

NGO Coordination in Humanitarian Action: The Case of the Czech Floods of August 2002

by

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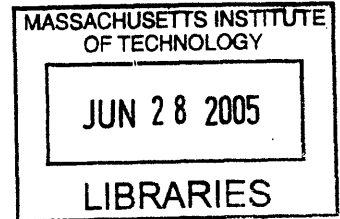
Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master in City Planning

at the

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

June 2005



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ABSTRACT

In responding to disasters and emergencies, it is generally expected that there is effective coordination and exchange of information among those affected by or involved in the disaster response at the national and international level and that relief agencies undertake activities on the basis of need, where their expertise and capacity can have the greatest impact. Benefits of coordination range from reducing activity duplication to allowing organizations to assist more people in need. However, while the importance of coordination is generally accepted and appreciated in the humanitarian aid field, how to accomplish it still remains somewhat elusive and problematic. This thesis attempts to analyze the nature and level of coordination among Czech humanitarian NGOs responding to the devastating floods of 2002 with a view to better understand the challenges to and incentives for NGO coordination in humanitarian action and response. The results show that while an ad-hoc attempt was made to coordinate the rehabilitation effort among the NGOs, differences in management styles and organizational values, along with traditional disincentives to cooperate like competition for funds and publicity limited the level of coordination in responding to the floods.

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to sincerely thank my thesis supervisor Professor JoAnn Carmin, for giving me the invaluable opportunity to work on this fascinating project and for being an extremely patient and supportive guide over these last two years. I am thankful to Prof. Bishwapriya Sanyal for reading my thesis and for his timely help and advice. I would also like to thank the Institute for Economic and Environmental Policy (IEEP) in Prague for their hospitality and the rest of the research team, especially Matt, for their camaraderie.

I am grateful to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning and the Graduate Students Office at MIT for generous financial support. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of the Prafulla C. Mukerji Foundation in New Jersey and the Tarakath Das Foundation at Columbia University, in enabling me to continue my education at MIT.

I am indebted to Vidya-ji for offering me a home away from home; to Bhumi, Sudhesh and my loving sister, Aditi for their constant support and encouragement; and to Amit, Danny, Anjali and Anubhav for sharing their friendship with me. Last, but not the very least, I am thankful to two very special friends - Clemens and Amruta - for their heartfelt love and caring, and their uncanny sense of humor that made my time here truly unforgettable.

I dedicate this work to my parents who have made countless sacrifices to make my *dreams* come true.

Disclaimer

The data for this thesis were drawn from the project, "International Cooperative Research on Environmental Policy Learning and Capacity Development in the Czech Republic." As such, this material is based on work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant #0408882. Any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

When a disaster strikes, humanitarian aid organizations – domestic and international - attempt to get delivery systems set up quickly on the ground to deal with the inevitable human tide of suffering that follows. However, historically much immediate thought has rarely been given to coordinating their actions with the multitude of other agencies doing similar work (Bennett, 1995; Van Brabant, 1997; Reindrop and Wiles, 2001). The common argument given is that the need for speed makes coordination less of a priority; less, easily admitted is the weight of institutional self-interest in aid-agency decisions. Indeed, in aid circles coordination is quite a value-laden concept. For some it has overtones of 'control' while others fear being swamped by interminable layers of bureaucracy (Bennett, 1995). Long-established institutions like the UN have always accepted, at least in principle, that a multi-faceted approach to relief and development requires a degree of regulation – a 'coordinator' – to oversee its entirety. By contrast, the smaller, independent and relatively younger non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in particular, have traditionally resisted centralism and formal cooperation among each other. For them, working together, at best, has entailed a loose consensus, 'a tacit agreement to not tread on each other's toes' (Bennett, 1995).

However this has slowly been changing. The last fifteen years have seen a discernible shift in favor of closer, more routine coordination among organizations that deal with the ever-increasing demands of humanitarian assistance. Spurred on by the perceived failures of the international aid community in the Rwandan crisis and increasing criticism of international aid in general, a plethora of new mechanisms and initiatives were developed in the second half of the 1990s by international NGOs seeking to enhance their performance and effectiveness, strengthen accountability and restore public trust in the humanitarian enterprise (Darcy and Hoffman, 2003). Examples include statements of principle such as the Red Cross Code of Conduct and the Sphere

Project's Humanitarian Charter; and operational guidelines and best practice such as the NGO Field Cooperation Protocol, the People in Aid code for managing and supporting humanitarian personnel and Sphere's Minimum Standards in Disaster Response. While some sections, notably francophone NGOs led by Medecins sans Frontiere (MSF), strongly oppose such initiatives on the grounds that they risk creating a set of rigid, lowest common denominator standards, inhibit innovation and independence, and are open to manipulation by donor governments, most major international NGOs and prominent domestic NGOs today, have greatly increased their coordination, in practice and in principle, covering virtually every aspect of their work (Darcy and Hoffman, 2003).

However coordination, in the humanitarian relief sector, is easier said than done. The trouble is that the overall structure and the operating environments in which relief agencies and NGOs must work do not readily encourage broad and open cooperation among them. Conflicting agendas, mandates, organizational histories and operating cultures coupled with increasing competition for donor money and beneficiaries, pose significant challenges to achieving effective coordination among humanitarian NGOs. Coordination among NGOs seems to only be possible if epistemic and collegial links among staff of major NGOs are strong, a network for sharing information during emergencies has been established and there is willingness – based on incentives - to work together and cooperate (McIntire, 1998).

This thesis explores the idea of NGO coordination in humanitarian action further – specifically what conditions and characteristics of inter-organizational structure and operation might lead to improved service delivery processes and outcomes among smaller civil society actors - by examining the response to a major disaster given by local humanitarian NGOs. By analyzing the nature and level of coordination among five prominent Czech humanitarian NGOs responding to the devastating floods of 2002, this thesis seeks to define more accurately the challenges to and the incentives for NGO coordination in humanitarian action and response. In doing so, it attempts to contribute to what is perceived to be a vital and important ongoing dialogue among analysts concerning how humanitarian aid may most effectively be delivered in the context of an ever-increasing number of NGOs participating in humanitarian activity today.

1.2 Data and Methods

Based on an empirical-inductive approach, the methodology for the study revolves around an extensive literature review and semi-structured in-depth interviews. As part of

an international collaborative research effort funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF), primary data for the study was collected by conducting interviews with representatives of five prominent humanitarian NGOs in Prague in June, 2004. To facilitate a ‘pattern analysis’ of the primary data, the transcripts of the interviews were coded in an ‘open’ fashion using *Atlas.ti*¹. Additional data about the floods and the response in 2002 was gleaned from secondary sources like websites of the respective organizations. This also helped in cross-checking the claims made by the respondents in the interviews. Drawing from non-profit organization theory and humanitarian studies, the literature review aids in understanding the concept of coordination and how it relates to the provision of humanitarian assistance.

While the next chapter summarizes the various notions, history, theory, experiences, obstacles and preconditions for coordination in the humanitarian aid sector, Chapter 3 provides a description of the NGO sector– its growth, political economy and contemporary debates around increasing accountability of the sector in delivering aid. It also provides a theoretical overview of the concepts used in the open coding process. Chapter 4 highlights the history, development and present status of civil society in the Czech Republic and profiles prominent local NGOs who responded to the floods of 2002. This chapter also describes the nature and scale of the flooding event in 2002. Finally, Chapter 5 attempts to describe one of the main NGOs’ - People in Need Foundation (PINF) – responses and analyze the nature and level of coordination among various NGOs during the crisis and posits some conclusions and recommendations.

¹ *Atlas.ti* is a software designed for qualitative data analysis by the Scientific Software Development group.
<http://www.atlasti.com/>

2 .COORDINATION IN THE HUMANITARIAN AID SECTOR

2.1 Why Co-ordinate?

In recent decades, as the corporate world has witnessed changing approaches to organizations working together, the concept of coordination has been much studied in organization theory and business management (Malone and Crowston, 1990; Kogut and Zander, 1996). Coordination and collaboration are now seen as important strategies used by public, private, and nonprofit institutions to achieve both small-scale, short-term and long-term, organizational goals. The need and encouragement for nonprofit organizations to collaborate, both cross-sector and intra-sector, has increased dramatically in recent years. James Austin (2000) asserts that political, economic, and social forces are causing societal changes that make collaboration imperative. Internal and external collaboration is being seen as the key to high-performing organizations' succeeding in an evolving, highly competitive and global world (Hesselbein et al., 1999). Myers (1998) provides a simple motivator – the real reason for collaboration is to “better achieve your organization’s goals.” Whatever the initial catalyst, organizations are expected to honestly identify why they wish to collaborate and what benefits they envision before undertaking this time- and labor-intensive strategy.

Benefits identified by scholars and documented through case studies range from improvements in programming to public relations to fiscal resourcefulness. As the numbers of people and needs served by nonprofits have grown, collaboration is seen as helping to “integrate programs and services that better serve complex needs” (Myers, 1998). Additionally, collaborations have the potential to attract more public attention than the similar work of a single institution. For some organizations, collaboration has allowed development of a more in-depth understanding of an issue. After the initial investment in staff time for beginning a collaborative effort, often a reduction is seen in the institution’s expenses for new initiatives. Particularly, planning, research, and training costs are

lessened as two or more organizations pool resources to accomplish a shared goal. Indeed, Austin (2000) points foremost to the fiscal effects of collaboration – cost savings, economies of scale and scope, synergies, and revenue enhancement.

In the humanitarian aid literature, the work of Jon Bennett (1995) on coordination emphasizes the need for investing in organizational and institutional development and a change in the pattern of interactions within the NGO community for two fundamental reasons:

- to minimize duplication and wastage in humanitarian action through exchange of information and resources
- to provide a mandated forum through which the collective consensus of NGOs can be expressed to others usually national governments, donors and UN agencies.

From this basis, according to Bennett (1995), coordination can help serve other tasks such as: facilitating division of labor with other aid actors; playing a civic role by pushing for greater ‘humanitarian space’ for NGOs; guarding against encroachment; supporting small, new NGOs by linking them to those with more experience; catalyzing activities which may require a critical mass to get them off the ground; identifying NGOs who may collaborate with donors; establishing guidelines for best practice and norms for proper conduct; acting as a reference point and analytical resource on sector wide issues; and providing support services requested by the membership.

From an institutional perspective, it is believed that the quality of such inter-organizational relationships effects civil society’s ability to better deal with the state and the market at all levels of operation (Brown and Kalegaonkar, 1999). An institutional development perspective regards NGOs as a sector promoting values associated with self reliance, social justice, countervailing power, etc: values that need to be protected and extended and it is civil society which generates the necessary normative framework for valuing the freedoms of association, participation and empowerment in society. Thus, it is in civil society that we locate the need for collective, coordinated and policy-oriented action by the NGO sector as a whole (Brown and Ashman, 1999).

However, according to Edwards and Hulme (1997) an investment in institutional development requires more than short-term funds for predetermined projects. It demands an awareness of the distinction between change in social sectors and change at an individual organizational level. Individual NGOs they argue cannot by themselves change the power relations that can transfer decision-making to the field -to the recipients

as well as to the givers of aid. Such genuine participation will depend on such structures are set-up and who controls them. The next section endeavors to explain some of the structural obstacles to effecting coordination in the humanitarian aid sector.

2.2 Objections and Obstacles to Operational Coordination in Humanitarian Assistance

More effective aid operations with minimization of duplication and waste through exchange of information and resources seem eminently pursuable aims for the humanitarian aid sector. But then, why does this unity of purpose not lead to greater support for collaboration and coordinated approaches among the various organizations in this sector? Van Brabant (1997) explains that the humanitarian world operates in ways that offer strong disincentives against effective coordination, which are largely outside the control of field coordinators, and needs to be addressed at higher organizational levels and also by donors.

