the agent in these relationships.
4.3.2. Employee - Management relationship

4.3.2.1. Management - the crucial link
The former General Secretary, Kofi Annan (2006), strongly emphasised in the millennium summit the improvement of Human Resource Management (HRM). The weakness of the HRM system specifically lies in the neglect of:

- the build up and development of competent management; and
- the importance of participation of staff members to develop and maintain their skills and competencies through constant learning and development.

Being aware of managerial problems within the system, Kofi Annan initiated in 2005 a study which aimed at improving the quality of selection and training of heads of the United Nations funds and programmes. This study was carried out by the Office of Internal Oversight Services and an external consultant. The outcome, presented in a multipart report in June 2006, is a comprehensive review of governance and oversight within the United Nations, funds, programmes and specialised agencies (OIOS, 2006). This report is especially interesting for this dissertation as it covers (amongst other units) all the units in which interviews for this research were conducted. Furthermore, one part of the data derives from 160 interviews with managers and addresses several management issues which will be mentioned in the further analysis.

The report highlighted the importance of a better training of managers which allows managers to reflect on their management style, to learn recent management techniques as well as to apply them. These measures aim to develop future managers who possess the necessary leadership skills as well as cross cultural and team competences.

Hence, increasing emphasis is put on the development of management as it is seen as the key driver to induce organisational cultural change, to build up shared organisational values and to promote effective performance management. An established UN competency model suggests that core organisational values and competencies may only be induced by competent management. The model contains three core values, eight core competencies, and six managerial competencies, the latter playing a dominant role in the model as shown in table 7 below.
Table 7: UN competency model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Values</th>
<th>Core Competencies</th>
<th>Managerial Competencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for diversity</td>
<td>Planning and development</td>
<td>Empowering others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Building trust</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Managing performance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Client orientation</td>
<td>Judgement/decision making</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Commitment and continuous learning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Technological awareness</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fernandez (2005, p. 233)

The model seems to acknowledge the middle role of managers between the organisation and the employee. Managers must fulfil contradictory roles as subordinates expect them to represent their interests upward to higher officials while higher officials expect them to present organisational goals downward to employees.

To be able to fulfil these roles equally well, managers need to possess managerial skills. Skills often referred to are a manager’s ability to perform aspects of the job like handling interpersonal problems or handling the budgeting process. A group manager moreover needs to be able to handle group dynamics and has to know how to delegate and allocate tasks. Moreover, an important skill is to know how to empower and motivate others and how to build up trust.

To develop leadership and managerial capacity and to enable managers to successfully fulfil their role as a link between the organisation and the individual employee, the following trainings are offered:

- **Management Trainings** are targeting D1 and D2 staff and P-staff with supervisory responsibilities and focus on the development of leadership competencies.
- **Department-based managerial Development** focuses on providing specific trainings according to the needs of individual departments. The aim is to strengthen the skills of individual managers by taking into account the people and processes within a specific department.
- **Supervisory skills trainings** focus on the development of staff at all hierarchical levels who has supervisory responsibilities and it accompanied by a follow-up programme to reinforce the skills learned and to assess further needs.
• Team based workshops aim to promote team work by introducing the concept of team work.
• Intercultural workshops are designed to raise awareness of the impact of diversity and aim to show how to work constructively with people from different backgrounds.

The plan for raising team awareness by team training was put into practice immediately as at the time of the interview interviewees in management positions were already engaged with management training in various forms:

There is an initiative which began in our HR department. Within the HR department there is section responsible for training and education and they have offered team building courses. These courses are offered in my sector so we need to spare 2 days for teambuilding. This is nothing new for me, it is the third teambuilding course I have taken [laughter] or management course. […] the ones I took focused on psychological aspects. I recall a course which started with half a day of analysis of my own personality profile according to Jung. […](P39:17)

Yes, it will be a team building training. We did a process analysis then we have some recommendation of the management and there was a lot of communication and so on and so forth and now we are taking all the groups sector of the trademarks in team building exercise, a training, then we will complement that by a management training where XX will take part and where we discuss all the issues we got from the teambuilding training. (P38:24)

I know that the UN actually has training on multiculturalism or so for managers on how to manage team diversity, cultural diversity I think is what they call it. They have a - I think it is a one day training - which you can take but only if you are manager. (P47:138)

Oh yes, there has been some intercultural training recently but only for section and unit heads. But we all should receive the training material or at least have access to it. (P8:38)

The last quote above highlights the fact that all of these trainings were made available to staff in leading and supervisory functions only. However, the need for diverse trainings not only applies to management but also to all other levels of staff. This implies that both management and subordinates need to develop skills. Therefore, a further aim of management training is to enable managers to
pass on their knowledge to their subordinates and to encourage them to participate in various trainings themselves. One group leader described how skills learned in the course of training were passed on to subordinates:

Well, I have done some trainings with them...I tried to raise team spirit so that everyone knows that well...I need this person for that and in return this person needs me for something else. (P35:67)

Usually, management takes over staff development in the context of performance appraisal by assessing needs and wishes of individual employees. The focus of such appraisals lies on

- explaining organisational needs and goals and how to reach them
- working on individual needs such as training and skill development
- assessing career opportunities

The quote of one employee below illustrates the agenda of individual appraisals:

There are personal reviews. Tasks for the next year are set and at the end of the year one has a look whether or not the task has been achieved. Also some sort of career plan is discussed which I find very good. (P2:56)

4.3.2.2. Criticism of management

As in any other organisation, criticism of management is part of organisational life and was frequently expressed throughout the interviews. One major criticism dealt with the effect of political job positioning of managers. This topic has also been addressed by Kofi Annan (2006) who stressed the importance of more transparency and quality of selection of management across all levels of the organisation. He emphasised the fact that only a more rigorous selection process combined with a clear statement of responsibility and authority of individual managers will increase their accountability. Moreover, he proposed to establish clear criteria for assessing the performance of managers.

