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Coordinating the Humanitarian Response to Refugee Situations

The Role of Power and Trust in Humanitarian Networks

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Abstract

Most traditional literature focusing on coordination of humanitarian organisations argues for a hierarchy where one focal point is entitled the authority to coordinate by power of command. This argument has been criticised by theorists claiming that this is a utopia that will never become reality on a humanitarian arena consisting of autonomous actors. Instead, trust between the actors in a humanitarian network is understood as the foundation of successful coordination. Based on a fieldwork from Burundi, this paper argues that the financial ties between the organisations creates a possibility to coordinate by power of command, but that the application of this financially founded power decreases the levels of trust between the actors. Decreased levels of trust lead to decreased motivation for coordination. The paper therefore concludes that financially founded power of command is counterproductive to successful coordination. Effective coordination is founded on the ability to influence autonomous actors, not on the enforcement of decisions through power of command.

INTRODUCTION

In Gihinga camp for refugees in Burundi, 2700 people now lives as refugees after being forced to flee their homes due to conflicts in their home area in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Camp Musasa hosts 7000 Rwandese seeking asylum in Burundi due to fear of persecution in Rwanda. Being among the poorest countries in the world, Burundi does not have the economical means (and in the case of the asylum- seekers, the political will) to fulfil the obligations contained in the OAU- and the 1951- conventions¹ for the legal status of refugees.

The contemporary global patterns of forced displacement are condensed in the global south, and the majority of the worlds 11.5 million refugees face situations similar to the ones in Musasa and Gihinga, with host states being unable- or unwilling to take due responsibilities. According to the principle of burden- sharing, the international community enters the scene to meet the needs of the displaced. Enters the United Nations (UN), with its different specialised agencies, enters numerous international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and their national counter-parts; -all with different areas of expertise, and all with their own approach to the situation of displacement. This paper seeks to understand what motivations and mechanisms that can best assure that these organisations coordinate their activities in order to provide an efficient and coherent response to the needs of the displaced persons². The argument is built on a fieldwork conducted in the two above mentioned camps for displaced persons.

There is a saying that 'everyone wants coordination but no one wants to be coordinated'. This saying sketches a picture of the humanitarian arena where the organisations jealously protect their autonomy, and where the coordination of the actors is almost impossible under the current environment in which no one can give orders, and all organisations have to fight for visibility in a saturated donor- market. Reflecting this, most of the reports evaluating the coordination of

humanitarian operations are severely critical to the attempts. The traditional academic literature conclude that there will be no real coordination of humanitarian operations until power is shifted to one focal point, which is given authority to coordinate through power of command and take decisions on behalf of the other organisations.

This argument has been criticised by practitioners and theorists who dismiss power of command as a utopia that will never become reality on the humanitarian arena where the UN does not want to take on the full responsibility and the autonomous NGOs will never hand over the power needed. Based on the analysis of the fieldwork in Burundi, this paper argues that ties of funding between the UNHCR and its operational partners are used as a source of power to command. To acknowledge that the application of such power is a possibility, however, does not necessarily mean that the paper argues for more of it. Rather, the paper analyses the effectiveness of the application of such financially founded power of command through the core questions; -does power of command in hierarchies provide a sustainable base for coordination in the long term? If not, how can coordination of the humanitarian actors otherwise be conceptualised and approached?

Much literature on coordination explain effectively coordinated operations by holding the 'outstanding individual' leader as the main reason for success, but this explanation is generally not analysed in theoretical terms. This paper presents a theoretical framework of trust in humanitarian networks, which can be helpful in order to understand what motivates organisations to follow the 'outstanding individual'. Based on these theories, it will be argued for a perception of coordination of humanitarian operations where the building of trust in the humanitarian network is the basis for successful coordination.

On the basis of the fieldwork, it will be suggested that enforced decisions based on financially founded power will decrease the levels of trust in the humanitarian networks. If trust is understood as the basic necessity for successful coordination, it becomes clear that coordination by power of command, though a possibility, over time will be counterproductive to successful coordination. I will therefore argue that long- term building of trust should be at the foundation of the organisations' understanding of coordination, and affect their approach to coordinated activities. Short- term efficiency through the application of financially founded power may seem less attractive if the long- term implication is

¹ Burundi has signed both the 1969 OAU Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa, as well as the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees and its 1967 Protocol.

² The focus is thus put on the *international response* to situations of displaced populations, and the focus on the displaced populations themselves is thus left for another discussion.

understood as deterioration of the coordination-environment.

This paper is not meant to provide an operational manual on 'how- to build trust', and this question will largely be left unanswered. The aim here is to understand the underlying perceptions and mechanisms upon which can be built the structures and techniques of successful coordination. The exertion of power and leadership is encouraged, but built on the base of trust, not on formal power of command.

The author has been employed by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) as a trainee within camp management in Gihinga Refugee Camp throughout the period of the fieldwork. The bulk of the fieldwork is collected from this camp, but interviews are also conducted to compare the situation in camp Gihinga with the one in camp Musasa, where the NRC is also running the camp management activities. The experiences and impressions that I have gained as a professional participatory observer (Labaree 2002) have provided insights that are at the base of my understanding of coordination, and therefore at the core of the fieldwork. Research from the two camps is used as case- studies, and should make use of a wide range of information-sources as data. For this paper, eight unstructured interviews were conducted in Norway with high-level professionals and researchers for a general comprehension of coordination of humanitarian operations. For the understanding of the more specific areas of coordination in the camps, seven semi- structured interviews were held with key-personnel from the partners in the two camps, based on an interview schedule (see appendix 1). Minutes from meetings as well as internal and external reports are used as written documentation in certain cases.

In order to build the argument, chapter 1 presents basic theory on coordination in general and more specifically in the humanitarian context. This chapter should provide an understanding of the basic obstacles that hinders coordination, as well as the motivations to overcome these obstacles; -an understanding that is fundamental for the discussion and analyses in this paper. Based on the data- and insights from the fieldwork as well as the basic theory of coordination, chapter 2 contains the discussion of what perceptions of-, and mechanisms for coordination should be the foundation for effectively coordinated humanitarian operations. Arguments for power of command is tested in the Burundian environment, and discussed against arguments for the building of trust in networks. These discussions and analyses provide the basis for a set of conclusions that are summarised at

the end of the paper.

Basic theory for the study of coordination

The main discussion of this paper is the analysis of the foundations of successful coordination. To enable this discussion, it is essential with a thorough understanding of what coordination is, what obstacles that make coordination difficult, as well as the humanitarian organisations' motivations to overcome these hindrances. This chapter contains the theoretical foundations for this understanding. An analysis of successful coordination should also build on previous experiences. This chapter therefore further contains the presentation of the findings from a literary review undertaken, reviewing the existing literature for the explanations behind successful coordination.

What is coordination?

The theoretical study of Inter Organisational Coordination (IOC) seeks to "...understand the logic of how systems work as totalities as well as of their component parts" (Brett 2005a:1). The theory takes organisations as the entity of analysis and studies the interaction between them. Brett distinguishes between four different mechanisms through which organisations in social systems relate to each other: coexistence, competition, coordination and co-operation. He presents a normative theory describing how social systems move from simple coexistence - present among self-sufficient families and clans in pre-market societies, to competition and coordination in market societies, for then ultimately to arrive at co-operative interdependence as "...the dominant model for the management of 'modern' organizations" (Brett 2005a:1).