- **Competition for funds:** A major systemic obstacle comes from the fact he argues, that the humanitarian sector is a saturated market where implementing agencies are competing for funds. Visibility and scale of the individual agency are seen as a key element for successful long-term financial survival (Reindrop and Wiles, 2001). This competition, unfortunately, also extends to official aid donors.
- **Different Mandates of NGOs:** Van Brabant (1997) feels that too much is made of 'mandate' issues which usually belies even more overtly of mere organizational self-interest, with total disregard for the interests of the intended beneficiaries. Fundamentally humanitarian agencies do not have different mandates. They may specialize in certain sectors or focus on different target groups such as children, refugees, mine victims etc. But it is fairly obvious that neither population categories nor sector-based constituencies can be seen in isolation from each other. People afflicted by disaster do not mistakenly 'slice up reality' the way aid agencies tend to do. Agencies usually fail to recognize that the underlying humanitarian mandate is the same: save lives, reduce suffering and try and protect or restore livelihoods and local capacities. The work of different agencies is therefore inherently complementary.
- **Coordination as decreasing 'speed':** Secondly, particularly when confronted with an acute emergency, the humanitarian sector puts a premium on speed. There is the fear then that the coordination effort will cause delays (Minear, 2002; Whitman and Pocock, 1996). The point is not that this argument is without

substance, but that it applies in only a minority of circumstances. Many crises become protracted, so that the most effective response is not necessarily or no longer the speediest one.

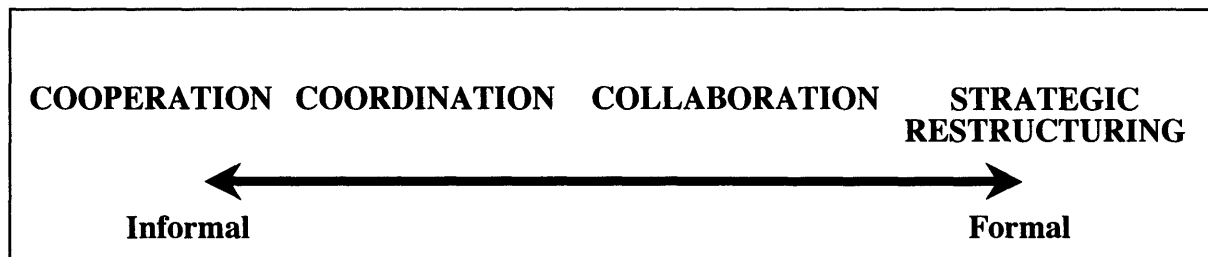
- **Coordination as increasing bureaucracy:** Thirdly, there is institutional resistance to creating yet another layer of bureaucracy. If coordination attempts are indeed so unprofessional and ineffective as to be nothing more than bureaucracy, they are indeed a wastage. Yet at the same time few would refuse to recognize that uncoordinated work also creates much wastage, as well as unfilled gaps. The reservation therefore does not seem to be against coordination per se, as against ineffective coordination. Given that the same senior managers who object to interagency coordination probably see internal coordination as an important aspect of their management responsibilities, the stumbling block seems more a wish to retain authority and autonomy than a concern over bureaucracy.
- **Costs of coordination:** Fourthly, effective coordination indeed has a cost. It is time and therefore staff intensive, and needs to be properly resourced. The problem is that damage-control and wastage avoided through coordination do not show up in the books, and that it is therefore difficult to demonstrate that the coordination effort even from a financial point of view has been cost-saving. But because wastage does not show up in the books it does not mean that it has not happened. If cost-effectiveness would be more regularly looked at in evaluations and audits, this would quickly appear.
- **Coordination as reducing financial accountability:** Fifthly, there is a rather strange belief that coordination complicates accountability - where resources are pooled in a coordinated effort, it may become more difficult to trace the end-use of each donor's individual dollar. But surely that is a distorted concept of accountability since financial accountability cannot be limited to the figures that appear in the accounts. Wastage from unnecessary duplication of efforts does not appear in any agency's accounts, but is therefore no less of a management failure. Moreover, aid funds are provided to bring assistance. There cannot therefore only be accountability upwards to the financial auditor, there has to be accountability in terms of the effectiveness of the work, and its impact.

2.3 Towards a Typology of NGO Coordination

Humanitarian and development NGOs around the world endeavor to maintain a diverse range of interactions with each other, either because they want to or because they have to. A medley of names like partnerships, networks, alliances, coalitions, consortia and coordination are used to describe the different relationships that exist between NGOs. Though these terms are sometimes used synonymously, a number of scholars have tried to distinguish coordination and other types of inter-organizational relationships. In organizational theory, Mattessich and Monsey (1992) have distinguished collaboration from cooperation (“informal relationships...without any commonly defined mission, structure or planning effort”) and coordination (“shares more of characteristics of collaboration, such as formal relationships and compatible missions, with some planning and role division”). Table 2.1 describes the essential elements distinguishing an effort as collaboration, cooperation or coordination. Myers (1998) discusses Klein’s model of the Continuum of Collaborations (see figure 2.1) which illustrates the differing levels of intensity in inter-organizational work, moving from the most simple on the left to the most complex on the right. Myers notes that the level of risk and reward increases as one moves further right on the scale.

Figure 2.1 Continuum of Collaboration

Source: Adapted from Collaborations: Ensuring a Fit with your Partners and your Plans.



Myers (Page 53, 1998)

Table 2.1 Table describing the Elements of Cooperation, Coordination and Collaboration

<i>ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS</i>	COOPERATION	COORDINATION	COLLABORATION
Vision and Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basis for cooperation is usually between individuals but may be mandated by a third party. • Organizational missions and goals are not taken into account • Interaction is on an as needed basis, may last 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual relationships are supported by the organizations they represent • Missions and goals of the individual organizations are reviewed for compatibility • Interaction is usually around one specific project or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment of the organizations and their leaders is fully behind their representatives • Common, new mission and goals are created • One or more projects are undertaken for longer term results

	indefinitely	task of definable length	
Structure, Responsibilities and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships are informal; each organization functions separately • No joint planning is required • Information is conveyed as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations involved take on needed roles, but function relatively independently of each other • Some project-specific planning is required • Communications roles are established and definite channels are created for interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New organizational and structure and/or clearly defined and interrelated roles that constitute a formal division of labor are created • More comprehensive planning is required that includes developing joint strategies and measuring success in terms of impact on the needs of those served • Beyond communication roles and channels for interaction, many 'levels' of communication are created as clear information is a keystone of success
Authority and Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authority rests solely with individual organizations • Leadership is unilateral and control is central • All authority rests with individual organization which acts independently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authority rests with the individual organizations but there is coordination among participants • Some sharing of leadership and control • There is some shared risk but most of the authority and accountability falls to the individual organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authority is determined by the collaboration to balance ownership by the individual organizations with expediency to accomplish purpose • Leadership is dispersed, and control is shared and mutual • Equal risk is shared by all organizations in the collaboration
Rewards and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources (staff time, finances and capabilities) are separate, serving the individual organizations needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources are acknowledged and can be made available to others for a specific project • Rewards are mutually acknowledged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources are pooled or jointly secured for a longer-term effort that is managed by the collaborative structure • Organizations share in the products; more is accomplished jointly than could have been individually

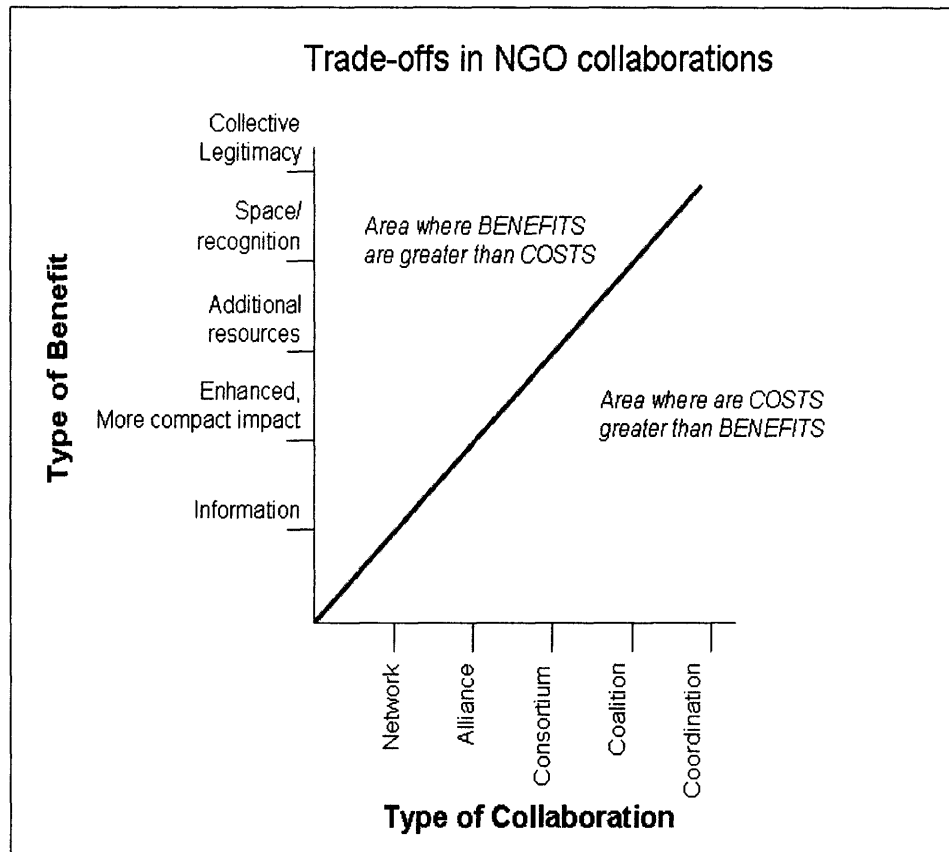
Source: Adapted from *Collaboration: What Makes it Work*, Monsey and Mattessich (Page 77, 1992)

To describe the organizational distinctions among the various terms used to describe the ways in which NGOs collaborate with each other, Fowler (1997) has developed a typology, based on the differences in their relative 'costs' to NGO autonomy - from complete sovereignty of decision-making and action at one extreme to (self-

)enforced constraint at the other. This scale can then be set up against the organizational benefits made in return for limitations on freedom. In other words, the greater the perceived benefit, the more likely an NGO will be to give up autonomy of action and/or take additional responsibility for its actions. The management trade-off is to read the best balance between the two for any given situation. Figure 2.2 sets out the two scales. Horizontally, autonomy decreases from left to right while benefits increase from bottom to top. In the area above the sloping line, benefits outweigh costs; below the line it is the opposite, costs involved in collaboration outweigh the benefit to an individual NGO. Discussions among the organizations follow the line from bottom left to top right. The benefits are however, not mutually exclusive; in fact they tend to nest in each other up the scale, and each higher level incorporates those below. For example, information exchange is found in all other levels, consortia certain alliances, and so on. Finally collaboration may be pursued with self-motivation or out of necessity. For example, the stimulus could be to counter the threat, as opposed to achieving an organizational gain – a situation arising when the state adopts a hostile stance towards NGOs.

The most common reason for weakness in NGO collaboration, Fowler explains is the inherent preference for everyone to try and obtain the highest degree of benefit at the lowest cost in terms of resources and reduced autonomy. All NGOs seem to want the advantages increased coordination can bring but are seldom willing to reach the compromises need to make this happen.

Figure 2.2 Trade-offs in NGO collaborations



Source: Adapted from *Earth Scan Reader on NGO Management* by Alan Fowler and Michael Edwards (Page 111, 2002)

2.4 Organizational Features affecting Coordination

Certain key organizational features of individual NGOs influence the probability of attaining a meaningful and productive relationship with other organizations. Fowler (1997) summarizes these factors in approximate order of importance in Table 2.2. When sufficient congruence and grounds for compromise exist, genuine partnerships can arise leading to field-level and organizational coordination in responding to humanitarian emergencies. An important contextual factor, (not addressed in the following table), is the degree to which NGOs have a recognized position and function in society. For example, in Central and Eastern European countries where civil society has had a interrupted history, the exact role of NGOs in society may be unclear or in a state of flux. The significance of such a historical context will be dealt with in-depth in the next chapter.

