Bridging the Resource Gap: Inter-Organizational Collaboration between the World Bank and Transnational City Networks

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Scholars of world politics have recently devoted growing attention to the inner workings of international organizations. While this research strand has considerably enhanced our knowledge on the impact of international bureaucracies on global policy-making, their interplay with transnational actors has not been analyzed in much detail. Against this backdrop, the present article addresses the question of why and under what circumstances international bureaucracies and transnational actors work together. Building upon a resource-exchange approach, the article specifically explores the determinants of varying levels of inter-organizational collaboration between the World Bank and transnational city networks in the policy domain of climate change. We contend that the resource-exchange perspective bears great potential to understand inter-organizational dynamics as it takes the motivations on both sides of the relationship into account. In contrast to conceptualizations of international organizations as regulators, principals, or orchestrators, this approach leaves conceptual room for analyzing their bureaucracies as partners of transnational actors.

Introduction

The past few years have witnessed a growing scholarly interest in the inner workings of international organizations—specifically in the role and function of their bureaucracies. Several authors have shown that international bureaucracies exert an autonomous influence in various domains of world politics (e.g., Barnett and Finnemore 2004; M. W. Bauer and Ege 2016; Soonhee, Shena, and Lambright 2014; Tallberg, Sommerer, Squatrito, and Jönsson 2013; Trondal, Marcussen, Larsson, and Veggeland 2010). These scholars perceive international bureaucracies as distinct actors and contend that they have adopted crucial tasks in contemporary global policy-making. The field of global environmental politics is of particular interest for studying international bureaucracies. This domain has been characterized as "one of the institutionally most dynamic areas in world politics regarding the number of international institutions and actors that have emerged over the past three decades" (F. Biermann and Siebenhüner 2009a, 9).

However, while scholars have considerably improved our understanding of international bureaucracies in recent years, little explicit attention has been paid to their interactions with transnational actors. Therefore, this article addresses this issue and aims to delve into the interplay between the staff members of international organizations and transnational networks. In particular, the article investigates the determinants of varying levels of inter-organizational collaboration between the World Bank and two prominent transnational city networks in the policy domain of climate change, namely the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40) and ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI). These networks provide a forum for local governments to share knowledge and formulate best practices for coping with climate change in urban areas.

While pursuing similar goals and targets concerning the involvement of cities in climate policy-making, the two networks differ along key organizational dimensions (e.g., budget, staffing structure, and membership base). Hence, they provide us with revealing answers to the core question of this study: Why and under what circumstances do international bureaucracies and transnational actors collaborate? To systematically explore this question, the present article builds upon a resource-exchange model for explaining inter-organizational collaboration. This approach embodies insights from the rational-institutionalist account of international relations and imports key findings from resource dependency theory within organizational science (Aldrich and Pfeffer 1976; Levine and White 1961). Essentially, the model contends that the degree and balance of mutual resource dependency between an international bureaucracy and a transnational actor determines their level of collaboration. The empirical analysis tests the usefulness of the model for explaining the World Bank's varying levels of collaboration with transnational city networks both across and within the two cases.

In sum, our findings indicate that the resource-exchange perspective bears great potential to understand inter-organizational dynamics. Concerning the two cases analyzed in this article, it becomes clear that the different patterns of collaboration between the World Bank and transnational city networks are mainly the result of mutual resource discrepancies. As the empirical analysis demonstrates, the C40 network possesses much more of those critical resources which the World Bank demands than ICLEI. Moreover, our applied model offers a plausible explanation for the differences in the cooperation between the World Bank and the two networks over time. Thus, the resource-exchange approach presents a useful "first stab" at our question of why and under what circumstances international bureaucracies engage with transnational actors, while future studies need to test the model against the predictions of other theories of inter-organizational relations.

The article proceeds as follows: In the next section, we first briefly refer to the growing scholarly recognition of international bureaucracies in the field of international relations, before we review the literature on inter-organizational relations. In the subsequent section, we elaborate on the concept of inter-organizational collaboration in relation to other modes of governance and develop a resource-exchange model for explaining the logic and variation in its occurrence. Then we turn to the empirical study and probe our research design in section five, the sixth section probes the explanatory power of the resource-exchange model by comparing the results from the analysis of the World Bank's relation to the two transnational city networks with the predictions deduced from our theoretical model. Finally, we summarize the main findings, draw conclusions, and highlight avenues for future research.

International Bureaucracies and Transnational Actors

From the early 1990s onward, different scholars concerned with global affairs have started to perceive international bureaucracies as actors that develop their own preferences and act according to them (e.g., Barnett and Finnemore 1999; Finnemore 1993; Haas 1990; Reinalda and Verbeek 1998). This research interest is inextricably linked to the emergence of the concept of global governance and the general growth in importance of sub- and non-state actors in the discipline of international relations (S. Bauer and Weinlich 2011, 253–54). Authors in this tradition assert that the classical schools of thought have largely overlooked the increasingly salient role and function of actors other than the nation-state in global policy-making (Avant, Finnemore, and Sell 2010; Grande and Pauly 2005; Hewson and Sinclair 1999; Higgott, Underhill, and Bieler 2000; Kahler and Lake 2003). For example, Rosenau asserts that "states and governments should be posited not as first among equals, but simply as significant actors in a world marked by an increasing diffusion of authority and a corresponding diminution of hierarchy" (Rosenau 1999, 292). In other words, Rosenau puts forward the argument that the nation-state constitutes only one of several spheres of authority in world politics that have emerged in the past decades (Rosenau 2007).

In the context of this new wave of research, a number of authors have also conceptualized international environmental bureaucracies as distinct actors that pursue certain policies that cannot be entirely controlled by national governments (e.g., S. Bauer 2006; F. Biermann and Siebenhüner 2009b; Hickmann, Widerberg, Lederer, and Pattberg, Forthcoming; Jinnah 2014; Jörgens, Kolleck, and Saerbeck 2016; Widerberg and van Laerhoven 2014). These scholars argue that the secretariats of multilateral environmental treaties and the environmental departments of international organizations have adopted various policy-making tasks. In particular, they show that international environmental bureaucracies put environmental problems on the political agenda, produce and spread knowledge, stimulate scientific as well as public debates, facilitate discussions with different stakeholders, and help implement the norms and rules agreed upon by national governments and stipulated in international environmental agreements.