In practice, however, empirical evidence shows that despite reform attempts, the general problem in hierarchical organisations (Gortner et al., 2007) is that a formal position in the hierarchy does not prove anything about a person’s management abilities, still prevails.

The following quotes summarise the criticism of management:
They recruit any managers, they are managers but they do not have real knowledge in the specific field. That’s the actual problem. You get a manager who used to be responsible for, let’s say, food and now he/she has to manage the print office. (P35:165)

In my view too many managers are sitting in the wrong places but these organizations have no influence on it because top management is solely politically appointed, this is one of the shortcomings in these organizations. (P29:64)

Ahm, the manager is most important and I think that’s the problem because in the UN the managers are too political. There are all these principles like integrity, respect for diversity in recruitment but in the end it is more a political factor which is stronger and that’s why in the end we have all those managers who are not good managers. (P43:12)

When speaking about their own managers, interviewees predominantly criticised the lack of decision making competency of managers. Criticism not only alluded to the long and cumbersome process of decision making which is led by rules and regulations but also to the lack of decision making competency. The following quote criticises managers who did not make decisions and furthermore lacked in communication:

In this particular office the management was really bad. Some argued this was due to the fact that both chief managers came from West Africa. I would certainly not have said so but I am still convinced that they were extremely indecisive. They never made any decisions. Also, the communication did not work but I do not think this was due to the multinational environment, I think they were just happy to have this important position and they did not work on it any more. (P13:06)

Half of all interviewed persons concluded that managers are afraid to make decisions and hold responsible for them because of a fear of losing their good job position:

They [the managers] can not make any decisions or they do not dare to and they do not take any responsibility. (P16:51)

However, interviewees also reported positively about their managers. Some described good managers by referring to human qualities of the manager and by describing different skills which distinguish a so called ‘good manager’ from a ‘bad manager’. Interviewees across all hierarchical levels defined a good man-
ager as a person who is empathic, fair, encourages career development and motivates staff.

He is really good. It’s not that I mean to say that he has so much experience as a manager but he is simply suitable for it and he has these human qualities and he learns. He adjusts, he is empathetic, he does not have prejudices, he treats everyone equally. I think he is the ideal boss…there are not many of this kind. (P43:32)

An intern in a completely different hierarchical position who spent 9 months on a non-paid contract also points to the human qualities of the manager as well as the appreciation of the work as done by a motivating manager:

Well, it came across that the work that I did, the texts that I wrote were actually used, and that I did not do a stupid or useless job. This was some sort of confirmation for me. At the same time they always told me what I did not do well. I had the feeling that I was taken seriously in any aspect. (P30:12)

Similarly, a manager expressed the importance of motivation and support being a supervisor of superiors him/herself:

The motivation is the crucial part. For each individual you have to find an individual strategy. It takes more time but if you don’t do it they will not understand the same thing. Everyone can come to me and ask again to make sure we all talk about the same. (P18:06)

To reduce negative criticism, the UN reform, which was instigated in 2006 by Kofi Annan, targeted several topics a major one being the aim to improve the current management situation. Unfortunately, this reform could not be realised because of a negative vote of several member countries. Resistance to change seems to be very strong and the vote against the proposed reform is probably the best example for this movement against change as captured by the interviewee below:

You have to manage change very very carefully in this organisation. You have to package it in such a way that it is not threatening the people; that they don’t get scared and then they accept it. Because if people don’t accept change it could be very bad. And right now, the UN is in a situation that people don’t expect change. Even the coun-
tries don’t expect. You know, they just voted against the UN reform actually. The UN reform package did not pass. Everyone is talking about reform but the reform package did not pass because the developing countries voted against it and they had a majority because out of 191 countries they had 91 member states and it was a simple vote, every country has one vote and they have the majority there and they oppose it. (P47:66)