Table 2.2 Organizational features influencing authentic NGO partnerships

RANK	ORGANIZATIONAL FEATURE	EXPLANATION
1	Constituency	Owners and supporters of the organization are more likely to understand and endorse relationships formed with

		others having similar socio-economic characteristics
2	Beliefs, values and culture	Beliefs and values and culture determine organizational behavior; the more these are shared the better the grounds for mutual respect and confidence, with less likelihood of major incompatibilities in other areas and processes
3	Theory	Shared understandings of the cause of the problems and of the way societies can be changed lead to consistent, mutually supported choices on issues of public policy
4	Strategic choices and time scales	Shared strategies imply compatible views of the operating environment, with common goals and understanding about how intentional change will take to occur
5	Complementary strengths	Shared appreciation of what each has to bring to the relationship, in terms of competencies and comparative advantages, should work against disagreements on roles and divisions of labor – in addition to creating consistency in terms of expectations which reduces duplication and competition
6	Development policies	Significant differences in understandings of best practice, usually translated as development or technical policies, can be the source of significant friction which leads to time-consuming arguments and mistrust
7	Distribution of authority	Negotiation proceeds most speedily if those involved carry similar authority; referrals and consultations lead to delays and added costs
8	Human-resource policies	Disparity between staff motivation, incentives and treatment can give rise to frustration or envy, leading to negative attitudes which interfere with communication and sound understanding
9	Adaptability	The ability to adjust to changing circumstances is important for the effectiveness of humanitarian and development aid; mismatch in this area can lead to a sense of agreements being taken for granted or ignored
10	Fund raising	Similarity in the way funds are viewed and mobilized leads to shared perspectives on accountability
11	Standards for legitimacy and accountability	A shared concern for and combined ability to demonstrate, legitimacy should lead to higher donor and client confidence, giving improved continuity in funding and contributing significantly to joint effectiveness and accountability
12	Approach to gender	Compatibility in the way gender is approached internally and in external projects reduces the likelihood of insensitivity

Source: Adapted from *Striking a Balance*. Fowler, Alan (1997)

While NGO coordination is always context-specific, Bennett (1995) provides a list of common features found in successful (and not-so successful) attempts at field-level NGO coordination in the humanitarian sector (see Table 2.3). In addition, he strongly advocates for the development of field-based NGO coordination structures and practices

since they can be ‘owned not only by the multitude of small local NGOs rarely seen on our television screens ... and by at least some of the voiceless majority they serve’.

Table 2.3 When does NGO coordination work and fail: Common observations

When does NGO Coordination work best?	When does NGO Coordination fail?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGOs value coordination sufficiently to budget for it as a recognized activity • An individual NGO is prepared to take the lead by investing in the required human capacity • There are complementary networks which reinforce each other in emergency situations • A wholehearted approval and involvement in field coordination is reciprocated at headquarters, not overriding field-directors’ decisions • The individual leading the coordinating body has the right personality for the setting; sometimes a conciliatory figure is needed, other times a dynamic person to push things along and stand ground towards other actors • There is no perception of competition between the coordinating body and its members, in other words, the coordinating body provided a value-added that only it can do, such as sector-wide information, analysis, publications and links to similar bodies elsewhere • The system of governance gives a mandate to act which is clear and widely supported • Coordination is treated as a learning process, molding itself to emergency situations and member needs while looking around to see what is working well elsewhere and why 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGOs consider coordination only from the perspective of self interest – seeking benefits and no costs • There is rhetorical commitment to coordination at a policy level which does not translate down to mandates for field staff • There is insufficient delegation of authority with no agreed way dealing with internal NGO demands resulting from coordination; everything is dealt with on an ad-hoc basis demanding heavy communications traffic between field and headquarters, frequently producing inconsistent, self-interested solutions • The demands of coordination in terms of resource inputs, especially staff time frame • The demands of coordination in terms of resource inputs, especially staff-time, outweigh the benefits • Junior staff are sent to meetings but cannot decide anything without top level involvement; the process drags on and NGOs who cannot wait go their own way • Collective decisions are not made (morally) binding; NGOs can say ‘yes’ and do ‘no’ with impunity • Membership criteria is too broad and vetting is inadequate; this allows politically-aligned NGOs to use the coordinating body for their own agendas, bringing neutrality or independence into dispute – this, in turn, provides an excuse for greater state control • Coordinating bodies become extension of donors

Source: Adapted from *Meeting Needs: NGO Coordination in Practice*, Bennett, Jon (1995)

2.5 Organizational Values and Beliefs

The most fundamental element of NGO identity, according to Fowler (1997) is organizational beliefs and values. Beliefs are the foundations of organizational values

and philosophy of action. Together, beliefs, values, and development philosophy form the reference point for what an NGO stands for. They are the measure against which the organization must be judged by others. In organizational and management terms, clear values and a philosophy are essential for effectiveness because they link an NGO's purpose, policies, strategic aims and operational choices. Beliefs, vision and values are at the top of a hierarchy of organizational features which need to be in place if lower levels of organizational activity are to be done well. Having and making beliefs explicit enables staff to better decide whether or not they belong in the organization and to identify with the views which underlie its culture. A lack of shared beliefs and values reduces not just internal trust leading to a top-down control orientation within the organization but it also affects an NGO's relationship with other organizations.

Three main historical strands or traditions have been important in the evolution of various value-systems in the modern humanitarian sector: the religious, the 'Dunantist' and the 'Wilsonian'. The religious tradition which is the oldest of the three, evolved out of overseas missionary work, however, apart from evangelical organizations, most religious humanitarian NGOs do not proselytize in any direct way. Catholic organizations like the Catholic Relief Services (CRS), World Vision, Mercy Corps International, Lutheran World Relief (LWF), Caritas, and CAFOD, represent some of the largest and most visible transnational NGOs today. These organizations see their humanitarian programs as straddling the church and the secular world, combining social and religious goals. According to Attack (1999) portraying religious values explicitly may provide faith-based NGOs with increased legitimacy and allow them to tap into ready-made grass-roots constituencies – domestic church groups and congregations. A majority of western NGOs, though, base their organizational values in secular humanitarian traditions named for Henry Dunant and President Woodrow Wilson. While 'Dunantist' organizations like Oxfam and Medecins sans Frontieres (MSF) seek to position themselves outside of state interests, 'Wilsonian' humanitarianism characterizes most US NGOs that see a compatibility between humanitarian aims and US foreign policy.

Lewis and Wallace (2000) feel that the claim that development and humanitarian NGOs are explicitly 'values-based' organizations has become something of an article of faith these days. However, there is less evidence that NGOs put these values into practice in their organizational structures and behavior, or even that they are clear about what their core beliefs are (Edwards and Hulme, 1997). This can be a source of weakness because it is the link between values and actions that are crucial in generating legitimacy for NGOs when arguing the case for social change. Argyris and Schon (1974)

have sought to explain this split between theory and action by way of two theories of action. They are those theories that are implicit in what NGOs do as practitioners, also called theories-in-use and those on which they call to speak of their actions to others or the words they use to convey what they, do or what they would like others to think they do, also known as espoused theory. This is an important distinction and is very helpful when exploring questions around professional and organizational practice among NGOs today since they must be seen to implement values as the bottom line in their practice if they are to build a coalition in support of those values on the wider stage. In other words, to be exemplars of the society they want to create by showing that it is possible to be an effective and accountable organization which values its own employees and its partners as it does its clients. Unfortunately few humanitarian NGOs have been able to achieve this.

Surprisingly, values and beliefs are seldom if ever explicitly talked about or clearly stated. One can only deduce what an NGO believes in from its statements of purpose and the methods it employs. Most humanitarian and development NGOs which think no further than what they do, identity is equal to activity (Fowler, 1997). This means that an organization is no more than the project it runs; in other words, what the NGO does equals what it is. On the other hand, the values of faith-based NGOs may be informed by theological ideologies and build their operational philosophy around notions of voluntary service in religion (Darcy and Hoffman, 2003).

But why study NGOs in the humanitarian sector at all? The next chapter seeks to provide an answer to this question and lays out the main theoretical framework guiding the study.

3. NGOs IN THE HUMANITARIAN AID SECTOR

3.1 Accelerating Growth of the NGO Sector

Since the end of the Cold War, a profound transformation has taken place in the development of the global nonprofit sector. Non Governmental Organization (NGO) sector that emerged in the 1960s to simply fill the vacuum in human services left by private corporations and nation-states, is today a large and important political actor in determining the parameter and scale of relief and development work, at home and abroad (Bennett, 1995). While figures on NGO growth vary widely, most sources agree that since the mid-1970s the international humanitarian and development nonprofit sector has grown substantially. While the number of NGOs with international programs in the 25 Northern industrial countries grew from 1,600 in 1980 to more than 2,500 in 1990, overall nearly a fifth of today's international NGOs were formed after 1990 (See Table 3.1). Within the developing world, the number of local NGOs with a relief and development focus has also mushroomed. While one source reports that there are more than 250,000 Southern NGOs today², a more conservative

Table 3.1 Growth of International NGOs between 1990 and 2000

Purpose	1990	2000	Growth (%)
Culture and Recreation	1169	2733	26%
Education	1485	1839	23.8%
Research	7675	8467	10.3%
Health	1357	2036	50%
Social Services	2361	4215	78.5%
Environment	979	1170	19.5%
Economic Development	9582	9614	0.3%
Law, Policy Advocacy	2712	3864	42.5%
Religion	1407	1869	32.8%
Defense	244	234	-4.1%
Politics	1275	1240	-2.7%
Total	31,246	37,281	+19.3%

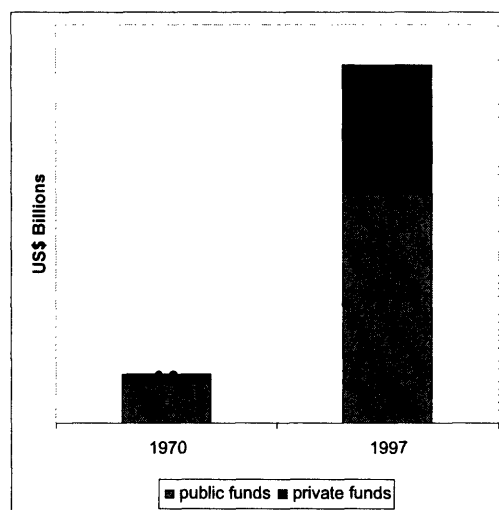
Source: *Human Development Report*, UNDP, 2002

² Julie Fisher, *Nongovernments* (West Hartford, Conn.: Kumarian Press, 1998)

estimate places the number of local NGOs in developing countries in a much lower 20,000-50,000 range³. According to the Union of International Associations, membership in international NGOs in low- and middle-income regions has increased faster than in high-income regions, with the biggest increases in Asia and Eastern Europe⁴.

Accompanying this phenomenal increase the flow of resources through international NGOs has also risen substantially, increasing more than sevenfold in the past three decades (see Figure 3.1). NGOs today collectively spend more than US 10 billion annually, reaching some 250 million people worldwide⁵. They source their funds from governments and intergovernmental organizations as well as donations from private individuals and foundations. In fact, with bilateral government donors increasingly channeling resources through their favored NGOs, since the mid-1990s they have surpassed the United Nations in the disbursement of official development assistance. Some claim NGOs now move more funds to the South than the World Bank group (Lindenberg and Bryant, 2001).

Figure 3.1 Growth in Revenue of International NGOs from 1970-1997



(in US\$ billions)

Source: *Human Development Report*, UNDP, 2002

According to Lindenberg and Bryant (2001), the growth of the global NGO sector can be explained by six important factors. First, the global recession and the public fiscal crisis of the 1980s and second, the collapse of the Soviet Union created a ‘worldwide

³ UNDP, *Human Development Report* 1993, Page 86.

⁴ In Nepal, for example, the number of registered NGOs grew from 220 in 1990 to 1,210 in 1993, while in Tunisia they shot up from 1,886 in 1988 to 5,186 in 1991. See UNDP, *Human Development Report* 2002, Page 102.