This paper will be concerned with the IOC between humanitarian organisations. Coordination of humanitarian operations is by nature very situational and contextually dependant, and has thus been defined in various different ways. A commonly applied definition is the one from Minear et al., where coordination is understood as:

"...the systematic use of policy instruments to deliver humanitarian assistance in a cohesive and effective manner. Such instruments include strategic planning, gathering data and managing information, mobilising resources and ensuring accountability, orchestrating a functional division of labour, negotiating and maintaining a serviceable framework with host political authorities and providing leadership" (Minear et al. 1992:3).

Less sharply delineated, coordination also means working in 'orchestrated' ways that 'converge', are 'coherent', 'informed of and by each other', and stimulate learning from the collective experience (Van Brabant 1999: 7).

IOC on the humanitarian arena happens on several levels that are closely interlinked. High-level strategic coordination seeks to shape the framework of the overall operation in a region/country, for example through determining agency positioning and terms of engagement/disengagement. Operational coordination seeks to coordinate dependencies between organisations at a more local and operational level, and can include activities such as general services to members (registration, meeting rooms, resource centre and surveys) and sharing of equipment. Further, both intra-/ inter-sectoral coordination is undertaken, to coordinate both the different specialised actors in one sector and the actors of the different sectors in one operation (Reindorp and Wiles 2001: 11-12, Van Brabant 1999: 18).

This paper is concerned with inter- sectoral coordination on the operational camp- level. This operational coordination can not be understood separate from the strategic coordination at country- and international levels, which will be presented in the following section.

Coordination of general humanitarian response at international level

The national government where the humanitarian operation takes place is, in principle, responsible for the coordination of all international assistance. In most situations where there is a functioning, effective government administration, the United Nations (UN) should merely support the government's own coordinating bodies. However, most of the literature on which this paper is based focuses on humanitarian operations in complex emergencies, defined as "A humanitarian crisis in a country, region or society where there is total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict..." (IASC 1994). In such situations, the UN must act on behalf of the international community and assume some of the overall coordination functions normally handled by the sovereign government (Daes 1995).

In order to face this responsibility, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) was established in 1997 (replacing earlier coordinating bodies, first UNDRO and then DHA). OCHA's Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is a top-level coordinating body where the UN agencies meet with representatives from the Red Cross/ Red Crescent, IOM and three different

NGO consortia, "...to ensure that an effective and efficient, well-coordinated plan for assistance is prepared" (Eliasson 1999: 192). The IASC will sometimes point out a lead- agency which is mandated with the overall coordination of the humanitarian response in a region or country³. This lead- agency will seek to coordinate the activities of the different UN- agencies with the NGOs.

In Burundi, after 12 years of civil war and complex emergency, a peace- agreement was signed in 2003, and a national unity government was voted into power in August 2005 in the first democratic election since the start of the conflict in 1993 (IDMC 2006: 2). Even though human rights- organisations still have severe critiques of the government and particularly the armed forces (HRW 2005), and even though the FNL is still fighting in certain regions, the situation in Burundi can no longer be termed a complex humanitarian emergency. In the Burundi Country profile for 2006, the NRC expects "...the smooth transition from a complex humanitarian emergency context to a durable development situation...." (NRC 2006b: 7). This means that the Burundian government is expected to take on a larger role in the future humanitarian response. At the moment, however, most coordination of the humanitarian intervention is still done by the international community itself.

Country- level strategic coordination of response to refugee situations

OCHA is the UN agency with mandate to coordinate the operations of the international presence in Burundi, and also to ensure regular contact with the Burundian central authorities.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the UN agency specifically responsible for the protection and durable solutions for refugees. In principle, this should imply to make sure that the States that have ratified the Conventions fulfil their obligations towards the refugees. The mandate is thus based on the protection of human rights, and originally not to be the actor providing care and maintenance for the refugees. But the understanding of this

³ Reflecting the rising international attention towards-, and demand for more effective coordination, the IASC last year launched the *Cluster- approach* to coordination (OCHA 2006) in order to clarify and strengthen overall coordination in humanitarian emergencies. As Burundi is not among the test- countries of this approach, only the old structure will be presented here.

mandate has changed, and it can be argued that the UNHCR has changed nature from an agency securing the legal protection of refugees through a rights- based approach, to a 'welfare agency' delivering emergency relief and aid through a needs- based approach (Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005: 291, Goodwin- Gill 1999: 235, Darcy 1997). Today the UNHCR provides relief to millions of refugees that are hosted by states that do not have the means or will to provide services and protection to mass- influxes of refugees. This relief is usually implemented partly by specialised organisations, and the UNHCR therefore finds itself left with the challenge to coordinate the different specialised actors. The solving of this challenge is what is being analysed in this paper.

UNHCR has, through OCHA and the IASC been given the primary responsibility for coordinating the international response to the refugees'- and asylum seekers' situation in Burundi. This means in practise that the UNHCR holds the primary dialogue with the central and local Burundian authorities on behalf of the organisations that operate in the camps for internationally displaced, and further that most organisations in camps are on some sort of contractual ties with the UNHCR.

Camp level operational coordination of response to refugee situation

Every NGO is in principle free to run its own programs independent from any UN agency, as long as the national government allows entry to the country. In practice though, it is often a demand from donors that the NGO they fund operates in cooperation with the UN. Further, a substantial part of NGO's funding is channelled through the UN system, and the NGOs are thus often found as operational partners to the UN on camp- level⁴.

In the case of Burundi, NRC is asked by the UNHCR to conduct Camp Management (CM) in Gihinga and Musasa camps. The UNHCR has further insisted on NRC taking responsibility for several of the other implementing responsibilities, and NRC is currently responsible also for distribution of water, food and non- food items, as well as construction, rehabilitation and education. The UNHCR is responsible for protection and the NGO Transcultural Psychological Organisation (TPO) is responsible for physical and mental health as well as community- services. ICRC runs a project on

contact between the refugees and their families in DRC. TPO is funded through the UNHCR, and thus reports directly to them, not through the CM-office. There exists no formal contract or hierarchy between TPO and NRC as Camp Manager, and no other bonds of formal power between the operational partners in camp, neither 'sticks' nor 'carrots'.

According to a decree from the central Burundian government, all activities should be undertaken only after the approval of the local Burundian authorities, represented through the local administrator. Though the local administrator at occasions tries to claim this power, the fact that he has a 50% absence from the camp (NRC 2006d: 2) leaves these attempts largely futile. The Burundian police have responsibility for the security internally in the camp, while the external security is ensured by the Burundian army.

Structures for the participation of the camp- population are put in place through different Committees. The Director Committee is the main participatory channel, with a democratically elected president and vice- president. In addition, there are the committees for women, youth, parents and elders, which are also functioning structures of participation. Coordination- structures is put in place through a weekly coordination- meeting chaired by the NRC and attended by the UNHCR, TPO, the local administration, the police and the Director's Committee. Information- sharing is sought formally ensured through distribution of minutes from meetings, and more informally through daily conversations and discussions.