Another literature strand has in the meantime engendered a rich body of literature on the opening up of international bureaucracies toward sub- and non-state actors (Jönsson and Tallberg 2010; Steffek, Kissling, and Nanz 2008; Tallberg et al., 2013). Although the first wave of studies on inter-organizational relations can be traced back to the 1970s (Gordenker and Sanders 1978; Hanf and Scharpf 1978), this topic has only recently attracted the attention of a larger number of international relations scholars (e.g., R. Biermann 2008; R. Biermann and Koops 2017b). Building on a rich literature, this field has lately evolved into a vibrant research strand that involves researchers from international relations, public administration, and public policy. However, despite the recent upsurge in studies on inter-organizational relations, the interactions of international bureaucracies with sub- and non-state actors organizing themselves into transnational networks still remains an underdeveloped branch in international relations theory.

Moreover, most of the existing studies focus merely on one side of the relationship, such as the motives of the international bureaucracy or organization in bringing about issue-specific change. In fact, they tend to neglect the "supply-side, " or the motives of transnational actors to engage on their part with international bureaucracies.[1] While international bureaucracies might occasionally have more (financial) leverage in setting the terms and conditions of an interaction, many bureaucracies lack adequate capacities to effectively steer sub- and non-state actors (Abbott, Genschel, Snidal, and Zangl 2015; Abbott and Snidal 2010). In comparison, transnational city networks like C40 operate and deal with extraordinary resources stemming from powerful strategic partners, such as Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Clinton Foundation, or Realdania, as well as a number of leading private corporations like ARUP, Microsoft, or Siemens (C40 2017b).

To ameliorate such shortcomings in current studies on inter-organizational relations, we adopt a more integrated perspective on the interplay between international bureaucracies and transnational actors that 1) is sensitive to exchange relationships between both types of actors and 2) takes the motivations on both sides of the partnership into account. Such a comprehensive analytical framework for explaining inter-organizational collaboration is arguably best captured by existing resource-exchange approaches. Originally developed by organizational sociologists in the 1960s, the resource-exchange perspective has recently been taken up by scholars of international relations (Brosig 2011, 156; Gest and Grigorescu 2010, 56). Before outlining the basic components of our refined resource-exchange model, we clarify the analytical boundaries of the study by distinguishing inter-organizational collaboration from other, more frequently analyzed modes of interaction between international bureaucracies and transnational actors.

1. For an important exception, see Steffek (2013), who explicitly distinguishes between "push" factors and "pull" factors that only together determine the patterns of cooperation between international organizations on the one hand and NGOs on the other.

Conceptualizing Inter-Organizational Collaboration

Kenneth Abbott and colleagues recently developed a conceptual framework which identifies different modes of governance that can be employed by international bureaucracies vis-à-vis sub- and non-state actors (Abbott et al., 2015).[2] According to this group of authors, four general modes of governance can be distinguished through which international bureaucracies may enter (or not) into a transaction with other organizational entities to achieve their goals: 1) top-down hierarchical regulation, 2) delegation of responsibilities and tasks, 3) orchestration of governance activities, and 4) collaboration through joint programs and initiatives. Although the boundaries between these four modes of governance might not always be clear-cut, they differ analytically from each other as they address the ultimate target either directly or indirectly and include either soft or hard means of control (see Table 1).

Table 1. Four Modes of Interaction Between International Bureaucracies and Transnational Actors

	Direct	Indirect
Hard	Regulation	Delegation
Soft	Collaboration	Orchestration

Source: Abbott et al., 2015: 9.

Using this categorization as a starting point, we now discuss the applicability of these ideal types of engagement of international bureaucracies with transnational city networks in the policy domain of climate change. While all four governance modes are relevant in the area of climate change, we find that the possibility of a horizontal inter-organizational relationship between actors has so far received only insufficient scholarly attention.

International Bureaucracies and Transnational City Networks

1. Regulation: A number of international bureaucracies have considerable capacity and experience in engaging directly with sub- and non-state actors. The World Bank serves as a prime example of an international bureaucracy that looks back on a history of more than forty years of direct involvement in urban areas, including about USD 50 billion of investments in climate-related activities over the past few years (World Bank 2015, 17). Yet, besides the World Bank's track record of supporting cities, only one body in the UN's system, the UN Human Settlements Programme, possesses the authority to provide guidelines for cities and local governments (UN General Assembly 2002).
2. Delegation: Some international bureaucracies have experimented with delegating relevant governance functions and competencies to city networks rather than trying to address individual cities directly. With considering this governance mode, the Covenant of Mayors may be cited as an example. This initiative has been launched by the European Commission in 2008 to administer the network's current 4.330 member cities through a judicious mix of carrots and sticks (Heyvaert 2013; Labaeye and Sauer 2013). Further instances of the delegation of governance functions to cities or their networks seem to be rare, at least in the area of climate change.
3. Orchestration: Other international bureaucracies engage in a soft and indirect mode of governance that has found to be pervasive also in the field of climate change (Bäckstrand and Kuyper 2017; Hale and Roger 2014). In fact, there are a number of indications that international bureaucracies have used transnational city networks

2. Although these authors focus specifically on different modes of governance, we see no major difficulties in transferring this typology to more general modes of interaction among organizations, which may imply some steering of one actor vis-à-vis another, yet not necessarily.

as intermediaries to pursue policies with a certain target group. However, orchestrated initiatives like the Compact of Mayors constitute only a small fraction of the overall interactions of international bureaucracies with transnational city networks. In addition, the initiators of such arrangements are deeply intertwined with the operations of city networks. Hence, it is often arguably difficult to precisely discern the direction of influence between these bodies.