⁵ Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, *Civil Society and the OECD*, 2004

vacuum' as public delivery of social services imploded. A host of Northern NGOs as well as Southern community-based organizations were pulled by and grew into this vacuum. Three further factors—democratic 'openings', bilateral and multilateral incentives, and private giving served as magnets to stimulate NGO development. The first of these has been the worldwide movement for democratic 'openings' wherein newly democratizing regimes⁶ provided expanded civil guarantees that permitted local NGOs to register and to organize without great fear of reprisal, and allowed Northern NGOs to enter countries where they previously could not work. Second, the increasing use of public bilateral (like USAID and DFID) and multilateral resources (like the World Bank) and third, the rise in private donations⁷ has provided the financial backing to stimulate the development of both Northern NGOs and Southern community-based organizations. A sixth factor, improved global communications, helped the sector grow more rapidly than it could have in earlier decades.

As in other countries, the nonprofit sector and civil society in Central and Eastern Europe and in the Czech Republic in particular, saw a tremendous upsurge after 1989, when the Communist Party's monopoly of power was abolished. The Czech nonprofit sector has reached a high level of development today (in spite of former neo-liberal Prime Minister, Václav Klaus' skepticism about the necessity of a nonprofit sector) (Fri_ et al, 1998). Also civil society development had a strong, high-level proponent in President Václav Havel and it was largely due to his influence that NGOs in the Czech Republic were increasingly thought of in positive terms as a set of citizens' activities that counterbalance state bureaucracy and state centralism. This growth of the civil society in the Czech Republic will be dealt with in greater detail in Chapter 4.

However this phenomenal increase in the number and financial status of relief and development NGOs in 1980s and 1990s has to a large extent happened without close inspection of their actual performance. For all their laudable success, some NGOs, particularly in the humanitarian aid sector, have been guilty of poor practice, wastage and a lack of professionalism, which to a large extent has gone unchecked. Rarely are NGO programs and practices evaluated from a standpoint of a broader analysis of their political as well as humanitarian impact. Critics of NGOs have pointed to the lack of

⁶ Between 1973 and 1989, the number of regimes classified as democratic (open elections with no major accusations of fraud) has increased from 17 to 38 in the developing world of a total of 90 developing-country regimes. See Marc Lindenberg, *The Human Development Race* (San Francisco, California.: ICS Press and ICEG Publications, 1993).

⁷ While overall private giving in the United States as a proportion of GDP has remained stable since the 1960s, in the past seven years, the portion of total giving designated for international purposes has more than doubled from 1 percent to 2 percent. See Lindenberg and Bryant, 2001.

accountability, mutual competitiveness and poor coordination as perhaps the three most serious charges against the sector (Weiss and Collins, 1996).

3.2 NGOs and the Political Economy of the Aid Sector

As with other sectors, NGOs bring strengths and weaknesses to the development and humanitarian field. NGOs have earned the reputation of being more flexible, forthcoming, and responsive than other members of the international humanitarian system. Their customized and dedicated efforts at the grassroots can be distinguished for the most part from the 'wholesale' efforts of governments and U.N. agencies.

Yet NGOs are hardly without fault; their energy may lead to frenzy and confusion. Careful planning and evaluation are rarer than they should be and the desire to get on with the next emergency contributes to a lack of attention to institutional learning. Impatience with bureaucracy can lead to naïveté and manipulation. Independence is so guarded such that opportunities for collaboration are missed. Van Brabant (1997) has identified four major structural obstacles- image, competition, finance and employment – that hinder organizational effectiveness in the humanitarian aid sector.

- **Image:** NGOs responding to humanitarian emergencies, apart from providing assistance, are highly motivated to increase their visibility. If an organization is able to gain media attention for its activities then its reason for existence is justified, and such salience practically guarantees funding for future operations. However giving a false impression to the general public and donors alike of disaster relief and rehabilitation being quick and simple, NGOs are now forced to come up with 'success' stories and to downplay problems and failures.

Another criticism is that humanitarian NGOs, overall, have failed profoundly in their public education work. Unlike the feminist and environmentalist movement, the sector has not been able to generate a more insightful understanding and to mobilize citizens and donors into a movement for sustainable development (Edwards and Hulme, 1997) or a global human and humanitarian rights and peace movement.

- **Competition:** The growth of the humanitarian industry has increased competition for profile and for funds in an unregulated market. As a consequence, the increased pressure to show results may also increase the gap between the rhetoric and the reality of performance.

- **Finance:** Although in recent years there has been an increase in overall funding for emergency and humanitarian work, it appears that the system at the same time suffers from profound financial insecurity. The UN system, certainly for humanitarian action, is heavily dependent on appeals and voluntary, rather than assessed contributions, while many NGOs, precisely because of a rapid growth through project-based official funding, have equally uncertain funding prospects year by year. The myth that development and humanitarian action are relatively cheap, has translated into requirements for unrealistically low 'overheads' (Smillie, 1995).

Increasing concerns with cost-effectiveness have also affected donor aid departments whose increases in budgets have not always been matched by increases in management capacity. Low overheads then may reflect understaffing rather than efficiency. In the equation the emphasis has been on reducing costs, more than on improving effectiveness. Performance becomes measured in terms of cash flow (income and disbursement) and 'cheap' implementation. Accounts however do not say anything about hidden costs, the quality of an action or its impact. Rising expectations about performance, combined with tighter budgets and pressures to cut costs, make for very high degrees of workload in the aid sector, that allow little scope for reflection. The net result is a tendency to go for the short term, quick fix, rather than for more in-depth evaluation and learning. Some aid recipients have also taken critical note of the reduced concern for quality of northern donors (Edwards and Hulme, 1997). Both in development work and in humanitarian assistance in protracted crises, there seems scope for more program funding.

- **Employment:** The financial volatility in the aid sector has generated increased 'informalization' of work. Contracting out is becoming more common in the aid sector. Many desk and field staff, with important responsibilities work on, sometimes very short term contracts. The implications of relying on outside consultants and contractors for the nurturing of in-house competence and institutional memory have not been good (Minear and Weiss, 1995). The job insecurity can be further aggravated by policies that abolish the mechanism of internal promotion, politicization of appointments and promotions. At field level, certainly in humanitarian operations, the high rates of notably international staff turnover, work against continuity and organizational learning. Under such

conditions, there is little incentive for both organizations and staff to invest in reflection and evaluation, or to question dominant ideas and practices.

3.3 NGO Approaches to Increase Effectiveness

Criticism regarding the lack of coherence among international humanitarian relief actors has not gone unheeded. A variety of approaches aimed at improving inter-organizational cooperation and effectiveness have appeared since early 1990 in the NGO sector. They include:

- The Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response, “a small consortium with limited membership, formed out of a desire to improve interagency cooperation” (Cahill, 2003). Much of the group’s activities have been centered on representing a group of NGOs before UN decision-making bodies.
- The Voluntary Organizations in Cooperation in Emergencies made up of over 80 European NGOs and dedicated to improving interagency linkages (Cahill, 2003).
- ICRC Codes of conduct, established with the explicit goal of improving effectiveness in humanitarian assistance agencies. The most widely recognized is the 1994 Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-governmental Organizations in Disaster Relief (referred to as the ‘Code’). This Code aims to “govern the way the humanitarian agencies should work in disaster assistance” by “developing a formal instrument against which the performance of humanitarian agencies can be measured” (ICRC, 1995). These codes are not binding, and monitoring and enforcement is not regulated. Nevertheless, they do offer a set of operational principles about which major humanitarian NGOs have reached consensus. Signing the Code means that an organization realizes the importance of sharing a certain set of values and standards with other organizations that also sign it. In addition, the Code represents standards by which signatory organization conduct can be evaluated by outside groups and individuals.
- Finally the Sphere Project⁸ provides “guidelines [that] were intended to increase NGO operational transparency and accountability, both to donor organizations and to the beneficiaries of humanitarian interventions” (Cahill, 2003). It is another

⁸ The Sphere Project was launched in 1998 by a group of international humanitarian NGOs. Sphere is based on two core beliefs: first, that all possible steps should be taken to alleviate human suffering arising out of calamity and conflict, and second, that those affected by disaster have a right to life with dignity and therefore a right to assistance. (See <http://www.sphereproject.org>)

effort to make humanitarian assistance more effective. The Project has created a handbook “containing a humanitarian charter, minimum standards, key indicators and guidance notes on the five basic life-sustaining aspects of disaster response: water and sanitation; food aid; nutrition; shelter and site selection; and health.

However, most of these approaches seem to imply that NGOs place a higher value on relationship building, information exchange and skill development over ceding authority to a central coordinating body to secure improved coordination. For example, the Code only briefly acknowledged coordination as a priority and seems to imply that coordination is only necessary with a few of the prominent organizations responding to a crisis. It does not offer any guidance beyond this aspiration. The Sphere Project was thus developed in 1998 to pinpoint the norms of action in humanitarian relief and the need for cooperation, communication, and ethically principled behavior among NGOs. In evaluating the response of Czech humanitarian NGOs, this paper aims to use the key elements of the Sphere Project relating to NGO coordination, as the main analytical frame.

3.4 Theoretical Overview

Before we look at the concept of coordination in the humanitarian aid sector, it is worth mentioning that for the purpose of this essay NGOs are defined according to Lindenberg and Bryant’s (2001) definition as organizations that:

1. Provide useful (in some specified legal sense) goods or services, thereby serving a specified public purpose.
2. Are not allowed to distribute profits to persons in their individual capacities.
3. Are voluntary in the sense that they are created, maintained, and terminated on the basis of voluntary decisions and initiatives by members or a board of directors.
4. Exhibit values-based rationality, often with ideological components.

3.4.1 Definition of Coordination

Coordination is arguably the word that appears most often in analyses and evaluations of humanitarian aid. Many definitions of coordination have been provided in the humanitarian aid literature. Some broadly characterize it as “the orchestration of efforts of diverse organizations” (Seybolt, 1997) and “the orderly and organized direction

of activities” (McEntire, 1998). The Humanitarianism and War Project⁹ offers a more specific and often cited definition of the concept as:

“The systematic use of policy instruments to deliver humanitarian assistance in a cohesive and effective manner. Such instruments include: (1) strategic planning; (2) gathering data and managing information; (3) mobilizing resources and assuring accountability; (4) orchestrating a functional division of labor in the field; (5) negotiating and maintaining a serviceable framework with host political authorities; and (6) providing leadership (Minear, 2002)”.

Analysts and scholars also often suggest that coordination is important to improve service delivery effectiveness. Indeed, while effectiveness is rarely defined, it is most often given as the reason why achieving coordination among service providing agencies is important (Eliasson, 1992; Weber et al, 2002; Minear, 2002). An effort to reduce duplication, often framed as securing or improving organizational efficiency, is also frequently offered as a rationale for why humanitarian organizations should seek to coordinate their assistance operations (McEntire, 1998).

However, some argue that a laissez-faire approach is best because it allows for “the magic of the marketplace in which individual agencies pursue independent strategies and arrive at a sound division of labor” (Weiss et al, 1996). It would be best, these authors contend, to make the most of a situation where no one is really in charge rather than trying to add another layer of bureaucracy. Kent (1987) argues, for example, that relief actors, in an attempt to outperform other agencies and maintain their independence, are reluctant to share information or acquiesce to a single agency. Self-regulation is most likely then, where actors “agree among themselves as to the types of functions and assistance each will provide” (Kent, 1987).

3.4.2 Approaches to analyzing Coordination

For over a decade, reports specifically aimed at evaluating coordination efforts have flooded the relief literature. Only one such report, however, by Antonio Donini, has sought to provide an analytical taxonomy of forms of assistance coordination in humanitarian emergencies. Only months after the outbreak of genocide in Rwanda in 1994, Donini and Norah Niland conducted interviews with key people involved in coordination of the humanitarian response to that tragedy. In a summary of his findings,

⁹ Humanitarianism And War Project is a research consortium that reviews the experience of the international community in responding to complex emergencies around the world during the post-Cold War period. (<http://hwproject.tufts.edu/>)

Donini offered a taxonomy consisting of three broad categories to describe the forms of coordination that he identified in his examination of the Rwanda relief effort. The first was “coordination by command” in which the lead NGO has authority to pursue coordination through carrots or sticks and possesses strong leadership abilities (Donini and Niland, 1999). “Coordination by consensus,” the second category, posits that in the absence of any direct assertion of authority, “leadership is essentially a function of the capacity to orchestrate a coherent response to mobilize the key actors around common objectives and priorities”. The third category, “coordination by default” described ad hoc coordination “in which a division of labor is generally the only exchange of information among actors.

