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A Case Study into NGO Partnership Practices for Sustainable Capacity Building

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Abstract

For the purpose of transforming the humanitarian system, the Grand Bargain localisation agenda aims to channel 25% of total funding through locally embedded organizations by 2020. Building the capacities of local NGOs is recognized to be a fitting strategy to localize humanitarian and development aid. Partnerships with local organizations are an important vehicle for international NGOs to do this. However, local NGOs are often treated as subcontractors for project implementation, which creates unequal partner relations. Contrary to these project-based partnerships are authentic partnerships, which are characterized by mutual trust and strategic, long-term collaboration. INGOs should therefore invest in authentic partnerships. This thesis aims to identify partnership practices that mostly contribute to authentic partnerships. The DIAD model of authentic dialogue provides the theoretical lens through which authentic partnerships are approached. By means of backward looking process-tracing, this thesis examines four authentic partnership cases. Data collection is done by means of semi-structured interviews, document analysis and participant observation. The results show that equality is perceived to be the most important aspect of authentic partnerships. Face-to-face meetings and joint decision-making can promote unequal partner relationships. Furthermore, trust has to be built into partner relations by means of committing to long-term collaboration. Donors have to share the risk of localisation in order for international NGOs to invest fully in authentic partnerships.

Keywords: *localisation, capacity building, international NGO, local NGO, authentic partnership, organizational relationship, shared understanding, shared commitment, equality*.

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Abbreviations

ACCORD	Assistance and Cooperation for Community Resilience and Development
CAFOD	Catholic Agency for Overseas Development
CARE	Cooperation for Community Resilience and Development
C4C	Charter4Change
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DfID	Department for International Development
DRA	Dutch Relief Alliance
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EU	European Union
FOA	Food & Agricultural Organization of the UN
HLP	High Level Panel
IARAN	Inter-Agency Research and Analysis Network
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent
KMSS	Karuna Mission Social Solidarity
LNGO	Local non-governmental organization
L/NNGO	Local/national non-governmental organization
MFS	Medefinancieringsstelsel
MIPAREC	Ministry for Peace and Reconciliation under the Cross
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United Stated Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit
ZOA	Zuid-Oost Azië

Executive summary

Despite massive investments in emergency relief and development, humanitarian needs have grown over the past decade. Due to protracted crises and climate change, the number of victims and displaced is not expected to decrease in the coming years. The Grand Bargain localisation agenda aims to contribute to a more effective and efficient way of spending by channeling 25% of humanitarian funding through local organizations by 2020. Capacity building concerns one of the localisation commitments and is commonly seen as developing, enhancing and organizing the systems, resources and knowledge of local crisis responders, such as NGOs. The larger purpose of building local capacities concerns the enhancement of social capital, which can on the long run strengthen civil society. In order to capacitate local NGOs, international NGOs engage in partnerships with their local counterparts.

Partnerships are a common phenomenon in the realm of relief and development, but have until now been characterized by one-sidedness. International NGOs dominate the partnerships in many aspects and autocratically make decisions regarding local organizations' funding, objectives and terms. Local NGOs rely on the funding of INGOs and therefore implement projects for their international contractor. Since this can hardly be understood under the notion of 'partnership', a distinction should be made between these project-based partnerships and 'authentic partnerships'. The latter, which is understood as a more strategic and long-term partner relationship, based on values as trust and reciprocity, allows for more sustainable capacity building than the short-term project cycles of the former. Because of the short-term nature of the project-focused way of working in the humanitarian system, localisation seems to be contradicting the system itself. A power shift is required to really localize humanitarian action.

For this purpose, actors within the international community should act according to a collaborative rationality, which is founded in Habermas' communicative rationality. Collaborative rationality puts dialogue at the center of problem-solving. This is captured in the DIAD model, which states that participants with diversity of interest and interdependence of interests can engage in an authentic dialogue, which results in mutually recognized values like reciprocity and learning. This can, in the end, influence society's meanings and heuristics. When projecting this model on authentic partnerships, it can be said that the result concerns the authentic partnership characteristics, as listed by Hoksbergen (2005). This can, in turn, increase social capital in order to enhance public rights and virtues on societal level, while it can lead to more aligned interests, less interdependence and sustainably built capacities on partnership level. By means of a backward looking process tracing methodology, four cases show to what extent these partnership characteristics are reflected in practice. Semi-structured interviews, document analysis and participant observation provided the data needed for the case studies.

The data show that two barriers block international NGO efforts to engage in authentic partnerships, which include the dependence on money for partnership practices and the non-willingness of

institutional donors to share the risk of localisation. The NGOs which engage in partnerships despite these barriers are motivated by the complementary capacity of the comparative advantages of both organizations. Among the major findings is the importance attributed to equality in the partner relationship. Although international NGOs insurmountably have an advantage in terms of resources and capabilities, they try to create a level playing field by consulting each other, jointly making decisions and sharing information and knowledge. These practices can practically take shape by promoting face-to-face interactions between international NGOs and their local counterparts. Besides equality, partners should adopt a long-term commitment to their partnership. This allows for learning processes, relationship building and multi-year (financial) support. The mutuality that can arise from a long-term relationship has the potential to increase the level of trust among partners. This in turn, can lead to a better collaboration. International NGOs can be enabled to structurally invest in authentic partnership, instead of project-based partnerships. However, systemic changes like the willingness of donors to share the risk of localisation are required for local NGOs to be sustainably capacitated.

1. Introduction

Humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are currently facing significant challenges in bridging effectiveness and efficiency gaps in providing relief and development services (Clarke & Ramalingam, 2008, p. 25). Despite countless development successes, humanitarian needs have increased over the past decade (OCHA, 2019, p. 12). Political conflicts are increasingly concentrated in the world's poorest regions and the protracted nature of these conflicts seems to have become the new norm (OCHA, 2019, p. 18; IARAN, 2017, p. 83; The New Humanitarian, 2017). Due to their weak governance, states within protracted crisis have little capacity to respond or to provide an adequate level of protection (FAO, 2010, p. 12). Conflicts and disasters strike even harder in the case of widespread poverty. Although fewer people are living below the poverty line than ever before, there is a growing inequality gap between rich and poor, which means an increase in the number of relatively poor people (World Bank, 2018). Poverty is mostly concentrated in vulnerable areas in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, where society is insufficiently supported by social institutions (IARAN, 2017, p. 42). In ten years, 80% of the world's extreme poor will be living in the most fragile countries (OECD, 2018, p. 3). Rising food insecurity as a result of climate variability and violent conflict contributes to these poverty rates. In other words, an interplay between climate change, violent conflicts and poverty makes a significant proportion of the population acutely vulnerable to death, disease and disruption of livelihoods over a prolonged period of time.

As a consequence, today's world is witnessing a massive increase in the number of forcibly displaced people with over 70 million now, compared to 50 million a few years ago (OCHA, 2019, p. 14; UNHCR, 2019). Global living standards have never been as high as today and yet do actors within the humanitarian sector lack the resources to take effective action (HLP, 2016). The funding gap to meet the needs of the people in crisis has been growing to 44% in 2018 (OCHA, 2019, p. 19). In other words, "*a dramatically changing world requires NGOs to fundamentally rethink all aspects of their work*" (Gnärig, 2015, p. 14).

1.1. Capacitating local partners

Creating a lasting impact by means of disaster relief and development services appears to be a challenging task for international NGOs (INGOs). Aid should therefore be closer to the ones receiving it. In the light of this, the development narrative has been dominated by concepts as 'empowerment' and 'participation' since the 1980s (Eade, 1997, p. 1). Local actors should participate actively in the development process, which allows them to get empowered. This enables them to enhance social values and virtues, which can strenghten civil society in the long run. In other words, a locally-led bottum-up approach to relief and development might result in more sustainably developed societies than a top-down approach, which depends on external support. The process of shifting to this locally-led approach to relief and development is known as 'localisation'.

A rather new concept entered this narrative during the mid-90s. Capacity building was introduced as the strategy to 'localize' humanitarian and development aid. The meaning of the concept ranges from 'training people to help themselves' to 'strenghtening civil society' and is therefore differently understood by many actors (Eade, 1997, p. 2). During the last decade, the role of INGOs has clearly moved more towards capacity builders of local organizations. Essentially, the goal for INGOs is to 'work themselves out of a job'.

Capacity building is most often done through partnerships with local or national NGOs (L/NNGOs). Partnerships are seen as a proper avenue for building the capacities of L/NNGOs (van der Haar, Hilhorst, & van Boeckel, 2009, p. 11). A healthy partnership involves an equal and mutual relationship of trust. However, many local partner organizations do not see their international counterpart as such a 'partner' (Eade, 1997, p. 48). They rather see them as employers. L/NNGOs are often treated as subcontractors, which are responsible for implementing INGO projects. They are employed by the INGO as long as the project lasts. This results in skewed power relationships, in which INGOs autocratically impose their desired changes on local partners (Elbers & Schulpen, 2012; Hoksbergen, 2005, p. 19; Todd Beer, Bartley, & Roberts, 2012, p. 332). It is therefore optimistic to continue calling these project-based practices 'partnerships'.

For this reason, Fowler (1998, p. 137) proposes to divide between these 'project-based partnerships' and long-term strategic partnerships, which he calls 'authentic partnerships'. Since capacity building is a long-term process, requiring a comprehensive approach of relationship and support, authentic partnerships better suit this purpose than project-based partnerships (Eade, 1997, p. 12; CARE et al., 2019a; IFCR; Government of Switzerland, 2018). However, the humanitarian funding system is not plainly compatible with this approach. INGOs get funded by instutional donors by writing concrete project proposals (Eade, 1997, p. 17). In other words, most funding is bound by projects and partnerships therefore cannot exist without any projects. Consequently, INGOs have to be accountable to donors by meeting the donor requirements (IARAN, 2017, p. 11; van der Haar, Hilhorst, & van Boeckel, 2009, p. 30). Local partners, in turn, are monitered through accountability systems of INGOs, This undermines a relationship based on trust. Besides that, project cycles are usually short-term, which does not allow for a long-term investment in the capacities of local partners (Pepper & Walker, 2007, p. 9). INGOs are not funded for gap periods, during which there are no projects to implement with their local partners. Moreover, they get little funding for capacitating L/NNGOs. These difficulties continuously barricade INGOs' efforts to fully engage in authentic partnerships.

INGOs are trying to find ways to create a partnership environment for sustainable capacity building, despite the descrepency between authentic partnerships and the financial flows of the funding system. This research contributes to identifying authentic partnership practices that are most conducive to such environment.

1.2. Research questions

Despite increased initiatives to engage with local partners in authentic partnerships, INGOs increasingly find themselves caught between the polarities of donor requirements and localisation targets (ZOA, 2019, p. 11). Authentic partnerships for capacity building mark the future of humanitarian aid. However, the path which enables INGOs to structurally organize authentic partnerships with L/NNGOs is still undefined. It is therefore of great importance to know which partnership practices are most conducive to building authentic partnerships for sustainable capacity building. Following from this, the central question of this thesis is:

> What partnership practices contribute to the creation of authentic INGO-L/NNGO partnerships for sustainable capacity building?

This research question is supported by three sub-questions. The first sub-question focuses on the reasons why INGOs are reluctant in building authentic partnerships with local responders. What barriers do INGOs face in establishing authentic partnerships? The answer to this question can contribute significantly to identifying the conditions in which INGOs are able or not able to establish authentic partnerships.

The second sub-question aims to identify the motives INGOs and L/NNGOs have in order to engage in partnerships. What motivates local non-governmental organizations (LNGOs) to partner with INGOs? And what is the added value for INGOs to partner with LNGOs? Getting a thorough understanding of the (dis)advantages of partnerships allows for the identification of the aspects that NGOs find important about partnerships.

The third sub-question focuses on the institutional environment of authentic partnerships. Which contextual conditions are needed for authentic partnership practices to flourish? The contextual conditions can enable or disable INGOs to invest in authentic partnerships and should therefore receive sufficient attention.

1.3. Research objective

This research aims to identify practices conducive to INGO-L/NNGO authentic partnerships for sustainable capacity building. Existing authentic partnerships between INGOs and L/NNGOs will be closely examined. The perceptions and experiences of different INGO staff workers will be analysed and compared to find the most essential practices for sustainable partnerships. The research outcomes can serve three objectives. Firstly, it can provide new insights in partnership practices, which can lead to a different understanding of the importance of authentic partnerships in humanitarian and development action. Secondly, the results can contribute to policy recommendations with regards to partnerships. Put differently, decisions that impact aid beneficiaries should involve the voice of locally embedded actors. Thirdly, the research results can contribute to the more general academic literature on partnerships for capacity building of local organizations.

In order to find satisfying results, qualitative empirical research is done over a period of six months. This consists of process tracing research, carried out by means of a comparative case analysis. Several data collection methods are used. Firstly, semi-structured interviews with key informants from different NGOs are done. Secondly, some data is collected through participant observation. Thirdly, document analysis is done to add information to the data acquired by the interviews.

1.4. Research justification

The importance of capacity building for the process of localisation has been emphasized within the literature by many scholars (Barbelet, 2018, p. 6). Also, some empirical evidence has been found regarding the role of authentic partnerships in moving the localisation agenda forward. Besides that, multiple academics have already observed the incompatibility between project-based humanitarian action and localisation. The question how INGOs should deal with this incompatibility is, however, insufficiently approached. Case-specific practices that stimulate authentic partnerships have thus not yet been covered by the literature (Wall & Hedlund, 2016, p. 4). Currently, solutions are found in decreased earmarking of institutional funding and transferring money directly to L/NNGOs. Although these solutions may seem to work towards a serious effort to give local actors more ownership over crises, it will not have a sustainable effect if local actors do not have sufficient capacity to exploit these resources. In the worst case, it might even harm local actors' capacity. Efforts to find a solution to this aid incompatibility are beyond the scope of this research. Rather, this research tries to put authentic partnerships in the centre in order to gain new perspectives on the issue.

1.5. Societal and scientific relevance

Partnerships are central to today's relief and development practices. Local organizations increasingly contest the Northern dominance in partnerships and INGOs are trying to find ways to collaborate more equitably. This research contributes to this search by looking into the structural problems that underlie the questionable nature of NGO partnerships. Besides that, the practices conducive to authentic partnerships are extensively discussed. The information resulting from this can be of particular value for INGOs as well as local organizations in reflecting on their own partnerships. It can enhance and inform new INGO strategies in working together with their Southern counterparts. Scientifically, this research seeks to contribute to complexity literature by viewing partnerships in the light of collaborative rationality. In addition, it contributes to the general scientific literature on partnerships and capacity building of L/NNGOs.

1.6. Thesis outline

The remainder of this thesis is structured as follows. In the second chapter, the background of the localisation debate will be extensively discussed. The chapter also goes deeper into the definition and relevance of capacity building. In addition, it discusses the reasons why the current project-based partnerships are not conducive to localisation. In chapter 3, existing theories will be examined in order

to create a relevant theoretical perspective on the problem. A theoretical framework will subsequently be presented in order to approach the challenge INGOs are facing regarding authentic partnerships. Here, the relation between capacity building and authentic partnerships will be more extensively discussed. Besides that, a collaborative rationality approach to complex problems will be provided. Chapter 4 contains the methodological steps that were taken in order to carry out the research. This includes the methods used to gather data by analysing documents, but also the ways in which cases were selected, and the way respondents were found. Additionally, the data analysis methods are explained here. In the fifth chapter, the results of the research will be presented and analysed. The analysis consists of four within-case analyses, followed by a cross-case analysis. The last chapter states and reflects on the conclusions of the research. Here is discussed what the data actually mean for the topic under investigation. Besides this, the results are put in the light of earlier findings. The discussion determines what we could learn from the findings and what should be done regarding the problem, as presented in the introduction. Besides that, it includes some shortcomings of this research, as well as possibilities for further research on this topic.

2. Localizing aid

This chapter digs more into the need for INGOs to partner with local organizations by putting the localisation debate within its context. The initial stages of the Grand Bargain will first be discussed. Subsequently, the localisation debate is more extensively discussed. Particularly the increased momentum for capacity building is highlighted. The chapter closes with an explanation of the need for more authentic partnerships, rather than partnerships that are merely project-based.

2.1. The Grand Bargain

The "woeful underresourcement" of humanitarian response and a financial funding gap of $US 15 billion in 2015 was reason for action towards improvements (Australian Aid et al., 2016). The UN Secretary General called the High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing into being with the task to construct the measures required in order to fill the funding gap. The final report "Too important to fail'', which was revealed in January 2016, presented several recommendations concerning effective and efficient humanitarian action. It emphasized the importance of the shared responsibility of humanitarian actors to shrink the needs, deepen and broaden the resource base for humanitarian action and, most importantly, to improve the delivery of aid services. These findings were aimed at steering and shaping the discussions during the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in Istanbul in May 2016 (HLP, 2016). The WHS created a level playing field where governments, UN agencies and NGOs discussed the needs, proposed solutions and sought agreements (Australian Aid et al., 2016, p. 2). Donors and implementing organizations came together in a Grand Bargain concerning the improvement of the efficiency of aid services (HLP, 2016, p. iv). This agreement consists of ten workstreams, all containing a number of commitments that serve the goal of working together more efficiently, transparently and harmoniously (Australian Aid et al., 2016, p. 2). 61 actors, including national governments, UN agencies and international NGOs, signed the Grand Bargain (Kajtazovic, 2019).

During its first three years, the Grand Bargain seemed to move towards a failed effort to unite humanitarian actors in order to bring change (Derzsi-Horvath, Steets, & Ruppert, 2017, p. 9). The individual workstreams did not seem to make any significant progression regarding the sets of commitments. The Grand Bargain is not legally binding for its signatories, which makes it a rather free affair. This has two sides. On the one hand does the non-binding character of the Grand Bargain allow NGOs to easily add another agreement to their already long list of agreements, alliances and standards, without changing too much on their organizational strategy and structure. On the other hand, support for the initiative would have been much lower when the Grand Bargain would be legally binding (Rowling & Whiting, 2016). Creating the Grand Bargain free of any judicial repercussions can thus be considered as a strategic decision. The workstream results currently show a slow but steady increase in improvements towards the commitments (Meltcafe-Hough, Wendy, & Poole, 2019). The Dutch Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Sigrid Kaag, has recently been appointed as the

eminent person of the Grand Bargain in order to restore its momentum among the international community (IASC, 2019).

2.2. Localisation

One of the workstreams of the Grand Bargain gained more momentum in the past years and is particularly high on the agenda: localisation (HLP, 2016, p. 19; Meltcafe-Hough, Wendy, & Poole, 2019). This localisation agenda embodies a more general discourse that has already been dominating the humanitarian and development sector for years. Early sources of three decades ago already point to the importance of a more southern-focused relief and development approach (Petruney et al., 2014, p. 436). In 1991, the General Assembly Resolution underlined "the prominent role of national authorities in coordinating humanitarian response." Also, the 1994 code of conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (ICRC) and NGOs mentions to "build disaster response on local capacities" (ICVA, 2018, p. 3). This call for a more southern-led response to humanitarian crises proceeded over the next decade, leading up to the creation of the localisation workstream in the Grand Bargain.

Localisation has surely become a buzzword within the humanitarian sector (De Geoffroy et al., 2017, p. 4). However, there is still no straightforward definition on what localisation entails and what not (De Geoffroy et al., 2017, p. 11; Wall & Hedlund, 2016, p. 3). Contrary to using a clear cut definition, stakeholders prefer to define localisation depending on what fits best to their operational context. This rather pragmatic approach to localisation allows for the recognition of the locally embedded social relations and the institutional context (ICVA, 2018, p. 6). For this reason, there is no commonly used definition of localisation among humanitarian actors. However, standard minimal definitions are used by the actors most involved with localisation research. Most actors working on the topic see localisation as "*the need to recognise, respect, strengthen, rebalance, recalibrate, reinforce or return some type of ownership or place to local and national actors*"

BOX 1: Grand Bargain Localisation commitments

Aid organisations and donors commit to:

1. Increase and support multi-year investment in the institutional capacities of local and national responders, including preparedness, response and coordination capacities, especially in fragile contexts and where communities are vulnerable to armed conflicts, disasters, recurrent outbreaks and the effects of climate change. We should achieve this through collaboration with development partners and incorporate capacity strengthening in partnership agreements.

2. Understand better and work to remove or reduce barriers that prevent organisations and donors from partnering with local and national responders in order to lessen their administrative burden.

3. Support and complement national coordination mechanisms where they exist and include local and national responders in international coordination mechanisms as appropriate and in keeping with humanitarian principles.

4. Achieve by 2020 a global, aggregated target of at least 25 percent of humanitarian funding to local and national responders as directly as possible to improve outcomes for affected people and reduce transactional costs.

5. Develop, with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), and apply a 'localisation' marker to measure direct and indirect funding to local and national responders.

6. Make greater use of funding tools which increase and improve assistance delivered by local and national responders, such as UN-led country-based pooled funds (CBPF), IFRC Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) and NGO-led and other pooled funds.

(Barbelet, 2018, p. 5). Others define the term a bit more concretely and chose to highlight a specific side of localisation in the definition. Some therefore see localisation as "*a process of recognising, respecting and strengthening the independence of leadership and decision making by national actors in humanitarian action, in order to better address the needs of affected populations*" (IFRC, 2018, p. 1). Localisation thus at least entails a locally led – tailor-made – humanitarian response with an emphasis on the participatory potential of local responders (Barbelet, 2018). Here, we take a perspective to localisation that mirrors this potential for autonomous response. Within this research, localisation is therefore seen as a process in which "*local and national humanitarian actors are increasingly empowered to take a greater role in the leadership, coordination and delivery of humanitarian preparedness and response in their countries*" (CARE et al., 2019a, p. 7)

Despite this pragmatic approach regarding the definition and the objectives of the concept, the direction of localisation is clear. Localisation aims for more support and funding tools for local and national responders. Its objective is to make principled humanitarian action as local as possible and as international as necessary (Australian Aid et al, 2016, p. 5; Barbelet, 2018). One could ask why this focus on locally-led action is needed. The argument is threefold. Firstly, local organizations and governments are culturally and geographically closer to the people in need of help and can therefore respond quickly and appropriately in case of a crisis. Secondly, local responders have access to the disaster areas and are therefore able to directly provide aid. Thirdly, local organizations themselves have a lot value to add. They possess knowledge on the local language and culture, and they might have applicable expertise (IFRC, 2019). By means of these three characteristics, local responders can contribute majorly to the needs assessment for the area. They are therefore in a strong position to link preparedness and response (IFRC, 2018, p. 2). These responders do not only include governments and NGOs, but also civil society organizations (CSOs) and social enterprises (Australian Aid, 2016).