The structures of coordination are much alike in the case of camp Musasa, the main difference being that MSF and IRC are not financed through- , and does not have contractual ties with the UNHCR.

Why coordinate? Obstacles to- and motivations for coordination

Seeing that NGOs are, in principle, independent actors that can choose whether they want to act alone or coordinate their activities with other actors, it becomes central to understand what factors that discourage coordination, and what motivates the autonomous organisation for coordination. A presentation will first be made of the obstacles that make coordination difficult, before analysing in greater depth what motivations that can drive humanitarian actors to overcome these obstacles.

⁴ This is not always the case though, as NGOs often operate on other funds, and thus not as operational partners. This will be discussed in larger detail throughout the paper.

Obstacles to coordination

Coordination is a notoriously difficult aspect of humanitarian interventions. There is a saying that 'everyone wants coordination but no one wants to be coordinated' (Van Brabant 1997: 5, Minear et al. 1992: 7). This saying reflects the dilemmas of a situation where the humanitarian actors acknowledges the positive effects that increased effective coordination would have on the people that needs assistance, while at the same time these are also actors that must ensure the visibility and position of the organisation they are working for. This has often led to a situation where the different humanitarian actors indulge in a fight for power and position instead of focusing on the actual positive output of their operations. This field- reality has led researchers' work on coordination to be overwhelmingly focused on the obstacles to coordination (Van Brabant 1999). Based on a survey on 159 documents, Kruke and Olsen (2005: 280) found that the main coordination challenges in complex emergencies are:

- Lack of authority to coordinate or command hampers efficient decision making. The coordinating bodies can only try to raise motivation for cooperation among actors over whom they have no formal authority.
- A large amount of humanitarian actors hampers coordination and joint efforts, because of the diverging affiliations, mandates and agendas. This can lead to misunderstandings of the actions of other organisations, but also to outright competition between the different organisations.
- The political aspects of complex emergencies. Humanitarian coordination does not happen in a power- vacuum, and the different powerbrokers may want to influence the humanitarian operations in certain directions that make overall coordination difficult.
- Demands from donors, often national governments, which have political agendas with the aid given.

Left out of this list of obstacles is the crucial aspect of scarce time (Van Brabant 1999: 15). Particularly when confronted with an acute emergency, the humanitarian actors put a premium on speed. There is the fear that the coordination efforts will cause delays (Minear et al. 1992:3, Doppler 1996:134). This again feeds into the argument that power of command is required before effective coordination can emerge, because there is no time in an emergency for long meetings trying to establish consensus between autonomous actors. While this is a weighty argument in the first phases of

an emergency, the reality of contemporary refugee situations is that nearly 7.8 millions of the world's 11.5 million refugees lives in protracted refugee situations, lasting five years or more (USCRI 2005). In these protracted situations, the most effective response is not necessarily the speediest one. Add the overarching systemic obstacle stemming from "...the fact that the humanitarian sector is a saturated market where implementing agencies are competing for funds" (Van Brabant 1999: 14), and the challenge of coordinating the humanitarian actors may seem insurmountable.

Motivations for coordination

Acknowledging all the above listed obstacles, what could motivate a humanitarian organisation to try and overcome them? A common answer would be that the coordination must add value to the activities of the organisation. This answer, however, still does not analyse what humanitarian actors perceive as valuable additions. For this analysis, a deeper understanding of the humanitarian actors' motivations is needed.

On the one hand humanitarian organisations are "...said to be motivated by altruism rather than self interest" (Brett 1998:11), all working towards supposedly similar and coherent goals. On the other hand, Brett emphasises that "...cooperation between NGOs is difficult, because they are independent agencies which defend their autonomy jealously and compete for funds and contracts". It is therefore useful to make a theoretical distinction between the humanitarian organisation as a value based co-operator on one hand, and on the other a competitive actor in a market for humanitarian relief. The value based humanitarian organisation works to achieve goals shared by the humanitarian community, and should involve in coordination as long as the cost required is less than the overall benefits to the humanitarian community in reaching their shared goals. The competitive actor, on the other hand, will involve in coordination activities only if the benefits in the form of better achievement of own goals surpasses the cost of involving in coordination activities.

This divide does not imply that the arena existing of competitive actors necessarily is less efficient in meeting the needs of the beneficiaries. Bill Easterly (2002) argues that the humanitarian market can be conceptualised as a 'cartel of good intentions', where the members of the cartel rarely compete for the same resources⁵ and

⁵ E.g. each national NGO has monopoly on funding from their national donors and their national member base

rather involve in 'spin control' in order to collaboratively project an image of humanitarian aid as a good investment in order to expand the overall market. The extent to which actors in the humanitarian community perceive that they have a common interest with other agencies will distinctly impact the actors' motivation to coordinate.

This theoretical divide of organisations' motivations for coordination takes us back to Brett's typology of interaction in social systems, and the question of whether the humanitarian market in a particular context best can be described as competitive, co-operative or coordinated. In any given humanitarian operation, the organisations can probably be placed somewhere along a continuum from the competitive 'lone rider' - coordinating only when the benefits for itself (own members and employees) outweighs cost, and the value based 'team player' that seeks to take larger societal goals into account when deciding how and to what extent to coordinate with other organisations. Humanitarian organisations are thus driven simultaneously by the need to maintain the base of its own existence through funding, and the goal of providing humanitarian relief where needed. Which of the motivations that is the strongest will be situational, and the prioritisations between them will shape the nature of any given humanitarian operation.

Previous experiences of successful coordination

Successful coordination contributes to effective and efficient humanitarian relief. From a literary review of 20 reports and evaluations of coordination- attempts, I found that although most research on coordination of humanitarian operations focuses on the inadequacy of the approaches, most literature also includes experiences of successful coordination. From rather small- scale information- sharing (Reindorp and Wiles 2001: 34) to more complicated and contested coordination of negotiating humanitarian space (Lautze and Jones 1998: 94, Van Brabant 1997: 11-12), and strategic policy coordination, such as 'the Burundi regroupement policy' (Lautze and Jones 1998: 95).

The most common explanation for successful coordination is well exemplified through the UN Tripartite evaluation mission's finding that "...the phrase that the Mission heard repeated most often (in relation to almost all of the aspects of operational co-ordination that were studied) was 'it depends on personalities'" (UN 1998: 7). 'The Burundi regroupement policy' mentioned above is also called 'the Griffiths policy', because Martin

Griffiths, the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator, was perceived to be the strong individual that made this coordination possible. This is another example of the centrality of 'outstanding individuals', which appears to be the most common explanatory variable in the success-stories (Van Brabant 1999: 16).

Another central explanation is the strength of networks of the organisations prior to the emergency. Organisations with a common religious affiliation have found trust in each other through shared belief, and a shared philosophy (Bennett 1995). Reindorp and Wiles (2001: 13) holds "relationships [which] have been built over time" to be one of the most important environments conducive to coordination. Sommers describes how the coordination efforts of OCHA were more effective than those of the government of Sierra Leone's own coordinating body, explained by a local expert by the fact that OCHA had "...far better relations with the powerful, well-organized, and well-funded NGOs" (Sommers 2000: 29).