4. Collaboration: Most prevalently, according to our observations, several international bureaucracies have started to directly engage with transnational city networks to carry out joint actions and projects. In such a setting of non-hierarchical exchange relations, two basic types of collaborations between international bureaucracies and transnational city networks can be distinguished (Abbott 2007). First, the emergence of so-called advocacy partnerships, in which transnational city networks participate directly in the governing bodies of international bureaucracies and advocate together for a greater involvement of cities and transnational city networks in climate policy-making. Second, the rise of operational partnerships, in which international bureaucracies and transnational city networks collaborate in order to implement common projects at the local level. As we are primarily interested in those collaborative outcomes that refer to the implementation of concrete mitigation and adaptation measures on the ground, we focus our analysis on the formation of operational partnerships between the World Bank and transnational city networks in the policy domain of climate change.

Following the definition of organizational exchange by Levine and White, inter-organizational collaboration can be understood as "any voluntary activity between two organizations which has consequences, actual or anticipated, for the realization of their respective goals or objectives" (Levine and White 1961, 588). This means that to qualify as an instance of inter-organizational collaboration, there must be at least some evidence of regular interaction taking place between partners. Moreover, those interactions need to be goal-oriented in a way that they inhibit a mutual understanding about the actual content of the relationship, in contrast to other kinds of institutional relations that may arise rather spontaneously from the organizations' overlapping mandates or otherwise shared normative obligations (Gehring and Faude 2014, 482). Finally, the scope of the analysis has been limited to instances of inter-organizational collaboration resulting from voluntary interaction between formally independent organizations. Thus, any form of collaboration among two legally dependent entities or any form of coercive pressure are a priori excluded from the analysis (Schmidt and Kochan 1977, 220).

After having delineated inter-organizational collaboration from other modes of governance, the following section introduces the resource-exchange approach as a promising conceptual framework for analyzing collaboration between international bureaucracies and transnational actors.

A Resource-Exchange Perspective on Inter-Organizational Collaboration

Exchange theories of collaboration have their theoretical foundation in organizational sociology, particularly in research on inter-organizational relations. The basic idea is that organizations exchange or "pool" their resources for mutual benefit (Brosig 2011, 156; Gest and Grigorescu 2010, 56). The resources that are brought into the partnership may be of a material kind, such as financial resources and staff members, or of an immaterial kind, most notably tacit knowledge and expertise.

The dynamics of exchange are captured by the resource dependency theory, as originally developed by management scholars and sociologists in the 1960s and was particularly advanced by Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald R. Salancik (1978) in their influential book the *External Control* *of Organizations*.[3] It is based on the premise “that organizations are not able to internally generate either all the resources or functions required to maintain themselves, and therefore organizations must enter into transactions and relations with elements in the environment that can supply the required resources and services” (Aldrich and Pfeffer 1976, 83). In its most simplified sense, the explicit purpose and ambition of collaboration is to attain policy goals that exceed the capabilities of organizations acting individually. This view of organizations as generally deficient can be applied to various actors, including transnational city networks, international bureaucracies, and even national governments.

However, when organizations are conceived as rational actors they will not only calculate the benefits of cooperation but also estimate the costs it may create, most significantly in terms of financial expenditures and perceived losses of decision-making autonomy (Pfeffer and Salancik 2003, 183). Whenever organizations have to work together, their decision-making autonomy diminishes as they have to pay attention to the demands of their partners (R. Biermann 2008, 158; Brosig 2011, 148). Furthermore, cooperation is expensive considering the time and resources spent for the collaboration. Instead of pursuing their own tasks, organizations may end up “spending a disproportionate amount of time trying to cooperate together through tedious and extended joint meetings and cooperative activities” (Balas 2011, 26). Consequently, international organizations and transnational city networks will engage in joint governance efforts only if the benefits in terms of acquiring new resources are higher than the costs and autonomy losses associated with cooperation (cf. Liese 2010, 97).

One complication of this straightforward argument is necessary though. The actual emergence of any type of voluntary partnership always rests on the combined decisions and actions of the different organizational entities involved (Murphy 2008, 81). Hence, the monadic conceptualization of the dependency of one actor from another‘s resources needs to be translated into dyadic terms. This is important in order to avoid the mistaken conclusion that the mere willingness of one partner to enter into transactions with another would imply the actual formation of a partnership. In other words, the mutual resource dependency between organizational entities needs to be considered if we seek to predict and analyze the actual level of collaboration. A seminal study that has developed such a genuine resource exchange perspective on inter-organizational collaboration is provided by Jens Steffek, who explicitly distinguishes between push factors and pull factors to “account for the fact that incentives for cooperation (and hence the power of push and pull factors) may change over time, and on both sides” (Steffek 2013, 995).

Similar resource-exchange models have been used by others to explain the increasing collaboration between international organizations and nongovernmental organizations in the sphere of environmental politics (Raustiala 1997), the various interactions among international organizations in the anti-corruption realm (Gest and Grigorescu 2010), or to study the conditions under which business actors gain access to the European Union’s policy-making processes (Bouwen 2002). However, all in all there are only a few studies that have taken an explicit two-sided perspective on inter-organizational resource exchange dynamics and even less exist to date that focus specifically on the collaboration between international organizations’ bureaucracies and transnational city networks.

After all, the fine-grained assumptions of resource dependency theories in combination with an explicit exchange perspective leads us to expect that “the higher the degree of resource dependency between any given international bureaucracy and transnational city network, and the smaller the fear of autonomy loss among the envisaged partners, the higher will be their level of collaboration.” This hypothesis guides the later empirical analysis of the inter-organizational collaboration

3. For a comprehensive overview of the historical evolution of resource dependence theory, see R. Biermann and Harsch, 2017, 136–38, who distinguish between four phases of theory development: 1) the formation phase of the 1950s and 1960s, 2) the heydays of the 1970s and early 1980s, 3) a subsequent phase of unquestioned acceptance from the mid-1980s to the early 2000s, and 4) the current phase of theory revival, refinement, and interdisciplinary application.

between the World Bank and C40 and ICLEI. In addition, it defines the cornerstones of the research design we apply to evaluate its validity in our two empirical cases.

Research Design

In order to assess the plausibility of the proposed resource-exchange model, this study examines variation within and across two longitudinal case studies of the collaboration between the World Bank and transnational city networks. These inter-organizational relationships have been selected as a sample of the much larger population of interactions based on their relevance for climate policy-making and theory development. Joint climate governance efforts are highly relevant because these operations have serious implications for a sound implementation of the Paris Agreement. While the World Bank has for a long time become a big fish in the global response to climate change (Birdsall 2012), C40 and ICLEI constitute for many observers two of the biggest beacons of hope to translate these actions into local reality.