Summary:
Summing up this section on the organisational level of the United Nations System as well as on the role of management several conclusions can be drawn and will be explained in more detail in the following.
All United Nations organisations which were part of this study were characterised by a strong hierarchy. This hierarchy is reflected in the categorisation of staff members into different bands which comprise different levels of power as well as a specialisation of tasks. However, depending on the band, this specialisation varies. Band 1 staff, or general staff, predominately reported of routine tasks whereas Band 4 staff, or senior management, reported the opposite. The strong hierarchy and specialisation of tasks imply that the formal structure of the United Nations Organisations under investigation does not incorporate a formal team structure. Apart from a strong hierarchy, interviewees also reported a strong bureaucracy with numerous rules and regulations and a high level of record keeping. This intense bureaucracy is explained as being necessary to assure accountability in a political, intergovernmental organisation whose specialised organisational units are financed by governmental money and/or membership fees. Hierarchy and bureaucracy are the main influences on organisational life as pointed out by the majority of interviewed staff. Amongst other, the personnel system especially has been described as being affected by hierarchy and bureaucracy. The recruitment process is very lengthy, contracts differ from position to position, promotions are based on seniority and not on merit, and a change of position involves the whole application process all over again.
To overcome hierarchic and bureaucratic hurdles, individuals start to break down boundaries by finding ways of communication outside the hierarchical structure and its rules and regulations. By doing so, networks and parallel systems to the official system evolve. The reasons for boundary spanning activities can be numerous, e.g. a lack of information or the need for swift decisions or actions.
The relationship between management and employees has been identified as being crucial. Management can be seen as the major link between employees and the organisation as the manager is the most immediate and tangible representation of the organisation in the eyes of the individual employee. The quality of
the exchange relationship between an employee and his/her manager is pivotal in determining the employees future within the organisation (Sparrowe & Liden, 1997).

Interviewees believe that a ‘good manager’ who motivates and empowers them is the key to successful group and team work. However, the criticism of management as being too politically appointed and the rotation principle hamper the relationship between employees and their superiors.

The following Network View visualises the relation of components and the ‘groundedness’ of each code in the data by quantifying how many quotations are grounded in a code. It also shows the number of links made to other codes, the so called density. The numbers in the brackets next to the characteristics represent groundedness and density:

Figure 7: Network view on organisational and managerial components

Source: Data analysis

Hierarchy lies at the centre of the network as it directly and indirectly influences all organisational components and processes.
4.3.3. Employee - Co-worker relationship

The employee-co-worker relationship is at the core of group work as it is strongly reliant on social aspects and driven by individual attributes. Where the employee-management relationship contains elements of economic exchange (e.g. salaries), the employee-co-worker relationship is almost exclusively driven by social and psychological components of exchange. So far, data analysis revealed that this relationship is strongly influenced by organisationally induced factors. As explained earlier, the hierarchy of the organisation and the standardisation of tasks are the basis for the employee-management relationship and also for the employee-co-worker relationship. The categorisation into bands and the type of task an individual fulfils set the stage for group work or collaboration of individuals. The interaction with co-workers will vary as some tasks involve intensive communication and exchange, whereas others involve comparably little interaction.

Further data analysis revealed that on an employee-co-worker level diversity in its various forms has the strongest impact on interaction patterns and on group behaviour. Moreover, the interviewee’s narratives unfolded on a continuum: on a general level, diversity in national origins of individuals and associated stereotypes were reported in a neutral way, meaning that these characteristics of co-workers do not impact or influence the overall work environment. However, when individuals talked about group work or collaboration, cultural diversity in its various facets was reported to be a strong factor of influence on work. Interviewees alluded to diversity in gender and age, diversity in working styles and language and their influence on the work environment. Further topics that were marginally mentioned by interviewees related to a different feeling of time, humour and different sources of conflict and ways to solve them.

Each of the nuances of diversity mentioned by interviewees are visualised in the network view below (figure 8) and will be explained in detail:
4.3.1 Diversity

4.3.1.1. Nationality and culture

The United Nations Organisation, by its very nature, is a multinational place as the name itself suggests. Subsequently, it is also a multicultural place with diverse ethical, religious and socioeconomic structures. As a consequence, encounters of diverse nationalities and cultures are a fact of daily work life. Culture according to Hofstede (1997) is conceptualised as “collective programming of minds” suggesting that from the time of birth values and beliefs specific to our own culture and society are programmed into our minds. Culture, furthermore, can be seen as a set of dimensions which determine our behaviour and patterns of interaction. Because the United Nations Organisation comprises 191 nationalities, a question to raise in this context is whether or not nationality and national culture matter to staff members. There are two views on when nationality matters in existing literature: one assumes that nationality does matter to employees because of different values and preferences with regard to management and leadership which are related to national and cultural background (see e.g. Hofstede, 2001; Schwartz, 1994; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997). The contrary view suggests that nationality does not matter because of other, stronger factors like age, gender or profession and education. According to the latter, people from different national backgrounds working at the same hierarchical level have more in common with each other than with people from their
same cultural background. Both views are represented in the data which corresponds to a more recent and dynamic view of culture based on the political, economical and technical consequences of globalisation. This view alludes to a world community which shares a common set of values, attitudes, norms and behaviours (Bird & Stevens, 2003).

According to the majority of interviewees national diversity per se is not salient in the work context. It is seen as a ‘normal’ component of work life. Moreover, interviewees relate nationality to foreignness and highlighted the fact that everyone in the organisation is a foreigner and therefore the foreignness is not salient.