The literature evaluating past humanitarian assistance coordination efforts often references Donini’s tripartite typology of coordination by command, consensus and default (Seybolt, 1997; Minear, 2002). Support for coordination by command is common (Weiss et al, 1996; Minear, 2002) and authors often point to examples where this type of coordination has resulted in successful interventions (Donini, 1996; Seybolt, 1997; Minear, 2002). For example, Minear (2002) has argued that the control approach assures a more rapid response to crisis conditions and greater accountability for the steps taken to address those concerns.

However, these categories have not been developed further either by Donini or by other researchers beyond these very general descriptions. Also this typology was designed with a view to analyze the operations of a more formal international relief system dominated by U.N. humanitarian agencies and other international NGOs. In the context of the current study, it does not lend itself to evaluating the responses of a local humanitarian sector wherein there exist no formal structures for inter-organizational coordination and it has historically been unprecedented.

The Sphere Project has evolved, however, as the first attempt to produce globally applicable minimum standards for humanitarian response services. Its main publication, the ‘Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Norms of Humanitarian Response in Cases of Disaster’ reflects the commitment of the signatories to improve the effectiveness of aid they offer and the responsibility they accept for the beneficiaries. As mentioned earlier, it is the only formal code of conduct that pinpoints the norms of action for cooperation, communication, and ethically principled behavior among NGOs and will thus be used as the main analytic frame for the study (more specifically, it serves as the main framework for coding the interviews). Its key aspects as they relate to NGO Coordination in humanitarian action are:

- **Cooperation:** Highlights the need for and commitment to effective coordination and exchange of information among those affected by or involved in the disaster response with the common aim of relieving human suffering, avoiding competition.
- **Accountability:** Mechanisms are set up so that beneficiaries, donors the media, the population at large may supervise the aid provided and request that agencies supply the accounting documentation of the work done to date. As the name suggests, accountability refers to the economic aspects – auditing – but it also refers to the present and possible future impacts of the humanitarian operations.
- **Targeting:** Aid agencies should be cognizant of the need to provide humanitarian assistance on a equitable and impartial basis, based on the vulnerability and needs of individuals or groups affected by disaster. They are expected to seek systems of coordination in the field at all levels such that they undertake activities where their expertise and capacity can have the greatest impact.
- **Capacity:** These aspects are defined in order to establish the diverse responsibilities of humanitarian action. Humanitarian response by agencies is required only in situations where it has been established by a prior systematic assessment in consultation with each other that the relevant authorities are unable and/or unwilling to respond to the protection and assistance needs of the population. Also relief agencies need to be aware that the main responsibility in terms of prevention and relief of conflicts and calamities falls upon political and not humanitarian actors.

The next chapter will address the main contextual factor underlying this study - Humanitarian NGOs in the Czech Republic - and the devastating floods they responded to in late 2002.

4. HUMANITARIAN NGOs IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

4.1 Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)

In order to fully explain contemporary inter-organizational relationships among NGOs in the Czech Republic, one needs to understand the historical and political factors underlying the development of civil society – conceived of as a crucial part of the public space between the state and family and embodied in voluntary organizations (Howard, 2003) - in the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE).

4.1.1 The concept of Civil Society before 1989

Before the fall of communism in 1989, many western scholars were quick to label CEE as being devoid of civil society since members of communist societies were seen as “atomized and unable to form authentic civil society” (Buchowski, 2001). The argument made was simple—in a world where every aspect of daily life was controlled by the communist party, there was no room for independent “organized interest groups and autonomous associations,” both essential to the western conception of civil society (Buchowski, 2001). However, Buchowski refutes this argument that there was no civil society in communist CEE and begins this refutation by separating civic society from civil society. In this “anthropological” vs. “political science” view, Buchowski (1996) argues that civil society is more than just organized interest groups and autonomous associations, both of which he assigns to civic society. He quotes Gellner, who claims that, “civil society ... cannot simply be identified with the existence of plural institutions, capable of acting as a kind of countervailing force to the state ... It certainly specifies one element necessary for the existence of civil society, but it is not sufficient” (Buchowski, 2001). Civil society, then, incorporates much more than was traditionally relegated to the “political science” conception of civil society, used by most western thinkers.

While Buchowski (2001) goes so far as to argue that even the official associations and unions created by the communist party were a part of civil society, according to him, the biggest aspect of civil society in communist CEE occurred in the ‘unofficial realms’. Under communism, vast circles of family networks developed, both for social and economic reasons, and most people living under communism found only in family and close friends what those living in western democracies find in various organized unions and volunteer societies. Marada labels civil society before 1989 in CEE as a “sphere of authentic conduct” (Marada, 1997). He states:

“The bureaucratization and ideologization of everyday public life forced people to look for a sphere of authentic conduct outside this space. Whether they played the regime’s game and took a disengaged part in the manifestations of loyalty or were reluctant to do so, in any case they largely found the space for authenticity in their private lives” (page 275).

Thus, civil society in CEE before 1989 flew under the radar of the traditional western conception of civil society as people found “authentic conduct” not in western organizations or societies, but in their own homes, the only place where they were safe from the state. In a more philosophical vein, Vaclav Havel expresses the revolutionary potential of such ‘hidden spheres’ of civil society in his essay, “The Power of the Powerless.” Identifying “living in truth” as the primary goal of citizens in a post-totalitarian society, Havel turns his back on the direct challenge to the authority of the Soviet system. “The primary purpose of [dissident] movements,” Havel (1985) writes,

“..is always, as we have seen, to have an impact on society, not to affect the power structure, at least not directly and immediately ... These movements, therefore, always affect the power structure as such indirectly, as part of society as a whole, for they are always addressing the hidden spheres of society”. (page 83)

4.1.2 Civil Society after 1989

After the fall of communism in 1989, the understanding and application of the concept of civil society changed drastically in CEE. While civil society in this part of the world had once been used as a place to seek refuge from an all-penetrating authoritarian state, it was now no longer necessary to seek a realm of “authentic conduct” separate from the state. Civil society thus entered its second phase. It now had to pick up the pieces of the post-communist state and rebuild it—civil society now actively sought to change the state, not simply withdraw from it. As Marada states “civil society turned into a catchword for a truly political democratization” (page 275). This “political

democratization” can best be illustrated by the actions of Civic Forum - a political party formed right after the Velvet Revolution¹⁰ in 1989 to unify all anti-totalitarian forces and win the free elections in 1990, which it did.

A further transformation of civil society in post-communist CEE occurred when political parties emerged as powerful players and replaced the loose organizations such as the Civic Forum. This third phase of civil society can be labeled as “balancing the state’s institutional arrangement” (Marada, 1997). The locus of the struggle for civil society was replanted into the political arena. In other words, the prospect of building civil society has become a task for “practical politics”. Civil society in the Czech Republic, then, seems to have come full circle; from a way to escape the state, to a way to change the state, civil society has now become something that some say the state should play an active role in creating. While it is clear that civil society is now viewed as something positive that should be championed by the state, it remains unclear and controversial as to the appropriate level of state intervention.

4.1.3 CEE Civil Society today

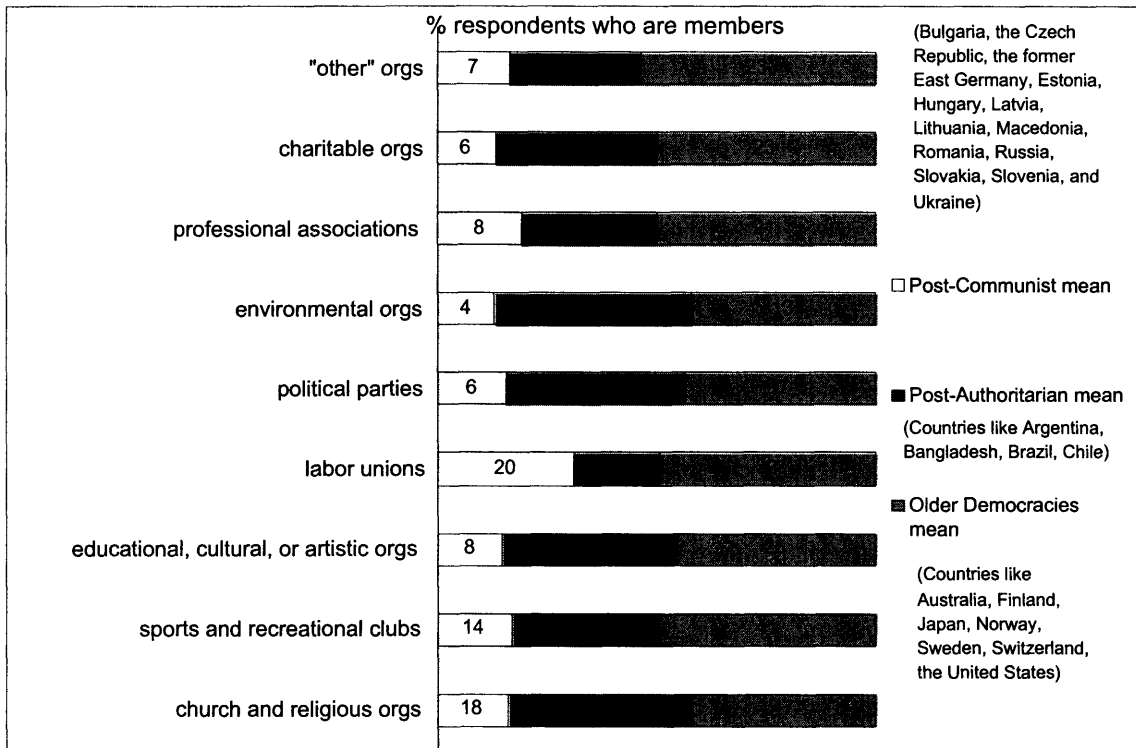
While Buchowski (2001) uses his aforementioned separation of civic and civil society to show that civic society was and still is strong and present in CEE, recent research confirms the thesis that civil society is generally ‘weak’ in the region. The World Values Survey, a large scale comparative survey conducted by the University of Michigan that was conducted between 1995 and 1997, provides an interesting view into the present state of civil society. While the results of the survey are extensive, a general theme arises—civil society is extremely weak in post-communist countries in comparison with democratic and post-authoritarian countries. As Howard (2003) states, “Differences between authoritarian and communist regimes also have a lasting effect in the post-authoritarian and post-communist period, as communist countries have legacies to overcome that are not found in an authoritarian regime”. As Figure 4.1 shows, post-communist regimes have the lowest degree of participation in nine types of organizations commonly viewed as integral to modern civil society.

Howard (2003) goes on to cite three reasons for the weak civil society present in CEE: the legacy of the communist experience of mandatory participation in state-controlled organizations, the persistence of vibrant private networks, and tremendous

¹⁰ The six-week period between November 17 and December 29, 1989 that brought about the bloodless overthrow of the Czechoslovak communist regime

disappointment with developments since the collapse of communism have left most post-communist citizens with a lasting aversion to public activities.

Figure 4.1 Membership levels of civil society organizations in various regions of the world



Source: Adapted from *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe* by Howard (2003)

4.2 Non-profit Sector in the Czech Republic

Despite the rather grim scenario in CEE, overall, civil society in the Czech Republic is an increasingly vibrant and mature part of the social and political fabric of the country. The most common form of voluntary organization is the civic association. As of November 2002 there were 54,895 NGOs registered in the country. Of these, 46,151 were civic associations; however, only about two-thirds were considered active. The remaining NGOs consisted of church-related organizations (4,810), ‘public-benefit’ organizations (707) and foundations (328). It is a modest but growing economic force with operating expenditures of US \$800 million and employing a sizeable workforce of more than 75,000 full-time workers - see Table 4.1 and Figure 4.2. (Fri_ et al, 1999).