Moreover, due to their deeply intertwined roles as global-local linkage builders, the World Bank and the two transnational city networks under investigation can be considered three of the most important organizational players in the policy domain of climate change. In theoretical terms, their joint operations are selected as case studies, because they offer a wide variance of levels of resource dependence and collaboration, both within and across common initiatives. By holding one side of the dyad (i.e., the World Bank) and the policy field (i.e., climate change) constant, these comparisons enable us to trace with greater certainty the relative influence of the present study's independent variable or mutual resource dependency.

Following common operationalizations, the degree of the mutual resource dependency of two actors is based on their perceptions of the essentiality and the (non-)substitutability of a given resource (Jacobs 1974, 50–51; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978, 46–48). This essentiality denotes the extent to which organizations require resources controlled by external actors, such as funding agencies or private actors, to attain their goals. There are two indicators for the essentiality of a resource: 1) the relative magnitude of the resource needs and 2) the criticality of the resource or the ability of an organization to continue functioning in the absence of the resource. Non-substitutability means the extent to which resources provided by an actor are not replaceable through other sources. Thus, if in an anticipated collaboration each organization perceives that the envisaged partner possesses resources that are both essential and non-substitutable, the mutual resource dependency is high and, as a consequence, so is the expected level of inter-organizational collaboration (Harsch 2015).

Inter-organizational collaboration as the dependent variable of this study ranges from very intense to minimal or even absent efforts taken by partners at working together toward a common goal or objective. For the sake of clarity and simplicity, the level of collaboration is characterized here as either high or low-to-zero. Accordingly, a high level of collaboration refers to strong, reciprocal efforts by partners to carry out a high number of joint programs and initiatives. A low-to-zero level of collaboration, by contrast, refers to superficial-to-nil and/or nonreciprocal efforts, such as the sporadic sharing of general information or the mere participation of delegates of one organization at a side event of the other.

The necessary data to ensure the robustness and reliability of our empirical results were obtained by using and evaluating three types of sources (Rothbauer 2008). First, we undertook an extensive desk study of the relevant scientific literature about international bureaucracies and transnational city networks. Second, we carried out a systematic content analysis of primary documents, including the latest reports, press releases, and policy briefs published by the respective organizations. Third, we conducted a series of semi-structured expert interviews, as well as informal talks with World Bank officials and representatives of C40 and ICLEI.[4] In our two case studies, our period of observation extends from 1990 to 2017.

4. In particular, we focused on interviewing the key "boundary spanners" (or frontline employees) within the different organizations given their pivotal role in managing the organization's relations to external actors (R. Biermann and Koops 2017a, 4).

The World Bank and Transnational City Networks

The collaboration of the World Bank with transnational city networks is mainly managed by three World Bank units serving as local focal points.[5] This collaboration is structured in three operational areas: 1) social, urban, rural, and resilience (global practice), 2) climate change (cross-cutting solutions area), and 3) the World Bank Institute (capacity-building). While the World Bank has much experience in direct interactions with cities through infrastructure projects in many developing countries, its engagement with transnational city networks is a relatively recent phenomenon.

The World Bank and C40

The first city network that is contrasted with the World Bank for assessing the plausibility of the resource-exchange perspective is C40. Created in 2005 on the initiative of the mayor of London, C40 today connects more than ninety of the world's largest cities, representing over 600 million people and one quarter of the global economy (C40 2017b). Initially set up as a counter initiative to state-led forums, such as the G8 or G20, the network quickly expanded in size and substance. At present, it is presumably "the most significant case of global city agency in global environmental governance" (Acuto 2013a, 99). The early years of the C40 network still largely resembled the first wave of city networks aimed at encouraging cities to put climate change on the local agenda. Since 2010, however, the network has been shifting its focus and seeks to initiate tangible global/local effects rather than triggering symbolic action by a few pioneering cities. Accordingly, C40 now serves as a prime example of the second wave of city networks framed within a mainstream economic rhetoric alongside a turn to city-led or mayor-driven initiatives (Gordon and Acuto 2015).

This re-orientation toward strategic urbanism did not emerge by accident (Bulkeley, Broto, and Edwards 2012; Hodson and Marvin 2010). It was rather driven by an explicit strategy of C40 to augment its operational capacity both in terms of personnel and budget size.[6] While in 2010, C40's capacities were still limited to less than a handful of staff members working in the Greater London Authority City Hall, the network today comprises more than 150 professionals working across multiple sectors and issues (C40 2018). This rapid expansion in staff numbers has been accompanied by a significant increase in funding from external partners, which has totaled up C40's operational budget to roughly USD 52 million per year.[7] The growth in human and financial resources has come along with a gradual marginalization of the London-based secretariat as C40 established a number of formal organizational positions in offices throughout the world (Gordon 2013, 294).

Notwithstanding this mixed picture of C40's organizational capacity, the network has steadily grown from an initial gathering of twenty municipal leaders in 2005 to forty members just one year later, to a current membership of ninety-one affiliated cities as of 2017 (C40 2017a). Membership in C40 is not open to all cities but reserved to those internationally recognizable mega and innovator cities that are perceived as having the greatest potential to take on a leadership role. According to a recent ranking, C40 brings together cities that account for forty-two of the top seventy-eight cities which together produce about 25 percent of the global gross domestic product (Globalization and World Cities 2012). The network's focus on developing a specific club of cities instead of accumulating an ever-larger membership base has proven to be a highly attractive element of its organizational structure. This does not only apply for many cities aspiring to become leaders on a global stage but also for a rising number of international funders and investors looking for partners at the local level.

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5. The World Bank consists of two main bodies, namely the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the International Development Association (IDA). Together with three other bodies—the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), and the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID)—they form the World Bank Group.