With the words of several interviewees:

For me, this multiculturalism is relatively normal. Because I have worked in an international field for quite a long time. (P13:48)

One thing that is really positive is that nationality does not play any role in mutual approach. Here, we are all foreigners. (P7:07)

You get used to it [multiculturalism], it is routine to sit in front of a person from India. [...] It is not like in a family but everyone who works here comes from a foreign country and we all feel bonded because we are all foreigners. Also the Austrians, for them it is just like they were foreigners as well. (P21:15)

The notion ‘we are all foreigners’ refers to the above explained view of a world community in which nationality does not matter. The interviewee’s statements may derive from their interpretation of article 100 of the UN Charta which stipulates: ‘In performance of their duties the Secretary-General and the staff shall not seek or receive instructions from any government of from any other authority external to the Organisation. They shall refrain from any action which might reflect on their position as international officials responsible only to the Organisation.’ (Charter, ; UN, Chapter 15, Article 100).

An interviewee makes the point by referring to the United Nations as a ‘common nationality’:

There is article 100 of the UN Charta which says that we are no national representatives we are, so to speak, without nationality. The UN is our nationality. From the moment you work for the UN you can not say any more that you are Austrian. You also have to sign something.
You are allowed to vote but you must not carry out any political activities. (P40:12)

Other interviewees pinned down foreignness to the physical building of the United Nations Organisation. A number of interviewees described that the entrance into the building with all its security checks made them feel to enter another world. As expressed by two interviewees:

You need to show a passport when you want to get in and it makes you feel like you are in a different country. (P22:23)

We are not in Austria. (P7:34)

At the same time, however, more than three quarters of interviewees report of special care and attention which is paid to cultural differences and which result in increased awareness:

You need to be very considerate because everyone has a different attitude. You need to approach each other slowly and carefully and you need to reduce prejudices. This may sound negative but in real life it is not like that. You may have to invest a little bit more time but you can learn this. (P5:06)

You need to have a lot of respect. You have to learn not to hurt feelings and not to be too fast with judgement. [...] An open attitude is the best thing which you can bring in such an organisation. (P25:06; P25:07)

Generally speaking I would say that the people here are very open minded and maybe they are a little bit more sensitive because of the fact the everyone is a foreigner. Not to take everything for granted. (P46:71)

4.3.1.2. Stereotypes

The point at which nationality and cultural diversity definitely become salient to the interviewees is when direct interaction with people from other cultures takes place. At this stage, the previous notion that nationality does not affect interactions loses power as interviewees also started to include racial and ethic stereotypes in their narratives. Racial and ethical stereotypes are pervasive, persistent, frequently negative and often self-contradictory. Most of us hold stereotypical views of other races or cultures and ourselves. Moreover, such stereotypes ex-
hibit remarkable stability over years and personal experience is not necessary to form stereotypes. (Alderfer & Thomas, 1988)
The following quotes best capture these insights:

The South Americans are usually very very funny and easy going but also in Asia it depends on where the people come from. We have very untypical French guys, for example, French people who do not enjoy eating and drinking wine. Suddenly you see that there are not only French guys who love to eat. And then one stops saying the Italians are like this, the French are like that, a Latin American is like that. (P6:15)

We do have a couple of Americans who do not care about anything at all. [laughter] (P8:14)

The usual verbal teasing just like between Austria and Germany. (P17:60).

However, stereotypes are not solely the triggers which make employees consciously notice national and cultural diversity of their co-workers. The data analysis also showed that national diversity becomes salient when related to team and group work, in the following quote especially with regards to language (language will be discussed in more detail later on):

The only time I think about nationality is when they don’t speak English well and then I start to think why they don’t speak English well. (P28:13)

4.3.1.2.1. Excursus: Working in the field
All of the interviewed people self-reported that they notice stereotypes when working in the field and equally strongly experienced cultural diversity. To work in the field in United Nations jargon means to work outside the headquarters as an expatriate. Work in the field usually involves work in developing countries and is seen as a means for transferring the headquarters’ knowledge to the field. When working in the field, interviewees had to cope with host culture work environments which differ to Western standards with regards to productivity and performance as well as punctuality, decision making and concepts of authority.

Acculturation
Acculturation strategies to different cultures have been extensively discussed in the relevant literature. Berry (1984) distinguishes between two types of accul-
turation based on maintenance of cultural identity or building up of relationships with other groups. The outcome of either acculturation process has been conceptualised as intercultural adjustment (Ward, 1996).

The data analysis also revealed that interviewees chose either of the two acculturation processes. The quote of the following interviewee can be categorised as an approach of maintenance of cultural identity which however, does not appear to be easy:

I try not to acculturate but you get slower because everything takes much more time. You have another problem for example in Africa, they never say no, we can not do it. For us it would not be a problem, just tell me that you can’t do it and I will find another solution. In Africa they don’t say it and work simply does not get done. That’s a huge problem and it happens all the time. (P16:17)

Contrarily, the next interviewees describe an adaptation to the behaviours in the host country and the building up of relationships with other groups according to their cultural standards:

With regards to the working style, it is a learning process: you have to learn to deal with different pattern of behaviour. The people in my office are very much process orientated. So you try to be less impatient and allow others more time. (P14:52)

You accommodate to how it works in a country … that an agreement on the phone is not taken seriously, or when organizing an event you do not take it too seriously that every 100 percent is fulfilled but you try to get it done and make it work. (P13: 19)