The localisation workstream focuses on four main areas, including partnership, capacity strengthening, financing and coordination. Regarding the first, Grand Bargain signatories aim to remove barriers to partnerships and to include capacity building in the partnership agreements. The second area focuses on this process of capacity building by emphasizing that international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) should reinforce, rather than replace institutional capacities. Building the institutional capacities of national and local actors to respond to crises is among the main activities which the localisation workstream encompasses (ICVA, 2018, p. 3; Australian Aid, 2016, p. 5). The third area, financing, aims to remove legal and technical barriers to funding and it contributes to pooled funds (Derzsi-Horvath et al., 2017; ICVA, 2018). The most ambitious demand of the localisation agenda is its target to transfer 25% of humanitarian funding to local partners as directly as possible by 2020 (Australian Aid et al., 2016, p. 5). The fourth and last area concerns support and complementation of local and national coordination mechanisms. More importantly, it emphasizes the importance of involving local actors in international mechanisms, like discussion platforms (ICVA, 2018, p. 3).

The four areas are highly interconnected and interdependent and a holistic approach to

localisation is therefore required. This thesis, however, focuses on the interconnections between the partnerships and capacity strengthening areas of the localisation agenda.

2.3. Capacity building

Although there is a general accordance about the need for localisation, international actors did not yet find unanimity on the specifics of how to achieve it (ICVA, 2018, p. 6). What they do agree upon, however, is that strengthening the capacity of local responders is a central element in the localisation process (Australian Aid, 2016, p. 5; Barbelet, 2018, p. 6). Though the concept is widely used in the literature, the exact meaning of the concept lacks clarity (Eade, 1997, p. 2; Petruney et al., 2014, p. 436; Barbelet, 2018, p. 12). Some actors see capacity building as strengthening the organisational capabilities already in place in order to reach their full potential (UNDP, 2009, p. 5). Others see capacity building as a practice which merely focuses on the development of the individual. Some even argue that it is nothing more than a synonym for training (Eade, 2007). Dichter (2014) even argues that capacity building is not the right word, since it implies a lack of capacity and reaffirms the North-South power division. He proposes a more dignified term by using 'capacity development'. Contributing to this lack of clarity is that the capacity building cannot be seen in isolation. It is part of wider dynamics composed of relationships involving governments, private parties and civil society actors (Eade, 1997, p. 21). However, strengthening capacities of local actors often means the improvement of institutional and organisational systems (Potter & Brough, 2004). Institutional development has already been promoted since the end of the 1980s (Postma, 1994, p. 448). Therefore, an institutional development perspective towards capacity building is taken within this research. The following definition of capacity building is therefore used: "*the process by which individuals, groups, organisations, institutions and countries develop, enhance and organize their systems, resources and knowledge, all reflected in their abilities, individually and collectively, to perform function, solve problems and achieve objectives*" (Pouligny, 2009, p. 7).

Organizing a profound way to build the capacities of local partners is among the major challenges that INGOs are currently facing within the realm of humanitarian aid. Capacity building comes in all forms and sizes, depending on the operational context. It can involve capacity of intellectual nature, but also of physical and organisational nature (Barbelet, 2018, p. 8). The literature identifies five phases that are commonly used in processes of capacity building. These include (1) stakeholder engagement and partnership formation; (2) capacity needs assessment; (3) capacity plan design; (4) plan implementation; and (5) evaluation (Petruney et al., 2014, p. 437). Beyond these general steps, capacity building is stimulated via various expressions, determined by the social and organisational context (Eade, 2007, p. 637).

Although recent progressions have been made, capacity building faces criticism from humanitarian actors (Barbelet, 2018). Firstly, controversy evolves regarding strengthening the capacities of local authorities (Barrios, 2018). Localisation does include empowering local authorities. However,

actors working on the local level increasingly see human rights and refugee laws broken by local governments. Moreover, government authorities have different powers and responsibilities and therefore work under a different set of rules and standards. In addition, widespread fraud and corruption problems are the order of the day in many local contexts. This is a root cause for the poverty rates and violent conflicts in these countries. L/NNGOs are embedded in this context and the question is whether capacity building of LNGOs will have any effect when national governments and local authorities are not changed. Secondly, donor requirements are problematic, since the amounts NGOs are expected to spend on a project are too high for the size of the LNGOs (Barrios, 2018). And if LNGOs even could spend these high amounts of money, they would not even have access to institutional donors who provide this money. For these reasons, most LNGOs are currently still dependent on external aid. Thirdly, critics see localisation through capacity building as a *contradictio in terminis* (Barbelet, 2018, p. 5). The idea of capacity building itself reaffirms the power inequality between North and South. Local organizations should be the ones in the lead, but localisation through local capacity building implies a one-sided approach with the INGO in the lead (Barrios, 2018). The capacities of INGOs are never questioned. Why would they be the best actors to do capacity building? In the end, a teacher first has to learn how to teach before he teaches others (Eade, 2007, p. 637). Self-criticism is therefore a key practice for INGOs when trying to build LNGO capacities (Eade, 2007, p. 634). Despite these heavy but fair points of critique, localisation through capacity building is generally still seen as the best way towards a sustainable improvement of humanitarian response.

More dedication to a localized approach is needed from institutional donors, as well as INGOs to strengthen local ownership. Capacity building is central to this process (Barbelet, 2018; Petruney et al., 2014, p. 436). And international actors have to do it. However, problems occur when looking closer to the institutional environment in which this process takes place.

2.4. Project-based partnerships

Two words dominate the current course of action within the realm of humanitarian aid: money and projects. This systemic peculiarity causes that every activity within this realm is expressed and determined by these terms. The largest source of income for INGOs are institutional donors. Based on their priorities and the world's needs, institutional donors set relief and development targets. Subsequently, they make funds available for the achievement of these pre-set targets. INGOs can apply for these funds by writing project proposals to institutional donors (Eade, 1997, p. 17). If the proposal meets the standards and requirements, the organization can qualify for institutional funding. When INGOs cannot or do not want to implement the project themselves, they usually look for a local organization that is qualified enough to do it. For this reason, INGOs have partnered with L/NNGOs only through bilateral partnerships (Barbelet, 2018, p. 12).

2.4.1. Flawed partnerships

The nature of these partnerships, however, is often questionable. The L/NNGOs involved in these project-based partnerships are often used as sub-contractors (IFCR; Government of Switzerland, 2018, p. 1). This indicates that they often cannot make decisions regarding the content, budget and target group of programs. By setting the rules, based on own goals, norms and values, INGOs mostly dictate the partnerships in all of its facets (Elbers & Schulpen, 2012; Hoksbergen, 2005, p. 19; Todd Beer, Bartley, & Roberts, 2012, p. 332). The reason for this is that INGOs are accountable to their donors, who increasingly prioritise value for money (IARAN, 2017, p. 11; van der Haar, Hilhorst, & van Boeckel, 2009, p. 30). INGOs aim to meet the donor requirements, since it allows them to secure themselves of future funding. Moreover, providing high quality services gives INGOs a legitimate base for their existence and growth. After all, the existence of INGOs depends on their ability to attract funds, which, in turn, depends on the organization's results. Besides this skewed nature of partner relationships, the duration of the partnerships is a matter of concern (Eade, 2007, p. 636). Most projects only run for a short period of time. INGOs are therefore incentivised only to partner with LNGOs for as long as the project runs, since there is no funding beyond the project (Hoksbergen, 2005, p. 21).

However, new insights from the field reveal that project-based partnerships between INGOs and LNGOs are least conducive to localisation (CARE et al., 2019a, p. 13). If INGOs really want to commit themselves to localisation through capacity building, they will have to engage with local responders in authentic partnerships (Eade, 2007; CARE et al., 2019a; IFCR; Government of Switzerland, 2018). Many years before the WHS, humanitarian workers already argued for putting partnerships at the centre of organisational culture and practice (Street, 2011; Fowler, 1997). This requires INGOs to shift away from a project oriented way of providing relief and development (Lewis, 1998). A project-based way of working might steer knowledge and skills and provide resources for the short term, but it will not have lasting effects. However, this requires INGOs to fundamentally rethink their organisational structure and strategy (Eade, 2007). They should focus on strengthening capacities of L/NNGOs and other responders. As INGOs have multi-year experience in relief and development, and act as a translator between institutional donors and local responders, they might well be suited for this role. For this purpose, they have to shift towards being a horizontal partner, which teaches and learns at the same time. By engaging with the wider context of social relations in which L/NNGOs are embedded, INGOs can create better insights regarding the capacity building strategy (Eade, 2007, p. 633). In addition, the organizations will have to be mutually accountable to each other by means of feedback and communication mechanisms (Eade, p. 636). Whereas the results of this long-term partnership approach may be disappointing in the first few years it will make local actors more autonomous responders to local crises in the long run (Eade, 1997, p. 4).

2.4.2. Power shift

The project-focused nature of humanitarian action contradicts with the increased call for localisation. Localisation is therefore a *contradictio in terminis* that constitutes a complex problem for governments, UN agencies and NGOs. Localisation touches upon the foundation of the North-South narrative of humanitarian aid relations. "*It therefore requires a shift in power relations between actors, both in terms of strategic decision-making and control of resources*" (de Geoffroy et al., 2017, p. 2). Such a power shift seems far away when looking to the current way of aid service delivery that dominates humanitarian practice. INGOs that are in the lead of humanitarian projects have been reluctant in sharing their space and resources until this point. Additionally, a chronic lack of funding and hesitance of INGOs to fill capacity gaps of LNGOs contributes to the inability of LNGOs to take a leading role in humanitarian response (Barbelet, 2018, p. 5). INGOs are thus still using these sub-contracting practices, in order to comply with donor requirements for short term results (IFCR; Government of Switzerland, 2018, p. 1). Seen from this viewpoint, institutional donors contribute to the problem, because they increasingly call for value-for-money.

Authentic partnerships have the potential to contribute to a power shift by means of their collaborative nature. In order to examine this potential, authentic partnerships should first be theoretically approached. The next chapter extensively theorizes how authentic partnerships can lead to change on partnership level as well as on societal level.

3. Theorizing authentic partnerships

In this chapter, the problem of the project-based domination of humanitarian practice will be theoretically approached by taking a collaborative rationality perspective, as put forward by Innes & Booher (2010). It builds on Habermas' work on communicative rationality (1981) which is grounded in planning theory. Firstly, the relation between capacity building and authentic partnerships will be examined more in-depth. Secondly, the theory of collaborative rationality and connected literature will be discussed. This will be showed as an alternative to the rational-technical approach to problem solving. Finally, I argue how collaborative rationality can help to approach the central problem of this thesis.

3.1. Capacity building and authentic partnerships

During the 1980s, INGOs became increasingly frustrated by the disappointing results of relief and development practices. Working relationships with government agencies were often laborious and effects of projects were found non-sustainable after a few years of phase-out (Postma, 1994, p. 448). In the two decades that followed, the perspective on development gradually changed from a focus on physical welfare to increased attention for local ownership and participation (Petruney, 2014, p. 436). In addition, a greater awareness of the multi-level nature of development, involving individual, community, national and international levels, led to a more holistic approach towards development (Todd Beer, Bartley, & Roberts, 2012, p. 331).

3.1.1. Strengthening civil society through social capital

Thorough research concerning international development led to the conclusion that a vibrant civil society is one of the cornerstones of human development (Hoksbergen, 2005, p. 17). Civil society can be seen as "*a set of people's organisations that are neither managed by the government nor oriented towards profit*" (Fowler, 1997, p. 8). A more functional perspective towards civil society is given by Ewert (2002, p. 106), who defines civil society as "*citizens [working] in concert with one another to promote their interests, to participate in the life of the nation, to hold power accountable, to work for change in a manner respectful of others and of the rights of others*." On the one hand, these complementary definitions show that civil society is nurtured by the grassroots and is able to develop the local context. On the other hand, they show that civil society is a platform for national organizations to organize, to speak up and to hold governments to account (Hoksbergen, 2005, p. 17). In short, a strong civil society allows for sustainable human and organisational development. Strengthening civil society therefore became the centerpiece of development thinking at the turn of the century.

Central to the process of strenthening the capacity of civil society is the notion of social capital (Fowler, 1998, p. 6; Putnam, 1993). A wide academic literature on social capital presents different defining elements of the concept (Serageldin, 1996, p. 196). A general definition of social capital is

provided by Fowler (1998, p. 6): "*the sum of trusted, reciprocal relationships between citizens and their associations at all levels of politics and economy*". It is the whole of individual, community and associative relations that binds society together. The origin of the concept, however, goes back two decades before Fowler. Pierre Bourdieu, a sociologist well-known for his works on societal power dynamics and his initiation of the concept of 'habitus', already published academic work on social capital in 1980. Social capital is defined by him as "*all current or potential resources that are related to the possession of a sustainable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual knowledge and interrecognition; or, in other words, membership in a group, as a set of agents who are not only with common properties ... but are also united by permanent and useful links*" (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 2). This conception does not include the importance of trust, which is common in most definitions of social capital. Instead, it really focuses on the management of resources and conflicts. It can therefore be said that it is rooted in sociology of conflict and structuralist tradition (Siisiäinen, 2000, p. 9).

Another pioneer in social capital, Robert Putnam (1993), takes a perspective towards the concept that is rooted in the sociology of integration and functionalism (Siisiäinen, 2000, p. 9). Putnam sees social capital as "*features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions*" (Putnam, 1993, p. 167). His interpretation of social capital rest on three components, which include moral obligations and norms, social values and social networks (Siisiäinen, 2000, p. 1). These three predominantly take the form of reciprocity, trust and co-operation. The central idea Putnam (1993) puts forward in his work on civic traditions in modern Italy is that civic engagement through highly developed social networks produces the capacity for putting these components into practice. This 'social capital', in turn, shapes society and steers its democratic quality (Lowndes, 2001, p. 629). Through social capital, civil society is better equipped to control the state and the market in all of its facets (Fowler, 1998, p. 6; Todd Beer, Bartley, & Roberts, 2012, p. 329). Through continuing interaction between individuals and associations, civil society reinforces itself in a virtuous circle of trust and reciprocity (Putnam, 1993, p. 117). Although Putnam is critisized for his inadequate specification of causal mechanisms and his seemingly negligent attitude towards the role of state agency, he does provide an account of the processes that link the dots to a plausible theory (Lowndes, 2001, p. 3). Moreover, contrary to Bourdieu (1980), Putnam does emphasize the importance of trust in social interrelations (Lowndes, 2001; Putnam, 1993; Siisiäinen, 2000). Since mutual trust is a vital element in building long term relationships for organisational and societal change, this thesis adopts Putnam's view on social capital as a theoretical starting point.

3.1.2. Barriers to equitable partnerships

Research points out that building the institutional capacities of L/NNGOs can increase civil society's potential to steer democracy and social change (Hoksbergen, 2005, p. 26; Lewis, 1998; Postma, 1994; Suárez & Marshall, 2014, p. 194). Good interrelationsships between national and international INGOs are crucial in stimulating social capital within local societies (Fowler, 1998, p. 6). Partnerships with

L/NNGOs have become the vehicle to build the capacities of L/NNGOs. Today, partnership is still an indispensible term in the development vocubulary (Lewis, 1998; Postma, 1994). These partnerships should be characterized by mutual trust, respect and exchange of knowledge. However, until now INGOs did not achieve to build equitable relationships with fellow organizations. Instead, most partnerships involve a paternalistic INGO which only uses a LNGO for public goods and service delivery (Hoksbergen, 2005, p. 19; Lewis, 1998; Postma, 1994). Implementing projects through contracts with L/NNGOs is an efficient way of working for INGOs, since the costs are lower and L/NNGOs provide local knowledge. Moreover, research shows that INGOs only select partners that are capable of achieving the results that are required by the donor (Lister, 2000). This does not mean that INGOs do not build the capacity of their partners at all. INGOs do transfer operational techniques related the delivery of programmes and projects. However, values conducive to social capital and civil society strenghtening are addressed to a much lesser extent. As a consequence, L/NNGOs are not able to fully embed themselves in society by means of social relations (Hoksbergen, 2005, p. 19).

What factors account for the unequal nature of these partnerships? Fowler (1998) identifies a number of causes responsible for this power imbalance. Firstly, INGOs are not aware of the incomparability between the language and ideas used to determine the objectives and direction of partnerships. Secondly, INGOs behave in a paternalistic way, due to the fact that they decide over the money, and overestimate the value of northern development and policy approaches (Lewis, 1998, p. 505; Fowler, 1998, p. 19). Thirdly, INGOs are anxious about the loss of control and the uncertainty about their role, which is inherent to equal partnerships. Fourthly, there is insufficient public pressure on INGOs from the south to demonstrate their legitimacy through performance. These four factors show how INGOs contribute to the power imbalance within partnerships.

Other factors relate to L/NNGOs. Firstly, L/NNGOs often assume that showing solidarity is equal to effective aid, which is not the case. Additionally, they have organisational weaknesses which disable them to grow towards a healthy, well-performing organization. Secondly. single or double-loop learning is scarcely applied in L/NNGOs, which does not improve their practices. Finally, L/NNGOs are insufficiently incentivised to mobilize resources within their local context in order to diversify their sources of income (Fowler, 1998, p. 4).

The last and most important set of factors Fowler identifies relates to the interaction between INGOs and L/NNGOs. Firstly, INGOs usually have a knowledge advantage over their Southern counterparts and are also less transparent. Secondly, there is no pre-set stage for dialogue between the two parties. Additionally, interaction is further discontinued by INGOs using their power as gatekeepers in conversations. Another factor which hinders open dialogue is the parent-child relation that comes from the resource dependence of L/NNGOs on INGOs. Finally, insufficient attention is given to partner assessments, which sometimes leads to an early termination of the contract (Fowler, 1998, p. 5).

3.2. Collaborative rationality

The problem described above will be discussed in this section by taking a collaborative rationality approach. Attempts have been made to deal with the increasingly difficult and complex administrative problems in the course of the 1980s. The practices of New Public Management, which were increasingly receiving attention at that time, were partly constructed for this purpose. Soon became clear that such a rational-technical approach to decision-making did not fit as a measure to deal with complex problems (Head & Alford, 2013, pp. 719-720). As Suárez and Marshall (2014) note, "*many management practices are 'rationalized myths' that provide legitimacy for organizations without necessarily improving their ability to achieve mission*". Other measures than the traditional linear model of problem solving should therefore be used to approach complex problems (Conklin, 2006). Among the widely recommended strategies to deal with these, the importance of collaboration is particularly emphasized (Daviter, 2017, p. 574; Head, 2008, p. 114; Head & Alford, 2013). Innes & Booher (2010) present an alternative rationality to the rational-technical, or linear, way of problem solving. This alternative is based on practices of collaboration for the purpose of public services.

3.2.1. The foundation of collaborative rationality

As globalization and distrust in politics and governments have increased, so has the voice of the public (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 4). Besides that, governmental leaders represent more people from different backgrounds, cultures, norms, values and desires (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 197). More frequently, governments and NGOs try to bring these voices together in dialogues. Several trends enable this alternative practice. More socially constructed ways of problem-solving are being used as an alternative to technical "expertise-led" ways of working. Besides that, the recognition that scientific knowledge is socially constructed creates space for the adoption of other knowledge appropriate for public policy, such as local knowledge or tacit knowledge (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 5; Polanyi, 1958). Even so, dominant forms of reasoning fade and are gradually replaced by others (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 6). Storytelling, for example, is such a new form of reasoning and provides an equal playground for mutual understanding (Innes & Booher, 2016, p. 9). Collaborative rationality builds on these trends and promotes dialogue between different players, based on multi-faceted information (Innes & Booher, 2010). A brief explanation of the underlying theories is needed in order to explain the theory of collaborative rationality more in-depth.

The foundation of collaborative rationality theory is in Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative rationality (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 24). While developing the theory, Habermas relied on works of the early American pragmatists, like John Dewey (Evans, 2000). Habermas' approach is particularly rooted in Dewey's notion of community inquiry. Gaining new insights can essentially be achieved through experience and eduction in reflective community inquiries. Since collaborative dialogues are a form of a community of inquiry, this should not be ignored (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 26). As a critical theorist of the Frankfurt School of thought, Habermas challenged positivist and

interpretative ways of thinking about reality. This emancipatory approach was steered by dialectical processes, which allowed scholars to view the whole of society from multiple sides, acknowledging that reality is continually transforming under the influence of socially constructed, "tacit" understandings (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 23). In his theory of communicative rationality, Habermas adopts a different view on rationality than the positivist epistemology. According to Habermas, communicative processes can be said to be rational under particular conditions. These conditions include diversity of interests, several speech conditions (comprehensibility, trueness, decent use of logic and evidence, sincereness and legitimacy), mutual understanding, equal treatment and scrutiny regarding others' statements and arguments. Note that these conditions are ideal-typical and can therefore not be fully achieved in practice (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 24).

The theory of collaborative rationality treats collaborative processes as complex adaptive systems, as put forward in complexity theory (Innes & Booher, pp. 33-34; Schneider, 2012). As Schneider (2012, p. 139) puts forward, "*complex systems are "systems of systems", in which micro-level processes are nested in meso and macro levels, and macrostructures "emerge" from micro and meso dynamics*." In addition, social processes cannot be reduced to a few logics, since they are defined by a multiplicity of factors and dynamics (Schneider, 2012, p. 139). Complex adapting systems in the context of collaborative rationality means that collaborative processes are not static, but constantly adapting and evolving (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 35).