6. Phone interview with the former C40 director of communications, editorial, and content, April 2014.

7. Personal communication with a senior C40 consultant, Baltimore, February 2017.

Furthermore, as membership to C40 requires that cities disclose their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and demonstrate a credible commitment to action, C40 is deemed as being at the forefront of the move toward accountability in networked urban climate policy-making (Acuto 2013b; Bulkeley and Schroeder 2012; Gordon 2016). In fact, C40 appears to be more accountable than any other city networks gauged by its members' efforts at measuring and disclosing climate-relevant data on an annual basis. Although the network does not commit itself or its members to quantitative GHG emission reductions, the vast majority of C40 cities engage in the combined practices of measurement, accounting, and public disclosure of citywide GHG emissions. This number has been increasing rapidly since it was first piloted in 2008 (Carbon Disclosure Project 2016).

At the same time, over three-fourths of C40 members have confirmed a willingness to systematically identify, account for, and disclose local climate policies and interventions (C40 and ARUP 2015), providing C40 with a means of affirming the often-reiterated assertion that while "nations talk, cities act" (Curtis 2014, 4). However, C40's promise to be accountable and its commitment to the maxim that "you can't manage, what you don't measure" has not only enabled C40 member cities to establish themselves as legitimate and authoritative global climate governors, but, as some observers have noticed, it has also been well received by a number of powerful international financial institutions and donors (including the World Bank).[8] These actors link cities' prospects for gaining access to international climate financing channels to the need for quantification, standardization, and transparency (Aust 2015; Gordon 2016; Porras 2008).

Besides its exclusive membership that is limited to a set of particularly virtuous and globally accountable cities, a second feature which distinguishes C40 from other networks is its tendency toward hybrid forms of organization (Román 2010, 78). This is demonstrated, most strikingly, by its extensive use of third-party implementation partners from the private sector. In this respect, a first milestone in the implementation of C40's growth strategy was a partnership agreement (2006) and later merger (2011) with the Clinton Climate Initiative. This move has significantly added operational capacity and expertise to the network by facilitating C40's liaison with major Energy Service Companies (like Siemens or Veolia) and mobilizing information technology experts to provide technical assistance to member cities (Acuto 2013b, 844; Gordon 2013, 293). In addition, Bloomberg Philanthropies, the charity organization of the former mayor of New York, has been acting as an important supporter of C40 since 2010, like a number of wealthy donors, such as Realdania or the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (C40 2017b).

Still, the greatest structural development in the organizational history of C40 came with the signing of a formal partnership agreement with the World Bank in June 2011 (Acuto 2013b, 848). This agreement was touted as offering C40 member cities "streamlined access to over a dozen investment and financing instruments—ranging from climate investments funds to development policy lending—that can help cities overcome the expensive but often necessary upfront costs of green infrastructure" (C40 2012). In order to meet the access criteria for one of the World Bank's USD 8.3 billion endowed Climate Investment Funds,[9] cities are required to establish a consistent approach to measure and report their GHG emissions. This imperative has already been responded to by C40 through the release of the Global Protocol for Community-Scale GHG Emission Inventories drafted together with the World Resource Institute and ICLEI in 2014.

8. Skype interview with the former C40 head of Adaptation Research, December 2015, and personal communication with a C40 consultant, Baltimore, February 2017.

9. The CIF actually consists of two trust funds: the Clean Technology Fund (CTF) and the Strategic Climate Fund (SCF). While the IBRD serves as trustee and administrator for both funds, approved projects are jointly implemented by the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the International Finance Corporation (IFC), and the World Bank. As of 22 June 2018, the stock capital of both funds totaled USD 8.3 billion (World Bank 2018c).

While it is too early to judge whether this approach has already been fully implemented, recent reports and statements by World Bank officials indicate that a number of C40 cities have already signed such sub-sovereign loan agreements directly with the World Bank (World Bank 2015, 97). Beyond the development of a global city reporting standard and the establishment of a single, dedicated entry point for C40 member cities to tap into World Bank resources, there are further implementation advantages arising from the partnership for both partners. As Acuto acknowledged, linking the World Bank apparatus not merely to C40's political but essentially to its technical operations allows both actors to reach out to new targets at the local and global level of climate policy-making. Furthermore, this linkage allows either party to circumvent (or even outpace) the all too often painstaking international negotiations "by setting up direct connections between the transnational scale of both the Bank and the C40's city diplomacy, and the urban sphere represented in the latter's planning track" (Acuto 2013a, 132).

Two further aspects need to be considered to gain a thorough understanding of the actual amount of collaboration between the World Bank and C40. First, as indicated above, collaboration between the World Bank and C40 already came into being in 2009, when they partnered with the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs and the Canton of Basel-City. This happened within the framework of the Carbon Finance Capacity Building Program in order to establish a "South-North-mega-city climate alliance network market, that allows emerging mega cities of the South to sell the generated certificates to an industrialized partnering mega city" (Carbon Finance Capacity Building 2015). Second, there are also a number of other projects in which the World Bank and C40 have worked together, especially after the official announcement of its partnership in 2011.

One of the most visible and meaningful joint projects carried out in the more recent history of the partnership between World Bank and C40 is the City Creditworthiness Initiative, which addresses credit barriers to green growth of 300 cities in about sixty low- and middle-income countries (World Bank 2018). Designed as a platform to enable reform-minded local authorities to access a wide range of financial and technical services (e.g., capacity building, international expertise, local hands-on assistance, peer-to-peer networking, credit rating and transaction), representatives from more than eighty cities have so far attended one of the program's City Creditworthiness Academies. They provide in-depth training courses on climate-smart capital investment plans and actions to enhance the credit ratings of cities (Miller and Swann 2016). Another major collaborative project is the joint development of the already mentioned Global Protocol for Community-Scale GHG Emission Inventories. This protocol currently provides the most accurate and robust standard for accounting and reporting city-wide emissions. In addition, the two organizations launched the Climate Action for Urban Sustainability, an interactive data-driven planning tool designed to help cities identify and prioritize cost-effective ways to reduce emissions and improve urban livelihoods.