### 4.3.1.2.2 Feeling of time

Respondents who have had work experience in the field repeatedly reported of a different feeling of time as a major issue when working in another country. Interviewees described a divers understanding of time which is in line with existing research about different understandings of time among cultures (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997). The latter distinguish between a monochronic time approach which suggests that time is conceived as a line of sequential events and a polychronic time approach which allows numerous activities at the same time. Austrians are categorised as having a monochronic understanding of time and hence, are insistent on punctuality.
Fink & Meierewert (2004) discovered two types of time behaviours in East and Central Europe: slow speed of task solving and extreme length of negotiations and decision making processes. They explain these types of time behaviour in a tendency to work in collectives rather than teams and in the priority setting power of supervisors rather than employees. Both types of behaviours are also supported in the data:

One guy in our office sometimes really gets upset because reports are not finished despite a deadline. But his superior says that he has talked to some other people and they have great input and we should wait for it so in the end it can take weeks until we finally get the report. Of course it may be a really great input but a deadline is no deadline any more and this is sometimes difficult. (P14:63)

...to understand that by tomorrow does not mean by tomorrow but by someday. If they say maniana it means by sometime and you must not expect that it means by tomorrow. (P13:06)

4.3.1.3. Gender

One of the most problematic stereotypes for organisations in general is the gender stereotype. Since the early 1970s when researchers conducted the first studies on stereotypes they have essentially stayed the same up until now. These studies have determined that successful management is related to traits and attitudes which are similar to those generally ascribed to men, that is, qualities such as leadership ability, competitiveness, self-confidence, ambitiousness, and objectivity (Brenner, Tomkiewicz, & Schein, 1989; Schein, 1975). More recent research describes good managers as possessing less masculine characteristics than in past decades; however, it still indicates that both men and women of varying age, education, and work experience predominately refer to masculine characteristics when describing good managers (Powell, Butterfield, & Parent, 2002). Considering the number of woman in the workforce, they are severely underrepresented in managerial jobs and top-level positions. This stereotype is also true for the United Nations Organisation. A simple demonstration of the gender problematic can be found at the very top level of management: since the founding of the United Nations in 1945 all Secretary Generals were male. The same pattern exists on the Directors level and on the Professional level. United Nations staffing policies aim at an equal participation and representation of gender across all hierarchies. A 50/50 gender distribution in all posts in the professional category as well at a director’s level and above is a goal set by the General Assembly (Fernandez, 2005). To meet this goal the following measures have been taken: whenever a job vacancy is announced, priority is given to seek female staff within the organisation as well as outside of the organisation. Fur-
thermore, accelerated promotions of female staff members apply until the goal of gender equality is met. Both measures only apply provided the female candidate complies with the requirements for the vacant job with regards to qualifications and experience.

In reality the gender stereotype appears to be a delicate topic. As explicated by two male interviewees who describe a reversed stereotype:

I can think of an example in which I personally was the bogeyman. A P5 post was advertised, a directors post, and a woman applied for it. We all agreed that this woman was not qualified for the job and I also communicated it this way. And imagine, in the end I was drawn in front of the committee in NY and in NY they called me an adversary of women just because I said that this women was not qualified for the post. (P31:47)

Yes, there are gender issues. The posts are split 50:50 but it will take some time until senior functions will be carried by women. The first woman who applied for a senior post was too young. There were few female candidates because men have been favourites. At the moment, women are clearly privileged and so it is difficult for men. (P49:103)

However, gender stereotypes tend to favour women when they are being considered for ‘women’s’ jobs or for ‘women’s tasks as illustrated by the following quote:

I work with 25 women because the jobs are very administrative and need attention to details. Women are better in this than men. (P18:23)

4.3.1.4. Language

The United Nations Organisation uses six official languages in its intergovernmental documents and meetings: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish. The Secretariat uses two working languages: English and French.

The daily working language of the sample predominately is English which is to 47 out of the 50 interviewed persons a foreign language.

Communication is a vital and major part of team and group work. At the same time, one of the main barriers to communication is that individuals speak different languages. Therefore, a common language has to be used which most of the time is not the native language of the members of the group. Several researchers have noted that the level of language proficiency effects team and group work and demonstrated its crucial role. Findings indicate that language has a consid-
erable impact on socialisation processes and that the use of a common work language may result in unsuccessful communication and ambiguity (Feely & Harzing, 2003; Henderson, 2005; Marschan, Welch, & Welch, 1997).

An interesting insight of the current study is that only non-native interviewees reported about this very language barrier and about its consequences on communication.