A third recurring theme seems to be the coordinating body's ability to use some basis of command or control over the other organisations. One example at hand can be the UNHCR's coordination role in the refugee camps of Ngara, Tanzania in 1994. Backed by the relatively well-functioning and therefore powerful Tanzanian government (as well as the major donors), the UNHCR could effectively limit the number of NGOs in Benaco camp. Thus, on the basis of the power that a well- functioning host- state has in the international system to choose the actors that will get access to their soil, the Tanzanian government in close collaboration with the UNHCR could create an understandable and controllable environment that led to "...an unusually collaborative approach contributing to a highly effective response" (Borton 1996). Another recurring possibility for establishing command and control is 'the power of the purse' (Ingram 1993), where funding is channelled through the coordinating body, one of the UN agencies, and into operational partners. This gives the coordinating body the possibility to choose partners, and some capacity to control their work (Ingram 1993, Bennett 1995, Reindorp and Wiles 2001: 14).

The two most recurring explanations for past successful coordination share the feature of being highly situational and relational, where the context of the operation and the individuals that run it are held to be highly influential on the outcome of coordination. While this may certainly be true in practice, it still does not provide a theoretical understanding of the mechanisms at

work when coordination actually happens in a successful way. Chapter 3 seeks to put the features of successful coordination from the literary review into a theoretical understanding. Before turning to this analysis, a thorough discussion on the foundation of the claims that will be made is needed. I will now present my fieldwork, with the strengths and dilemmas it includes.

How does coordination happen?

Having so far mapped out the inter-organisational relations and –coordination mechanisms in Burundi, and a basic theoretical framework for the understanding of coordination, the task is now to use the theory to analyse the Burundian field- reality. Having analysed the obstacles towards coordination, and presented the theoretical understanding of humanitarian organisations' motivations to coordinate, the necessary foundation is laid for the discussion of how these motivations towards coordination can be activated. In this chapter, it will be discussed what mechanisms that best trigger the organisation's motivation to move away from competition, and towards coordination.

Building on interviews with humanitarian actors from the 1994 Rwanda crisis, Donini and Niland (1994: 13) offered a taxonomy consisting of three broad categories to describe the forms of coordination and power-relations that they identified in their examination of the Rwanda relief effort.

- The first was 'coordination by command' in which the agent has authority to pursue coordination through carrots or sticks and possesses strong leadership abilities.
- '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" (Donini and Niland 1994: 13).

A traditional field of theory sees coordination as happening on the basis of power of command in hierarchies. This view will be tested and discussed on basis of interviews and experiences with NGOs in Burundi, where it becomes clear that another understanding of coordination is needed. A field of occurring theory will be presented that sees trust in networks as the fundament for successful

coordination, based on principles of coordination by consensus. A comparison between the two views will enable the final discussion of the impacts that the use of power of command has on the levels of trust in the humanitarian networks in Burundi.

Power of command in hierarchies

"In my judgement, the continuing absence of effective coordination structures remains the soft underbelly of the humanitarian enterprise."

Minear (2002: 21)

Although the different UN agencies are mandated by the international community to facilitate the coordination of humanitarian operations, this responsibility does not entail the formal authority that often follows with a coordination- role. The coordinating body's lack of formal authority is the most widespread explanation for the failures to effectively coordinate humanitarian operations (Kruke and Olsen 2005, Minear 2002, Reindorp and Wiles 2001, Lautze et al. 1998, Donini and Niland 1994, Minear et al. 1992). The inability to coordinate by command is seen as the main reason why 'coordination by default' is the most recurring reality on the humanitarian arena. Together with many practitioners, important academic voices such as Lautze et al. (1998) and Reindorp and Wiles (2001) see this 'coordination light' as inadequate for effective coordination of humanitarian operations. The latter found "...a recurring paradox among interviewees: a repeated insistence on inter-agency consensus-building but implicit recognition that timely, effective humanitarian response requires power of command" (Reindorp and Wiles 2001: 14). They hold that the most recurring theme from studies of successful coordination was that the coordinators had been vested with elements of command or control at critical stages in the response. Through control over funds and/or access, these coordinators were able to buttress their claim to authority. Examples are cited where the coordinating body has been able to offer a financial reward to participants in coordination. In Angola for example, the quick disbursing mechanism of the UN Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Unit for Angola (UCAH) funded by SIDA was seen as very successful at providing NGOs with seed money, so strengthening UCAH's coordination role (Reindorp and Wiles 2001: 14). On the fundament of interviews and reviews of literature, this 'power of the purse' is seen as one clear mechanism to strengthen the coordinating body, and thereby making the coordination more successful.

Thus, at the same time as the UN's inability to 'coordinate by command' is held as the main

obstacle to effective coordination, the position of power that can be acquired through access to and control over funding is strongly acknowledged, and used as an exemplary way that more power of command can be shifted to one focal point. This potential source of power is one of the main discussions of this paper, and will now be continued in the case of Burundi.

Power of command- a utopia?

The argument that the lack of authority to 'coordinate by command' is the main obstacle to effective coordination is widespread, and may seem self-evident for the coordinator that tries in vain to gather the fragmented operations of different autonomous organisations. It is, however, an argument that is contested both by the UN agencies and the NGOs.

On the one hand it is not clear whether the UN would accept more power of command in humanitarian actions, if this was ever a possibility. Through the interviews I have conducted, especially with the respondents that have worked on a high level for a long time, a clear perception was formulated where the UN on high-level is not willing to take the full power of command if it was given to them. The respondents understand the UN as wanting to share responsibility through the 'out-sourcing' of implementing responsibilities to the different NGO's. The UN, according to respondents, does not want the full responsibility for difficult humanitarian operations, because with responsibility comes the risk of receiving severe critique, which is always abundant in difficult operations. This critique is more difficult to direct to one single actor as long as the responsibilities are shared between the UN and the different operational partners. Minear, being one of the main theorists arguing for more power of command, nevertheless recognises that this proposition is open to debate and that neither the various UN agencies nor the key donor nations have thus far assented to it. Indeed, he has acknowledged that both have actively resisted it (Minear 2002: 22).

On the other hand, it is argued that the independent NGOs would never give away the power of command to one focal point of power, because the NGOs lives on visibility and can not take the risk of being swallowed by the huge UN system and thereby losing both their independence of choice and their visibility.

Thus, the argument that more power of command has been criticised for being a utopia that will never be realised (Kehler 2004). At the same time all respondents, and also most of the academic literature, holds sources of funding to be a strong source of power. I will now analyse how the

channels of funding make a significant impact on the power-relations, and thus counter the above-mentioned argument that sees power of command as a utopia in the field of autonomous organisations.

Power of command- a reality?

"The financial ties between the NRC and the UNHCR shouldn't be an actual source of power for the UNHCR, but in reality it is most definitely. I don't understand why they think they have so much power. I think they're just not used to having partners [in the equal sense of partnership]. They treat us like a *soustraitant*, not as a *partenaire*⁶".

Florance Le Geulinel, NRC Camp Management program coordinator

While the UN and its different agencies are dependant on the political will and winds of its constituent member states, an NGO is fundamentally an autonomous actor that is independent from the power of state actors and the UN system. Thus, the Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs), the formal contract between the UN and the different operational partners (NGOs), does not contain evidence of a formal hierarchy of power. True, the UN agency has the right to "...at any time control the budget-expenditure of the project, if necessary⁷" (NRC/UNHCR 2006: 7), and the operational partner must operate "...according to the description and budget of this project" " (NRC/UNHCR 2006: 7). Nevertheless, in principle the operational partners are, as the term should imply, equal partners.