In sum, we identified six major instances of collaboration (through initiatives, programs, and projects) in the period from the first informal interaction concerning the implementation of the Carbon Finance Capacity Building program in 2009 until 2017. While this figure is impressive, it should not obscure the fact that the frequency and intensity of interactions between the World Bank and C40 has varied considerably over the life cycle of the partnership. The partnership varied from just one collaborative activity in the first six years after C40's foundation (2005–11), followed by a period of extensive collaboration after signing the Memorandum of Understanding (2011–14), to a notable slow-down of joint activities in most recent years (2014–17). Finally, a closer look at the content-related goals of the individual initiatives reveals that most collaborative activities undertaken by the World Bank and C40 have so far taken place in the later phases of the policy cycle. This is most obvious with respect to the implementation of various capacity building and technical assistance programs, as well as the development of city inventories for monitoring and reporting GHG emissions.

The World Bank and ICLEI

The second transnational city network that is contrasted with the World Bank to test the assumptions of the resource-exchange model and examine the actual level of collaboration is ICLEI. Founded in 1990, the network's mission is "to build and serve a worldwide movement of local governments to achieve tangible improvements in global sustainability with special focus on environmental conditions through cumulative local actions" (ICLEI 2011, 4). In 2003, the organization changed its name from International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives to Local Governments for Sustainability in order to stress its dedication to sustainability. Today, over 1,500 cities, towns, and counties from 100+ countries across the world have signed up with ICLEI to participate in voluntary programs devoted to a sustainable future (ICLEI 2016). As such, ICLEI is not only the largest global network of local governments committed to sustainable development. It is also the network with the longest experience in showcasing solutions for mainstreaming sustainable development at the local level (Hickmann 2016). Accordingly, a first essential difference to C40 is that for ICLEI, climate change is only one concern among many.

ICLEI's organizational strategy for engagement with member cities is primarily oriented toward securing the greatest possible involvement in one of its global or regional projects (Labaeye and Sauer 2013). Hence, in contrast to C40, ICLEI is often considered an archetypical emanation of the first generation of city networks that seek to steer (if not regulate) city behavior from the top instead of directly working together with the cities (Gordon and Acuto 2015, 66). Since 2003, ICLEI has been undergoing a transformation process to the effect that not only the name of the organization was changed but also nearly every official statement now entails a reference to the central functions that member cities have assumed as key drivers of ICLEI's success. However, current strategy papers suggest that ICLEI still defines its role as primarily acting on behalf of its members who they seek to encourage, guide, and support through a number of services, tools, and technical solutions (Van Begin and Zimmermann 2015).

In terms of its organizational structure, ICLEI also differs considerably from C40. Operating with a staff of more than 280 professionals dispersed across seventeen regional offices and five thematic centers, it clearly outperforms C40 in terms of administrative capacity. On the other hand, its overall annual budget of USD 17 million breaks down to a much smaller amount of money available for managing relations to each of its 1,500+ members (ICLEI 2014, 5). Related to this, another organizational characteristic distinguishing ICLEI from C40 is its "much broader and diverse membership comprising small and medium-sized cities from all regions of the world."[10] ICLEI is principally open to all cities, regardless of their size and estimated impact on GHG emission reductions. For new aspirant cities, the only access requirements are the support of ICLEI's mission, mandate, and principles as stated in the charter, plus the payment of an annual fee. Hence, ICLEI represents a far less exclusive club of cities than C40 does with its membership.

On the downside, however, ICLEI appears less accountable than C40 as ICLEI does not define any quantitative GHG emission reduction targets neither at the network, nor individual member level (Bansard, Pattberg, and Widerberg 2014, 11). Although member cities are encouraged to develop ambitious climate action plans and report on their climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, the provision of such data, as well as the choice of targets, metrics, baseline years, and participation in one of its sub-networks is entirely voluntary (Hickmann 2017). Member cities are only indirectly steered through the provision of certain support measures, such as capacity building, technical assistance, or information supplied by ICLEI's World Secretariat.

A final organizational feature affecting ICLEI's attractiveness as a partner to international bureaucracies is the fact that it is far less connected to the private sector than C40. Recently, ICLEI's World Secretariat and some regional offices have begun to reach out to the private sector.

10. Personal interview with the ICLEI Head of Global Capacity Center, Paris, December 2015.

In particular, a number of companies and business associations—among them Deutsche Messe AG, McKinsey, or Siemens—are now appearing as active sponsors of events organized by the network (ICLEI 2018). However, the importance of these linkages for the functioning of the network is not comparable to the critical role played by private actors as implementing partners of C40. Rather, as it becomes evident from ICLEI's current organizational strategy (Van Begin and Zimmermann 2015, 15), the network mainly interacts with the public sector. Partners comprise first and foremost UN agencies and specialized international organizations as well as a number of national government organizations, such as Germany's Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development or South Korea's Ministry of Public Administration and Security on Cooperation in the Area of Green Growth.

Most interestingly, despite ICLEI's particular connectedness to the UN system with several formalized long-term partnerships to a number of specialized bodies—no such partnership agreement exists between ICLEI and the World Bank. Notably, the World Bank is now mentioned in official documents as one amongst other institutions with which ICLEI seeks to "establish/improve institutional partnerships" (Van Begin and Zimmermann 2015, 18). While the absence of a formal partnership agreement provides a first indication of the (non-) maturity and (low) density of the relationship between the World Bank and ICLEI, our focus here is on assessing the level of de facto collaboration, no matter whether the relationship has been formalized or not.

A closer look at the jointly launched and implemented initiatives reinforces the impression that the level of collaboration between the World Bank and ICLEI is indeed significantly lower than within the formalized partnership between the World Bank and C40. To be sure, there are some instances of (rather indirect) collaboration between the World Bank and ICLEI in a few broader multi-stakeholder initiatives, such as the Medellin Collaboration on Urban Resilience, the World Bank-led Global Platform for Sustainable Cities, or the Resilient Cities Acceleration Initiative backed by the UN General Secretary Executive Office and the Rockefeller Foundation. However, apart from two initiatives, namely the City Climate Planner Certificate Program and the Global Protocol for Community-Scale GHG Emission Inventories, we identified no meaningful instances of direct collaboration between the two institutions. This stands in stark contrast to the relationship between C40 and the World Bank.

In sum, ICLEI apparently constitutes for the World Bank at best as an auxiliary partner to implement its climate change mission on the ground, just as the World Bank remains only a second-rank partner for ICLEI to reach its aim of scaling up its sustainability agenda. At the same time, a number of representatives of both organizations reported in personal communications that over the past few years the two actors have come closer to one another in terms of an increased exchange of information and exploring possibilities for future collaboration.[11] This latter observation is also underscored by the fact that the collaborative initiatives between ICLEI and the World Bank identified above were all launched within the last three years of our period of observation (2014–17).