3.2.2. Authentic dialogue

Collaborative rationality aims to put dialogue at the center of problem-solving. The agents participating in dialogues could be individuals, as well as organizations, governments or larger parts of society (Schneider, 2012). In order for dialogues to be effective, three conditions have to be met. Firstly, the interests of the participants are fully diverse (D). This refers to the wide variety of actors included in the

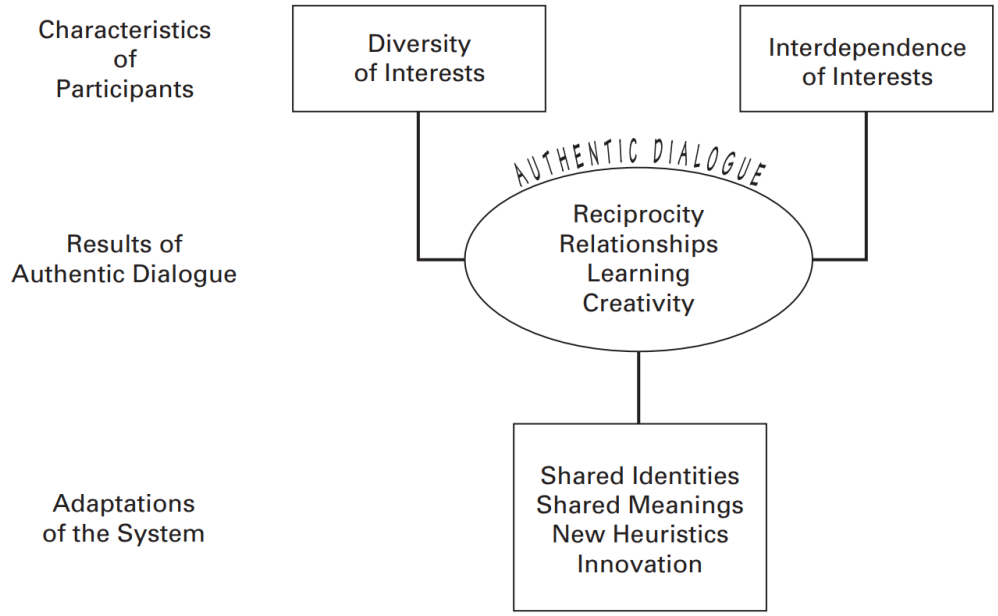

Figure 1: The DIAD model (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 35)

collaborative process. In other words, power holders as well as local, relatively powerless actors should be included. This captures the full bandwith of knowledge, expertise and experiences to draw from during the learning process. Secondly, the participants rely on each other for meeting each others interests. This interdependence (I) creates an incentive for participants to continue deliberations in order to reach an agreement. Not engaging or quitting to engage in authentic dialogues would be disadvantageous. Thirdly, the speech conditions, as described by Habermas, should be met for an authentic face-to-face dialogue between the participants (AD). Actors should gather around a specific task, which simultaneously connects and distances them. These conditions are captured in the DIAD model, which is shown in figure 1 (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 36).

Authentic dialogues held under these conditions allow for several outcomes that are conducive to public problem solving. Firstly, participants learn from each other's visions and reflect on their own ones. During this process, the stakeholders discover that their interests can merely be met by means of meeting the interests of their competitors. Competitors, in fact, suddenly become allies in joint efforts to reach mutually beneficial strategies and outcomes (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 37). Secondly, the increased capability of stakeholders to look at the case from the eyes of their fellow participants creates mutual understanding of each other's standpoints. This, in turn, allows for newly found or redirected relationships (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 37). Thirdly, authentic dialogues steer processes of single- as well as double-loop learning (Argyris & Schon, 1974; Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 37). Put differently, stakeholders do not only question whether they do things right, but also whether they do the right things. This provides new perspectives on the participant's interests. The last, and potentially most striking outcome is that the holistic approach taken by collaborative rationality can result in an overflow to the societal system at large. In other words, shared identity can offer new paths to collectively develop new heuristics in order to construct solution-oriented actor networks (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 38). This contributes to the resilience of communities (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 10). All in all, existing knowledge can be of significant value for public action if it is comprehensively interpreted through inclusive dialogue (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 138).

3.2.3. The DIAD model contested

The DIAD model gives a clear understanding of the potential outcomes of authentic dialogues. It also provides insight into the ways in which this collaborative rationality contributes to complex problem solving. The experience of collaborative ways of working can significantly change an agent's perspective on what the problem is and what should be the next step to improve the situation. It can make agents realize that they should work in entirely different ways than they did until this point. Besides that, the dynamics described by the DIAD model may contribute to adaptations in the system, which steer interactive resolution-seeking (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 37).

Despite these clear advantages of the DIAD model, gaps remain regarding the question of how this process of authentic dialogue exactly unfolds. The model poses that participants' diversity of

interests and interdependence of interests leads them automatically to a dialogue. However, several barriers might block the possibilities for dialogue. Stakeholders, for example, might have objections to come to the table for a comprehensive dialogue with other parties involved in the problem. Those agents might argue that it is too risky and unrealistic to play open cards with competitors (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 36). In the same way, facilitators could motivate stakeholders to come to the table and present their own views. For instance, they realize that they need the other stakeholder to reach their objectives. The same lack of elucidation can be observed in the relation between the results of authentic dialogue and adaptations of the system. The model thus not expands on the causal mechanisms that are below the surface of the relationships between the participants, authentic dialogue and adaptations of the system. The coming section will go into the black box of causation in order to shed light on these hidden causal mechanisms.

3.2.4. The DIAD model expanded

Despite its improving potential, collaborative rationality is not simple to put into practice. Incentives to collaborate might be insufficient or radical asymmetric power structures might block authentic dialogue. What contributes to the decision of agents to engage in authentic dialogue?

There are three general aspects that stakeholders depend on in their decision to come to the table. The first concerns the level of conflict between two agents. Conflict arises from the combination of diversity of interests as well as interdependence of interests. Agents involved in public service problems usually have a specific task to fulfil, in which they need the knowledge and expertise of other stakeholders. When agents have competing understandings, but also rely on each other in terms of resources, conflicts may arise (Fowler, 1998, p. 146). The extent to which the interests of agents differ and the extent to which they rely on each other determines their course of action. In addition, negative or positive past experiences with the fellow agent nurture the level of conflict. The level of conflict produces an initial trust level between the two agents (Ansell & Gash, 2008, p. 550). Mutual trust in each other's intentions and capabilities works as an incentive to collaborate. Besides a steering factor to get stakeholders to the table, trust is also reinforced by authentic dialogue. It is therefore considered as a factor that is required as well as reinforced by authentic dialogue. Trust lays the foundation for dialogues that have the potential to increase the level of collaboration (Fowler, 1998, p. 143).

The second aspect that informs an agent's decision to participate in authentic dialogue is the level of power asymmetry (Ansell & Gash, 2008, p. 550; Alan, 2000, p. 5). This aspect can take multiple forms, but most relate to an imbalance of resources or knowledge. Considerable gaps in resources or knowledge between two parties create serious power imbalances. This results in one agent being more informed and capacitated to act. Besides that, differences in organisational transparency can be a factor that might nurture this imbalance (Fowler, 1998, p. 142). When an agent has a power advantage over another, its comparative incentive to engage in authentic dialogue will be higher. In a case of power imbalance, the relationship between two agents will be manipulated by the strongest (Ansell & Gash,

2008, p. 551).

These two aspects explain the upper half of the DIAD model. The lower half of the model, however, requires a closer look as well. In other words, how does authentic dialogue lead to adaptations in the system as a whole? The answer lies in Putnam's conceptualisation of social capital (Putnam,

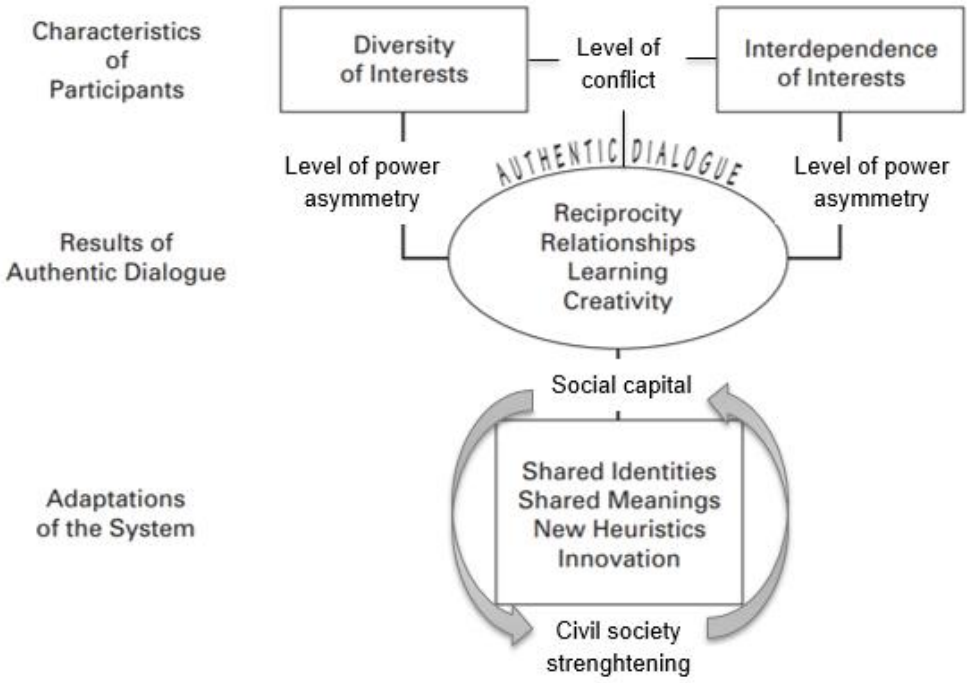

Figure 2: the DIAD model expanded (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 35)

1993). As agents engage in authentic dialogue, they embark on a shared task in order to solve a public problem. In order to do this, they commit themselves to moral obligations and norms, share social values and connect different social networks. They discover the richness of their partners' viewpoints, as well as the opportunities this brings. Additionally, agents find that their interests can best be met by using the qualities of their partners (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 37). In practice, this results in a relationship characterized by reciprocity, trust and co-operation. The latter three aspects are central to the development of social capital (Siisiäinen, 2000, p. 1). Through social capital, individuals and organizations can create shared meanings about the contentious issues of society. They are increasingly able to hold governments to account by means of a unified voice. Innovative approaches in a manner that is respectful to others can be adopted. In short, they can participate in society under a shared identity which promotes their interests (Ewert, 2002; Innes & Booher, 2010). This leads to the conclusion that authentic dialogue can steer social capital and, consequently, strenghten civil society.

The next section aims to give a characterization of 'authentic partnerships'. Following to that, an explanation of the challenges to establishing authentic partnerships will be provided.

3.3. Collaboratively rational partnerships

As earlier discussed, a multiplicity of factors contribute to the inequality of partnership relations. Despite this, these relations are still called 'partnerships'. According to Fowler (1998, p. 137), the use of the

word 'partnership' is therefore "*old wine in relabeled bottles*". The term should be urgently revised in order to bring back real meaning to the concept. He therefore proposes to use 'authentic partnerships' instead. The meaning of authentic partnerships is further elaborated upon below.

3.3.1. 'Authentic partnerships' and its challenges

Authentic partnerships aim for a more structural approach to partnering with L/NNGOs in order to bring institutional change. It promotes dialogue, steers social capital and therefore strengthens participatory potential in civil society (Fowler, 1998, p. 143). Box 2 shows how these partnerships are characterized. Contrary to project-based partnerships, it is of great importance that such partnerships sustain over a long period of time. A long term commitment to capacity building allows for sustainable social change.

BOX 2: Authentic partnerships characteristics

Authentic partnerships have:

- common vision, sense of purpose, and clearly articulated goals;
- complementary strengths;
- a sense of equality in the relationship (in size and character of the organisation and also in how people are treated and whose voices count);
- autonomous, self-standing organisations;
- shared responsibility and clear understanding of roles;
- mutual accountability;
- joint decision making;
- a strong, compatible working relationship;
- open and transparent communication;
- a constructive method of resolving conflicts and disagreements;
- willingness to compromise;
- a practice of listening to and learning from each other;
- a common understanding about the future of the partnership.

Hoksbergen, 2005, pp. 19-20

However, the idea of authentic partnerships is rather ideal-typical than realistic (Brinkerhoff, 2003, p. 107; Fowler, 1998). Hoksbergen (2005), who did a case study on building civil society through partnerships, distinguishes three broad areas of practices which make it extremely difficult to establish authentic partnerships between INGOs and L/NNGOs. The first and most striking problem is that funding comes from the global North, which gives power into the hands of institutional donors and INGOs (van der Haar, Hilhorst, & van Boeckel, 2009, p. 75). Indeed, "he who pays the piper, calls the tune." This leaves L/NNGOs with no choice but to sing along with the tunes of the North by means of contract-based public service delivery. Institutional donors generally set the objectives for local development themselves, instead of the people who receive the funding. Moreover, INGOs set specific performance indicators in order to show their impact to the ones who secure their funding (Hoksbergen, 2005, p. 20). This systemic problem has already been discussed in the introductory chapter.

The second area Hoksbergen (2005, p. 21) identifies is the Southern focus of capacity building. The target group of capacity building activities usually concerns local organizations. The problem is that capacity building undermines a mutual relation of learning and exchange of resources. It rather involves a one-way transfer of knowledge and expertise from the INGO to the local organization. Additionally, INGOs build the capacity of local organizations according to their own standards and experiences, leaving little room for local embeddedness of these practices. Since INGOs aim for the well performed implementation of projects, training and other forms of capacity building are required when local

organizations accept INGO funds. In that way, INGOs can safeguard the efficient and effective spending of their funds. Among the most common organisational capacity building practices is the establishment of a good financial system and good proposal writing.

The early termination of a partnership is another frequently noticed problem when it comes to capacity building (Eade, 2007, p. 636; Hoksbergen, 2005, p. 25). Phasing out of a partnership is detrimental to the local development process, since the partnership is, besides a means, also an end to sustainable development. Besides that, authentic partnerships take a lot of effort and resources to build. It would therefore make little sense to phase out of the partnership, leaving all potential for social capital increasement unused. Once a particular system is put in place and local staff has been trained to manage the system well, INGOs phase out under the (frequently incorrect) assumption that the organization is capable enough to function autonomously. In other words, just when the local organization has gained an equal level of capacity which would enable a more authentic relationship, the INGO stops the collaboration (Hoksbergen, 2005, p. 21). A relatively short-term strenghtening of organisational capacities enables to observe results on institutional reforms, but not on the deeper patterns of culture and social structure (Putnam, 1993, p. 185). As Putnam (1993, p. 185) rightly states: "*Those concerned with democracy and development in the South should be building a more civic community, but they should lift their sights beyond instant results*".

The third area is the issue of legitimate advocacy. Civil society, as mirrored by the definition provided earlier, clearly has an advocacy function. When an INGO partners with a L/NNGO, whose interests are being represented: the interests of the Northern constituency or the ones of the Southern beneficiaries? The INGO might decide to voice its own interests as well as that of the partners. And the other way around, the L/NNGO might adapt its interests to that of the INGO, on which it relies. This further complicates efforts towards authentic partnerships (Hoksbergen, 2005, p. 22).

These systemic peculiarities are structurally preventing INGOs to cooperate with L/NNGOs in a way that is conducive to social capital and, subsequently, to building a strong civil society. The coming section aims to place the characterization of authentic partnerships and its connected challenges in the DIAD model of collaborative rationality.

3.3.2. The 'authentic partnership' model

Agents which engage in authentic dialogue not merely represent individuals, but also organizations, governments and larger segments of society (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 35; Schneider, 2012, p. 135). For the purpose of aid services, organizations often need to cooperate to be effective. The DIAD model is in this thesis therefore viewed as portraying a way to bring NGOs together for the purpose of providing effective and efficient relief or development services.

As put forward in the DIAD model, authentic dialogue can take place under the three conditions of 'diversity of interests', 'interdependence of interests' and Habermas' speech conditions (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 37). Based on additional literature, 'the level of conflict' and the connected level of

initial trust and the 'power asymmetry' in terms of resources and knowledge were identified as factors that inform agents' decisions to engage in authentic dialogue. Also, social capital was identified as a result of authentic dialogue and a steering factor for strengthening civil society. Authentic partnerships almost perfectly meet the conditions for authentic dialogue. This reflection of authentic partnerships in authentic dialogue requires a comparison based on the authentic dialogue conditions.

Firstly, the condition of diversity of interests is clearly mirrored in authentic partnerships. INGOs are mainly accountable to institutional donors, since that is where their money comes from (van der Haar, Hilhorst, & van Boeckel, 2009, p. 30; Eade, 2007, p. 630). Their programs are therefore directed towards the requirements that donors set and are generally oriented to short-term results. On the contrary, local organizations want to see change embedded in the local system, which requires a longer-term commitment to development (Hoksbergen, 2005, p. 25). In fact, due to their duty to be accountable to donors, INGOs also have an interest in partnering with local organizations that are sufficiently qualified. Scandals as a result of bad management on the part of the local organization might be detrimental to the face of the INGO. Local organizations, however, are generally not directly accountable to institutional donors (van der Haar, Hilhorst, & van Boeckel, 2009, p. 74). Therefore, INGOs have a low incentive to partner with undercapacitated local organizations. The local organizations, in turn, have a high incentive to partner with INGOs, since their very existence relies on funds from INGOs. In the case of already existing partnerships, INGOs have a tendency to phase out when goals are met and capacities are built. However, local organizations value a longer term commitment, since the partnership is more broadly seen as part of building a vibrant society (Hoksbergen, 2005, p. 25).

Secondly, the condition of interdependence of interests is present in authentic partnerships. As mentioned above, local organizations are dependent on money from the North (van der Haar, Hilhorst, & van Boeckel, 2009, p. 75). INGOs, in turn, need these LNGOs to partner with, since localisation is increasingly set as an important requirement by institutional donors (HLP, 2016, p. 19; Australian Aid, 2016, p. 5). INGOs are also dependent on LNGOs, since they possess valuable expertise and knowledge on local culture and government structures. Moreover, in many cases INGOs might not even have access to the target area without their local counterparts. A lack of capacity and relevant knowledge is another aspect for local organizations' dependence on INGOs. Namely, Northern INGOs are often not only relief or development organizations, but also centres for research and innovation. For the purpose of advocacy, local organizations also need the expertise of INGOs, because the latter give them access to money from the North (Hoksbergen, 2005, p. 18). This can also apply for the reverse.

Thirdly, the authentic partnership characteristics in box 2 strongly reflect the four key results of the DIAD model. Reciprocity is, for instance, mirrored by shared responsibility, mutual accountability and willingness to compromise. Relationships is reflected in a strong working relationship and open and transparent communication and joint decision-making. Learning happens through a practice of listening and learning from each other and a constructive method of resolving disagreements. This, in turn, can

stimulate processes of innovation.

In addition to the strong interrelationships with authentic dialogue, authentic partnerships also meet the conditions for communicative rationality as formulated by Habermas (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 24). Besides 'diversity of interests', these include 'mutual understanding', 'equal treatment' and scrutiny regarding others' statements and arguments'. Agents in authentic partnerships aim to create mutual understanding by formulating a common vision, by creating a sense of purpose and to set clear common goals. They also focus on the longer term by creating a common understanding about the future of the partnership (Hoksbergen, 2005, pp. 19-20). Equal treatment is reflected by a sense of equality and

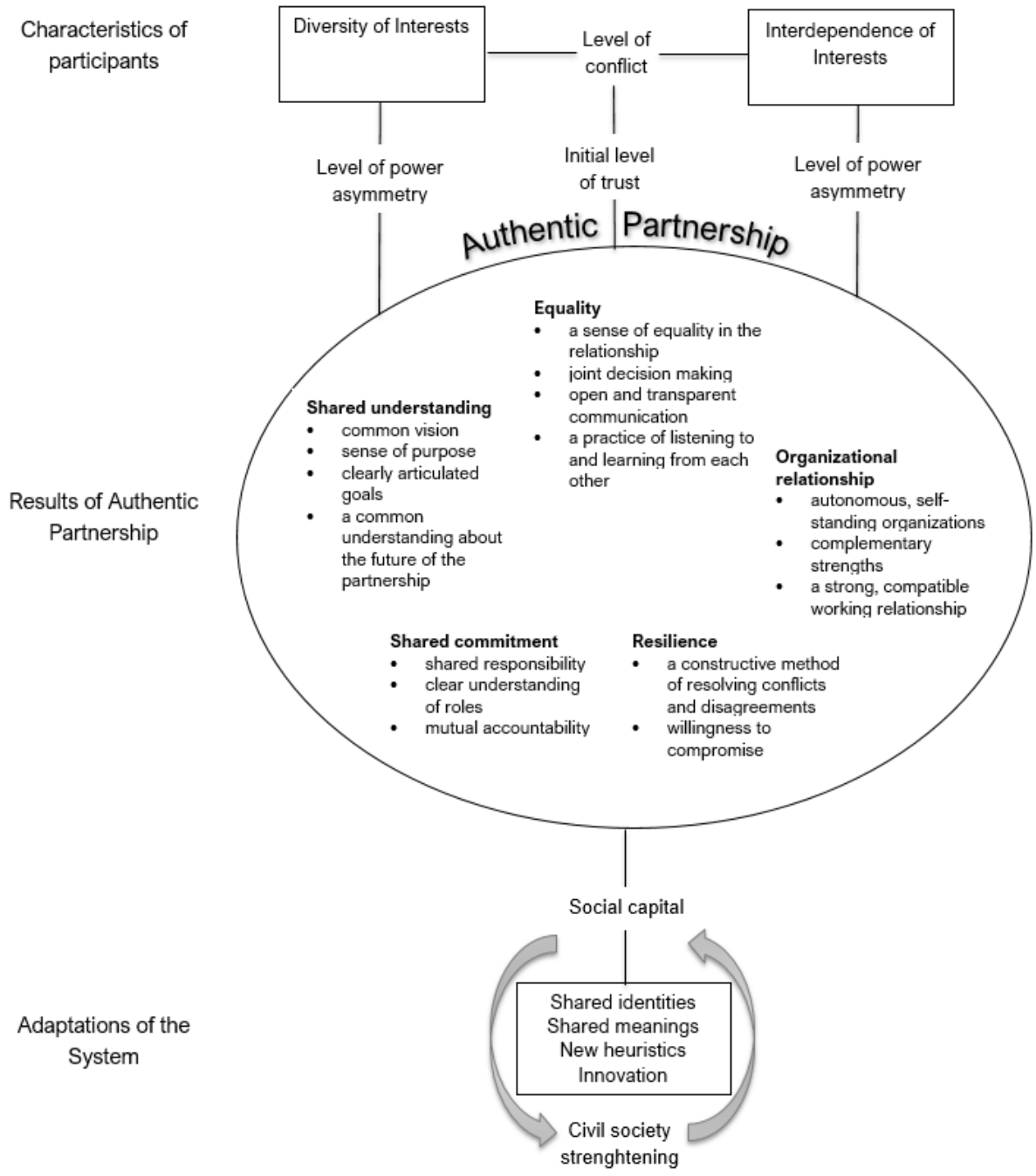

Figure 3: Authentic partnership model

by jointly making decision within the partnership. Open and transparent communication and an ambiance in which mutual learning can take place contribute to an equal relationship as well (Hoksbergen, 2005, pp. 19-20). Partners scrutinize each other's statements and argument by means of a system of mutual accountability (Hoksbergen, 2005, pp. 19-20). These aspects all contribute to a relationship in which partners are equal. Because of these characteristics, it can be said that authentic partnerships are collaboratively rational.