In reality, however, most NGOs depend on state actors and/ or the UN system for the majority of their funding. Exemplified in the case of the NRC Burundi, the Camp Management activities are almost in its entirety funded through the UNHCR (NRC/UNHCR 2006). True, NRC as an NGO has the opportunity to withdraw from any project which counters their founding values. However, in the case of NRC Burundi, a decision to withdraw from the Camp Management cooperation with UNHCR would have to be initiated by the Camp Manager, whose position is largely funded through UNHCR. It would further have to be realised by the Country Director who is dependent

⁶ The French words *soustraitant* and *partenaire* have a meaning close to subcontractor and partner, but where the *soustraitant* is understood as more inferior, and has a stronger negative connotation than subcontractor.

⁷ Several of the quotations are collected from French texts, and the translations are all mine

on a good relationship with the UNHCR for a series of existing- as well as future programs in Burundi. As one of the respondents formulated it, "We are always on the look for future funding and contracts. As these possibilities are often found through the UN- system, it is extremely important that we are perceived of by the UN- agencies as the preferred partner for future operations".

It becomes clear that for the NGOs that receives their funding through the UN system is difficult- and potentially costly to claim independence in a reality where funding is of crucial importance. Thus, the NGO independence is often more theoretical than actual⁸.

All respondent stated that they perceived the financial ties between their own organisation and the UNHCR (where it exists) as "A strong source of power for the UNHCR". Being asked how often the UNHCR utilises this power, the respondents were less clear in their answers, saying that it depends on the circumstance and the UNHCR staff at hand. For most cases it was held that the UNHCR uses the power entailed in the financial ties with their operational partners quite regularly, between the options 'most of the time' and 'sometimes'. It is, of course, difficult to say whether this power is used by the UNHCR, because this will rarely be done in a direct way with direct reference to the funding and lack thereof if the partner refuses to follow a UNHCR-order. Most often, this power is used in a more subtle way, or is simply baked into the relation between the UNHCR and its partners. Thus, I have researched mainly the perceptions of the power- relations among NGO-staff, and not a timid analysis of frequency of direct reference to financial ties when taking decisions. Nevertheless, the general understanding among the respondents, and also through what I have experienced through the practical work in camp Gihinga, was that the UNHCR is by no means reluctant to use the power they possess through financial ties with the implementing organisations in order to force through decisions. Thereby, the implementing organisations are treated as subcontractors, not as equal partners, to use the language from the quotation in the beginning of this section.

The power of the purse becomes even clearer seen in contrast to the actions of the partners that are not financially dependent on the UNHCR. From camp Musasa, the IRC representative

reported that "In the beginning, it was only GTZ who was funded only through the UNHCR. They usually followed whatever the UNHCR ordered. The rest of us were financially independent from the UNHCR, and was therefore free to do whatever we liked".

Summarised, the humanitarian field consist of actors that fundamentally are autonomous, in the sense that they can always choose to pull out of the area. On the basis of statements from the interviews and impressions from my own work though, I will argue that the existence of financial ties between the UNHCR and the implementing organisations is a strong source of potential and utilised power on the humanitarian arena. This means that where financial ties exist, coordination through power of command is a possibility which is also utilised in operations. Money speaks, and the power that is derived from financial ties between the humanitarian actors is of crucial importance and has more direct implications for interaction than any MoU or other soft agreement.

This understanding counters the previous presented arguments that power of command is a utopia in humanitarian operations. Where these arguments sees power of command to originate from agreements where the NGOs formally hands over the power of command to the UN system, I argue that power of command is already a reality in many humanitarian operations;- not built on formal agreements, but on the power of the purse and the NGOs' motivations for continual existence. Thus, on this topic I argue along the same lines as the theorists that argue for more power of command. However, to admit that power of command is a possibility and reality is not the same as arguing for more of it. It is merely to argue that a deeper understanding is needed on how effective the use of formal power is, and how it affects the relations between the humanitarian actors. Based on the presented understanding of the power- relations among the humanitarian actors, I will now proceed to a deeper analysis of the effectiveness of the use of power on the humanitarian arena.

Is the use of power of command effective on the humanitarian arena?

It the previous section, it was claimed that the UNHCR, through channelling funding into the operational partners can establish a strong source of power that is also widely utilised. The funded partners may find themselves forced to agree to a decision being made, or not being asked at all. But this is not in itself successful coordination. Going back to the definitions of coordination, they hold that coordination among other features is "...orchestrating a functional division of labour"

⁸ Nevertheless, it is an opportunity that is currently being discussed by the NRC in Burundi, as the climate of cooperation with the UNHCR is perceived of as too difficult

(Minear et al. 1992: 3), and working in ways that is "...informed of and by each other" (Van Brabant 1999: 7). One could say that forcing through a decision that would coordinate the other actors' work would orchestrate a division of labour, but it is highly uncertain whether it would be functional. Coordination of humanitarian operations must be based on information-sharing between the actors, which then become 'informed of and by each other'. According to the respondents this information-sharing is the first feature of coordination that is abandoned by actors that perceives their autonomy to be threatened by enforced decisions. This because information by its nature is difficult to control, because it is impossible for the leader to control that all relevant information is channelled up to the decision-making levels. Actors that feel threatened by enforced decisions will tend to give only the information they are asked for by the decision-maker, and to keep hidden all the surrounding information that would make it easier for the leader to make informed decisions. This indicates that the application of the power of the purse to enforce decisions that quickly coordinate the actors on a short term basis may at the same time entail a degradation of the atmosphere of cooperation between the actors in the long term. The actors will be less 'informed of and by each other' and the 'functional' aspect of the division of labour will be decreasing.

Question 5-7 of the interview schedule aimed at reaching a deeper understanding of the effects and effectiveness of the use of contractual power. The respondents were generally reluctant to reply in a closed format to the question whether their organisation would follow an order given by the UNHCR. Through more descriptive answers to the questions, the general view was formulated that their organisation would follow an order only to the least degree possible. Whether the organisations would follow would depend on a series of contextual factors, where the potential for future funding through the decision-maker was the most prominent factor (as long as the decision would not directly harm the camp-population in a grave way). The replies to this question were significantly different; -one respondent saw it "...as a good thing if the UNHCR gives orders, as they have the right expertise and experience in refugee situations". Another respondent held that "It is our job not to follow enforced decisions; -a system can not be established where the UNHCR can perceive of their partners as subcontractors".

The general impressions from the respondents and my own professional experiences are that organisations that perceives themselves as equal partners, but are treated as subcontractors, will

tend to follow an order to the least extent possible, and more on a superficial level than on a deeper and long-term basis. Nevertheless, as stated by one of the respondents above, as long as the decision-maker is perceived as embodying the necessary expertise and experience, the use of informal power based on faith in a person or agency is generally welcomed and followed. This statement correlates with parts of the literature that argues for more power of command, and will be discussed in more detail in the section that follows.