Summary of Empirical Results

The previous analysis has shown that there is considerable variation in the level of collaboration between the World Bank and transnational city networks across organizations and over time. To begin with, a cross-case comparison reveals that the level of collaboration varies considerably between the two cases. While the World Bank and C40 have collaborated in at least six major climate-related urban initiatives, this figure is considerably lower in the case of the World Bank's relations with ICLEI. Here, we merely identified two instances of direct collaboration through joint initiatives. A second striking observation is that the World

11. Personal interviews with the ICLEI head of Global Capacity Center and with an ICLEI program manager, Paris, November 2015, and skype interview with a senior advisor to the World Bank and former ICLEI staff member, January 2016.

Bank and C40 are frequently collaborating directly with each other in bilateral projects, while the relationship between the World Bank and ICLEI is primarily of indirect nature and rarely characterized by the occurrence of direct interactions at the operational level (see Table 2).

Besides inter-organizational variation, there are also indications of inter-temporal variations within each dyadic case. The evolution of the World Bank's relationship with ICLEI has been subject to only minor temporal fluctuations, namely from a long period of only sporadic interaction to a slight increase in joint activities over the past few years (2014–17). The diachronic comparison of the World Bank's relations to C40 revealed considerable discontinuities in the level of collaboration. It started from an initial participation in parallel initiatives and ad hoc consultations (2009–11), turned to an extensive partnership (2011–14), and most recently a significant decrease of collaborative activity (2014–17).

Table 2. List of Major Initiatives by the World Bank in Collaboration with C40/ICLEI

Partnership	Joint Initiatives
World Bank—C40 Formal Cooperation Agreement adopted in 2011	Carbon Finance Capacity Building Program (2009) Municipal Solid Waste Initiative (2012) Global Protocol for Community-Scale GHG Emission Inventories (2014) Medellin Collaboration on Urban Resilience (2014)* City Creditworthiness Initiative (2014) Climate Action for Urban Sustainability (2015) Transportation Initiative (2015) Global Platform for Sustainable Cities (2016)*
World Bank—ICLEI No Cooperation Agreement	Global Protocol for Community-Scale GHG Emission Inventories (2014) Medellin Collaboration on Urban Resilience (2014)* Resilient Cities Acceleration Initiative (2014)* City Climate Planner Certificate Program (2015) Global Platform for Sustainable Cities (2016)*

* Initiatives in which partners collaborate only indirectly or in a consortium with other actors

Thus, while the level of collaboration between the World Bank and C40 rates high in comparison to the collaboration between the World Bank and ICLEI, we also identified considerable within-case variance in the former case. This finding points to the need for a more dynamic framework to investigate the institutional interplay between actors—one that goes beyond merely providing "snap-shot analyses" and takes into account "the interrelatedness of cooperation episodes across time" (R. Biermann and Koops 2017a, 13).

Explaining Inter-Organizational Collaboration

What accounts for the variable patterns of collaboration between the World Bank and the two transnational city networks? In view of the empirical analysis, we argue in line with the resource-exchange perspective that both the cross-organizational and inter-temporal patterns of collaboration are mainly the result of existing resource discrepancies between the organizational entities. This divergence leads to higher or lower degrees of mutual resource dependency among the actors and hence determines their level of collaboration. C40 is far better equipped than ICLEI with those critical resources demanded by the World Bank (i.e., direct access to local decision-makers and technical staff). This explains why the World Bank in its steady search for new clients and implementation partners on the ground shows a much higher propensity to collaborate with C40 than with ICLEI. By contrast, ICLEI's core competency lies in the implementation of projects at the network-level, a function less needed by current World Bank operations in the policy domain of climate change. As a senior advisor to the World Bank and former ICLEI staff member put it, the main reason for the World Bank to engage with C40 is that the network "is in contrast to ICLEI not only more exclusive in terms of its membership, but at the same time also much more inclusive of the cities themselves." Hence, one of the biggest assets of C40's operations is that "they engage the mayors or technical staff much more than ICLEI." While ICLEI "does a lot of project implementation at the network-level and features particularly strong when it comes to shaping the policy agenda at the international level," the central issue for the World Bank to engage with city networks is "to make sure that the [World] Bank gets in touch with the right cities" and here "C40 clearly outperforms [other] networks, such as ICLEI."[12]

Yet, the lower level of collaboration between the World Bank and ICLEI is not only a matter of ICLEI's relatively lower attractiveness compared to what C40 has to offer in terms of resources. Instead, there are strong indications that for ICLEI the World Bank is not the most preferred partner to pursue its sustainability agenda. As a program manager of ICLEI stated, ICLEI's "main priority as a global membership organization is to facilitate the united voice of forward-looking local and regional governments, rather than to pave a few cities the way for improved access to existing funding channels." Although enhancing the access opportunities to international climate financing instruments for members "has become an ever more important tenet of ICLEI's global programs (. . .), building an active and committed membership at the local level, as well as partnerships with international and regional government associations are still our greatest concerns."[13] Apart from that, however, autonomy concerns seem to have played an even greater role in explaining ICLEI's reluctance to engage more actively with the World Bank, as several other staff members of ICLEI revealed. In a personal interview, ICLEI's head of the Global Capacity Center noted, "no one within the ICLEI family would seriously claim that the resources the World Bank could bring in a more vital partnership [would] be inessential or even insignificant for ICLEI's mission on climate change."[14] Moreover, many interviewees referred, albeit mostly off-the-record, to the existence of a "healthy skepticism" among leading staff members within the organization as to whether a "closer collaboration with the World Bank would lead to an over-reliance on World Bank programs and funding schemes or otherwise force ICLEI in a one-sided partnership with this financial giant."[15] In the worst case, as one senior manager acknowledged, this could even lead to a situation in which ICLEI becomes "invisible to both its members and the outside world."