Collaborative practices within the relief and development sector should be held against the light of the authentic partnership model in order to observe how humanitarian agents try to build successful authentic partnerships. The question is, as Susskind (2010, p. 370) nicely puts, "*are they really committed to collaborative rationality, or are they just instrumental rationalists hiding behind a mask of collaboration?*"

In short, the authentic partnership model clearly mirrors the way in which authentic dialogue can take place on a partnership level. The next section focuses on how the authentic partnership results can be viewed in relation to each other.

3.4. A conceptual framework for authentic partnerships

This study searches for successful authentic partnerships in order for local capacities to be built sustainably. The dependent variable for this research is therefore formulated as 'sustainable capacity building'. The first independent variable concerns the level of diversity of interest between INGOs and L/NNGOs. The exptectation is that interests become more aligned as NGOs engage more in authentic partnerships together. The second independent variable is the level of interdependence of interests between INGOs and L/NNGOs. For this variable, it is expected that the interests of partners become less interdependent as they engage in authentic partnerships.

The authentic partnership characteristics as presented by Hoksbergen (2005, pp. 19-20), which are shown in box 2, behave as intervening variables. In other words, they affect the level of diversity of interests and the level of interdependence of interests. The intervening variables are categorized according to their interrelationships. These categories include 'shared understanding', 'shared commitment', 'equality', 'organizational relationship' and 'resilience'. Figure 6 puts these variables in perspective by showing how they relate to each other. Two self-standing organizations can decide to engage in authentic partnership because of the complementarity of their comparative strenghts. This results in strong and compatible working relationship. A shared understanding of the partnership, based on common norms and values, steers the relation towards commonly formulated goals. The existence of these goals imply shared commitment and responsibility for the targets set. The mutual accountability attached to this shared responsibility leads to a more equal partnership relation, which gives room to listen to and learn from each other in an open way. This practice allows for the development of a willingness to compromise. As a result, the partnership is resilient enough to withstand external pressures and to solve internal conflicts and disagreements. Finally, a strong partnership that can resolve

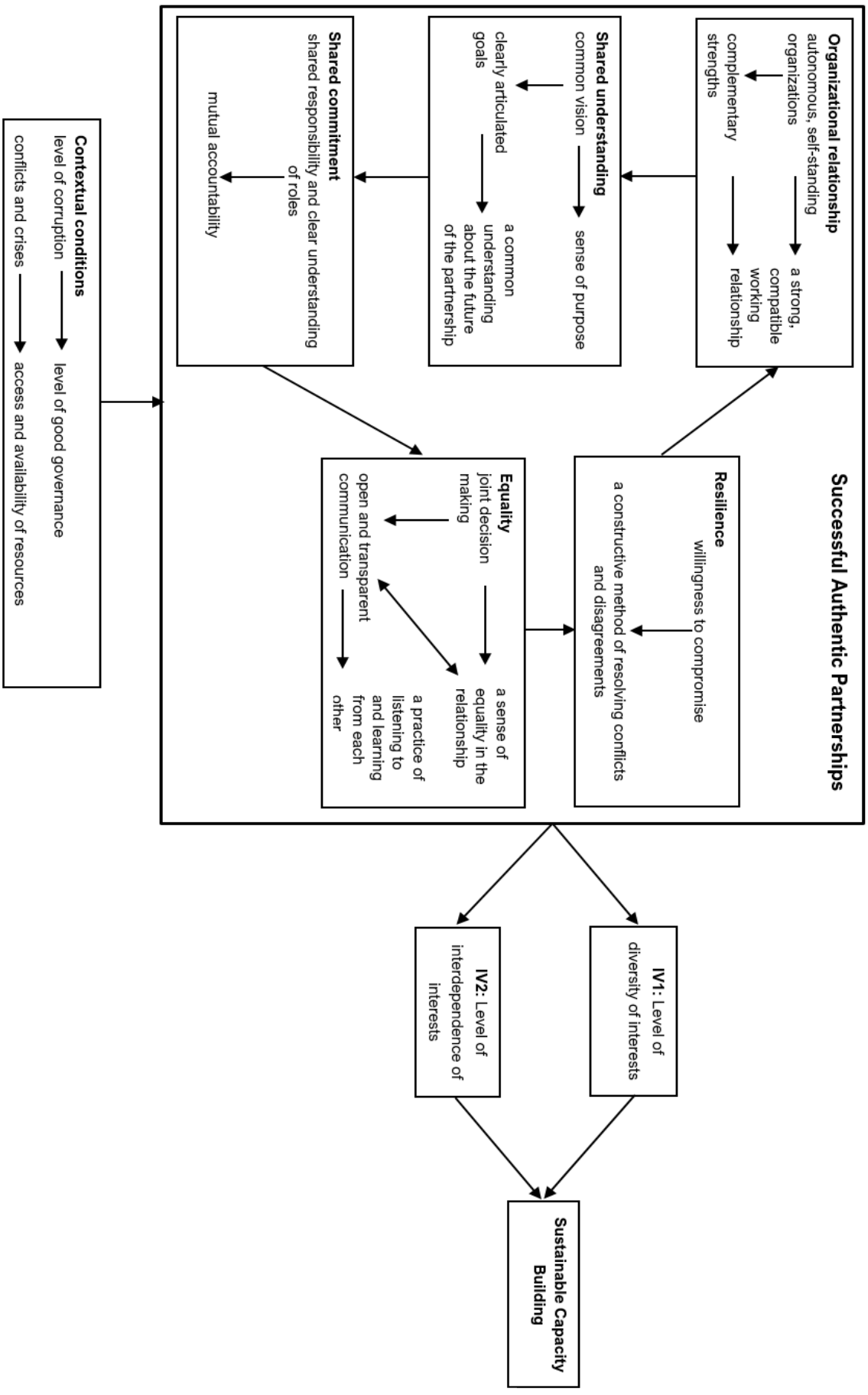

Figure 4: conceptual framework for authentic partnerships

conflicts and disagreements nurtures a strong and compatible working relationship.

Besides the authentic partnership characteristics, the success of authentic partnerships is determined by contextual factors. Two particularly influence these NGOs in their efforts to build long lasting partnerships. Firstly, fraud and corruption is still a major barrier for institutional donors and INGOs to engage with local partners (Hoksbergen, 2005, p. 20; Mawdsley, Townsend, & Porter, 2005, p. 80). When partnering directly with a L/NNGO which has no good governance policy, donors might run the risk of losing money. This, together with the existing hierarchical accountability structure, forms a disincentive for donors and INGOs to partner with insufficiently transparent NGOs. For this reason, many INGOs have adopted a strategy to stimulate good governance in developing countries (Frewer, 2013; Lee, 2016). This has led them to new insights into the reasons behind the presence or absence of good governance. Research shows that metropolitan NGOs which engage in advocacy are most likely to have written policies on good governance (Lee, 2016, p. 105). This is mostly due to their relations with governments which forces them to be transparent and accountable. In contrast, NGOs which do not have these policies lack the financial and human resources to work on good governance (Lee, 2016, p. 102).

Secondly, the history of the region and the crisis-level affects the success of authentic partnerships (van der Haar, Hilhorst, & van Boeckel, 2009, p. 77). The conditions in the crisis region determine the needs of the victims, but also the shape and direction of the partnerships. Especially in relief contexts, capacity building in long-term committed collaborations is often beyond the scope of reality. Crisis environments create problems regarding access to the region and sufficient human and financial resources. Additionally, within specific regions the difference in political positions could form a barrier to building authentic partnerships (van der Haar, Hilhorst, & van Boeckel, 2009, p. 77). The latter mainly applies to cases in the Middle-East.

As figure 4 shows, the partnership characteristics are related to each other in various ways. The way in which these intervening variables are measured is important for the validity of the research findings. This is elaborated upon in the next chapter.

4. Methodology

This chapter presents the methodological approach that is selected in order to gather and analyze relevant data for this research. The research stages will be addressed consecutively. The chapter starts off with a brief explanation on the research design. Then the data collection phase is extensively described. The choices regarding the data collection methods are subsequently explained. Thereafter, the limitations to the research design and methods are discussed. Finally, this chapter elaborates on the method for data analysis.

4.1. Operationalizing authentic partnership characteristics

A proper operationalization of the main variables in this thesis is needed to guide the research process. The intervening variables are operationalized by multiple indicators, which measure the extent to which the authentic partnership characteristics apply to the cases (see annex I). Indicators for *organizational relationship* predominantly focus on the autonomy of organizations relative to their partners, like their reliance on own constituency or the number of own projects (Fowler, 1998, p. 146). Remaining indicators for these variables concern the mutual acknowledgement of organization-specific strengths, like inclusion of competencies and comparative advantages in the division of roles (Fowler, 1998, p. 146). The extent to which partnerships have a *shared understanding* is determined by the inclusion of these in written documents or agreements. The partnership agreement will specifically be of main interest for these variables. Besides that, the beliefs, values and principles in which the partnerships are grounded are examined (Fowler, 1998, p. 146). These include for example the humanitarian principles or the code of conduct of the ICRC. The *shared commitment* variables which relate to roles, responsibilities and accountability are mainly measured through written sources which contain specific arrangements. These concern the acceptance of joint responsibilities, clarity on roles and obligations and the extent to which one organization has the lead in partnership practices. Additionally, standards of accountability and the existence of a good monitoring and evaluation system are included in the set of indicators (Fowler, 1998, p. 146). The variables relating to *equality* are measured by a number of organizational attributes, like the difference in total funding and staff, and the number of same sectors of operations. Technical differences are also included, like the difference in organizational capabilities (Fowler, 1998, p. 146). Additionally, indicators that account for the sense of equality in communication are used, like the existence of documented equal rights and distribution of authority (Fowler, 1998, p. 146). The number of face-to-face meetings in one month is also included as an indicator, since personal contact stimulates effective partnership (Mawdsley, Townsend, & Porter, 2005). The last indicators for equality concern issues of mutual sharing of knowledge and the existence of a capacity strengthening plan. Lastly, indicators for the *resilience* variables are formulated. These include the existence of a collaborative strategy to conflict resolution and to solving problems of mismanagement (Hoksbergen, 2005, p. 20). Also, a general sense of reciprocity is taken as an indicator.

4.2. Research design

The steps that have to be taken in order to generate satisfying results are of crucial importance for the validity of the research outcomes. The methodological approach to the topic of this study should therefore receive sufficient attention.

This qualitative study is descriptive in nature. It aims to describe the aspects that make authentic partnerships successful. Descriptive research tries to shed light on causal relationships by investigating the causal mechanisms that influence the variables of interest (de Vaus, 2001, p. 201). This thesis uses process tracing as a method to identify and explain these causal mechanisms. To serve this purpose, four cases are selected and studied in-depth. By means of comparing the data from the cases, this thesis tests which partnership characteristics from the literature are conducive to successful authentic partnerships. The study is backward looking in that it looks into the historic events that shaped the partnership cases.

The data collection methods used in this research mainly include semi-structured interviews with key informants. Document analysis of partnership policies and agreements is done to provide supporting evidence with the interviews. Besides that, a couple of meetings provided additional information on the central subject of this thesis by means of participant observation. Since this research uses process tracing as its main methodology, a short examination of the method and the methodological choices is given.

4.2.1. Process tracing

Specifying causal mechanisms is vital when trying to explain the path from cause to outcome. Causal mechanisms are "intervening processes through which causes exert their effects" (Goertz & Mahoney, 2012, p. 100). Process tracing particularly lends itself for tracing a process from A to B. It has the ambition to go beyond mere correlations between two phenomena by opening up the black box of causation (Beach & Brun Pedersen, 2013, pp. 1-2). This thesis focuses on the causal pathway from a partnership characterized by diversity of interests and interdependence of interests to a partnership that is characterized by more aligned interests and collaboration.

Three variants of process tracing can be distinguished: theory-testing process tracing, theory building process tracing and explaining-outcome process tracing (see figure 4). The three differ on different aspects (Beach & Brun Pedersen, 2013, pp. 13-14). Firstly, they differ in their aim to test or to build causal mechanisms. Secondly, they differ on their design, either theory-centric or case-centric. Thirdly, they differ on the generality of causal mechanisms, either to a single case or to a group of cases. Finally, the variants differ on the type of inferences made, either on the presence and absence of causal mechanisms or on the sufficiency of the explanation.

In this thesis, theory-testing process tracing is used as the main methodology. Theory-testing process tracing happens in three stages (see figure 5). It starts from a specific theory deduced from the literature. By means of the theory, the causal mechanism is conceptualized. In the second stage, the hypothetical causal mechanism is specified and operationalized in order to make it measurable through

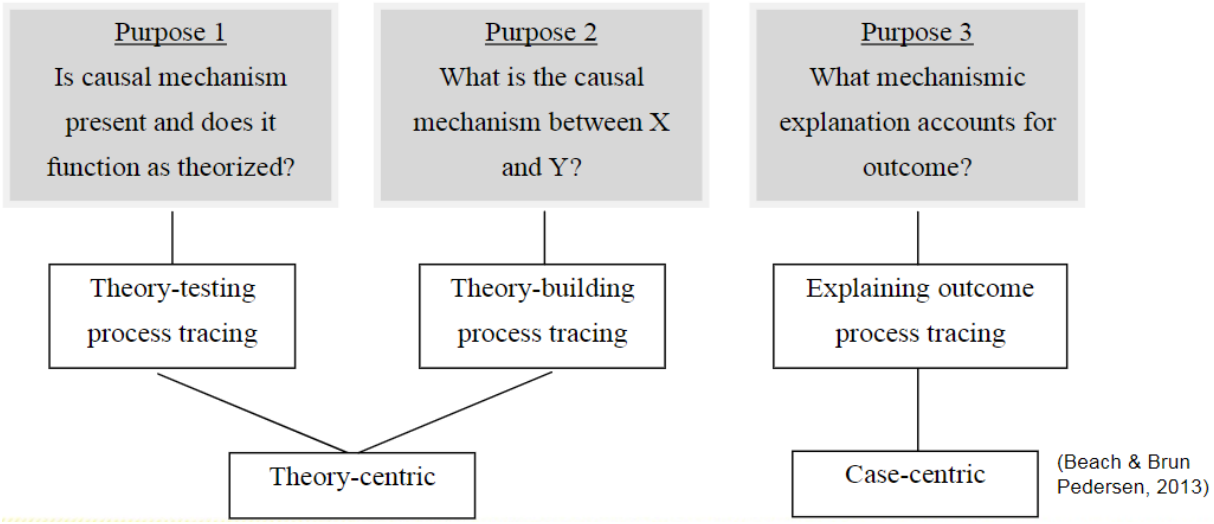

Figure 5: three variants of process tracing

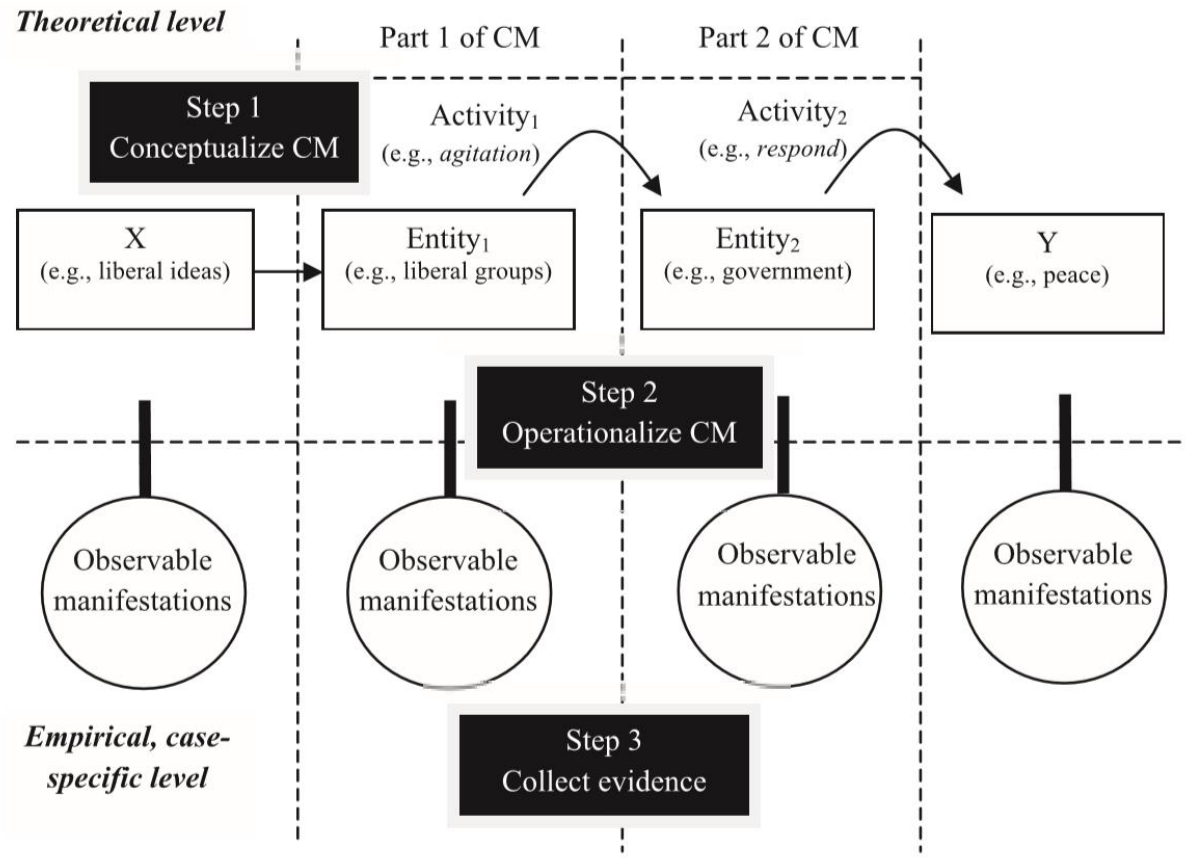

Figure 6: theory-testing process tracing (Beach & Brun Pedersen, 2013, p. 15)

observable manifestations. The final stage concerns collecting evidence on empirical case level. Subsequently, the researcher identifies which parts of the causal mechanisms are reflected by the case and whether they function as theorized (Beach & Brun Pedersen, 2013, p. 14). Most process tracing studies are done through singular case analyses. However, a singular case study has limited explanatory power and making claims regarding the necessity of mechanisms is hardly possible (Beach & Brun Pedersen, 2013, p. 15). In order to be able to identify to what extent a mechanism explains the outcome, a cross-case analysis is needed. Although explaining-outcome process-tracing is commonly done by using a singular case, theory-building and theory-testing process tracing can involve multiple cases (Beach & Brun Pedersen, 2013, p. 144). This thesis process traces multiple cases in order to bring in the comparative aspect.

4.2.2. Case study research

The past four decades have shown a significant increase in the use of cases as a research methodology (Yin, 2011, p. xix). Additionally, case study research has been explored further and resulted in many forms of case studies. One of these is comparative case analysis. This case-based approach is characterized by its ability for thorough comparison between multiple cases on the variables of interest (Bartlett & Varvrus, 2017).

According to Bartlett and Vavrus (2017, p. 6), the comparative case approach is a heuristic, which implies an experience-based strategy to problem-solving. This comparative case heuristic is, among others, influenced by critical theory. Critical theory, as mentioned in the theoretical chapter, has a highly emancipatory character and is mostly informed by scholars like Marx and Habermas. It aims to change society by challenging existing structures of power, exploitation and agency (Bartlett & Varvrus, 2017, p. 11; Innes & Booher, 2016, p. 23). Due to its comparative nature, this form of case study research is particularly suitable for identifying the practices that are conducive to authentic partnerships. Moreover, its foundation in critical theory creates an interesting match between the research method and the subject of unequal INGO-L/NNGO partnership relations. This is because of the fact that critical theory undermines existing power structures and aims to bring change to these structures (Bartlett & Varvrus, 2017, p. 11; Innes & Booher, 2016, p. 23). This method therefore fits the aim of identifying the practices conducive to authentic partnerships between INGOs and local organizations.