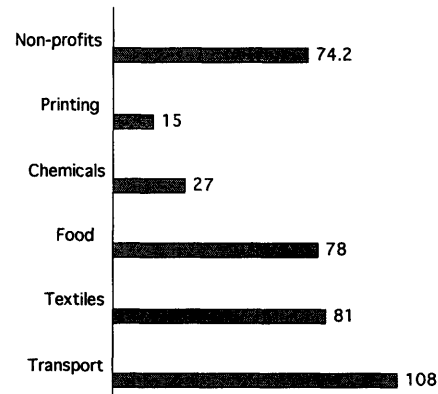
Czech (NGOs) are active in many fields, including sports, the environment, culture and cultural preservation, and social and health services for the handicapped, the elderly, and other disadvantaged groups. Several organizations successfully participate in the provision of international humanitarian aid. A limited number of groups engage in the

dissemination of ideas or in public advocacy; an even smaller number of organizations fit the category of public policy think tanks.

Table 4.1 The nonprofit sector in the Czech Republic, 1995

Sector-wise Employment (in 000's) 1995 \$ 803.6 million in expenditures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.6 percent of GDP
74,200 paid employees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.7 percent of total nonagricultural employment • 3.4 percent of total service employment • 5.9 percent of public employment

Figure 4.2 Sector-wise Employment, 1995 (in 000's)



Experience and training have contributed to ongoing improvements in the organizational capacity of Czech NGOs. In particular, several large foundations and international aid agencies run workshops and seminars on organization, fund-raising, project management, application writing, communications, and other topics. The situation is much better in Prague, though, than in other parts of the country. According to Fri_ et al (1999), many NGOs are too overloaded with day-to-day project work to pay sufficient attention to strategic planning. In addition, the culture of volunteerism is not sufficiently developed, and few NGOs devote systematic energy to building a network of supporters. Also, the importance of boards of directors is not always fully grasped.

The nonprofit sector in the Czech Republic is heavily dependent on the state and large foreign donors for funding. However, foreign grants are in decline and are set to decrease substantially over the next few years with the Czech Republic joining the EU in May, 2004. Since 1999 the government has adopted a list of social activities that it will fund each year through NGOs and then publishes a list of available contracts. However, according to Fri_ et al (1998) this system limits capacity building by NGOs because the state offers support only on a year-to-year basis without the promise of renewal.

Czech citizens generally view the nonprofit sector more favorably today than they did a decade ago, soon after the fall of communism. Media coverage of NGO activities has improved as large groups have grown more media-savvy and media outlets, in turn, have shown more interest in their work. For instance, *Mlada Fronta Dnes*, a national newspaper, devotes a weekly public service section highlighting the work of a particular NGO and the Czech national television is a long time supporter and founding member of

Prague-based People in Need Foundation, one of the largest humanitarian NGOs in Central Europe.

4.3 Czech Humanitarian NGOs

With the Czech Republic becoming the first former communist nation to re-establish a foreign aid program in 1995, a number of local NGOs started initiating independent fund-raising for and became active in humanitarian missions abroad, particularly in countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Over the last 10 years, with the Czech Republic increasing its official development assistance spending to more than 0.1% of its GDP, in accordance to EU and OECD regulations¹¹, and with volunteer programs becoming increasingly popular among local university students, Czech humanitarian NGOs have experienced remarkable growth and are now considered as key members of the non-profit sector (Hancilova, 2000). The most prominent Czech humanitarian NGOs are as shown in Table 4.2 below. This is followed by a detailed profile of the two major types of humanitarian NGOs – newer, secular and highly professional-specialized organizations like the People in Need Foundation (PINF) and older, religious and social work-focused groups like ADRA, Caritas and Diakonie.

Table 4.2 Profiles of Major Humanitarian NGOs in the Czech Republic

Name	Primary Activities	Founded in (year)	Governing structure	No. of full time employees	Finances
People in Need Foundation (PINF) <i>_lov_k v tísní - spole_nost při_T, o.p.s</i>	International humanitarian relief and development, Democratic inclusion and human rights advocacy	Founded in 1992 and based in Prague; has since become the largest non-denominational NGO in CEE	Governed by a Board of Directors with an executive officer and senior/support staff	100+	11.3 Million Euros (2002)
Mission: <i>“to inspire a largeness of spirit in Czech society by helping others in need, and to promote democratic freedoms for all.”</i>					
Czech Catholic Caritas (CCK) <i>(Arcidiecezni charita)</i>	Social work; maternal and child health and humanitarian relief and development	Founded in 1997; National member of Caritas Internationalis (CI) – a global confederation of 162 Catholic social service organizations with	Regional parishes have their own Caritas with the Archbishop as the president. Archbishop of the Prague diocese	50+	7.5 Million Euros (2003)

¹¹ As cited in Dauderstädt (ed.), *EU Eastern Enlargement and Development Cooperation*, 2002

		headquarters at the Vatican	presides over the Caritas' board of bishops. His mandate lasts four years.		
Mission: <i>"The Caritas approach is based on the social teaching of the Church, which focuses on the dignity of the human person. Caritas' work on behalf of the poor manifests God's love for all of creation... Caritas is committed to developing close working relations with Catholic and other Christian, inter-faith and secular organizations which share our vision"</i>					
Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)	Basic education, health care, disaster preparedness and response	Founded in 1994; National member of ADRA International– a global network consisting of 27 national Adventist social service organizations	Governed by an Executive Body of 13 elected members; a General Assembly is called twice a year and a Supervisory Board performs audits once every year	Around 75+	6 Mil. Euros (1999)
Mission: <i>Reflect the character of God through humanitarian and developmental activities.</i>					
Diaconia in the Czech Republic (Dv_R)	Running retirement homes, counseling and crisis support centers, day care for handicapped children	Founded in 1991 in Bratislava	Governance structure similar to that of the Catholic Caritas with regional dioceses headed by priests	Central office is in Prague with administrative staff of around 25 people.	N/A
Mission: <i>Preparation of an ecumenical theology of charitable work</i>					
Czech Red Cross (CRC)	Humanitarian work and provision of health services and social care.	Recognized by the International Committee of the Red Cross on August 26, 1993,	A General Assembly is the ultimate governing body of all members of the Local Group). There is also an Executive Board (with a chairman, secretary and treasurer)	Currently has 91,040 members working in 2,350 local groups	3.2 Mil. Euros (1999)
Mission: <i>Prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles</i>					

Sources: Adapted from the official websites and annual reports of individual organization

4.3.1 People in Need Foundation (PINF)

The most prominent secular humanitarian organization in the Czech Republic is the People in Need Foundation (PINF) whose stated mission is “to inspire a largeness of spirit in Czech society by helping others in need, and to promote democratic freedoms for

all.”¹² The origins of the organization can be traced to 1988 and the efforts of Simon Pánek, a young student from Prague. Pánek, who had been one of the main student leaders of the ‘Velvet Revolution’, had a strong commitment to humanitarianism and the scope of the 1988 earthquake in Armenia, which had killed 25,000 and left half a million homeless, impelled him to take action. Using his contacts and experience as a student activist, Pánek organized an innovative public fundraising campaign dubbed “SOS Karabakh.” The initiative used television and radio spots to appeal for funds and the Czech people soon responded with USD 80,000 for the effort. With the money, Pánek and his team bought food, blankets, and clothing; the relief package was augmented by medicines contributed by Czech hospitals. He persuaded the manager of Prague’s largest supermarket to provide storage and enlisted the support of the Soviet embassy to make available an Aeroflot plane to move the supplies to Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, where a convoy of trucks transported the cargo to the earthquake victims¹³.

With the completion of the earthquake response, Pánek returned to his life as a human rights activist, but his timely and innovative response to the Armenian disaster was to become a template for action that would change the face of Czech humanitarian aid (Ditzler and De Leon, 2003). The next year, Panek, formed the PINF which began its first major fundraising campaign to aid victims of the Balkan conflict, “SOS Sarajevo.” Once again the media played an important role, and by 1994 PINF was formally affiliated with Ceska Televize, the Czech national television network. As a partner in the organization, Czech TV provides material assistance, access to information, and the means for PINF to reach a larger audience. In addition, PINF later partnered with the Czech Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Interior. The Foundation leadership acknowledges the relationship has had its share of challenges, but the shift towards more effective collaboration between humanitarian organizations and the Czech government has continued to yield positive results. Since its founding in 1992, PINF has provided more than \$30 million U.S. dollars for relief and related assistance in 27 countries and regions and has served the Czech populace as a domestic resource as well (PINF Report, 2001).

The PINF is seen as being illustrative of the kind of “nonreligious, innovative NGOs” which have emerged in post-communist societies “to weld traditionally collectivist values of voluntary labor and aid for social needs together with individualist initiative, freedom of the media, and human rights advocacy, thereby making a real

¹² As stated on the organizations website. <http://www.clovekvtisni.cz/english/kdojsme.php>

¹³ TIME Europe, *International Velvet*, April 28, 2003. Vol. 161 No. 17

difference in people's lives” (May and Milton, 2005). This public and institutional confidence in PINF is reflected in the selection of PINF as the first NGO from Central and Eastern Europe to become an implementing partner of UNICEF; it is now an accepted partner of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, World Health Organization, International Committee of the Red Cross, the World Food Programme, the City of Prague, the Open Society Fund, Foundation for Civil Society (PHARE), the Charles S. Mott Foundation, and the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy.

4.3.2 Faith-based NGOs - ADRA, CCK and Czech Diakonie

Throughout history, the nations of Eastern, Central, and Southeastern Europe have tried to preserve their identities through such ethno-cultural symbols as language, ethnicity, and religion. Religion has played an important role in CEE strongly influencing society, culture, and politics. Today, CEE NGOs include a variety of religious and faith-based associations, sometimes established by citizens and sometimes by religious institutions. Even in the old socialist system, religious institutions operated organizations focused mainly on helping the most vulnerable populations and on organizing cultural events for their followers (Leban, 2003). Traditionally, such faith-based groups have claimed to have two major types of advantages over secular NGOs – one, their links with the Church are valuable since the Church is highly trusted and two, they serve as a ‘bridge between Christian values and secular goals’.

Religious NGOs in the Czech Republic vary greatly. Some are members of international networks of faith-based NGOs having substantial material resources and elaborate institutional structures. Others are much smaller and newer and are still defining their mode of operation. Those with fewer resources and less organizational experience nonetheless claim to have other extremely valuable assets, such as ties to local actors, credibility, and trust (Caritas Internationalis Report, 1996). Most faith-based NGOs in the Czech Republic seek to deliver short-term humanitarian aid while others foresee long-term involvement with local communities. Almost, all however, aim to help the destitute and the infirm, and seek to establish themselves as agents of social change.

The Czech Catholic Caritas (CCK), the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and Czech Diakonie are the three most prominent faith-based NGOs in the Czech Republic. Apart from their common religious identity, they demonstrate a fair degree of overlap in terms of their primary activities – focused on health, education, social service and humanitarian aid – and governance structures. All three organizations represent the national chapters of larger international faith-based social service

organizations. All three are headquartered in Prague and oversee their development and relief work via a wide network of regional churches and parishes. However some elements in the Church are viewed as being corrupt and having double standards. Such negative perceptions of the Church seem to have spill-over effects in terms of impact and effectiveness of Church-sponsored programs in the Czech Republic (Mahony, 2003).