The comment of a native speaker:

Language is not a problem for me since I am native speaker, I can't tell how non-native speakers feel about it. (P20:35)

Compared to the remarks of non-native English speakers:

It does make a difference to communicate in your non-native language all the time. Even tough you know English very well it is not your mother tongue and you can not express yourself like in your mother tongue. So it is more difficult to communicate. (P13:23)

What I notice is the language barrier. The fact that people come from many different countries is not beneficial for communication. With native speakers who fluently speak the language it is sometimes a problem - at least for me. (P2:06)

Sometimes things happen and you think that the collaboration does not work a hundred percent. These are often language barriers and communication problems. (P5:61)

To overcome these barriers, the same interviewee described to choose simple language to make sure that the content of the communication becomes clear:

You are definitely not faster, it takes some time and in some cases you use a simple level of communication. It takes longer to transfer knowledge or to tell someone your wishes. (P5:27)

Others narrated that technical language serves to overcome barriers. Technical language as an element of a professional culture which is characterised by a specific type of vocabulary helps to at least partly overcome language deficiencies:
We communicate on a very technical level....there are certain expressions which we use and so on this very technical level the communication works. However, when it comes to discuss problems or when we say, well the technical part is ok but maybe we should try it differently next time, because this might me more effective you need to switch to a meta-level and then, yes, then I think communication problems arise, when it comes to reflecting the work. (P45:36)

The last part of the above quote alludes to the proficiency of English. Although excellent knowledge of English is presumed, the data analysis indicates that English as a shared language does not ensure efficient communication. Different interpretations of underlying meanings based on different cultural norms are the source for misunderstandings and in the worst case even conflicts.

Sure, he [a Chinese superior] is very hard to understand because his English is so Chinese. But one can interpret what he tries to explain. I myself also make mistakes because I realize a couple of days later that he meant it differently and that he was right. (P24:42)

Slowly a couple of things became clear to me for example that specific situations of conflict are a result of language problems. On one hand it is the careful formulation in German language. Then the sender of the message does not transfer what he intends to because his English might not be as good so he can not transfer what he wants to say from one language to another. (P11:06)

However, interviewees are aware of the fact that communication in a language other than the mother tongue hampers their ability to express themselves. The notion that speaking in a non native language feels like speaking on a different level has been supported by several interviewees as illustrated by the following quotes:

You always communicate on a different level. The choice of language and what you try to communicate is not clear, and you always have to move to another level. You can be really fluent in a language but you will never be able to bring it to the point just like you can do it in your mother tongue. (P10:45)

It becomes a barrier at the moment. IF I do not know a specific word that’s my own fault. The advantage of working in a foreign language
is that you can use a third room...we come from the Philippines, Burma and Germany, and when we speak in English we all speak in a foreign language. (P46:35)

The empirical findings above illustrate that communication at the workplace takes place at different levels which is depicted by layers of language. These layers are interconnected, yet, each single layer may be a source for communication problems. Everyday spoken and written language used for communication between individuals and units and for external communication. Company speak refers to a specialised internal language of a whole organisation or company. Technical industry language refers to jargons such as ‘Eurospeak’, the jargon of the European Union (Neyer, 2004).

The three layers are shown in figure 9 drawn from Welch, Welch & Piekkari (2005):

Figure 9: Layers of language

![Layer diagram]


4.3.1.5. Faultlines

Traditional research into diversity has stipulated that work group diversity may affect performance either positively or negatively. Among the positive aspects of diversity research suggested increased creativity and innovation attributed to the work process. The negative aspects alluded to more complexity in the decision making processes and hence longer work processes. These findings are also in line with other research on diversity and performance as summarised in the
literature review (Bowers et al., 2000; Webber & Donahue, 2001; Williams & O’Reilly, 1998). In a similar vein, data analysis revealed the positive and negative side of diversity. The words of two interviewees give account to the positive and negative effects of diversity on performance:

Multicultural: multi-faceted but processes take much longer
Monocultural: fast results because there are less potential sources of misunderstandings but there is also less innovation. (P14:39)

In my view monocultural teams are faster in fulfilling a task because a lot of hurdles drop out. However, multicultural teams have the advantage that different perspectives can be integrated into the workflow and as a result the quality of work can be increased. (P19:55)

However, as also elaborated in the literature review, diversity may affect group work not only either positively or negatively but diversity is multifaceted and multidimensional. Hence, the effects of one dimension of diversity may be contingent on diversity on other dimensions. This highlights the notion made in the literature review that the different kinds of diversity, respectively demographic, job related and individual diversity may not be separated from each other but rather conceptualised in one framework. The term ‘faultlines’ which was coined by Lau & Murnighan (1998) refers to combinations of dimensions of diversity which build a basis for differentiation between subgroups. According to the authors, ‘faultlines’ are ‘hypothetical dividing lines that may split a group into subgroups based on one or more attributes.’ (Lau & Murnighan, 1998, p. 328). These faultlines or subgroups based on different attributes were also found in the data. For example, cultural diversity was also reported in connection with other types of diversity such as gender, race, age and functional diversity. The following quotes for example illustrate the interplay of race, hierarchical position and age:

Especially among ‘white’ senior managers you can still feel that they feel superior and they also show it even if not directly. Younger colleagues are mostly more horizontal, more sensitive and more open towards other cultures. (P49: 44)

There are people who discriminate themselves. I have African colleagues who do it. But also: woman have to work twice as hard as men to be the same. (P25:15)

Let me take as an example India in 2001. We had difficulties to get a woman, our team member, into the tent. There were doctors from In-
dia who did not accept that women sleep in the same tent as men. But there was no other alternative and we needed these women in our team to communicate with the weak population, weak in this situation, the children and women in a natural catastrophe. So these are hurdles which one has to overcome. Nationality is a sensitive area, gender is another sensitive area in teambuilding. (P42:36)