The units of analysis in this study concern NGOs in authentic partnerships. This particular kind of partnership between INGOs and L/NNGOs forms the basis for the selection of the cases for this research.

4.3. Case selection

The case selection procedure, the selection criteria and the way the selection of cases is done is vital when it comes to the internal validity of the research. It therefore deserves sufficient attention.

4.3.1. Case selection criteria

As earlier mentioned, localisation has gained momentum as a topic of discussion among INGOs. Action towards capacity building of local responders is internationally organized in the Grand Bargain agreement. Authentic partnerships can serve as a vehicle for sustainable capacity building of local responders. Therefore, this research is focused on multiple cases of authentic partnerships between INGOs and local organizations.

Before the start of the case selection procedure, several criteria of these partnerships were put in place before including them in the sample. The first criterion is that the INGO involved in the partner relationship explicitly values working in partnerships. This can be verified by mission statements or documents that contain the organizational strategy.

Secondly, the sample should include only INGOs that are a Grand Bargain signatory. It is assumed that Grand Bargain signatories are more concerned with the localisation commitments than other INGOs, which directs them more to a sustainable partnership approach (ICVA, 2018).

Thirdly, the partnership cases selected for this study should concern partnerships that are ongoing for at least five years. Although there is no official time length that labels a partnership as 'long-term', this thesis regards long-term partnerships as collaborations that start off where project-based partnership stop at their maximum length. The latter usually lies between two to five years,

Fourthly, the partnerships should be currently ongoing. The cases are retrospective in nature. In other words, the cases are holistically approached by investigating an extensive period of time (de Vaus, 2001, p. 227). The case selection is not limited by a specific period in time. The age of the selected partnerships therefore diverge in length and depth.

Fifthly, INGO partners should be based in developing countries in Sub-Sahara Africa or South-East Asia. By including cases from multiple continents, a diverse selection of cases could be included in the sample. This is especially important because NGO sectors could differ strongly between countries (Elbers & Schulpen, 2012, p. 55).

4.3.2. Case selection procedure

My internship position at ZOA was used as a starting platform for the case selection procedure. The case of ZOA was first included in the sample and could be more extensively investigated. As local organizations in beneficiary countries are badly approachable, the investigation started by contacting a number of INGOs. Since the selection criteria requires the selection of Grand Bargain signatories, my initial focus was on those. All 21 Grand Bargain signatories were consecutively contacted. The first step of getting in touch with these INGOs involved an email to the organizations' secretary. This initially resulted in two respondents. The organizations which did not respond on the e-mail were contacted by phone one week later. This resulted in another two organizations willing to participate in the research.

The comparability of cases in terms of size and mandate of the INGOs was no primary concern. Thematic issues were valued over organizational resemblance. Consequently, some participating

organizations resembled the size and mandate of ZOA, whereas others did not. CARE, for instance, is a particularly large INGO with a wide curriculum, which is not similar to ZOA. Thus, inclusion of the latter type of INGOs does not increase the comparability of cases in terms of size and mandate, but it does increase the comparability of cases in terms of thematic and organizational focus.

The next step concerned the identification of one authentic partnership for each INGO-respondent. This resulted in another four, locally or nationally based, partner organizations to investigate. The INGOs provided access to contact details of their partners in order to get in touch with the local organizations.

4.4. Data collection

Data collection in process tracing studies can be done through interviews, participant observation and document analysis. Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 65) value the use of a combination of these data collection strategies. Indeed, triangulation provides different viewpoints in order to assign meaning to the variables of interest. Data collection for this thesis took place between August and November 2019 and was mainly done through semi-structured interviews. Additional information was obtained through participant observation and analyzing the organizations' policies and annual reports.

4.4.1. Interviews

The role of personal experiences in identifying practices that stimulate authentic partnerships should not be underestimated, since it can contribute significantly to acquiring valuable knowledge. For this reason, several interviews were conducted. From each INGO and partner organization, at least one representative was interviewed, resulting in a total of eight interviews (annex III). The interviews were semi-structured and had the nature of an open conversation. This allowed the respondents to drift away from the main themes in order to discuss topics that seemed of more interest to them. A document with themes and topics (annex II) gave guidance to the discussion in order to make sure all topics of interest were covered. This document was frequently adapted for the purpose of validity. Insights from interviews informed the creation of new or adapted questions, which could increase the potential for in-depth discussion and valid findings. Becker (2007, p. 548) gives words to this process as follows: "*Each interview and each day's observations produce ideas tested against relevant data. Not fully pre-specifying these ideas and procedures, as well as being ready to change them when their findings require it, are not flaws, but rather two of the great strengths of qualitative research*" (Becker, 2009, p. 548). The categorized intervening variables were taken as the main structure of the discussion. If the interviews gave access to partnership agreements or other documents relevant to the partnerships, these documents were analyzed in order to verify the values of the indicators. This also allowed me to determine which visions, rules and arrangements were formally documented, and which remained informal. The interviews all lasted between one and one and a half hour and were held in English or Dutch, according to the respondent's preference. Due to the physical distance between me, as a

researcher, and the respondents, several interviews were done via Skype. When the interview could take place personally within the Netherlands, I traveled to the respondent's office.

4.4.2. Participant observation

Besides the data gathered by means of interviews, some additional information was gathered through participant observation. This was done by participating in a number of meetings on the topic of localisation. The goal of these meetings was to share localisation experiences and to discuss how the importance of localisation might change in the future and how to adapt to these changes.

The first meeting I attended concerned a learning event of the Dutch Relief Alliance (DRA), which is a coalition of 16 Dutch aid NGOs in partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A high number of NGO representatives were present. The learning event, which took place at the 2nd of July, was called "Changing dynamics: Southern leadership in humanitarian response". The central question of this meeting was: How can the international humanitarian sector stimulate and support southern leadership in humanitarian responses? During the event, fieldnotes were made in order to transcribe the discussion afterwards.

Second, I attended a localisation session on the ZOA International Conference. The localisation focal point of ZOA presented information on the current trends and developments within the localisation workstream. Besides that, ZOA's current results on localisation were presented. Subsequently, a role play and several group discussions were done, in which I participated. Besides the session on localisation, the conference gave an opportunity to engage in informal conversations with ZOA field staff.

4.5. Limitations

Balancing internal and external validity of research has always been a challenge for researchers. Process tracing particularly increases the internal validity of this study. The reason for this is that it gives more clarity on the causal mechanisms that link the independent variables to the dependent variable, compared to normal comparative analysis (George & Bennett, 2005).

Although process tracing lends itself perfectly for analyzing causal mechanisms, it also has its flaws. One concerns its limited ability to identify all causal mechanisms that led to the outcome. A particular causal mechanism might be necessary and sufficient for explaining the outcome, while there also might be other mechanisms that account for the outcome (Beach & Brun Pedersen, 2013, p. 3). In other words, establishing an uninterrupted causal path is hard to achieve (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 222). Part of this is the difficulty of determining whether the causal path is fully complete. This slightly decreases its internal validity. The cross-case analysis involving different cases partly accounts for this lack of explanatory power. However, it remains difficult to make strong claims regarding the extent to which the outcome is explained by the causal mechanisms investigated.

Another limitation concerns the high amounts of information needed to dig into the causal

mechanisms (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 223). Process tracing usually goes with long sequences of observation. A decision should therefore be made on how far down these mechanisms are traced. Inherent to this information requirement is the fact that process tracing studies take much space for the analysis. This is even more applicable to this study, since it studies multiple cases.

The advantages process tracing has regarding internal validity is negatively reflected in its inability to establish a high level of external validity. The findings of process tracing studies can usually limitedly be generalized to larger samples. The small samples, most often single case, of process tracing studies explains this. This study tries to overcome this limitation by including four, instead of one, case in the sample. This enables me to make partly generalize the results to other partnerships.

4.6. Data analysis

The process of data analysis in this research involves a strategy of constant data comparison. Firstly, the interviews are recorded and transcribed for the purpose of analysis. Second, the interview transcripts are coded. The software package Atlas.ti was used in order to code the data in a structural way. Atlas.ti provides a comprehensive tool for qualitative data analysts, allowing for the creation of codes and code groups. The categorized variables are taken as the code groups, while the authentic partnership characteristics and the indicators are used for the creation of the code names. Additional codes are taken for all pieces of data which do not directly link to the intervening variables or indicators. By comparing pieces of data through code-document tables and code co-occurrence tables, differences and similarities within and between partnerships are identified.

By using the process tracing method, the four partnership cases included in this study are traced back over the entire partnership process. The coming chapter presents and analyses the findings from the cases.

5. Analyzing authentic partnerships

This chapter presents the results of the investigation regarding authentic partnership practices. Firstly, the four partnership cases are described individually. Secondly, cross-case comparisons will be made, in order to create linkages among the data. These, in turn, provide insights into the partnership practices that are most used. Also the impact of contextual factors on authentic partnerships is showed. Note that only the most interesting links and patterns are highlighted here. This means that not every category is elaborated upon in every case.

5.1. Partnership I: ZOA and MIPAREC

Fifteen years ago, ZOA and the Ministry for Peace and Reconciliation under the Cross (MIPAREC) started a partnership in order to work collaboratively on peace in Burundi. Since 1973, ZOA provides humanitarian support to communities and individuals struck by major conflicts and natural disasters. ZOA envisions "*a world where people have hope and live dignified lives in peaceful communities*" (ZOA, 2019, p. 7). The organization works in countries in Africa, Asia and Latin-America and remains there until the living conditions of the people are restored to their original level. During emergency responses, ZOA provides basic needs, like Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), food security and shelter. In recovery settings, the organization gives support on education, agriculture and land rights. ZOA works with a hybrid model, which allows for directly implementing projects in beneficiary countries, as well as partnering with local organizations (ZOA, 2019, p. 11). ZOA recognizes that "*partnerships are important for the sharing of knowledge and resources and can play an important role for lobby and advocacy"* (ZOA, 2019, p. 6). This stimulated ZOA to partner strategically with LNGOs.

MIPAREC is one of these local partners and aims "*to build a peaceful, fair and prosperous society by striving to promote peace, community development, and social cohesion through trainings, peacebuilding and activities that bring people together*" (MIPAREC, 2019; Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 2). The organization was founded during the war time in 1996, but was finally recognized by the federal government in 2002. While attaching to the values of integrity, non-violence, culture of learning, equality and fairness, honesty and transparency, and love, the locally embedded organization actively puts peace in the centre of Burundian society. MIPAREC works on local, regional, as well as national level. Community mediation and socio-economic reintegration of different groups belong to the main activities of MIPAREC. By giving trainings and seminars, different societal groups are brought together in order to meet and to talk. The social cohesion resulting from these activities bridges the ethnic gaps, which Burundians have inherited from the violent past decades in the country. Besides peace programs, MIPAREC also works on cross-cutting themes and provides basic needs in case of emergencies (MIPAREC, 2019; Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 2).

5.1.1. Contextual conditions

Burundi is a country in a complex situation of class warfare. Since its independence in 1961, Burundi has been an instable country in which violent conflicts between Hutu and Tutsi consecutively followed each other. During the most severe moment of crisis in 1972, about 300.000 people were killed and more than 700.000 fled the country. The assassination of the firstly elected president in 1993 preluded the next challenging decade of extreme violence and hostility. Another 200.000 Burundians were killed and most people got internally displaced from their homes. As a result for the massive displacement of Hutu and Tutsi, the conflict continues in surrounding countries as well. In addition to the peace-related problems in Burundi, the country suffers from the consequences of severe corruption scandals (de Boer, 2019, p. 2). At the level of justice, the police, the municipalities and the national government, corruption is nurtured by skewed power and accountability structures (Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 3). This portrays the context in which MIPAREC has been acting over the past decades.

MIPAREC often faces barriers to act as a result of this challenging working environment, which indirectly affect its partnership practices as well. The current crisis, which started in 2015, was induced by the decision of the president to run for a third term (de Boer, 2019, p. 2). The conflict has a political, rather than an ethnic nature and both Hutu and Tutsi can therefore be found on either side. As a result of the political scandal, the EU has taken sanctions against Burundi, which affects many people. MIPAREC especially experiences this impact by a lack of oil, fuel, foreign currencies and other resources. This severely limits its space to act. Besides the lack of resources, partners of MIPAREC resign and leave the country (Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 3). As a result, MIPAREC misses out on (financial) support. Another difficulty for MIPAREC is the close and severe scrutiny of the Burundian government.

> *"For now the government is trying to control different activities of NGOs. They try to control where we getting resources from, where the money we are using is coming from, who our partners are and they want to know what we are doing in the field, we have to ask permissions to do workshops and ministries, but they also ask us how we treat people according to their ethnic groups, which is not easy. Also, they even come to our offices and see our ways of working on the field. It means that at the moment the government is very strict with NGOs"* (Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 3).

Local organization's room for manoeuvre has thus been limited significantly. The suspicion of governments towards NGOs also impacts the collaboration between MIPAREC and ZOA. Despite the fact that the partnership is legally allowed, the collaboration is hampered by many permission requirements and controlling mechanisms. These contextual conditions therefore partly determine the success of the authentic partnership between MIPAREC and ZOA.

5.1.2. Organisational relationship

At the start of the partnership in 2006, ZOA was not yet represented in Burundi. In order to start a couple of projects in the country, ZOA selected MIPAREC as a partner. Different motives contributed to the decision of both organizations to start the partnership. One relates to the vision, goals and values of both organizations and will be discussed in the next section. Another motive relates to the sectors of

operation. MIPAREC is active in creating local peace committees and land registration, which are both themes on which ZOA works. ZOA's decision to select MIPAREC was therefore stimulated by the peace-focused expertise of the local organization (Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 8; de Boer, 2019, p. 3).

The two organizations work closely together in Burundi, but are clearly autonomous, self-standing organizations. ZOA is supported by its committed, mainly Reformed Christian constituency in the Netherlands. MIPAREC originated from the American Mennonites and is still supported by them (de Boer, 2019, p. 5). They are also supported by honourable members within the country (Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 8). Besides ZOA, MIPAREC also partners with CARE, OXFAM, Kinder Not Hilfe and IRC, which provides the organization with a diversified range of funding sources (de Boer, 2019, p. 6). This, in turn, makes the organization less dependent of ZOA. As a result of its partnerships with other INGOs, MIPAREC also carries out projects beyond the partnership with ZOA.

Besides the same sectors of operation, the complementary potential contributed to the willingness of both organizations to partner. MIPAREC has organisational advantages in comparison to ZOA, which is also recognized by the latter in its partnership policy (ZOA , 2018, p. 5). The main comparative advantages are on the topics of access to beneficiaries and planning.

> *"(…) local organizations are the ones who know better in the context. They are based in the communities. They know the culture, they know the context, they know the people. This is very important for local organizations to be supported. Second, they are the ones who have a long-term vision. It means that they may last for years in the country, because sometimes international NGOs are working for certain time and then comes the time to exit. But local organizations, they are the ones that sustain in the communities. It is very important for those local organizations to be supported. The main problem that we meet is that local organizations do not meet the requirements for the UN, EU and other agencies to get funds. Maybe they have different weaknesses which makes them non-eligible to get funds. This is a problem that I see"* (Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 4).

The problem mentioned in the last sentences relates to a lack of capacities and expertise. Another explanation for this problem is given by the ZOA program quality manager in Burundi.

> *Many organizations are occupied with their mission., rather than with the things international donors would like to hear. Localisation is an example of a buzzword which suddenly comes up, which is very popular and much used, but such terms do not mean a lot to local organizations, since they are busy with what their mission is* [author's translation] (de Boer, 2019, p. 4).

In other words, MIPAREC's focus on its mission blocks its ability to focus on the benefits of investing in international donors. The comparative advantage of ZOA, however, fills this gap. As an international organization, ZOA has a lot of experience in proposal writing and knows exactly what donors want to hear. Their access to and knowledge of international donors complements MIPAREC's work. In that way, MIPAREC can express their concern for a particular topic to the ZOA country director, who can take the issue to the UN or the embassy, to which MIPAREC would never have access (de Boer, 2019, p. 6). ZOA can compare practices on international level, whereas MIPAREC can apply this more easily to the local context, since they know exactly what is going on in the region (de Boer, 2019, p. 8). This complementarity allows for a strong and compatible working relationship (Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 6).

5.1.3. Shared understanding

Within a strategic partnership, a common understanding about all facets of the collaboration is of high importance. A common vision on what to achieve constitutes an important first step of this process. The partnership between ZOA and MIPAREC was initially a project-based partnership. Four years after the start of the partnership, both partners decided to collaborate on a more strategic level and signed a strategic partnership agreement (Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 5). This agreement includes the purpose and rationale, the key principles and commitments, as well as the key steps and requirements of the partnership (ZOA, 2010). When asked about the common vision within the partnership, the legal representative of MIPAREC predominantly describes the contents of the strategic partnership agreement.

> *"At the point that ZOA wanted MIPAREC to be their strategic partner, did you create a common vision?"*
> *"At that time we sat together and discussed on different areas and we also created the strategic plan together and we agreed on how we share information, how we may share new calls on proposals, how we collaborate to design new proposals, but also how we may share information about the context. We also agreed on how long we continue to support each other by building capacities. Those are the main things on which our strategic partnership agreement is based"* (Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 4).

This fragment shows a lot of the contents of the first partnership discussions between ZOA and MIPAREC. Besides agreements on planning and proposal writing, the organizations also agreed upon the termination of the partnership (ZOA, 2010, p. 4). The frequent references to information sharing particularly stand out in this fragment. This is interesting, since the question is about the common vision. Apparently, information sharing is essential to MIPAREC in its partnership with ZOA. This is again emphasized later on in the interview.

> *"[It] is about sharing information on different changes in the country, but also on new partners to work with. Another thing is what we share together: the common vision, the common values. These are very important. The main strategy which is making the plan and the agreement strategic is that we have agreed, before looking to other partners, that we share information on new projects, on new activities, on new things to implement, on new working areas"* (Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 9).

However, the strategic partnership agreement, of which the format is designed by ZOA, does not mention it as the most important common goal.

> *"ZOA and MIPAREC are organisations that share common goals, beliefs and a Christian motivation for doing humanitarian aid work. The common goal of both agencies is to relieve the suffering of people in situations of complex human emergencies and support them in rebuilding their lives"* (ZOA, 2010, p. 2).

The strategic partnership agreement also shows a partnership-specific goal in the statement of intent (ZOA, 2010, p. 2). It also lists secondary aims of the partners in their collaborative understanding. These goals include sharing information, sharing resources, (mutual) capacity development, joint proposal development, cooperation in fundraising and joint implementation of a programme (ZOA, 2010, p. 3).

Another important aspect of a common understanding among the two partners is the set of values and principles they adhere to. Both organizations share a Christian identity, through which they find a

common ground. This was one of the reasons for MIPAREC to engage into partnership with ZOA (Kibinakanwa, 2019, pp. 5, 9). Besides these Christian values, ZOA and MIPAREC adhere to basic humanitarian principles. For instance, both organizations are signatory to the "Code of Conduct for the ICRC and Non-Governmental Organisations in Disaster Relief." Humanitarian assistance will therefore be given irrespective of race, gender, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group (ZOA, 2010, p. 2).

5.1.4. Shared commitment

Shared commitment involves shared responsibility, a clear understanding of roles, and accountability. ZOA and MIPAREC share the responsibility for the goals set in the strategic partnership agreement. The agreement includes the roles both parties play within the partnership. Programme-specific roles are included within separate project contracts. Through these contracts, it is clear what is expected from both organizations in the field (Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 6). With the responsibility comes accountability. A monitoring and evaluation system allows for controlling the financial flows between the organizations. MIPAREC has to report any activities that are being implemented in the field to ZOA. ZOA, in turn, gives feedback on these reports. MIPAREC is also accountable to beneficiary communities. ZOA might be responsible for the projects in the field as well, but the communities do not know ZOA. They know MIPAREC, since that is the organization which implements the programmes in the field. This does not leave ZOA without any duties of accountability. The INGO is accountable to the government and to donors (Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 9).

Sharing responsibility also means sharing the risks of all joint operations. An example from the data shows this. During the year of 2019, a project contract between ZOA and MIPAREC had to stop as a consequence of the decision of USAID to quit funding the project. However, MIPAREC had already contracted staff for the project (Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 6). According to the law in Burundi, an employer has to cover the salaries of contracted staff in case the contract terminates. This left both parties with a problematic situation, in which financial gaps had to be filled without any perspective on results. During regular meetings, both organizations discussed the possible solutions (Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 7). An act of financial solidarity finally resolved the issue.

> *"We said even in the beginning that it was not easy for ZOA, because the situation was also affecting ZOA and the staff. The situation was also affecting our credibility in the communities. (…) I liked how ZOA took the time to discuss it with MIPAREC and also how they went to the field to explain the problem, to the local authorities and to the communities. (…) They shared the risk with us, they even were more affected! The staff of ZOA had to stop working for some time, while the staff of MIPAREC continued to work in the field. So you could say that ZOA took a big risk"* (Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 7).

> *"When there was no funding, it meant that the staff was going to be on the charge of MIPAREC. But ZOA continued to pay the salaries to the staff, but also to pay the running costs, which was a good decision."* (Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 6).

The situation described above could have been detrimental to the partnership between ZOA and MIPAREC. The local organization could have experienced a major downturn in their organisational development. However, the compromise made by ZOA allowed for the continuance of the project and the partnership (Kibinakanwa, 2019, pp. 6-7). ZOA took responsibility by making a financial investment in the staff of MIPAREC and by communicating the issue to beneficiaries. Such an investment does not result in any revenue on the short-term and might therefore be seen as an irrational choice. However, the investment enabled MIPAREC to continue to work, to gain experience and to grow further towards a self-sustaining organization. The investment might therefore be rewarding on the long term, rather than the short term.