In addition to the significant cross-organizational differences between the World Bank's level of collaboration with C40 as compared to its relationship with ICLEI, the resource-exchange perspective captures the inter-temporal variance observed in the partnership between the World Bank and C40. As empirical evidence shows, the collaboration between the World Bank and C40 gathered pace only after the network had undergone a significant transformation process in 2010, which led to a tremendous increase in its capacity to act. This explains why the two organizations have, at this point in time, considerably strengthened their collaborative relations and concluded a partnership agreement. As a number of new powerful city networks, such as the 100 Resilient Cities sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation, have emerged between 2013 and 2014, they have not only reduced the dependency of the World Bank on C40 (as the only potential partner among the various existing transnational city networks), but they also affected C40's incentives to collaborate even more closely with actors from the private sector as a means of safeguarding its competitive position. Thus, while the new partnership agreement with the World Bank has been announced proudly in 2011 as being unique and groundbreaking, many C40 staff members we interviewed after 2014 highlighted the organization's newly adopted "keeping all options open" approach through which "C40 constantly seeks to enhance its climate change portfolio and, at the same time, reduce its traditional reliance on one or a few international donors." Consequently, C40 staff members still consider the World Bank to be an important partner, "but by no means the only one with which

12. Skype interview with a senior advisor to the World Bank and former ICLEI staff member, January 2016.

13. Phone interview with an ICLEI program manager, June 2015.

14. Personal interview with the ICLEI head of Global Capacity Center, Paris, December 2015.

15. Skype interview with a senior advisor to the World Bank and former ICLEI staff member, January 2016, and phone interview with an ICLEI program manager, June 2015.

C40 looks out for synergies."[16] This latter finding is also supported by a self-conducted time tracking of the information provided on the C40 homepage under the heading "Partners and Funders," revealing a significant rise in the number of officially listed partner organizations from five in 2014 to thirty as of September 2018.[17]

Conclusion

This article has adopted a resource-exchange perspective and explored the inter-organizational collaboration between the World Bank and two prominent transnational city networks. While recent studies have considerably advanced our understanding of the role and function of international bureaucracies in world politics, their interactions with transnational actors so far have not been analyzed in much detail. By focusing on the interplay of the World Bank with C40 and ICLEI, we have shown that it is of utmost importance to recognize both sides of such interactions. Thus, the key conclusion of our analysis is that the resource-exchange approach is well suited for investigating instances of inter-organizational relations in contemporary global policy-making.

Recent conceptualizations of the interplay between international bureaucracies and transnational actors tend to focus merely on one side of the relationship, like the motives of the international bureaucracy in bringing about issue-specific change. A resource-exchange approach to inter-organizational relations, by contrast, reflects the interests of both partners in a relationship, no matter what types of actors are scrutinized. Certainly, international bureaucracies might sometimes be in the privileged position to set the terms and conditions of a transaction with a given transnational actor. However, we argue that a more adequate starting point to study inter-organizational relations is provided by frameworks based on (resource) exchanges rather than by concepts presupposing instances of regulation, delegation, or orchestration. On the one hand, neither of such governance modes seems to be at play in a number of interactions between international bureaucracies and transnational actors. On the other hand, even in cases where relations are deemed to be asymmetric, it is often difficult to judge whether or not the governance activities of the alleged stronger partner were indeed geared toward influencing the other actor's behavior, or merely reflect temporary one-sided support services as common in any functioning partnership.

Considering our two empirical cases, it has become apparent that the interactions between the World Bank and C40 on the one hand and the World Bank and ICLEI on the other hand differ in several respects. Although the two city networks share similar network goals, they vary in their core organizational dimension and resources. This is a main component for the explanation of the relatively dense interactions of the World Bank with C40, whereas its collaboration is far less pronounced with ICLEI. In this vein, the main contribution of this article is to show that the resource-exchange model provides a useful "first stab" at the question, why we observe such stark differences in the level of cooperation across the two cases and over time.

Furthermore, it has become obvious that the varying level of collaboration in our cases was a result of shifts in the actors' perceived mutual resource dependency (rather than one actor successfully inducing or steering the other toward more or less cooperation). Accordingly, we contend that in order to arrive at a comprehensive explanation of the actual collaboration level, the motivations and strategies of the international bureaucracies and transnational actors need to be studied. In this respect, the biggest advantage of the resource-exchange perspective is that it sheds light on the motivations of both sides in a partnership in order to determine the level of collaboration, as well as its variations over time. Hence, a second conclusion derived from our analysis is that it appears only of little use to specify and attribute certain resource categories to particular actor types. In particular, we found that the level of collaboration strongly relies on which specific sub-types of resources (e.g., policy field expertise versus

16. Phone interview with the former C40 director of communications, editorial and content, April 2014 and personal communication with a senior C40 consultant, Baltimore, February 2017.

17. The respective screenshots are available on request from the authors.

technical and financial expertise) are sought to be exchanged. Put differently, it is not the type of actor or resource but the specific properties of the resources held by the actors that shape the perceived mutual resource dependency and consequently the level of collaboration.

Finally, we see three avenues for further research. First, it would be interesting to compare the interactions of the World Bank with C40 and ICLEI to those of other international bureaucracies with the two city networks. Such studies could validate whether the resource-exchange model possesses explanatory power in more or less crucial cases, where the ex ante likeliness for collaboration is deemed to be either higher or lower. Second, it would be appealing to analyze interactions between international bureaucracies and transnational actors in other policy domains. While the area of climate change is often used as a laboratory to study new institutional dynamics, it needs to be examined to what extent similar findings can be obtained in other fields. As international bureaucracies and transnational actors require external resources to pursue their goals regardless of the specific policy domain, we suppose that the resource-exchange approach also bears much analytical value in other domains. Third, it would be particularly rewarding to test our proposed model against the predictions of other theories of inter-organizational relations to further refine our approach (Harbrich, Forthcoming). We contend in line with a number of scholars that such a "rationalist first stab" at the question of why and under what circumstances international bureaucracies and transnational actors collaborate and enjoy the greatest prima facie plausibility (Mayer 2008, 133; Steffek 2013, 1,000). Nonetheless, we recognize that other factors, such as the compatibilities of cultures or shifts in the normative environment of organizations may likewise play a crucial role in the formation of inter-organizational collaboration.

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