There is sometimes some sort of a generation conflict. This is not so intercultural, but I am the youngest in my immediate environment. I am 20, the others are 35 and then 45 and older. We all have a different view of the world. It is not so much age it is more blindness by routine. (P11:34)

Faultlines also emerged based on functional diversity and age. As in many hierarchical organisations, seniority is directly linked to age as the process of promotion is based on the number of years with the organisation and not on merit. At the same time however, the assumption that a certain age range of a person is related to the person’s physical, psychological, and intellectual capabilities is also true for the United Nations organisations. These two assumptions create a faultline which suggests that older employees are more reluctant to induce changes than younger employees and that older employees do not possess the skills requested for a changing work place. As reflected in the interview data:

If I wanted to discriminate against, I would do it via age in the sense that the UN has changed a lot. Let’s say it used to be an organisational forum to build and maintain a dialog between east and west while today UNOPS and UNDP mainly provide development aid and post crisis aid, so the skill set has changed significantly. Nowadays we actually need more engineers, business administrators, lawyers and not so many international relations people any more. People here hold positions which are rather manager positions than international relations positions, and you often notice that they lack management skills. When these people started 20 years ago the UN was completely different. And I would not want to accuse anyone. (P44:31)

To bring young blood at a professional level to the organisation, the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) Programme was introduced in 1972. This programme which runs for 2 to 3 years provides young graduates the opportunity to gain substantive job related skills and knowledge for future work in senior positions.
within the United Nations organisations. The JPO’s are seen as a promising source for changes within the system:

JPOs definitely have a more progressive view than senior management. (P49:109)

I have to admit that JPOs are model students when it comes to efficiency and efficient costs savings. (P10:40)

Another source for progressive ideas is the UNIDO internship programme. Young graduates or students who are about to graduate work on a 6 month basis as unpaid interns and conduct research in areas of direct relevance to the organisation. The students get the opportunity to gain work experience in an intergovernmental organisation while the organisation can benefit from fresh ideas at no cost.

Summary
Concluding, diversity in its various facets is a major component of group work. The charter of the United Nations manifests national and gender diversity and the organisational structure naturally creates functional diversity. As in other organisations, general stereotypes on nationality and gender also exist in the United Nations Organisations. When working in a group or in collaboration, national and cultural diversity become salient to individuals and different strategies are used to cope with diversity.

The interview data revealed that the use of a common, foreign language as the main means of communication creates barriers to team and group interaction. Communicated messages can become ambiguous and subject to individual interpretation and in the worst case result in conflict. Strategies to cope with this communication barrier are the use of simple language or technical language; both minimising the propensity for misunderstandings. Interviewees describe being aware of the fact that communication in a foreign language restricts their abilities to express themselves as compared to communication in a native language.

Faultlines or subgroups are the result of all the different types of diversity and based on different attributes. However, not all faultlines become salient. It depends on ‘whether features of the context in which individuals operate highlight the faultline’ (Polzer, Crisp, Jarvenpaa, & Kim, 2006). In this research setting the context is characterised by hierarchy and national diversity which highlight faultlines.
4.3.4. Individual

Each individual carries a different culture compared to another individual. Because of its uniqueness, individual culture may be compared to a fingerprint. But how to describe individual culture?

The culture of an individual according to Krentzel (1999) comprises several components: national culture, ethical culture, sex, age, social background, social class, education, profession, and workplace. All of these components vary from one individual to the other. Moreover, some components are more salient than others. For instance, national and ethical cultures are the most salient characteristics of individuals and learned from childhood. Education and profession are choices that are made at a later stage in life and are easier to learn and to change. However, social class and social background play a huge impact on these choices.

Considering the uniqueness of each individual’s culture one might argue that it is impossible to generalise characteristics of several individuals.

Yet, the final notion ‘it all depends on the individual’ was a very clear and strong pattern that emerged throughout the data analysis and hence is explicitly grounded in the data. Data analysis revealed three facets of the individual which are perceived to have the strongest influence on group work, namely the personal background of individuals, personality and motivation. Each of the facets will be explained in detail and illustrated with quotes. Subsequently, a network view will be presented and further propositions will be enunciated.

4.3.4.1. Personal background

Individual staff in the United Nations Organisations can be characterised as being very internationally orientated and interested. More than 80% of the interviewed staff has lived and worked in foreign countries either prior to the work with the United Nations or as part of it. A considerable number of staff have grown up in a multicultural family or in different countries and speak at least one foreign language fluently. Other staff have not had international experience and therefore were keen to work for the United Nations to gain this experience. All of these backgrounds however comprise an affinity for other cultures and nations as also explained in the interviews:

I am used to working in an international environment which makes work much more interesting because you learn and hear from the world and not only from a small or specific area. You can overlook barriers – this makes life simply more interesting for me. And it helps to see world politics with other eyes or from another angle and not the way the media and radio present it. (P2:17)
I always wanted to work in an international environment because I simply find it great to work with people from different nationalities. Besides, I always wanted to speak other languages so during a regular workday I speak German, English and French. (P9:23)

I think the people who start working for the UN bring many good qualities. They know many languages and on average they are much more international and culturally aware than in a national company. So if you work for the UN you know that you have to be open minded towards other cultures and I love this aspect. (P40:36)