The role of informal power

Through the interviews and conversations with humanitarian staff, both in Norway and in Burundi, the respondents generally depicted the field as something similar to what Easterly calls a 'cartel of good intentions', where all humanitarian actors see the value of coordinated action motivated by the potential benefits for the beneficiaries. This depiction may seem surprising, as the literature on coordination is generally very pessimistic both in terms of actual coordination-history, and in terms of theoretical possibilities for future coordinated operations. Inquiring deeper into this question, the picture got clearer colours and shadings, and may be given due representation through the shelter-coordinator's version of a coordinated planning and action in Aceh, Sumatra:

It was early on decided that timber for the reconstruction of Aceh should be imported, because it was claimed that too much timber was needed to be provided in a sustainable pattern by the island's own reserves. It soon became a point of discussion, though, when the moment had arrived when the island could sustain the exploitation needed to provide timber for the remaining reconstruction. The information was too scarce for the actors to make a decision, because they were afraid of the consequences of a failed decision. When the shelter coordinator stepped in front and dared to take responsibility to decide that the right time had come for exploitation of Sumatra's own resources, the other actors were more than happy to follow this decision. They could tell their boss and donors that a decision was made, and they could blame the coordinator in case the decision led to unsustainable exploitation.

Similar motivations for coordination was expressed by most of the respondents, among whom scarce information and high levels of insecurity fuels a wish to follow an organisation or an individual that dares to stand out of the crowd, and show direction for the rest. These findings are further similar to findings in parts of the literature that argues for more power of

command. In the cases cited by Reindorp and Wiles power of command is used as the explanation for effective coordination, it was nevertheless "...important that other participants welcomed these elements of command as legitimate" (Reindorp and Wiles 2001: 14). This study then continues by emphasising the importance of the coordinator's demonstration of a mentality of inclusion and service orientation, so that the independent organisations does not perceive of the coordinator as rude and overruling. The studies that support power of command often argue simultaneously that the 'incredible' or 'outstanding' individual leader is a strong and necessary asset for successful coordination.

This outstanding individual was also the most recurring explanation for successful coordination in the literary review described in section 1.3. Thus, I argue along the same lines with Reindorp and Wiles that legitimacy of the leader is a central point to coordination. However, where Reindorp and Wiles continue by arguing that more power of command is nevertheless needed, this paper argues that what is needed is more of the legitimacy that makes organisations want to follow a leader. Based on findings from my fieldwork, I have claimed that the application of power without legitimacy among the coordinated organisations will lead to decreased motivation for coordination in the long term (section 3.1.3). I therefore see it as fruitless to establish relations of formal power of command, as long as the coordinator is nevertheless wholly dependent on legitimacy for committed coordination to be established. I have argued that because of high levels of insecurity caused by low levels of information, the humanitarian actors have a high motivation to follow a leader they trust. But the very same insecurity that creates this motivation for coordination is at the same time the reason why the actors claim they would never (or as little as possible) follow a leader they do not have faith in. The application of power is not a problem in itself, rather to the contrary, but this power must be built informally on faith and trust, and not established through formal hierarchies.

So, does this imply that the humanitarian actors have to sit around waiting for an outstanding individual to enter the scene? While certainly true in practice, the claim that outstanding individuals are needed for the coordination attempts to be successful is poor theory, and should motivate us to look for the general characteristics of such individuals and the way they act. I will argue for a different perception of what lies at the foundation of successful coordination, and thus for a change of how coordination should be approached in practice. In order to build this argument, I will use

a growing theoretical literature focusing on trust among actors in informal networks. This occurring strand of theory will now be presented as a source of complementary understanding to-, as well as a challenge to the traditional literature on coordination of humanitarian operations.

Trust in networks

The argument that there has to be established a source of power to 'coordinate by command' before effective coordination will happen is contested by a growing number of theorists (Kent 1987, Comfort 1990, Quarantelli 1997, Sommers 2000, Stephenson 2005, Kruke and Olsen 2005). Instead of arguing for more power of command for the coordinating UN bodies, these theorists take as their outset a humanitarian arena where coordination happens on a voluntary basis between more or less autonomous organisations. The understanding of coordination of humanitarian organisations as horizontal management (Burkle and Hayden 2001) gives rise to a centrality of networks (Moore et al. 2003, Kapucu 2003), in which trust (Stephenson 2005) and reliability (Kruke and Olsen 2005) between the actors becomes central factors for coordination.

Kent (1987) argues that the commonly used phrase 'humanitarian relief system' does not accurately describe forms of interaction among relief agencies. He classifies a system as interdependent, bounded, structurally explicit with defined relationships, and goal-focused. However, when analysing the international relief community, he found a network that was "devoid of any institutional framework, lacks coherent goals, reflects few patterned relationships, yet points to a variety of transnational and functional linkages that have emerged" (Kent 1987: 69). Newell and Swan (2001: 1292) have identified three major forms of inter-organisational networks. Each of these network types appears to be characterised by different forms of coordination:

- Social networks are based primarily on personal and interpersonal exchange (such as an alumni network).
- In contrast, bureaucratic networks are underpinned by formal agreements and formally identified roles and coordination mechanisms (such as a research consortium).
- Proprietary networks are both relatively formal and are also founded on some financial or intellectual property rights (such as a joint venture).

Stephenson (2005), applying this network theory on the humanitarian arena, holds that "The

'typical' humanitarian relief environment (if one exists) appears to include a relatively weak bureaucratic network and a social network of variable strength. Rarely are humanitarian organisations joined in strongly proprietary ways" (Stephenson 2005: 343).

Motivations for coordination in networks

Since the actors in these networks are coordinated on a voluntary basis, an understanding of their motivation for coordination becomes crucial⁹. Section 1.2.2 concluded that an organisation, whether understood as a competitive- or a value- based actor, will weigh the advantages of participating in coordination initiatives against the impact on its autonomy. Brett (2005a/b?) uses the term transaction cost to describe the perceived cost of participating in a given coordination- activity. High impact on its autonomy will result in high transaction costs. Command structures in hierarchies inherently involve principal-agent problems where the principal experiences monitoring cost in order to control the agent. However, the transaction cost of coordination can be decreased through establishing institutions that make coordination more efficient. In the theoretically perfect network one avoids this cost as all actors are recognised as independent, but still chooses to adhere to a set of common rules because they all gain from it in the long run. If trust is built in the networks, the perceived transaction costs will decrease, as the risk of giving away independence is perceived as lower. Organisational development specialists have sought for some years to build trust among firms in the business sector to reduce transaction costs and to curb the potential for exploitative opportunism in inter-organisational relationships. Scholars examining the role of trust in these sorts of dealings have "...widely acknowledged that trust can lead to cooperative behaviour among individuals, groups and organizations" (Jones and George 1998: 531).

The trust between the actors thus becomes a central denominator for the network's motivation to move away from competition, and towards coordinated activities. Trust has become a large field of study in the recent years, on an interdisciplinary basis, and organisation scholars agree that trust is an essential attribute for inter-organisational coordination (Noteboom and Six: 2003).

⁹ The theoretical framework for understanding the organisations' motivations for coordination has already been discussed in section 1.2.2. Here will be added some arguments that are more specifically utilised in the network- and trust theory.