5.1.5. Equality

The nature of the partnership in terms of equality depends on the general sense of equality (Hoksbergen, 2005, pp. 19-20). The differences in size and organisational structure partly determine this general sense. ZOA is a semi-sized organization, employing over 900 people in 15 different countries. MIPAREC, however, is a lot smaller and works in only three countries. As a result of these differences, the total amounts of funds that both organizations attract differ as well. The organizations are indeed not equal when looking to the means and capabilities of both organizations (Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 6). However, the sense of equality is higher with regards to other aspects.

> *"Equal in some ways, but different in other ways. I can say equal in ways of learning together and working together, but different in terms of capacity and means. ZOA is an international NGO which has more capacity and equipment and other things. MIPAREC is a local organization"* (Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 6)

The MIPAREC representative points out the mutuality in the learning process within the partnership. This is in line with the earlier finding of information sharing as a central element within the partnership. Sharing knowledge and learning from each other therefore defines the nature of the partnership, which both organizations underline.

> *"The main secret which is making our partner different is that we consider both of us as learning organizations"* (Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 6)

> *"We have a strategic partnership, but it is not based on mandatory exchanging services or money. It is more an intention of collaboration and exchanging ideas"* [author's translation] (de Boer, 2019, p. 9).

This practice of listening and learning from each other requires an open and transparent way of communicating. Both organizations therefore commit to full information and knowledge sharing (ZOA, 2010).

A topic which recurs regularly in the data is the importance of face-to-face meetings in creating an environment for mutual exchange of knowledge and information. These meetings have the function to share information, but also to build the relationship informally.

> *"What I also noticed is that it works better when country directors meet regularly with their partners and not merely meet on a contract basis. Particularly in the beginning, country directors found it very important to invest in these strategic partnerships. Every two months, they would meet with the director of MIPAREC for small talk and if work accidentally became part of the conversation it was considered as a nice bonus"* [author's translation] (de Boer, 2019, p. 6).

> *"It helps to have those regular meetings. In the beginning, ZOA was organizing retreats for partners so it is good to have such an occasion to discuss together. They also have a time to sit together and think together"* (Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 8).

The extent to which the partners meet face-to-face depends for a large part on the priorities of the senior management. Some directors or managers might find it of crucial importance to invest in partner relationships, while others consider the partnership merely as an extension of resources. The first ZOA country director introduced ZOA to Burundi and facilitated the registration. MIPAREC assisted with this process, which created a close relationship. This continued in the relationships with the second and third country director (Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 8). However, due to a lot of discontinuity in senior management positions, the last five years have been hard with regards to relationship building within the partnership (de Boer, 2019, pp. 5-6). For that reason, the sense of equality within the partnership has been fluctuating between hierarchical and horizontal during this period (de Boer, 2019, p. 7). The current country director is very close with MIPAREC, since he knows the local organization already from 2006 onwards. Both organizations meet each other face-to-face in monthly and quarterly meetings. Continuity therefore has a lot of positive effects on the partnership and enables to build a sustainable partnership environment (de Boer, 2019, p. 6).

Another aspect in the creation of a strong learning environment is the development of each other's capacities. Since the start of the partnership, ZOA and MIPAREC have made joint plans for capacity strengthening (Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 5). The complementary strengths, as presented earlier, are important in this. The capacity strengthening process started by a capacity assessment, through which both ZOA and MIPAREC itself, assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the local organization. This assessment covers a range of subjects on governance and control, ability to deliver and financial stability. The capacity assessment shows which gaps need to be worked on.

> *"ZOA helps us to define our weaknesses, but they also help us to build our capacities. It is very important for us to have a partner that understands that our organization has weaknesses and has an idea on how we can overcome these weaknesses. So ZOA is our partner and we are running on ZOA, but ZOA is also running on us. We get both profit from it"* (Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 5).

The next step concerns jointly writing a capacity strengthening plan. According to de Boer (2019, p. 4), money plays an important role within building the capacities of MIPAREC. The ideal would be that MIPAREC becomes financially independent. For that purpose, they have to attract funds from institutional donors. ZOA can share its expertise on this practice through different activities. Jointly writing proposals, for example, is a form of capacity building through which ZOA's knowledge and experience on donor requirements is shared (Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 5). Besides that, ZOA trains

MIPAREC on thematic areas, like governance and land rights. Additionally, a 5C evaluation[1] is done once in a while (de Boer, 2019, p. 4).

5.1.6. Resilience

ZOA and MIPAREC show to have developed a constructive method to collaborative problem-solving. Especially discussion and continuous deliberation is mentioned in the data as a way to handle problems. The central place of joint discussion within the partnership also appears from the word cloud below, in which the words most often said are captured (Kibinakanwa, 2019).

Figure 7: word cloud of the semi-structured interview with Dieudonné Kibinakanwa.

The word cloud shows 'together' and 'discuss' as two of the most central words within the interview. Discussing together and doing activities together can contribute majorly to a reciprocal relationship. As clearly comes forward in the data, both ZOA and MIPAREC experience a general sense of reciprocity within the partnership.

> *"For me it is clearly a reciprocal experience"* [author's translation] (de Boer, 2019, p. 8).

> *"ZOA is our partner and we are running on ZOA, but ZOA is also running on us. We get both profit from it.* (Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 6).

This reciprocal relationship allows for the solidarity to make compromises, as exemplified earlier. Compromises contribute to joint problem-solving within the partnership, which, in turn, leads to new insights and common understandings between the two partners.

5.2. Partnership II: CAFOD and KMSS

The second case consists of the partnership between the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) and the Karuna Mission Social Solidarity (KMSS), of which the latter is based in Myanmar. CAFOD is the official international aid and development agency of the Catholic Church in England and Wales (CAFOD, 2019a). The organization was founded in 1960 as a response to a successful aid campaign for poverty in the Dominican Republic and is part of Caritas International. Today, CAFOD

[1] A technique used to conduct a situation analysis

employs hundreds of staff and works on themes like education, climate and shelter. CAFOD envisions *a transformed world in which the rights and dignity of every person are respected; all have access to the basic needs in life; women and men share equally in shaping their societies and the world; the gifts of creation are nurtured and shared by all for the common good; and the structures that shape people's lives are just and enable peace* (CAFOD, 2019b, p. 2). For that purpose, they support the poor, work for changes in societal structures and systems and help to strengthen the capacity of the poor. Besides that, they act as awareness- and fundraisers and adapt to the ever changing working environment in order to continue to be relevant in a changing world (CAFOD, 2019b, p. 6). CAFOD was one of the frontrunners in the localisation debate and co-initiated the Charter4Change[1] (Donkin, 2019, p. 2). As a Grand Bargain signatory, CAFOD believes that "*supporting the localisation of aid is an essential aspect of 'shifting the power' in favour of the poorest and most disadvantaged communities*" (CAFOD, 2019b, p. 7).

In order to put these words into practice, CAFOD works strategically with several partners to strengthen local capacities (CAFOD, 2019b, p. 7). One of these strategic partners is KMSS. KMSS is a national, faith-based NGO which assists 16 dioceses in Myanmar according to the social teaching of the Church (KMSS, 2019a). Its vision is to see their people empowered, transformed and integrally developed. KMSS aims to serve the local communities in Myanmar, especially the poor, needy and marginalized, in order to empower them to exercise their rights fully and to live dignified lives (KMSS, 2019b). The 2002 founded organization runs projects on education, disaster risk reduction (DRR), health, social protection and livelihood. KMSS is the country organization of Caritas in Myanmar and is ran by 55 staff members. The different Caritas organizations work together closely and the strategic partnership with CAFOD is a typical example of that.

5.2.1. Organisational relationship

CAFOD has been working with national Caritas organizations for ten to twenty years. CAFOD has been partnering with KMSS since the challenging period of the country before it opened up. Despite the fact that the organizations share their membership in Caritas International, they are two separate entities. One of the things that illustrate this is that both organizations have an own constituency (Mawia, 2019, p. 7). Besides that, KMSS is not fully dependent on funding from CAFOD, since it also has arranged some funding itself (Donkin, 2019, p. 7). CAFOD even claims to stimulate their local counterpart to diversify its funding sources (Donkin, 2019, p. 8).

Both organizations aim to complement each other, based on their comparative advantages. On the one hand, local organizations are mainly located in field areas. As a result, KMSS has many funding opportunities. They have much better relations with local communities and locally authorized people than the UN and INGOs (Mawia, 2019, p. 3). Their comparative advantage is thus mainly related to access and resources. This is also recognized by CAFOD, which also sees local organizations' first and

[1] A NGO-led initiative to direct the humanitarian system to more locally-led emergency responses.

fast response to emergencies as a strength (Donkin, 2019, p. 3). CAFOD, on the other hand, is specialized in humanitarian organizational capacity building and individual capacity building. Not surprisingly, capacity strengthening has therefore been a central element of the partnership during its last five years (Donkin, 2019, p. 4). This stimulated KMSS to partner with CAFOD, as their organization was in need of external support (Mawia, 2019, p. 4).

5.2.2. Shared understanding

A common understanding starts with foundational elements, like the vision of the organizations, the underlying beliefs, values and principles, and the goals attached to these (Hoksbergen, 2005, pp. 19-22). Since both CAFOD and KMSS are a Caritas member, their visions overlap considerably (Mawia, 2019, p. 4). Their common vision is based on Catholic social teaching, which emphasizes the shared beliefs, values and principles on which the organizations are built (Mawia, 2019, p. 5). These values are included in the CAFOD safeguarding policy (CAFOD, 2019c, p. 2). The common vision is included in the partnership agreements, which are signed on annual basis (Mawia, 2019, p. 5). These agreements also include strategic goals for the partnership and the collaborative projects. The strategic goals that are defined for building the capacity of KMSS largely depend on the alignment of organizational preferences.

> *"I think, generally, that the success is dependent on the quality of the partnership and the interest of the organization in whatever that kind of strategic objective is. (…) and then also understanding what their direction is and where they want to go and how can that be compatible with the support that you can offer them"* (Donkin, 2019, p. 5).

Interestingly, CAFOD here emphasizes the importance of the interests and initiatives of KMSS as a step which is prior to the question of compatibility with CAFOD's support. In other words, there seems to be room for KMSS to create its own definition of capacity, instead of CAFOD prescribing the local organization what to do. KMSS therefore describes its lack of institutional development in a jointly designed capacity strengthening plan. Especially on financial management and HR for the humanitarian department requires KMSS support. Besides that, KMSS misses real experts on specific themes, like WASH. Consequently, they cannot attend on thematic meetings and miss out on opportunities to meet other potential partners and donors (Mawia, 2019, p. 6).

The British INGO has been supporting KMSS in a variety of ways (Donkin, 2019, p. 5). CAFOD does not see capacity building as something static, which is pre-defined and narrowed to technical assistance.

> *"We define humanitarian capacity as being not just plain technical capacity but also more like the organizational attributes as well, the vision and strategy, leadership, all of the kind of different functions that make up an organization in terms of the kind of the organization itself, processes in their systems, but then also the other aspects which have more to do with the quality of their response"* (Donkin, 2019, p. 3).

Contrastingly, KMSS does not emphasize capacity strengthening as something that goes beyond financial and technical support.

> *"Our organization, as every organization, needs funding and some technical support. I think we have no problems between CAFOD and KMSS, but sometimes we need to improve the relationship. The partnership should not only be about project implementation, but also about providing technical support"* (Mawia, 2019, p. 4).

It therefore seems like there is no common understanding about the things that capacity building should entail in the partnership. One of the possible explanations for this is given by the capacity strengthening manager of CAFOD.

> *"(…) we had quite a lot of discussions about what capacity is and it was felt that it may be Western perspectives on capacity or international donors perspective on capacity that may not necessarily align with the local actors capacity relation what is needed for them"* (Donkin, 2019, p. 4).

Seen in this perspective, capacity could also mean to have a strong relationship with local authorities, of which INGOs might not necessarily think when defining local capacity. This shows that a common understanding of the approach within the authentic partnership is vital in achieving satisfying results for both organizations.

5.2.3. Shared commitment

Besides the capacity strengthening goals, both organizations define programmatic goals with regards to collaborative projects on humanitarian assistance and health. In terms of shared commitment to these goals, both organizations should be jointly responsible for their roles.

> *"(…) in terms of programmes itself: what is the programme trying to achieve? Who is going to contribute what? What do we expect you're gonna do? What do you expect we're gonna do. So that real clarity on roles and responsibilities"* (Donkin, 2019, p. 6).

> *"Based on the project recommendation, we already developed rules and responsibilities, values, respect to each other. (…) We work all together based on the rules and responsibilities. In every implementation and operation process"* (Mawia, 2019, p. 5).

Regarding shared commitment, the two organizations seem to be on the same waveline, as they both emphasize the need for clarity on roles and responsibilities. With responsibility, however, comes accountability. The latter is a topic much less mentioned by both organizations. The clear division of tasks and the responsibilities attached to it could be a reason for the little attention for accountability. The commitment does not only concern responsibilities, but also the willingness to invest in the partnership in order to sustain it. These investments mainly concern time and money and are highly valued by CAFOD as a supporting strategy.

> *"(…) if you really want to support the organization, you have to understand the organization. And you can understand it by building trust over a longer period of time, and not in just supporting them to do one-off projects, but actually kind of supporting them for their core costs, to run their offices, to keep on staff. These kind of things that show solidarity towards the organization"* (Donkin, 2019, p. 5).

This shows that CAFOD indeed invests its resources in building a strong relationship with KMSS. Not only during projects, but also beyond projects, CAFOD supports its local partner. A trust-based partnership can potentially influence the sense of equality within the partnership.

5.2.4. Equality

The extent to which the relationship between CAFOD and KMSS is equal can be determined by assessing the sense of equality, the decision-making procedures, the manner of communication and the extent to which both organizations are listened to (Hoksbergen, 2005, pp. 19-20). The general sense of equality is partly determined by the difference in organisational capabilities. The fragment below, in which KMSS is asked about the level of equality within the partnership, captures this succinctly.

> ***"Do you think that you are equally treated?"***
> *"I do not want to compare between our organization and CAFOD, but we work together according to our shared rules and responsibilities. So our organization is especially responsible for field operations. CAFOD is a capacity building organization, they provide the organization with funding. Whether it is equal or not equal, I do not know."*
>
> ***"Why do you not want to compare between the two organizations?"***
> *"Because their organization is very great. Their organizations' main office is in the UK. Our organization is in a developing country. We are still in a development country. It is totally different. That is my personal point of view. All of the CAFOD staff are professional, they have a lot of skills, a lot of experience, they have a good system and a lot of funding. But our organization, we have good common means and we have a good [inaudible] resource person, so we need to improve some parts of the system through capacity building, some technical areas"* (Mawia, 2019, p. 5)

A striking element of this fragment is that KMSS is not specifically asked about the difference in size (in terms of the number of staff and funding amounts) and capabilities between the organizations, but does interpret the issue of equality as these organisational characteristics. Equality is for KMSS therefore associated with the ability to attract sufficient financial, intellectual and human resources. Indeed, the organizations differ majorly on almost every aspect. However, CAFOD focuses less on these organisational aspects when it comes to equality. The INGO rather talks about issues of power and authority in this context (Donkin, 2019, p. 7). Taking in consideration the different interpretations of equality, CAFOD speaks more positively about the sense of equality. This difference is shown in the Atlas.ti table below.

	2: CAFOD 79	3: KMSS 63	Totals
EQUALITY 28	3	3	6
sense of equality: neg. 14		6	6
sense of equality: pos. 11	3	1	4
Totals	6	10	16

Table 1: Code-document table

Decision-making is another element of importance within authentic partnerships. KMSS points out that there is a principle of prior consultation, through which CAFOD consults KMSS before the process of proposal writing starts. During regular visits to the dioceses, both partners sit around the table to discuss

the best ways to do humanitarian capacity building. These conversations also take place informally. Regarding humanitarian capacity building, KMSS can propose which gaps they want CAFOD to support them on. The authority to make the final decision lies with KMSS (Mawia, 2019, p. 6). Other face-to-face meetings are organized on monthly basis and concern focal person meetings with each department of the dioceses. CAFOD staff members participate in these conversations by giving technical support. KMSS, in turn, consults their international colleagues personally (Mawia, 2019, p. 7). These regular face-to-face meetings contributed to a balanced power relation between CAFOD and KMSS. This points to the observation that it is a lot about having somebody based in the country.

> *"(…) There is more a balance of power, more than has been in the past. But it takes time. The reason why I think we can do this is because we have a programme officer and we have got a capacity strengthening officer who are based in Myanmar so they can have day-to-day time building the relationship, while it would be quite difficult to do that from London and visiting once or twice a year."* (Donkin, 2019, p. 7).

An environment characterized by open and transparent communication can be very helpful in processes of joint decision-making. For CAFOD, openness is one of the most important elements in creating a high quality partner relationship (Donkin, 2019, p. 6). By sharing information and exchanging knowledge, a common understanding about situations, needs and steps to be taken, can be created. CAFOD has included their commitment to share information fully in their Open Information policy.

> *"(…) Ensuring that information is accessible is a key aspect of this. We encourage and support our partners to be transparent with the people and communities they support by making information about the organisation, their activities and resources available and accessible, taking consideration of the safety and security of all involved (…) We adhere to the principle of 'publish what you can' while adhering to The Data Protection Act. (…) we will update our policies and other resources."* (CAFOD, 2019, n.p.)

KMSS has not documented its commitment to full information sharing, majorly shares information and knowledge through informal conversations (Mawia, 2019, p. 6). However, the data shows that, despite sharing information and knowledge, INGOs and L/NNGOs still have to improve the practice of listening to each other.

> *"(…) In some countries, there are currently 3 or 4 international actors who dominate everything. They make all the decisions, which makes it really difficult for other organizations to operate. They might act on local level which penetrate those things, so I think more diversity and better listening to understand what local actors want: whether they want to access funding directly and what are the barriers to be able to do that, or is actually what they want just to have a better partnership, more openness"* (Donkin, 2019, p. 9).

This should be enhanced in future partnership practices in order to better capacitate local organizations.

5.2.5. Resilience

Some things might go wrong during the partnership. CAFOD, for instance, witnessed several cases of financial mismanagement with their local partner. Instead of immediately repelling its partner, CAFOD tries to work with the organization to overcome the issues. This is mainly done by stricting their policies and systems (Donkin, 2019, p. 6). This shows that the organizations have a collaborative way of resolving problems of mismanagement in order to pull the partnership through difficult periods.

5.3. Partnership III: CARE and ACCORD

CARE Netherlands and Assistance and Cooperation for Community Resilience and Development, Inc (ACCORD) constitute the third case of this research. CARE Netherlands is part of the CARE International Confederation, which is one of the largest international aid NGOs in the world (CARE, 2019b). In 1945, 22 American aid organizations joint forces in order to reach out to the European victims of the Second World War. The first aid was predominantly focused on the distribution of packages with basic needs. The Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe Inc. (CARE) was born. After the war, CARE International shifted its focus to developing countries in which it provided relief services. CARE's current vision is to strive for "*a world of hope, tolerance, and social justice in which poverty is overcome and in which people can live together in dignity and safety"* (CARE, 2019c). CARE Netherlands works in 27 countries all over the world, supporting people to overcome poverty and to achieve social justice (CARE, 2019c). For this purpose, CARE focuses on four areas of expertise, including humanitarian emergencies, women's economic empowerment, climate change and resilience, and governance and stability. Besides implementing projects directly, CARE is working through local partners. This enables the organization "*to achieve greater impact, work more efficiently and increase influence at all levels"* (CARE, 2019d, p. 15).

In the Philippines, CARE Netherlands has long been working with ACCORD, a LNGO which is committed to "*strengthening local capacities for managing poverty reduction and human development programmes that have lasting results"* (ACCORD, 2019a). By doing this, ACCORD wants to contribute to "*a safe and secure environment where every child, woman and man will be free from poverty and inequity"* (ACCORD, 2019a). The roots of ACCORD are in the same-named project, which was initiated by CARE, the Corporate Network for Disaster Response and the Agri-Aqua Development Coalition. The project was set up with the objective to capacitate local communities, governments and NGOs, in order to make programmes on poverty reduction and DRR more sustainable (ACCORD, 2019b). A long process of working closely with local staff laid the basis for the project. During a strategic planning exercise in 2005, CARE Netherlands decided to stay in the Philippines, despite the decision of many other CARE organizations to phase out of the country. Backed by the argument that local organizations were not yet ready to take over all operations independently, CARE Netherlands continued to invest in the capacities of local organizations (Langenberg, 2019, p. 3). During the year that followed, CARE hired local staff who were being stimulated to find partners in order to train and capacitate them. In 2007, cyclone Hayian devastated the country heavily, which made available new donor funds for the years to follow. Many trainings and workshops were done and many LNGOs were supported to get access to institutional donor funds. ACCORD was the first project of these. After the projects, a group of local staff workers initiated the idea to start a new NGO in order to work structurally on capacitating local organizations and communities. This idea was supported by CARE and ACCORD was called into being (Dulce, 2019, p. 2; Langenberg, 2019, p. 4)

5.3.1. Contextual conditions

Different contextual conditions have the potential to affect the partnership between CARE and ACCORD. Among the many country conditions, conflict and corruption generally have the most impact on such relationships. This is, however, not the case in the Philippines. Despite a lot of conflict around land rights in Mindanao, the level of conflict in the Philippines is currently low (Langenberg, 2019, p. 9). Also regarding corruption, the Philippines do not lead the list. However, there have been cases of corruption among NGOs. This had a great impact on the image of the Philippine NGO community. ACCORD has never seen corruption scandals. Misappropriation of funding was actively prevented by regular visits of CARE project managers and financial managers (Dulce, 2019, p. 7).

More relevant contextual conditions in the Philippines concern the disaster proneness of the country. The Philippines are yearly hit by 25-30 cyclones. This, in combination with mass tourism, has devastated the original landscapes. The Philippines used to be a wooded country, which contributed to the containment of the soils. Nowadays, the natural environment is characterized by landslides and loss of soil. This mainly has practical implications that relate to access and mobility. Mud flows regularly block the entry roads of villages, which has consequences for resource supply and planned meetings (Langenberg, 2019, p. 6). This has little impact on the partnership between CARE and ACCORD, but rather emphasizes the need for DRR in the country.