4.3.4.2. Personality

Data analysis showed in line with existing research the importance of personality as an influential factor on group work. Interviewees attributed far more importance to a group member’s personality than to his/her national and functional background. Personality as described by the sample comprises the character of individuals, and whether or not someone is empathetic and a team player. Interviewees explained this point as follows:

I would say you adjust to people, and in my view that does not depend on nationality. If I work with someone, I will get to know this person and adjust to this person. And just as I said whether this person is from Chile, Cuba or somewhere else does not matter. (P3:06)

It is completely irrelevant where people come from. Sometimes you speak of someone as ‘the Indian’ or ‘the Japanese’ at least you know who you are speaking of. But personally for me it does not make a difference where people come from. It more depends on personality than on nationality. (P11: 94)

Well, my personal feeling is that it does not matter which nationality someone belongs to, the character counts. (P12:14)

To start with I would like to say that it all depends very much on the person, on the individual, that’s most important. How individuals interact is culturally coded and many cultural factors play a part. Team members subconsciously handle this. (P15:11)

The problems at work don’t come from nationality. They could be linked but I think it comes more from personality. (P18:25)
I am colour blind. I see the person, not the nationality. (P25:11)

In my view it does not depend on nationality. Of course you work with some people more easily than with others but this depends more on personality than on nationality. (P29:31)

4.3.4.3. Motivation

Individual motivation is a further crucial component of group work and directly influences performance. Fink & Holden (2007) relate the concept of motivation to three theories of identity established by Jiménez at al. (2004) which are: instrumental theory, civic theory, and cultural theory. Instrumental theory suggests that perceived personal interests create identities. Civic theory argues that identities emerge if actors within a group collectively develop rules and goals and share the same values. Cultural theory suggests that identity is based on cultural heritage, common language, symbols and national networks. Fink & Holden (2007) argue that extrinsic motivation fits with instrumental theory as wealth is an important part of this theory. Intrinsic motivation is argued to fit with cultural theory as shared cultural heritage, language and symbols play an important role. Research also suggests that the collection of tasks that comprise the job influence work motivation (Perry & Porter, 1982).

In a similar vein, data analysis revealed a positive relationship between the hierarchical position of interviewees (and respectively the type of task they fulfil) and their perception of motivation. High ranking staff commented on intellectual stimulation and intellectual freedom as a source of intrinsic motivation. Work is perceived to be influential and to make sense. With the words of interviewees:

You work for intellectual stimulation. You see what happens and how it works out and that rewards you. (P20:33)

What you find here is absolute intellectual freedom and that’s what makes work here so special and for sure is the main part of motivation. There is no other job in which you have so much intellectual flexibility, there are hardly any boundaries. No matter what you can suppose it as long as the frame conditions are fulfilled. Because there is need in development, in the area we work. And that’s what makes work here so special. (P29:43)

Repetitive tasks or very well structured tasks on the other hand are perceived as being a source of demotivation. Therefore, staff strive for job variety as illustrated by the following two quotes:
Well, because you do not have the global view which is not possible because of daily routine, you quickly just focus on this part and lose sight of everything else and this is for sure a source of demotivation. (P48:61)

My motivation is the variety because I don’t solely work for XX but also for someone else. The aim of my position was to get to know everything. To do my own work really well is part of my motivation. There are different tasks, sometimes you can chose what you like to do sometimes it is not so exciting. (P11:127)

Some interviewees very honestly remarked that the high level of remuneration and the generous benefits are a further source of motivation. This kind of motivation relates to extrinsic motivation and instrumental theory of identity. In the words of two respondents:

It is very simple – I earn double of what I earn at University. (P24:08)

One of the major reasons for motivation is the fact that the pay is tax free. I would say everyone who is honest would have to name this reason. I would have to have super super job somewhere in the top level management of Siemens to earn so much money. (P9:23)

However, some interviewees commented critically on the negative sides of high remuneration. In a worst case scenario the motivation to work shifts to a motivation to simply keep the job and its benefits.

I think it all started when they set up the system. Specifically the HR system with the benefits and everything. (P47:98)
You lose that vision very easily. I think. Especially if you are concerned about the benefits like I need to stay because of the pension or they pay my kids the tuition at the school, I mean it is very tough. (P47:106)

Summary:
Summing up, the individual and his/her personal background, motivation and personality impact on the overall work situation and especially group work. The personal background of most interviewees is very similar with regards to internationally orientated education or work experience. Moreover, the com-
ments on motivation clearly show that the main source of motivation comes from the feeling of interviewees being part of an organisation with global influence. However, on a daily work basis this motivation may be strongly influenced by job characteristics, including tasks. The latter ones are directly related to the hierarchical position, hence, senior level staff report intellectual motivation while general staff find motivation in a variation of tasks. Some young interviewees criticised the obvious motivation by remuneration and benefits which due to social desirability bias supposedly has not been self-reported. It appears that the role of personality is very decisive. In line with findings in literature it can be assumed that specific personality traits are supportive of group work and collaboration.

Figure 10 below summarises the main components of group work in a network view.

Figure 10: Network view on components of group work

Source: Data analysis