Theories of trust

The concept of trust has been defined in numerous ways and analysed in a variety of contexts. While there is no single 'correct' view of trust, an often used definition is the one by Zaheer et al. (1998), where trust is understood as "...the expectation that an actor (1) can be relied on to fulfil obligations, (2) will behave in a predictable manner, and (3) will act and negotiate fairly when the possibility for opportunism is present" (Zaheer et al. 1998: 143).

The research undertaken on trust suggests that there exist a variety of types of trust (Stephenson 2005, Cvetkovich and Löfsted 1999), which is built on the foundation of different features. It has not been the scope of this paper to brake down and analyse the concept of trust in its different variations. It has been sufficient to be aware that trust can be built both between individuals, between individuals and organisations, and between organisations.

Stephenson has recently published what is to my knowledge the first article which explicitly applies the theoretical framework for the study of trust on the humanitarian field (Stephenson 2005). From a rather theoretical point of view¹⁰, he holds that "It seems likely that trust plays a vital role in establishing the conditions for effective coordination among otherwise separate organisations in the humanitarian relief environment" (Stephenson 2005: 343). Seeing trust as the necessary basis for successful coordination, the challenge for the coordinator in humanitarian operations is to develop the conditions in which participants in some organisations accord participants in others a sufficient measure of the most effective forms of trust available.

Humanitarian networks thus consist of relations built on mutual knowledge and trust, which make it easier and more attractive for independent organisations to discard some of their autonomy to be part of a larger, coordinated whole. While trust is admittedly founded on a common history of experiences, it is not something that organisations have to passively wait for the occurrence of. If trust and reliability are understood as crucial means for effective coordination, these could be actively sought by the coordinating bodies, instead of insisting on more formal power to command. In this way, effective coordination is founded on the ability to influence autonomous actors, what Donini and

¹⁰ His article is backed with primary data through only three interviews with humanitarian workers. Kehler's work (2004) is used at supplementary data.

Niland call 'coordination by consensus', as opposed to enforcing decisions on inferior organisations through chains of formal power of command. As Brett (2005) puts it, actual coordination "...requires rules that exclude command but allows levels of voluntary co-operation that nevertheless involve binding agreements between parties to ensure long-term co-ordination, rather than mere co-existence".

The humanitarian network in Burundi

The network- and trust theorists that is just presented treats the humanitarian organisations as ('more or less/semi-') autonomous actors, were the organisations have the freedom to choose whether they want to take part in coordination with other actors or not. I have argued that this independency often is a more theoretical- than practical feature of a NGO's reality, as funding sourced through the UN system constitutes a power- source that infringes the independence of the NGOs.

Building further on the language of Newell and Swan (2001) who identifies three different types of network, namely the social- the bureaucratic- and the proprietary network, one can say that the humanitarian network containing financial ties between the actors takes on some features of the proprietary network. I will therefore argue that the humanitarian field is still better understood as a network than as a hierarchy, but that power of command is exerted inside of this network, on the basis of financial ties. But as the ordinary proprietary network, such as a joint venture, tends to be built on clear and formal roles of power on each decision- level, the humanitarian network still rests in the informal social network mode, with some hints only of the bureaucratic network's formal coordination mechanisms. There is a discrepancy between the principle- and perception of an informal social network, and the field- reality of a proprietary network built through the financial ties, but lacking the ordinary formality of a proprietary network. This discrepancy between principles of a network of equal actors and the field- reality creates frustrations among the actors that may have implications on the levels of trust between them. This hypothesis will now be presented and analysed in the following section.

Effects of applying financially founded power in humanitarian networks

"I would refuse to call it [the contractual ties between the UNHCR and its operational partners] relations of authority. There are no authority-issues between the partners in camp Musasa; -it is an atmosphere of collaboration. Maybe this is

different between the UNHCR and the NGOs that are on contractual ties with them, this I don't know, as my organisation is financially independent from them".

Representative from non-contractual partner

"Oh yes, it [the contractual ties between the UNHCR and its operational partners] is most definitely a source of power for the UNHCR. This funding really forms the field more than anything else".

Representative from contractual partner

To enable the analysis of implications of the use of financially founded power, I conducted interviews with officers from both contractual partners of the UNHCR (contractual ties entails funding), and from the non- contractual partners IRC and MSF in camp Musasa. Thus, I have been able to make a comparison between the contractual and non- contractual partners' levels of trust towards the UNHCR. The answers from the respondent from the contractual partner NRC in camp Musasa were very similar to the ones from contractual partners in Gihinga, indicating that the UNHCR has a similar profile towards contractual partners in the two camps.

In the quotations over, the representative of the non- contractual partner expresses a radically different view from the representative of the contractual partner. The view of the latter respondent is backed by the other respondents from contractual partners, all of whom perceives the financial ties to be 'a strong source of power for the UNHCR'.

The divide between contractual- and non-contractual partners is not so clear- cut as the two quotations may indicate, as the IRC-representative holds that there are authority-issues between the actors in camp Musasa. What distinguishes this representative from the contractual representatives is that s/he does not feel particularly threatened by these, as "[we] were financially independent from the UNHCR, and was therefore free to do whatever we liked".

It thus seems that the UNHCR treats the non-contractual partners differently than the contractual partners which receive funding through the UNHCR. As there is no financial basis for enforcing decisions on non- contractual partners, the UNHCR has to go into a dialogue and seek a common understanding through consensus. In this environment it is possible to compare on the one hand the coordination by command that is exerted by UNHCR towards its contractual partners and on the other the coordination by consensus that happens between the UNHCR and non- contractual partners. What

impacts do the different approaches to coordination have on the levels of trust between the actors?

Question 8 of the interview schedule (see appendix 1) is a technique that is developed in order to analyse the levels of trust between different actors (Metlay 1999). The respondents' answers to question 8 can be put in a table to give a visual presentation of the differences in levels of trust between the UNHCR and is contractual and non- contractual partners.

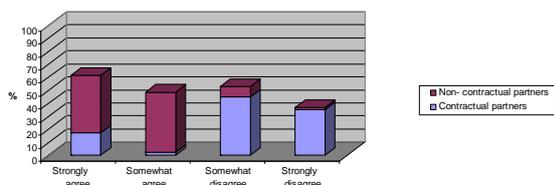


Figure 1: Levels of trust between UNHCR and non-/contractual partners. Percentage of total answers of non-contractual and contractual partners

The respondents were asked to grade their agreement with a series of positive statements about the UNHCR, for example 'The UNHCR provides all relevant unclassified information to the operational partners'. Figure 1 shows that the respondents from the non- contractual partners generally agree to the positive statements, indicating that the levels of trust are relatively good between them and the UNHCR. On the contrary, the respondents from the contractual partners generally disagree, indicating low levels of trust towards the UNHCR¹¹. The number of respondents in my fieldwork does not support a quantitative analysis of the levels of trust, and the table is therefore used here merely as a visual presentation that has to be supported by the following qualitative material from the interviews.

One of the representatives from the non-contractual partners holds that "UNHCR definitely listens and seeks equal partnership with the other organisations in Burundi". This differs significantly from the respondents from contractual partners, of whom all except one either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statements that the UNHCR 'Does listen to concerns raised by people like you', and 'Makes a good faith effort to treat every organisation even- handedly'. The other non- contractual representative also perceives the UNHCR to try to involve the views of partners

¹¹ All the Strongly agree answers among the contractual partner originates from the same respondent, which is also the respondent described in section ? as holding that the UNHCR is the most experienced and knowledgeable organisation working with refugees.

when planning for operations, and states that "...if they don't, well, there is no reason for us to follow their decisions".