5.3.2. Organisational relationship

As ACCORD originated from a CARE project, it is interesting to examine the organisational relationship between the two. One question to ask is whether the organizations share certain parts of the organization. After all, an authentic partnership exists of two self-standing organizations (Hoksbergen, 2005, pp. 19-20). Finding alternative partners is one of the requirements of being an autonomous organization. CARE partners with many organizations worldwide. ACCORD, however, is just beyond its infancy and is still building its partnerships. Both parties recognize the importance for ACCORD to have additional partnerships.

> *"They will be working with a lot other organizations. I already see them working with Oxfam and others. I only encourage that, because they have been our child and now you can see that they are building additional relationships. It is very good that they not only rely on us"* [author's translation] (Langenberg, 2019, p. 11).

> *"CARE Netherlands has always stimulated Accord to partner with others, so I think now Accord is in a very good position to continue working, hopefully with the support of CARE, but even without it Accord was able to diversify its partnerships and donors"* (Dulce, 2019, p. 5)

These partnerships enable ACCORD to diversify its funding sources as well. Initially, CARE supported its local partner to access international donors, like the European Commission and the Dutch government (Langenberg, 2019, p. 4). Currently, ACCORD receives financial support from different institutional donors and manages its own funding sources. Despite this independence, 50% of CARE Philippines projects are implemented by ACCORD. Especially the projects funded by ECHO, which include

humanitarian, as well as DRR projects, are being accessed through CARE (Dulce, 2019, p. 9). This indicates that ACCORD still does not have direct access to these donors. Moreover, the length of the funding chain actually impacts the organization, because this funding first passes CARE Netherlands and the newly set-up country office of CARE Philippines. Both these INGOs get their share, which implies that less remains for ACCORD to implement the project (Dulce, 2019, p. 7). The ACCORD consultant shows his concern about the consequences of this systemic disadvantage.

> *"I find this set-up a bit disadvantageous for local and national organizations. (…) if the local organizations really intend on delivering as much services to the affected population, the local organization must tighten its belt in terms of staffing, in terms of building the capacity of the local staff and general support costs"* (Dulce, 2019, p. 7).

In other words, the length of the funding chain disables ACCORD to flourish financially.

Besides autonomous, self-standing organizations, strategic partners have to be complementary in order to work effectively (Hoksbergen, 2005, pp. 19-20). CARE and ACCORD show to be mutually dependent on each other. Therefore, their comparative advantages work in favour of their partner (Dulce, 2019, p. 6; Langenberg, 2019, p. 8). On the one hand, CARE is able to access international donor funds in order to transfer a share to ACCORD. Without CARE as a partner, ACCORD would not be able to access these funds (Langenberg, 2019, p. 8). ACCORD thus depends on CARE financially. In addition, CARE supports ACCORD with its financial systems, so they are not getting overburdened in case that the local organizations accepts too many projects (Dulce, 2019, p. 9). On the other hand, ACCORD possesses vital expertise on DRR, as well as field experience. CARE would not be able to work on the Philippines without the knowledge and expertise of the local staff. Moreover, CARE would not have any staff at all, since all international staff departed before Haiyan hit the country (Langenberg, 2019, pp. 3, 8). This shows the mutual dependence in the partner relationship. The comparative advantages of both organizations are compatible with each other, nurturing a good relationship of complementarity (Dulce, 2019, p. 6).

5.3.3. Shared understanding

Moving the faces towards the same desired change can create a common sense of purpose. Creating a common vision is of high importance in authentic partnerships (Hoksbergen, 2005, pp. 19-20). Whereas the desired change of CARE and ACCORD overlaps significantly, for both fight poverty and social injustice, they have not formulated any common vision. When asked about the common vision, the ACCORD consultant emphasizes the potential effects of changing priorities on the collaboration.

> *"Yes and no. Yes in a sense that CARE has been quite supportive to what we do here in the Philippines, but organizations change and, for example, within CARE Netherlands I see that Nok has that institutional memory about the partnership. But nothing is written. So when changes within the organizations happen, priorities change. So in the Philippines Accord was the priority of CARE in the past, but I am not so sure about it now"* (Dulce, 2019, p. 5).

This does not provide an explanation for the absence of a common vision, but it does show how the local organizations associates with the concept of 'common vision'. Interestingly, ACCORD sees it as being "*supportive to what **we** do here in the Philippines."* This implies that the local organization appropriates the services of CARE in order to direct them to its own organizational vision. However, that is not what a common vision should entail.

Despite aligning interests, nothing is documented with regards to a common vision (Dulce, 2019, pp. 5-6). The organizations have therefore not signed any strategic partnership agreement. Concerning common goals, however, the organizations jointly constructed five-year strategic plans (Langenberg, 2019, p. 6; Dulce, 2019, p. 4). This included decisions on programming, on what areas ACCORD wanted to develop its programs, what kind of programs it wanted to develop and what kind of donors to approach (Dulce, 2019, p. 4). What turns up in the data is that when both organizations talk about these five-year plans, they would also talk about the importance of taking small steps, rather than big leaps (see table 2).

	LOCALISATION 47	localisation: small steps 8
common goals 13	1 (0.02)	6 (0.40)
LONG-TERM STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP 66	6 (0.06)	2 (0.03)

Table 2: code co-occurrence table

Table 3 shows that these co-occurrences are limited to the interviews with CARE and ACCORD only.

	4: CARE 87	5: ACCORD 63	**Totals**
common goals 13	4	3	7
localisation: small steps 8	6	2	8
Totals	10	5	15

Table 3: code document table

These numbers point to a certain connection between the goals set for the partnership and the importance of taking small steps. This is clarified by the humanitarian aid coordinator of CARE.

> *"Especially important is to be modest in your goals. That is often where it goes wrong. Organizations grow too fast. They want a great number of staff, a nice office, and cars, computers etc. and they measure themselves against the image of large NGOs and UN organizations. (...) For that reason, you have to find a balance between not growing too fast and stagnating. With ACCORD, we have designed a five-year plan. I have really consciously tried to abade the enthousiasm in the beginning"* [author's translation] (Langenberg, 2019, p. 6).

The five-year strategic plans are being designed in order to formulate strategic goals, without setting the bar too high. Clear common goals are thus documented. Besides the goals, nothing is clearly documented within the partnership. Many practices and assumptions are therefore organized informally (Dulce, 2019, p. 5). When the first five-year plan was in place, the organizations discussed about the possibility of formalizing the partnership in a strategic partnership agreement. However, those discussions stopped when Haiyan happened. Other issues, like reopening the CARE country office, were prioritized over formalizing the partnership (Dulce, 2019, pp. 4, 6). As a consequence, CARE and ACCORD have not agreed upon the termination of the partnership. Although much is written in the project documents and the five-year strategic plan, a shared understanding on the future of the partnership beyond project-based collaboration, still misses (Dulce, 2019, p. 5).

5.3.4. Shared commitment

Nothing shapes an organisational relationship like human interaction (Langenberg, 2019, p. 5). CARE mentions trust as a requirement to build the capacities of local partners.

> *"(...) you have to give people chances and trust if you want to build their capacity. (...) It is also the years of collaboration through which you know each other very well. Celso is now someone who I would give the keys of my house to. He could come over to stay. We have experienced so many things together"* [author's translation] (Langenberg, 2019, pp. 3, 5).

Through these face-to-face interaction, a relationship of trust is built between the partner representatives. Besides this, a hands-off approach regarding monitoring each other's practices contributed to a partner relationship characterized by mutual trust (Dulce, 2019, p. 7).

In addition to trust, time is an ingredient that has to potential to improve the capacity of local organizations. Time is needed in order to sustain the partnership and to take small steps towards improvement. As time is a valuable resource, INGOs really have to commit to long-term collaborations with local organizations in order to build their capacities. As the quote below succinctly states:

> *"Time is required. It is not something you just do momentarily. Especially not with humanitarian project, which are always short"* [author's translation] (Langenberg, 2019, p. 7).

During this long-term process, CARE has often shown its commitment to continue supporting ACCORD strategically. This was predominantly expressed by providing extra support in times of hardship. One example is the period when typhoon Haiyan had disrupted large parts of the Philippines (Langenberg, 2019, p. 4). Another example concerns financial solidarity regarding ACCORD. Since all financial flows rely on projects, not all months can be financially covered by CARE. There have been times that CARE was not funded, and neither ACCORD. The INGO then covered those costs in order to sustain the partnership.

> *"There have been periods in which we have paid Celso's salary, because there was no income for his position in between 2 contracts. So we have also invested in keeping the team together. Now and then, we have opened our wallet and covered those costs. Or if a car breaks down, we cover those costs too"* [author's translation] (Langenberg, 2019, p. 7).

As donors hardly pay for capacity building of local organizations, CARE has invested a lot itself (Langenberg, 2019, p. 7). CARE helped the local organization to put in place a good working financial system. On administrative level CARE also capacitated ACCORD, especially on proposal writing and reporting to institutional donors (Dulce, 2019, p. 7). This was done through multiple trainings and workshops (Langenberg, 2019, p. 4). Programmatically, ACCORD always had the expertise locally available (Langenberg, 2019, p. 8). Only during times ACCORD needed specialized expertise on WASH, CARE would send an expert (Dulce, 2019, p. 6). These investments in the capacities of ACCORD have resulted in a more independent organization, which is able to provide high quality DRR services.

> *"Now is ACCORD one of the most capable NGOs in the entire country, which is able to stand on its own two feet. It has a much wider portfolio CARE has ever had and implements more than 50% of all CARE financed projects"* [author's translation] (Langenberg, 2019, p. 8).

> *"In terms of autonomy, ACCORD decides on its own. It has a board of trustees, composed of persons recognized in their professions. They meet regularly to decide over strategic issues, there is a senior management team which meets at least every month. They are doing the decision-making. (…) It can decide for itself without undue pressure from CARE Netherlands"* (Dulce, 2019, p. 8).

As these quotations show, the partnership between CARE and ACCORD has been growing throughout the years. The organizations have been working up together, learning from each other. CARE has gradually put its hands off of the local organization, in order for the local organization to start working autonomously. Nowadays, there is hardly any link between CARE Netherlands and ACCORD (Dulce, 2019, p. 8). The latter now works with CARE Philippines, but ACCORD possesses more capacities to implement (Dulce, 2019, p. 6).

5.3.5. Equality

Equality is a central element when it comes to partnering strategically. The way in which the collaboration is experienced by both parties depends on the division of authority, the way decisions are made and the way in which the partners communicate (Hoksbergen, 2005, pp. 19-20).

When taking in consideration the organisational characteristics of CARE and ACCORD, it can be said that both organizations differ enormously. Particularly in terms of the number of staff and funding amounts, the organizations are incomparable. CARE has got hundreds of staff working all over the world, whereas ACCORD has currently 40 staff members (Dulce, 2019, p. 6). Besides that, CARE attracts yearly more than 43 million euros, of which 88.9% consists of institutional funds, while ACCORD hardly attracts any funding itself (CARE, 2019d, p. 67). The difference is clearly there. However, when it comes to expertise, ACCORD masters its partner (Langenberg, 2019, p. 8). As the Philippines have experienced many natural disasters, local staff has built a wide range of experience in DRR. Both organizations are working on DRR, but CARE does not implement any projects itself. Since local organizations possess more knowledge, they are the ones implementing projects (Dulce, 2019, p. 4).

The sense of equality within the partnership has been fluctuating over the years. In the beginning, the partnership was felt to be very hierarchical.

> *"Back then, it was still very vertical. I was the boss in the start-up phase. I determined what happened and I have selected people for the ACCORD project. I paid their salaries and they were fully dependent on me. When they came to me with the question whether they could found their own NGO already indicated that, because they do not at all have to ask that, but they wanted my blessing over their idea"* [author's translation] (Langenberg, 2019, p. 7).

A plausible explanation for this is that ACCORD grew out of a CARE project in which the INGO would decide on all topics related to it. During the years that followed, ACCORD gained experience and got more independent. As a result, ACCORD felt like the partnership became more equal in terms of reciprocity.

> *"We never felt that Care Netherlands was taking advantage of us. We felt that we were receiving adequate support financially as well as recognition for what we are doing"* (Dulce, 2019, p. 6).

Typhoon Haiyan marked the start of a more difficult period concerning the equality in the relationship between CARE and ACCORD. Since worldwide a lot of funding was made available for relief practices on the Philippines, many INGOs returned to the country in order to implement projects. ACCORD also got lots of opportunities to get funded. The large amounts of money were attractive and ACCORD signed many contracts. The still underdeveloped financial systems, however, were hardly capable of handling the great amounts of money (Langenberg, 2019, p. 4). Besides that, for every project reporting requirements are the same (Dulce, 2019, p. 9). As a result of that, reporting was another heavy burden for ACCORD to carry. For that reason, CARE supported the LNGO through this period by sending staff and consultants (Langenberg, 2019, p. 8).

The partner relationship was further strengthened in the period following Haiyan. Although little is documented on the authority to make decisions, some informal rules guided these processes within the partnership. These relate to prior consultation, information sharing and communication. Firstly, CARE would always consult ACCORD before it made decisions on proposals and calls for projects (Dulce, 2019, p. 7). Secondly, both organizations shared knowledge and information with each other in order to create a mutual relationship, based on that practice.

> *"Many of the things we developed here, Accord does not make a point of sharing it with other countries. Especially since CARE Netherlands had made the Philippines one of its priority countries. There would be a lot of effort in generating support for water planning in the Philippines and at the same time they are learning what is happening here and sharing within CARE Netherlands as well as in other CARE members doing programming in DRR"* (Dulce, 2019, p. 8).

> *"In a certain sense it was. It was mainly about things like writing an ECHO-funded proposal and how you report to ECHO. It was to a lesser extent about the technical capacity"* [author's translation] (Langenberg, 2019, p. 8).

By enhancing such a practice, CARE and ACCORD enabled each other to learn and to listen. Thirdly, CARE emphasizes the importance of regular face-to-face contact with ACCORD in building their

organizational capacities (Langenberg, 2019, p. 5). Although most of the contact currently happens via e-mail, there are still yearly meetings which consist of two visits by the finance side, the administration side and the programme side. Besides that, the ACCORD consultant travels to the Netherlands in order to meet the director, to meet other departments and to visit conferences (Dulce, 2019, p. 8).

These face-to-face meetings contributed a lot to the strategic capacity building of ACCORD. However, capacities are not build easily. A few steps prior to this process laid a basis for this practice.

5.4. Partnership IV: Oxfam Novib and Candlelight

The partnership between Oxfam Novib and Candlelight constitutes the fourth case of this research. Oxfam Novib is one of the 19 Oxfam affiliates which together constitute the Oxfam confederation. Novib was founded as a grateful response to the aid the Netherlands received after the 1953 floods. During the first decennia, Novib supported many countries worldwide by fighting injustice, racism and poverty. In 1994, Novib joined the Oxfam International confederation (Oxfam Novib, 2019a). Oxfam Novib strives for "*a world where people are valued and treated equally, enjoy their rights as full citizens, and can influence decisions affecting their lives*" (Oxfam Novib, 2019b, p. 12). Oxfam Novib wants to defeat poverty by tackling inequality, saving lives, defeating hunger and creating new opportunities for youth to get work (Oxfam Novib, 2019b, p. 17). Originally, Oxfam Novib has been an organization that is used to work with partners. The INGO was one of the founders of the advocacy around localisation, as the 2015 Oxfam America report 'Turn the humanitarian system on its head' illustrates (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 2). Oxfam Novib targets to strengthen civil societies in beneficiary countries, rather than providing plain services. Therefore, it signed the Charter4Change in 2016. The localisation workstream of the Grand Bargain, which Oxfam signed in 2017, was therefore an agenda Oxfam Novib was already working on.

Despite general decrease in working with local partners, Oxfam Novib has got partners with which it has been working for years. Candlelight is such a partner. The Somalian NGO works on environment, education and health since 1995 and is mainly operational in Somaliland. Candlelight envisions "*a peaceful and environmentally conscious society with equitable access to resources and quality social services"* (Candlelight, 2019). Environmental conservation, quality education and awareness raising on health belong to its mission activities. Besides these core themes, Candlelight provides humanitarian emergency support to Somaliland communities (Candlelight, 2018).

5.4.1. Contextual conditions

Somaliland is an independent, but unrecognized part of Somalia. The region is completely autonomous in terms of government, policies and currency (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 6). The Somaliland government, however, is not able to support the people in the country well, because it misses bilateral support from the international community as a result of its non-recognition. This also affects the governments' ability to establish strong institutions. The level of corruption is therefore high in Somalia.

Especially in war scenes, corruption is widespread (Libah, 2019, p. 4). In the south of the country the level of conflict is higher than in Somaliland, because Al Shabbab disrupts the country there. There thus seems to be a relation between the level of conflict and the level of corruption in Somalia. In terms of security, Somaliland is thus very stable compared to the rest of Somalia (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 7; Libah, 2019, p. 4). The economy of Somaliland is fragile as a consequence of the little foreign support. The country exports some livestock, but communities are largely dependent on agriculture (Libah, 2019, p. 4).

Despite fraud cases within Somali NGOs, Candlelight especially experiences hindrance from the impact of natural disasters, rather than conflicts or corruption. In the last four years, severe droughts have struck the country and communities have less and less time to restore their livelihoods before the next drought hits. This impacted Candlelight's interventions, which were targeted towards improving the livelihoods of people. Tangible results are therefore hardly discernible (Libah, 2019, p. 4).

5.4.2. Organisational relationship

The first contact between Oxfam Novib and Candlelight was in 1998, when several Oxfam staff members were sent to Somalia to orientate on local partners. At that time, Candlelight only existed of the executive director and four volunteers (Libah, 2019, p. 2). Since Oxfam Novib wanted to support local organizations strategically, the INGO took the initiative to approach Candlelight for a partnership. Out of the discussions that followed, Candlelight received small scale funding. This was later followed by an EU funded programme, which also left room for capacity building (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 7).

Oxfam Novib and Candlelight possess different strengths and weaknesses. Oxfam can easily access the international platform in order to advocate, to network and to attend meetings. It has, however, less capacity when it comes to the local level. They therefore miss cultural aspects as well as inside information about what is going on in the country (Libah, 2019, p. 7). Especially during the start of the partnership, this was a disadvantage for Oxfam, since it did not have an office in Somalia (Libah, 2019, p. 5). On the contrary, it is challenging for Candlelight to reach the international stage, whereas the local organization is strong in terms of access and information about the operational regions. This gives Candlelight a comparative advantage which also complements Oxfam Novib in their weakness to access communities. Oxfam also recognizes this comparative advantage in its partnership policy.

> *"We believe that local communities and other civil society partners can better understand, represent, and address the rights, needs, and aspirations of poor people"* (Oxfam, 2007, p. 3)

The organizations thus represent each other on their own level of operation (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 11). For that reason, the organizations work closely together (Libah, 2019, p. 7; Oxfam, 2007, p. 4). The complementary strengths are incorporated in the project reports (Libah, 2019, p. 8).

Despite the close collaboration, the organizations act autonomously beyond the partnership. Besides Oxfam Novib, Candlelight sustains eleven other partnerships with national and international NGOs, through which they access EU and UN funds (Libah, 2019, p. 3). Candlelight also took a large step towards more autonomy by getting access to the pooled funds and to local institutions.

> *"Candlelight does a lot in partnerships, but they are eligible voor SHS humanitarian fund, managed by OCHA. That is already a lot more direct. That pooled fund is financed by lots of different countries. OCHA is already more donor-like than Oxfam. The latter is more joint implementation"* [author's translation] (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 11).

However, this was not achieved without the support of Oxfam Novib, as the CEO of Candlelight says.

> "*Oxfam was showing us that they wanted us to sustain ourselves. They wanted us to function sustainably. They told us "you have to come up, you have to promote yourself, you have to search for other funding organizations*" (Libah, 2019, p. 6).

As the data show, Candlelight and Oxfam Novib recognize their comparative strengths and use these to complement each other (Oxfam, 2007, p. 4). This contributes to a strong and compatible working relationship (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 21; Libah, 2019, p. 6).

5.4.3. Shared understanding

Authentic partnerships can be documented in a strategic partnership agreement, which includes the common vision, common goals, the values and principles and the termination of the partnership. Note that such an agreement is usually non-binding, which makes it free from any legal obligations. A remarkable observation in the data is that their view on the existence of a strategic partnership agreement do not correspond.

> *"I do not think there is an overarching agreement. The contracts we have are for specific projects. (...) It is more on that level than that it is all narrowly documented"* (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 8).

> "*Yes, a strategic partnership was signed. They are always telling we are partners instead of mere contractors. We are partners, we are equal [inaudible]. We are working in a close relationship. It was very clear*" (Libah, 2019, p. 6).

If there was a strategic partnership agreement, a common vision would be included. However, the fact that both organizations indicate that they have not formulated a common vision points to the non-existence of a strategic partnership agreement. Oxfam Novib and Candlelight do share their vision and mission in order to make sure that they align (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 8; Libah, 2019, p. 6). Oxfam Novib has done this through their partner assessment tool (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 8).

Despite the absence of a common vision, Oxfam Novib and Candlelight jointly decide on strategic planning and goals.

> *"What we do have, although I do not think it is documented, is jointly look into the strategy, the contingency planning processes, which has to be done once a year. Through that, you jointly look into the ways in which you are prepared to emergencies"* [author's translation] (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 8).

As the quote above shows, little partnership practices are documented. This has implications for Candlelight, since Oxfam Novib can easily change their priorities, without being bound to an agreement.

> "*Their strategy is also changing, year after year. It affected us even. The projects we are doing and our strategy is sometimes not merging. So we also face that. There are challenges. Sometimes they are changing their strategies totally. At that time we did not get any funding from them, because they changed their strategy and then they totally changed their mandate*" (Libah, 2019, p. 6).