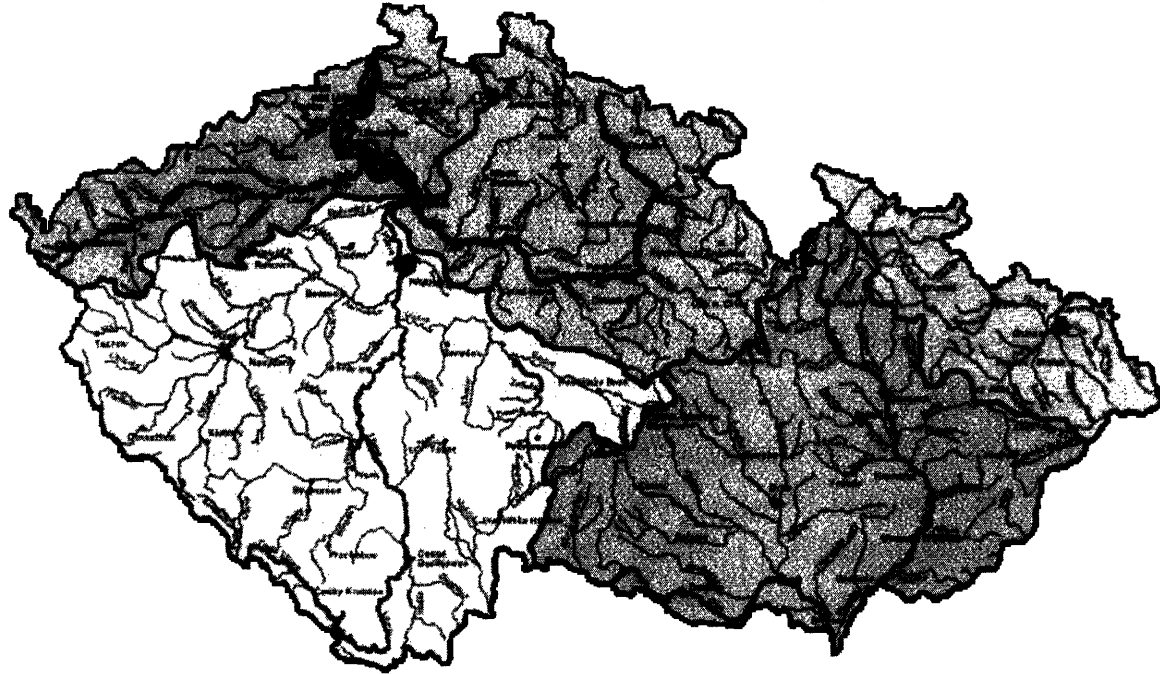
4.4 Description of the Flood Event in 2002

The catastrophic floods which hit Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic and other parts of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries rank as the most devastating European disaster on record. Caused by the flooding of the Elbe river and its tributaries, it was one of the worst floods to hit central Europe since the Middle Ages and thus was also popularly referred to as the 'Millennial Flood'. The event submerged more than 12,000 sq. km of land, caused over 100 deaths and led to thousands of people being evacuated. Economic and insurance losses exceeded US\$ 15 billion, eclipsing the Oder-Morava flood losses of 1997 (Munich Re, 2002).

The flood event was triggered by unusual, but not exceptionally rare, meteorological events. Two rain-bearing depressions (christened *Hanne* and *Ilse* by the Berlin Meteorological Institute), crossed Europe in close succession during the first half of August. *Hanne* formed in the Atlantic Ocean and crossed England on the 31st of July resulting in minor flooding in northern England. By the 6th and 8th of August, the system had reached southern Germany and Austria, where torrential rainfall resulted. The system then moved eastwards along the southern side of the Alps, resulting in further heavy rain in Romania, the Czech Republic and the eastern coast of the Black Sea. The first depression was followed rapidly by a second rain-bearing storm, "*Ilse*," which moved south-east from England and caused heavy rain in northern Italy, before moving to the north-east and causing further heavy precipitation in Austria, the Czech Republic and southern parts of Germany on the 10th and 11th of August. Exceptional rainfall also occurred in Spain during this time (Snow, 2003).

In the Czech Republic, water levels in the Elbe, Berounka and Vltava reached heights corresponding to between a 500-yr (upstream) and 25-yr (further downstream) return period. The capital, Prague, lying at the confluence of the Vltava and Berounka Rivers (see Figure 4.1 below), was especially badly hit. The flood peak from both rivers coincided here, and the resultant water level exceeded all previous measurements made in 175 years of data (EU, 2002). The following facts summarize the unprecedented damages caused due to the floods of 2002.

Figure 4.1 Map of Czech Republic in terms of the major river basins



Legend:

_Oh_e River Basin Morava River Basin Odra River Basin **Vltava River Basin** Labe Basin

- Immediately following the floods, a state of ‘emergency’ was declared by the national government in five regions of the Czech Republic. These regions were: Prague, St_edo_esk_ (Central Bohemia Region), Jiho_esk_ (South Bohemia Region), Plze_sk_ (Pilsen Region), and Ústeck_ (Ústí nad Labem Region). In Prague, this was effective from 12 August to 31 August, and was subsequently reduced to a state of ‘danger’ from 1 September to 31 October.
- The total number of people evacuated was estimated to be around 210,000–215,000 (of which about 50,000 in Prague). Fifteen people altogether were killed in the floods; all of whom were from Prague

5. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 NGO Response to the floods of 2002

By the end of the 1990s, emergency rescue services in the Czech Republic had achieved a considerable level of efficiency due to important advances achieved legislatively, technologically, monitoring and operational management, and in human resources. Prompted in part by the devastating Oder-Morava floods of 1997, by the end of 2000 a National System of Crisis Management was developed. The system is based on two organizational structures: (1) a network of crisis management authorities formed by the central and other administrative offices, and (2) on an effective instrument that combines the appropriate aggregation of capacities and means into a system called the Integrated Rescue System (IRS) (Pokorny and Storek, 2002). The IRS was formed to serve as a centralized disaster management system which would ensure cooperation between such bodies as the armed forces, the armed security forces, the rescue corps (firemen, health, air rescue), and other emergency crews that will respond in any crisis situation. This system proved to be an effective instrument in performing emergency rescue operations during the floods of 2002 and thus, passed ‘an enormous (first) test’ (Pokorny and Storek, 2003).

Within the first few hours of the crisis, the IRS services launched a massive rescue operation which led to the evacuation of more than 210, 200-215,000 people (50,000 in Prague alone) and the direct rescue of around 3, 374 people in 42 districts. This operation which, involved more than 24,000 emergency personnel from all over the country, was remarkably successful in restricting the death toll from the disaster, to only fifteen people. While Czech humanitarian NGOs, except for the Red Cross, were not directly involved in the emergency relief and rescue operations during the floods, immediately following the floods all major NGOs – PINF, CCK and ADRA - launched individual fund-raising campaigns to collect money and materials for the post-floods recovery

- A gross estimate of financial damages was pegged at over Czech Crowns 70 billion (EUR 2.3 billion approx.). In Prague the damage was estimated to be CZK 24 billion (approx. EUR 800 million). Transport infrastructure, especially the Prague subway system was badly hit.
- A total 24,000 emergency personnel were deployed in the emergency rescue operations. In addition, thousands of volunteers actively helped during the initial phase of rescue operations and several hundred public administration workers took part in organizing and managing Crisis Management Committees.
- Altogether over 400 buildings were destroyed and a few hundred others had to be reconstructed due to severe structural damage. The Government earmarked funds for relief and recovery and dozens of regional humanitarian accounts were established to directly provide cash donations to the affected. Substantial material and financial aid was organized by humanitarian NGOs with more aid provided from abroad.

The next chapter describes the response of one of the main organizations (PINF), analyzes the nature and level of coordination among various NGOs during the crisis and formulates some conclusions.

phase. Their primary humanitarian goal was to facilitate the safe return of displaced people to their villages and assist in the rebuilding and rehabilitation effort.

5.1.1 PINF's Response to the floods of 2002

In this multi-actor set-up, the People in Need Foundation (PINF) stood out in receiving by far the largest amount of private donations, from individuals and corporations alike, in response to its fund-raising campaign. As a humanitarian organization PINF has been routinely working all-over-the world for the last thirteen years responding to fast-onset natural disasters and (man-made) complex emergencies alike and has a reputation for organizing an efficient, effective response. Its Czech Television-sponsored 'SOS Povodne' campaign was the organizations' 14th major fund-raising drive since its founding in 1992. 'SOS Povodne' was so successful that it raised more funds than the Czech government and all other humanitarian NGOs put together. PINF's operational leadership on the ground, thus, came to be recognized almost naturally. Operating loosely on the SPHERE project's basic guidelines on humanitarian response, knowledge and decisions from each area of logistics planning and management drove PINF's disaster response operation in the following way¹⁴:

- **Assessment:** When the disaster struck, PINF worked to first quickly and accurately ascertain the supplies required to meet the relief needs of the affected population. An assessment team was dispatched to the affected areas within the first few hours of the crisis. The logistics department estimated needs, based on early rough projections of numbers of beneficiaries, mindful of the swing in either direction as new information emerged. However, the main responsibility of the assessment team was to collect detailed data on damage claims at the household- and village-level in order to develop a fair and accurate system for the disbursement of funds.
- **Appeals Management:** A preliminary appeal for donations of cash and relief supplies was launched with the help of Czech National Television, a founding partner of the organization, soon after the onset of the disaster. This appeal was the basis for the large-scale mobilization of supplies. The type and quantity of relief supplies needed were published to a mobilization table (a spreadsheet), that was used to track donations against demand. Since donations might be either in-cash or in-kind, logisticians worked with donors to ensure that in-kind donations

¹⁴ This chronology is based on interviews with senior managers and annual reports on the organization's website <http://www.clovekvtisni.cz/english/>

were appropriate and useful to the relief need. Simultaneously, any pre-positioned supplies available to the organization were assessed, and procurement activities were begun as necessary.

- **Procurement and Allotment of supplies:** Relief items not covered by in-kind donations from donors were purchased from vendors. According to the director, recently PINF had created blanket agreements with key vendors to set annual pricing and terms of trade, so that paperwork and negotiations were done outside of the lead response time. In addition the PINF board of directors decided early on, on a system for the allocation of the funds. The donations were to be divided into three parts - ten million Czech crowns¹⁵ were allocated for emergency relief aid and short and medium term projects related to restoring clean water supplies , de-contamination of flooded buildings and the purchase of industrial dryers; 40 million crowns were allocated for (so-called) "public benefit" projects—for example financing the renovation and re-opening of schools, health facilities, water purification plants etc; and the remaining sum of about 50 million Czech crowns was to be used in the form of direct monetary assistance for the affected families/households.
- **Mobilization:** Transport capacity was mobilized and supplies sent directly to the afflicted areas, where local volunteers received, warehoused and distributed relief items to beneficiaries, and reported to the logistician on material flows at the site. A regular flow of reliable information among the involved parties was maintained to ensure timely delivery of aid.
- **Reporting:** Reports served as a coordinating mechanism as operations unfolded, and as a means to monitor effectiveness of relief during and at the close of the operation. Early reporting to the media increased pledges. Reporting also met donors' needs to inform their own constituencies about their activities. To ensure accountability, PINF had signed agreements with its (corporate) donors defining exactly on what project their money would be used and kept them individually informed about the results as soon as the project had been completed.

5.2 Coordination among NGOs during 2002

According to its senior managers, the PINF took the initiative to organize an informal coordination meeting with their counterparts in the other three NGOs – ADRA, CCK and DvCR - (the Czech Red Cross was invited but did not attend either this first or

¹⁵ 1 USD = 22.5 Czech crowns (As of 9 May 2005)

any subsequent meetings) during the initial stages of the response. At this first meeting, the PINF apparently proposed a response strategy that would have all four NGOs pool their resources into a common account and divide the rehabilitation work based on each organization's capacity. However, according to the respondents at PINF, this first-attempt at coordination fell through as the other three NGOs refused to adhere to such a proposal. According to them (PINF) such a proposal was unacceptable to the other NGOs probably because they were faith-based and they were keen to work in the South of the country, which has a large Church-going population. A manager at PINF explained this by saying "...the church organization, of course, can't do same thing as People in Need because they do have local people, churches everywhere, almost in each district. They can't agree to be absent in a big district because it will harm the name of the church. And their followers and donors and private people will see this as some sort of a betrayal or abandonment"¹⁶. Despite several appeals by PINF managers regarding launching a standardized and coordinated relief effort to avoid differential treatment of the affected population, the other NGOs - ADRA, CCK and DvCR -seemed to have stood firm in their decision to not divvy up the work, according to the proposal made by PINF. "... then we (PINF) came with another proposal, 'Let's have better map of the Czech Republic and let's decide village by village'. (We were)... hoping that it might be more suitable for the church organization. but answer was 'No! We are everywhere', explained the manager at PINF¹⁷.