The general impression from the interviews was that the contractual partners felt the UNHCR to seek coordination through a coercive approach that threatened their autonomy. Over time, this enforcement of decisions that the contractual partners do not participate in the formation of-, and therefore do not have ownership to, leads to an environment where the partners do not feel that their voices are heard and start to distrust the agency that threatens their autonomy. The respondents did not necessarily claim that all decisions forced through by the UNHCR were wrong or led to poorly implemented operations. What mattered was that they were not consulted, and therefore tended to remember the times when the enforced decisions led to poor or failed operations. Even though these operations were of a very difficult nature, the respondents did not express any understanding for the difficulties that led to the failure. This again differs from the descriptions of the early phases of camp Musasa, where the partners (except GTZ) were economically independent from the UNHCR. Even though operations in this camp ran far from smoothly, the respondents generally expressed an understanding of the difficulties that led to the failures, and did not blame any single organisation or actor for them.

Interestingly enough, the MSF and IRC representatives also expressed higher motivations than the other respondents for future coordinated activities with the UNHCR. They both elaborated on the need for coordination, and refused that their financial independency from the UNHCR leads them to stand on the outside of coordinated activities. "We can of course, if we want to, choose to stand on the side, but generally there is no need for this, because the partners are perfectly able to find a common stand on issues". One of the representatives held that "I have many times chosen to follow decisions made by the UNHCR, particularly on country- level, because they often have access to valuable information through the UN- channels and close contact with the government. Of course I choose to follow an organisation that knows more than me". It is interesting to see how statements of motivation for coordinated activities come together with the word 'choose' in these statements, as the freedom to choose to coordinate is at the heart of this argument.

Summarised, in this section it is argued that the humanitarian field in Burundi can best be understood as a network of actors whose independency varies according to channels of

funding. It is documented that the levels of trust are much lower between the UNHCR and its contractual partners, than their non- contractual partners. It is therefore suggested that the exertion of the power of the purse have negative implications on the levels of trust in the humanitarian networks in Burundi, and thus to decreased motivations for coordination. It has to be added here that the level of trust is a subjective and slowly changing parameter, which in addition to the use of power is influenced by a whole range of other parameters such as personal qualities and –ties. This paper does not claim that the use of power is the only reason why the levels of trust differ in the field. To analyse the changes in the levels of trust specifically brought about by enforced decisions would require studies that last longer periods of time, and on a much deeper level than the scope of this paper allows. This paper has analysed certain actors' levels of trust towards the UNHCR, at one given moment in time. However, the causal explanations from the qualitative interviews provide an understanding of the formation of this status quo that has enabled the conclusion that the exertion of financially founded power has negative implications for the levels of trust between humanitarian organisations.

If trust is understood as the basic necessity for successful coordination, this conclusion should lead to a re-thinking of the use of financially founded power. While it may lead to rapid coordination of the operation at hand, the longer term environment for coordination may deteriorate. Knowing that the majority of today's refugee situations last for more than five years (USCRI 2005) and therefore that the organisations addressing their needs must cooperate for extensive periods of time, I argue that long- term building of trust should be at the foundation of the organisations' understanding of coordination, and effect their approach to coordinated activities. Short- term efficiency through the application of financially founded power may seem less attractive if the long- term implication is understood as deterioration of the coordination- environment.

Conclusion

"Successful coordination can be based either on trust alone, or on a combination of formal power and trust embodied in a person or an organisation, but will fail if based on formal power alone"

Yannick Martin, Camp Manager in Gihinga

This piece of qualitative research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that triggers the humanitarian

organisations' motivation to coordinate their activities. Where most theory that is critical to the argument for more power of command merely dismiss it as a utopia, this paper acknowledges the opportunity to apply power of command on the humanitarian arena. Thereby, it seeks to contribute to existing theory by a critique based on thorough analysis of the effectiveness of enforcing decisions on humanitarian organisations, not only the dismissal of it as a utopia.

An emerging field of theory of trust in networks is applied to grasp in theoretical terms the humanitarian actors' basic motivation for coordinated activities. The paper contributes by using this new theoretical language to criticise the argument for power of command by suggesting that the application of it may lead to decreased levels of trust among the actors, and therefore in a long- term perspective to decreased motivation for coordination.

These contributions have been built on the foundations of existing theories as well as a comprehensive fieldwork including professional experiences. Among the main findings of the fieldwork were the conclusions that the financial ties between the UNHCR and its operational partners are perceived by the operational partners as a strong source of power for the UNHCR. This power of the purse is often applied by the latter to enforce decisions on the other actors, whom are thereby treated more like subcontractors than as equal partners. The core of this paper has been the discussion whether this form of coordination will motivate the humanitarian actors to committed coordination over time.

In the introduction to this paper was presented the saying that 'everyone wants coordination, but no one wants to be coordinated'. My fieldwork generally supports that 'everyone wants coordination', and further that there is a strong resistance among the actors to commit to a decision that is enforced through ties of funding. If the actors choose to follow an enforced decision because they feel obliged for reasons of existing- or future funding, they are generally clear that they will follow only to the least extent possible. The conclusion that 'no one wants to be coordinated' may seem evident, but only if coordination is understood as happening through power of command. The fieldwork and literary review showed that the humanitarian actors do not fundamentally oppose leadership from another organisation, rather to the contrary. It is, however, of crucial importance that they can choose who is in lead, and that they trust that the individual or organisation will make the right decisions on their behalf. It seems that 'everyone

wants coordination and to be coordinated, but only as long as they trust the coordinator’.

To grasp this finding in theoretical terms, an emerging field of theory has been presented, which seeks to establish another mind-set concerning coordination, where the humanitarian arena is understood instead as a network of autonomous actors that chooses whether or not they ought to participate in coordinated activities. Trust between the actors becomes a central theme in such networks, and is understood as the obligatory basis for successful humanitarian coordination, as opposed to formal power of command.

The fieldwork shows that the UNHCR generally seeks coordination by consensus with its non-contractual partners, while coordination is often sought through power of command towards its contractual partners. Analysed in one given moment in time, the levels of trust towards the UNHCR are much weaker from its contractual partners, than its non- contractual partners. I have argued that the findings strongly indicates (if not proves) that enforced decisions based on financially founded power will decrease the levels of trust in the humanitarian networks. If trust is understood as the basic necessity for successful coordination, it becomes clear that coordination by power of command, though a possibility, is not a sustainable base for successful coordination in the long term.

The exertion of powerful leadership can most definitely be positive and lead to successful coordination, but only as long as there is trust between the decision-maker and the other organisations, as the quotation in the beginning of the conclusion suggests. I therefore argue that long- term building of trust should be at the foundation of the organisations’ understanding of coordination, and affect their approach to coordinated activities. Short- term efficiency through the application of financially founded power may seem less attractive if the long- term implication is understood as deterioration of the coordination- environment.

Effective coordination is founded on the ability to influence autonomous actors, not on the enforcement of decisions through power of command.

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