After several days of negotiations and delay, the four parties finally came to an agreement - relief and rehabilitation work in the South of the country was to be solely taken care of by ADRA, CCK and DvCR and the North by the PINF; while there was to be no common pooling of resources, they agreed to meet bi-weekly to exchange information and experiences from the field. However, according to PINF these meetings were not very productive and became more of a formality as their counterparts were not particularly interested in sharing information regarding the relief effort 'in their part' of the country. Soon the organizations ended up having little to no communication about the relief effort and it was only after the end of the operation when the PINF conducted a post-project evaluation of their own work that they learnt about the work of their other NGO 'partners'. According to one of the respondents at PINF "... after 3 or 4 months when we made an assessment in the South of Czech Republic, we found out that the average amount of money they (ADRA, CCK and DvCR) were giving was half the

¹⁶ Page 3, Interview # A70-2004

¹⁷ Page 3, Interview # A70-2004

amount of what we are giving in the North”¹⁸. Additionally, PINF claimed that the relief and rehabilitation work carried out by these NGOs in the South of the country was, ‘as was feared’, unprofessional and ‘not in line with standard aid-delivery practices’. Apparently relief funds were distributed ‘in a wildly disproportionate manner’ with some affected families receiving much in excess with others not getting any relief at all - “ ... (The other NGOs) ... promised and never came back and mislead the people ... in some places they were giving 3000 crowns and other places much more”¹⁹– an indication that a thorough needs assessment was probably not conducted prior to the distribution.

In the interviews with the other three interviews, however, they indicated that they were ‘very satisfied with the unprecedented level of cooperation’ they had with their ‘sister organizations’ (one respondent for example said that ‘While ADRA loaned them their heavy machinery, CCK staff worked in the field wearing ADRA T-shirts’²⁰). They claimed however that they were unable to work with PINF due to a fundamental ‘difference in the way they view beneficiaries’. In fact, they complained about the ‘extra attention’ that PINF got during and after the crisis response and felt that their work was ‘unappreciated’ – one interviewee rationalized it to be due to the ‘traditional apathy, even distrust of the work of the Church’ in the country²¹. While they, overall, expressed a willingness to collaborate with PINF in the future, they felt that the level of cooperation with other faith-based NGOs would probably be much stronger due to ‘shared organizational beliefs’.

5.3 Analysis

5.3.1 Lack of Managerial Experience as an Obstacle to Coordination

While the PINF has had considerable experience in responding to disasters the world over, for ADRA, CCK and DvCR, responding to the floods of 2002 was one of their first major humanitarian operations. This lack of managerial experience, this researcher feels may have compounded the pre-existing institutional and contextual difficulties in NGO coordination in the country. While the senior managers in these NGOs have previously worked in challenging settings, it is difficult to say the same about lower staff; given their brief organizational history and the infrequency of major catastrophic events in the country (while the ‘parent confederations’ of these faith-based groups regularly work in international settings, the national chapters deal mostly with domestic

¹⁸ Page 4, Interview # A70-2004

¹⁹ Page 4, Interview # A70-2004

²⁰ Page 2, Interview # A73-2004

²¹ Page 5, Interview # A75-2004

issues) they probably have had much less experience in organizing and managing such large-scale operations such as the relief and rehabilitation effort in 2002. For example, one of the respondents "...wish(ed) that we) would have good employees, strong and experienced managers"²² Indeed, a respondent from one of these agencies even confessed to the author that dealing with the financial, managerial and organizational implications of growth past a very small scale of operation has proved to be an exceptionally difficult challenge for such organizations, which are essentially geared towards providing local social services²³. According to Fowler (1997) and Bennett's (1995) observations, such lack of managerial experience in responding to disasters among smaller and less-experienced NGOs may affect their ability to coordinate with larger, more professional organizations like the PINF, which work exclusively in the international humanitarian aid sector²⁴.

Another characteristic feature of such managerial inexperience, evident from the interviews, is the tendency to compare one crisis situation²⁵ to another such that there is little that is done or learnt in a systematic way. While some respondents claimed that this shows flexibility, it in fact reveals decisions not made, conflicts not resolved, and the influence of politics on management decisions. The direct impact of such poor management practices on the crisis response of 2002, as mentioned earlier in Van Brabant's (1997) analysis²⁶, was that huge numbers of junior staff and volunteers (mostly from Prague) were sent into the field with little induction or guidance on fundamental matters of humanitarian logistics resulting in unclear roles, responsibilities, reporting lines and accountabilities. For example, one of the respondents explained "...the people assisting the victims were very tired and very pressure, because they knew that there are a huge numbers of needed people and they had been trying to help them. ... they got tired and (were) not prepared for something like that to happen ... (Next time) I think I would educate more volunteers"²⁷. In addition, a huge onus was put on individuals to work things out on the ground; another facet of this 'ad interim approach' to humanitarian coordination and management.

²² Page 5, Interview # A75-2004

²³ Page 4, Interview # A75-2004

²⁴ See Section 2.4. on 'Organizational Features affecting Coordination'

²⁵ "... each operation is unique in a crisis ... One can't use exactly the same thing .." Page 4, Interview # A73-2004

²⁶ See Section 2.2. on 'Objections and Obstacles to Operational Coordination in Humanitarian Assistance'

²⁷ Page 5, Interview # A75-2004

5.3.2 (Differing) Organizational Values as Obstacles to Coordination

NGOs, usually, have deep organizational roots and cultures, and they are strongly committed to their various, often unique missions. For this reason, the maintenance of organizational autonomy is often cited as a barrier to increased coordination. Given NGOs' strong desire for autonomy, coordination is best viewed not as sharing identical systems, but as "creating conditions that enable separate organizations to share information toward a common end" (Solomon and Brown, 2004). But, this trust and mutual accountability for performance within a partnership can only be based on an understanding of sharing of common values.

In the Czech humanitarian NGO community, however, there appears to be a polarization between secular and religious NGOs around their respective understanding and operationalisation of humanitarian principles. While it is true that the rise of many civil society actors organized around diverse values and visions can create a sector of great richness and complexity, offering many opportunities for innovative problem-solving and creative action, too much sector pluralism, however, can also lead to widespread duplication of effort, the proverbial reinvention of the wheel, and missed opportunities for coordination and synergy (ICRC, 1995). Such polarization of mandates, policies and procedures as well as ideologies, values and vested interests between the two sides, this researcher feels, probably contributes towards fragmentation within the NGO humanitarian response system in the Czech Republic.

5.3.3 Other Obstacles to Coordination - the Push for Profile and the Culture of the Market

Another common obstacle to meaningful coordination, as observed by several analysts (Fowler, 1997; Bennett, 1995, and Van Brabant; 1997) - competition between organizations for scarce resources – also plagues the NGO sector in the Czech Republic. All four NGOs increasingly seem to be approaching the same donors for funding and for similar projects. Each agency is therefore viewed as a competitor; a constant theme that emerged in the interviews. Unfortunately, donor agencies and the media in the Czech Republic at times, inadvertently, seem to be contributing to this competitive atmosphere by pitting agencies against each other. As was clearly evident by the rave reviews PINF got post-2002, this feeling often gets carried over into subsequent disaster relief operations as the agency perceived as doing the most or with the greatest visibility is likely to receive the greatest support in the post-response period. In this way inherent competition in the Czech NGO humanitarian system continues to be fostered.

5.4 Recommendations and Conclusions

The above analysis of NGO coordination in response to the floods of 2002 points towards discrepancies between agencies over standards of assistance, linking relief with longer-term rehabilitation efforts and differences in conceptual approaches to response all represent challenges to achieving a harmonized and equitable humanitarian response. As stated by one of the respondents, the disaster response of 2002 proved that “lack of coordination effort that does not try to harmonize standards and approaches, leads to differential and unjust treatment of the already suffering population”²⁸. As has been discussed in Chapter 2, this can, in turn, lead to competition for resources, conflict and distrust— more importantly, all of which exacerbate the problems of the disaster-affected population. Based on the above assessment and of established best practices in humanitarian action²⁹, the author would like to suggest a few actions and strategies that can be pursued by the members of the humanitarian NGO sector in the Czech Republic to facilitate productive coordination in response to future emergencies.

Resource mobilization is central to mounting a disaster relief effort. A well-coordinated appeal is often more attractive to potential donors and often becomes the basis for making a decision on providing funds or other materials; additionally joint appeals may be the best way to minimize competition and its effects (ICRC, 1995). However, in the Czech context, considering the sizable funds received by the PINF during the 2002 crisis and its fund-raising campaigns in the past³⁰, it seems that the organization has developed a successful strategy for raising funds quickly during crisis situations and thus, should probably continue with this tried-and-tested methods. Coordinating the fund-raising effort with smaller and less experienced NGOs could have a negative impact on its credibility. The other three NGOs (ADRA, CCK, DvCR) could instead, be served well by launching a joint fund-raising appeal during crisis - for such a consolidated approach to fundraising is not only the most cost-effective but it also improves access to funding and ensures a more efficient allocation of resources. In addition, by launching a common appeal these NGOs could jointly identify and secure funds from larger set of donors.

²⁸ Page 4, Interview # A70-2004

²⁹ Operational guidelines for humanitarian NGOs designed by the SPHERE project and the ICRC

³⁰ In recent times, the SOS Sri Lanka, 2005; SOS Iraq 2003; SOS Afghanistan 2002; SOS Chechnya 1999 have been highly successful, landmark campaigns that raised unprecedented sums of money in the Czech Republic for the organizations' humanitarian operations abroad. *Source*: The PINF's website - <http://www.clovekvtisni.cz/english/kdojsme.php>

Secondly, coordinated planning is a fundamental component of disaster management. It is essential before the onset of an emergency, and even more so, once it has begun. Failure to foresee an emergency and anticipate changes in the relief efforts, such as in the location and number of affected persons, too often results in needless suffering and deaths. This researcher feels that Czech NGOs, in general, need to become more sensitive to the process of developing common approaches in advance, sharing information, developing joint plans, and taking coordinated preparedness actions will greatly improve their relief efforts. While in some cases it may be difficult to reach consensus on which population group needs assistance, overall, coordinated identification of target groups is an important priority task in humanitarian relief. Joint assessment of needs and available resources will result in a decreased need for duplicative follow-up activities. Joint needs assessments are also more considerate of the affected population, for example by avoiding the need to ask the same questions multiple times by representatives of different agencies. In addition, joint assessment can provide the basis for a more complete picture of the needs situation and therefore can serve as the basis for a comprehensive “strategic plan” for assistance operations. One of the most important results of joint assessment, information sharing and management is the conversion of information into a plan of action, utilizing a ‘strategic planning approach’ (ICRC, 1995). Such a plan for strategic coordination can help to identify, from a broader perspective, which organization will be performing a given task in a particular geographic location. Such a strategic plan will help in identifying actions that maximize cost-effectiveness and speed of response and includes mechanisms for sharing operational support resources among the organizations.

It must be acknowledged here that while the NGO sector in the Czech Republic will tremendously benefit from coordinating their operations with other organizations who are involved in disaster preparedness or response, these benefits do have a cost. However, to be successful the value of coordination activities has to be truly appreciated as a benefit that far outweighs the costs and is thus as important as other relief and rehabilitation activities. To overcome, the management/human-resource related obstacles to coordination, there are a variety of useful techniques that lesser experienced humanitarian NGOs in the Czech Republic can consider investing in (indeed, to fund and support such professional development programs in civil society institutions the world over, has become a major priority for large donors like USAID in the last five years). According to the ICRC (1995), the following are some of the commonly needed skills to develop better organizational management and coordination in the NGO sector:

- facilitation skills
- consensus building
- preparation of memoranda of understanding
- identification of each organization's comparative strengths and mandates in order to establish a division of labor
- maintenance of a "communications loop"
- participatory decision making
- provision of personnel incentives to coordinate

Finally, all these actions that facilitate coordination share one common element: improved communication. All of them require that both those who initiate and those who are involved coordination efforts build in formal and informal mechanisms for improving and increasing communication between all concerned. While it is true that protocols and mechanisms for coordination are critical, this author also recognizes that people are the most crucial link and that while frameworks for coordination can be vastly improved. Ultimately, it is the staff in these organizations that will need to understand, appreciate, and implement these mechanisms in order to increase not just organizational but also institutional efficacy.

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