In other words, the partnership with Oxfam Novib does not give Candlelight any legal assurance. As a consequence of the changing mandate of the INGO, Candlelight misses out on funding. However, Oxfam Novib shows to have mechanisms to realign the strategies. They familiarize their local partner with their new strategy by inviting them to a workshop (Libah, 2019, p. 6). Harmonizing the way of working is indeed important for all aspects of the partnership (Libah, 2019, p. 7).

The contracts between Oxfam Novib and Candlelight are predominantly project-based. Whereas the funding Oxfam Novib received during the first stages of the partnership could be flexibly invested, the current funds are increasingly directed to short term projects of six to twelve months (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 8). This has several implications for Candlelight. Firstly, investing in partnerships becomes more difficult, since the donor money can be spend less flexibly (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 8). Secondly, the administrative burden for the local organization relatively increases, because donor requirements stay the same, regardless of the size of the project (Dulce, 2019, p. 9). Thirdly, there is no common understanding on the termination of the partnership, since it is attached to short-term funding cycles (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 8). The latter particularly relates to the importance of a shared understanding about the partnership. The question is how both organizations approach their relationship, knowing that the partnership is largely directed to projects.

5.4.4. Shared commitment

Within the partnership, both organizations commit to specific roles and responsibilities (Oxfam, 2007, p. 5). A clear understanding of roles and responsibilities is provided through the project contracts. These clearly state what is expected of both parties. Whether these tasks are properly done, however, is monitored by both organizations. Accountability is currently an important subject and Oxfam Novib is assisting Candlelight to put the right systems in place (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 10). Accountability measures are mainly taken with regards to projects. Beyond the projects, roles and responsibilities have grown automatically, particularly on information sharing (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 11).

Committing to roles and obligations creates credibility and trust within the partnership (Oxfam, 2007, p. 5). This is backed by the statements of both organizations.

> *"I experience Candlelight as a great organization. We work closely together on implementation and we can really trust them"* [author's translation] (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 12).

> *"Which practice of the process of the partnership is most important in building a successful partnership like this?*
> *Honestly, I can say trust. If the international organization trusts you and accepts that you are doing something, trust is the major thing. And also funding. Funding and then trust. Those are the two major issues"* (Libah, 2019, p. 10).

This basis of trust, however, does not come without any costs. It comes with a risk that INGOs often have to bear. This is more extensively discussed in the next section.

5.4.5. Equality

The centrality of projects within the partnership can create considerable challenges regarding the sense of equality among the partners. Starting with organisational characteristics, the two organizations differ majorly in their number of staff. While Oxfam employs thousands of people around the world (45 in Somalia), Candlelight has 170 staff workers (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 8; Libah, 2019, p. 3). They are more similar regarding their sectors of operation. Candlelight works on agriculture and nature conservation by giving trainings. Besides that, it works on livelihoods and WASH by doing income-generating activities and organizing self-help groups (Libah, 2019, p. 2). Lastly, Candlelight supports two schools by giving vocational trainings. Oxfam Novib has expertise on the same themes and has been assisting Candlelight for a long period (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 7).

Besides organisational characteristics, decision-making procedures contribute to the extent to which the partnership is experienced as equal. As earlier mentioned, Candlelight is closely involved in the contingency planning. Both organizations thus jointly decide on the long-term planning.

> *"Our partners have always been very engaged in developing the strategy and contingency planning. Actually in all the things Oxfam does beyond the projects. So, regular partner reviews, programme reviews. We include the partners in this. It is thus more about "what is the strategy, what are the needs, which direction do we want to go?"* [author's translation] (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 7).

However, consulting the local partner appears not always to be the first step.

> "*We always inform them that we need to listen to one another. (…) Sometimes the staff gives us also orders instead of consultation and discussion and listening to one another. We have seen that as well*" (Libah, 2019, p. 7).

An example in which consulting the local partner is not the first step concerns the proposal procedure. When Oxfam Novib gets the opportunity to react on a call, the issue is discussed internally before they decide over a role for Candlelight in the proposal (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 9). In other words, Candlelight is not given the opportunity to argue whether they see a role for themselves regarding the contents of the call. If Candlelight does get a responsibility within the proposal, the local organization gets involved in the proposal design and has to sign before the proposal is submitted to the donor. The decision regarding the amount of funding that is allocated to Candlelight, however, lies fully with the INGO (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 9). Interestingly, this fact is regularly highlighted and brought into relation with equality by Oxfam Novib, without being explicitly asked about it.

> *"Something that remains difficult according to me is that the funds will always be going from Oxfam Novib to Candlelight. You trie to make it as equal as possible, but sometimes you wonder how you can do that if this is the direction of the money flows"* [author's translation] (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 9).
>
> *"The decision regarding the amount fo money they get lies fully with Oxfam"* [author's translation] (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 9).
>
> *"What I continue to find difficult is that the money goes via Oxfam. So to what extent it is really equal..."* [author's translation] (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 12)

These statements show that Oxfam Novib puts question marks behind the level of equality within the partnership, especially regarding the allocation of funds. This slightly negative sense of equality is, however, not shared by Candlelight. This difference in the sense of equality between the two organizations is also shown in table 4, which shows that Oxfam speaks more negatively about equality than its local counterpart.

> *"So despite this huge difference in size, you feel some sense of equality?"*
> *"Yes, yes. We are still feeling that."*
>
> *"How do you achieve that sense of equality, despite the huge difference in size?"*
> *"We can reach all the time, we discuss all the time, we share our opinion all the time, we need to share our strategy, so we need to understand one another. That is I think, compared to other organizations that we work with, very good, because Oxfam listens. I hear also other things from international organizations, that they feel that they own the resources and humiliate us when they are giving support. So I can say that Oxfam is very good at that. We always negotiate, we always share our opinions, we always share. They are very good at that"* (Libah, 2019, p. 7).

Candlelight clearly appreciates the partnership with Oxfam Novib, as portrayed in the quote above. Particularly the way of communication, characterized by continuous sharing of knowledge and information, is highlighted as a factor that contributes to a positive sense of equality. As shown in table 5, these factors largely explain the positive sense of equality for Candlelight[2]. When the respondent talked about his sense of equality, he also talked about sharing knowledge and information.

	6: OXFAM Novib 113	8: Candlelight 71	Totals
EQUALITY 28	5	5	10
sense of equality: neg. 14	3	1	4
sense of equality: pos. 11	1	3	4
Totals	9	9	18

Table 4: code document table

[2] Note that different codes are assigned to the same quotations. The value of '2' thus refers to the same parts of the interview transcript, which have all three explaining codes attached to them.

	sense of equality: neg. 14	sense of equality: pos. 11
full information sharing 14	1 (0.04)	2 (0.09)
mutual knowledge sharing 11	2 (0.09)	2 (0.10)
open and transparent communication 11	1 (0.04)	2 (0.10)

Table 5: code co-occurrence table with the rows representing the individual explaining factors.

Capacity building is one of the objectives in the partnership between Oxfam Novib and Candlelight (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 7). This contributes to a practice of listening and learning within the partnership. During the first stage of the partnership, Oxfam Novib and Candlelight jointly assessed the local organization's capacity by means of a risk assessment tool. This included a capacity strengthening plan in which the steps to improve the gaps in the organizations were described (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 10). The support Oxfam Novib provided has been targeting all aspects of the organization.

> *"So their partnerships always capacitate, they tell you the reality, they are always building capacity, even supporting how to get funding from other organizations. So they were giving tremendous support in every aspect, in terms of strategy, strategy management, in terms of efficiency of the organizations. So we can say that the way they managed their partnerships was very successful"* (Libah, 2019, p. 7).

The INGO supported Candlelight in governance system, but also improved organisational policies and procedures, like their management policy and financial policy. Additionally, Oxfam Novib has improved physical infrastructures, like the Candlelight office (Libah, 2019, p. 6). Building the capacity of Candlelight was predominantly done by trainings (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 7; Libah, 2019, pp. 2-3). A rather different approach to share knowledge is to collaboratively work in the office of the partner. This has also regularly been done by Oxfam Novib and Candlelight.

> *"Wat wij vooral in 2017 heel veel hebben gedaan, toen we begonnen met de DRA response, is het werken met gezamenlijke teams. Dat was een hele nauwe samenwerking. We hadden ook support staf die dan op kantoor bij Candlelight ging zitten. We hadden zo onze logistics manager en onze finance manager die dan 1 dag in de week bij de partner doorbracht en met hun werkten. Dat is meer het seconden van staf en heel nauw samenwerken"* (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 10).

> *"Sometimes they ask for our staff to work with them for two or three months, and after these months they come back. We interchangeably benefit one another"* (Libah, 2019, p. 8).

These regular face-to-face meetings give shape to the capacity-building process and are being held formally as well as informally (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 12). Implementation was done through joint teams, consisting of staff from both organizations. Nowadays, the Oxfam partnership coordinator still meets a Candlelight representative on weekly basis (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 10).

Another way in which Oxfam Novib supports Candlelight is by inviting the local organization for different kinds of meetings. These include trainings, regional coordination meetings and meetings on international level. By enabling Candlelight to go to meetings of the humanitarian community in

Nairobi, the organization can now access international donors, like the UK Department for International Development (DfID) (Libah, 2019, p. 4).

The support given by Oxfam Novib contributed majorly to Candlelight's current position, as one of the three biggest NGOs in Somalia (Libah, 2019, pp. 3, 5). One thing that enabled Oxfam Novib to capacitate local organizations was the multi-year grants of the Dutch *medefinancieringsstelsel* (MFS). These funds could be spend flexibly and continued over a long period of time (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, pp. 7, 8). Local capacity building and civil society strengthening require a long-term approach (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 5). The opportunities that MFS financing provided showed how this can result in positive effects. Continuity within the organization is also important in sustaining this long-term relationship (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 11). Oxfam Novib invested a lot of staff time in order to capacitate Candlelight (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 10).

However, time only has not been sufficient in order to "graduate" Candlelight. Financial resources also have been invested into the local organization.

> *"At that time they were providing our core staff, they were providing salaries for the director, they were providing rent, they were providing utilities. All of that support from above. They were paying the core staff salaries. And our director, deputy director and some project staff. Even when there is no project, they are running the office"* (Libah, 2019, p. 5).

This clearly shows the financial solidarity Oxfam Novib has with Candlelight. To become the capacitated organization Candlelight is right now, investments have been made. Even when these costs were not budgeted by the donor.

5.5. Cross-case analysis

This section focuses on the differences and similarities between the four cases. Firstly, it presents an overview on the way localisation is perceived by the respondents. Secondly, the aspects that are most conducive to authentic partnerships are identified.

5.5.1. A perception of localisation

All the partnership efforts described in the cases are aimed to contribute to localisation. When the respondents talked about localisation, they also mentioned the comparative advantages of local organizations (see table 6). The need to "southernize" aid is thus partly related to local organizations' knowledge and expertise on local situations and operations and their ability to access local communities.

	comparative advantage 16
complementary strengths 19	7 (0.25)
LOCALISATION 49	8 (0.14)

Table 6: code co-occurrence table

These comparative advantages, however, have not yet led to a flourishing localisation campaign. Towards 2020, a lot still needs to be done in order to reach the 25% localisation target of the Grand Bargain. Oxfam Novib, for instance, only transferred 15% of total funding to local partners last year, while ZOA only spend 6% of last year's funding through local partners (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 3; Observation, 2019, p. 2). In Somalia, localisation neither proceeds fast. The CEO of Candlelight confirms these low rates and continuously repeats his frustration about this fact (Libah, 2019, p. 3). The percentages shown above imply that a lot of funding is still directly implemented by INGOs. As a result, LNGOs suffer from the consequences of short-term funding cycles (Donkin, 2019, p. 3). Administrative and overhead costs raise high and only a few INGOs cover for these costs. As soon will become clear, authentic partnerships show to belong to the minority of partnerships in which INGOs do account for the overhead costs of their local partners.

The pace at which aid is getting localised shows that it concerns a long, laborious process (Langenberg, 2019, p. 5). This can be explained by different barriers that block the process. In almost 20% of the cases in which respondents talk about localisation, they also mention barriers to the process (see table 7).

	LOCALISATION 53	localisation: barriers 20
LOCALISATION 53		13 (0.22)
localisation: money dependence 20	10 (0.16)	4 (0.11)
localisation: risk sharing 14	11 (0.20)	7 (0.26)

Table 7: code co-occurrence table

The money dependence of localisation is a barrier that is mentioned by the respondents. Its frequent occurrence in the data emphasizes how central this is in the localisation debate, which is also shown in table 7. 10 out of 20 'money dependence' quotations are directly linked to localisation. In the end, decision regarding partnerships have to be made based on money (de Boer, 2019, p. 3).

With a correlation coefficient of 0.26, the willingness of donors to share the risk of localisation is another barrier. This risk entails that INGOs might invest a lot without achieving short-term results. Donors do not share this risk, because donors also have to be accountable to the government or its electorate (Langenberg, 2019, p. 10). In other words, if money disappears or the quality of the delivered services is low, the INGO is responsible (Langenberg, 2019, p. 3).

The speed in which the localisation agenda will proceed over the coming years will depend on the extent to which donors can account for the risks involved in localizing aid. The question is, however, whether direct institutional funding to L/NNGOs will be enough to turn the humanitarian system on its head. Are LNGOs really less dependent and less vulnerable when they receive institutional funding directly? In the end, who says that LNGOs are necessarily unhappy with an INGO as their 'donor'

(Donkin, 2019, p. 3)? That is an assumption on which international humanitarian action currently rests. This emphasizes the need for INGOs to listen to their local counterparts in finding the best fit for funding relief and development services.

5.5.2. Authentic partnership characteristics

Regarding the authentic partnership characteristics as listed by Hoksbergen (2005, p. 19-20), it is interesting to look at whether the respondents recognize these, whether they really take up these terms and which topics show up in the data when discussing them. Table 8 shows the absolute frequencies of the code groups, in which the characteristics are categorized. 'Equality' is the category most often talked about by the respondents. In 28% of all cases in which they talk about authentic partnership characteristics, a relation to equality is made. The gap between 'equality' and the second most frequently discussed category is particularly striking. One reason for this could be the large difference in the number of codes attributed to the code groups. However, this does not change the observation that 'equality' is most often discussed.

	EQUALITY 21 190	ORGANISA... 11 142	RESILIENCE 4 83	SHARED... 11 141	SHARED... 11 12	Totals
2: CAFOD 79	22	16	8	16	16	78
3: KMSS 63	20	15	7	11	17	70
4: CARE 89	11	17	5	15	9	57
5: ACCORD 63	23	17	6	6	17	69
6: OXFAM Novib 113	39	19	14	28	19	119
7: ZOA 57	14	11	7	19	8	59
8: Candlelight 71	29	24	16	22	20	111
14: MIPAREC 80	32	23	20	24	20	119
Totals	190	142	83	141	126	682

Table 8: code document table of the code categories, with the second column representing organisational relationship, the fourth column representing shared commitment and the fifth column representing shared understanding.

Another observation that can be read from table 8 is the closeness of the number of quotations attached to the categories of 'organisational relationship' and 'shared commitment'. Some interviews even show to have the exact same number of quotations attached to both categories. This also counts for 'shared understanding', although this category has a slightly lower total number of quotations attached to it. One explanation could be the same number of codes in the categories. No sufficient alternative explanation that accounts for this peculiar pattern results from the data.

Where respondents do not talk about much is resilience in the partnership. Only 12% of all quotations that are codified as authentic partnership characteristics are related to resilience. Respondents neither take up the terms themselves, but only refer to it when being asked about specifically. This subject therefore clearly has the least relevancy for authentic partnerships. Since this research limits

itself to the characteristics that are most conducive to authentic partnerships, this category is not to be discussed extensively. The category of 'shared understanding' is neither discussed here, since its most interesting elements are yet covered in the within-case analyses. The other categories, however, are given attention according to their relative importance, as portrayed by table 8.

5.5.3. Organisational relationship

When looking more closely to category of organisational relationship, three things stand out from the data. Firstly, comparative advantages and complementary strengths show to be frequently discussed subjects (table 9). In fact, with a correlation coefficient of 0.25, the comparative advantages of the organizations often seem to complement each other in their partnership (table 10).

	auton. self-s... 15	comparati... 16	complem... 19	trust 15	Totals
2: CAFOD 79	2	1	2	4	9
3: KMSS 63		7	2		9
4: CARE 89	2	1	2	4	9
5: ACCORD 63	3	3	3	1	10
6: OXFAM Novib 113	2		1	2	5
7: ZOA 57			3	1	4
8: Candlelight 71	5	2	4	2	13
14: MIPAREC 80	1	2	2	1	6
Totals	15	16	19	15	65

Table 9: code co-occurrence table, with the first column representing 'autonomous, self-standing organizations', the second column representing 'comparative advantage' and the third column representing 'complementary strengths'.

	complementary strengths 19
comparative advantage 16	7 (0.25)

Table 10: code co-occurrence table

Secondly, when respondents talk about their organization being autonomous, they often interpret this in financial terms, as the total number for 'autonomous, self-standing organization' is high. As already presented in the within-case analyses, being dependent of INGO funding used to be the status quo. Nowadays, local organizations diversify their funding sources in order to become more autonomous (Dulce, 2019, p. 5).

Thirdly, trust is often mentioned as an important ingredient for a strong and compatible working relationship. Every partnership starts with an initial level of trust, which has to grow over time in order

to do capacity building (Langenberg, 2019, p. 5; Donkin, 2019, pp. 5-6). This relation also becomes clear in table 11, which shows a regular co-occurrence between trust and capacity building.

	trust 15
capac. support 21	3
CAPACITY BUILDING 67	6

Table 11: code co-occurrence table

Trust is therefore needed to guide the partnership through its first stages, but it continues to be an important aspect throughout the partnership.

5.5.4. Shared commitment

By engaging into partnerships, INGOs as well as L/NNGOs commit themselves to responsibilities with regards to the partnership objectives. The respondents mention different practices with which they give shape to these commitments. The most attached ones can be found in table 16.

An eye-catching code in terms of frequency is 'long-term commitment'. Most of the respondents referred to the resource of time as being of crucial importance. Most interestingly, 'long-term commitment' is the most frequently attached code of all codes, except for the general codes. This strongly emphasizes the importance of the aspect of time in authentic partnerships. The importance to commit to the partnership over a long period of time is by CAFOD linked to relationship building (Donkin, 2019, p. 7). CARE emphasizes time as an important ingredient for learning processes (Langenberg, 2019, p. 3). When Oxfam Novib talked about long-term commitment, it was frequently linked to the need for multi-annual funding (Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 8). This long-term commitment is reflected in another frequently returning topic in the data. This concerns the overhead costs of LNGOs. In all cases, respondents expressed the importance of INGOs covering core costs of LNGOs in times that are not financially covered by the donor.[3] These costs include office rents, staff salaries and remaining costs to run the office. As opposed to many INGOs, the ones in the sample did cover these costs for their local partners.

[3] Other terms used by the respondents include 'financial solidarity', 'core costs' or 'financial support', which are not accounted for by the 'overhead' code.

	clear understanding of roles 10	long-term commitment 24	overhead 12	Totals
2: CAFOD 79	1	5	1	7
3: KMSS 63		1		1
4: CARE 89	2	6		8
5: ACCORD 63				0
6: OXFAM N... 113	2	8	1	11
7: ZOA 57			3	3
8: Candlelight 71	1		5	6
14: MIPAREC 80	4	4	2	10
Totals	10	24	12	46

Table 12: code document table

This financial solidarity is a central element in sustaining partnership relations. However, as mentioned before, the risks are fully accounted for by the INGOs. Whether this commitment can be sustained in the future is therefore still to be seen.

5.5.5. Equality

As 'equality' is shown by the respondents to be of considerable importance, the category should be more closely examined. As a result of the multiplicity of subjects relating to equality, the category counts 21 codes. Quotations are therefore spread over a high number of codes. The nine most attached codes are shown in table 12.

	2: CAFOD 79	3: KMSS 63	4: CARE 89	5: ACCORD 63	6: OXFAM... 113	7: ZOA 57	8: Candlelight 71	14: MIPAREC 80	Totals
EQUALITY 28	3	3	1	7	5	2	5	2	28
face-to-face meetings 18		1	1	2	3	3	4	4	18
full information sharing 14	2	1		2	3		2	4	14
joint decision-making 13		2	1	3	4		1	2	13
mutual knowledge sharing 11	1		1	2		2	1	4	11
open and transparent co... 11	4	1	1		1		2	2	11
same sector of operation 16	1	3	1	2	4	3	1	1	16
sense of equality: neg. 14		6	1		3		1	3	14
sense of equality: pos. 11	3	1	1	1	1		3	1	11
Totals	14	18	8	19	24	10	20	23	136

Table 13: code document table, with the sixth row representing 'open and transparent communication'

After the general code for equality, face-to-face meetings heads the list as the most frequently attached code. This raises the question what makes face-to-face meetings so important for the level of equality within a partnership. Interestingly, the code does not co-occur with the codes for a sense of equality. Based on that, we can assume that there is no causal relationship between face-to-face meetings and

having a sense of equality regarding the partnership. Face-to-face meetings does co-occur with seven different codes for capacity building. This can be easily explained by the fact that capacitating partners requires face-to-face dialogue and training (de Boer, 2019, p. 4; Hiemstra & Harmsen, 2019, p. 10). The remaining codes with which 'face-to-face meetings' occurs are presented in table 13.

	face-to-face meetings 18
AUTHENTIC PARTNERSHIP 66	5 (0.06)
full information sharing 14	1 (0.03)
joint decision-making 13	1 (0.03)
person on the ground 9	4 (0.17)
prior consultation 5	1 (0.05)
understanding of the organization 5	2 (0.10)

Table 14: code co-occurrence table 'face-to-face meetings'

'Face-to-face meetings' most often occurs with the general code for authentic partnerships. The strength of this relation, however, is weak with a correlation coefficient of 0.06. The relation with the code 'person on the ground' is much higher. This leads to the obvious explanation that there should be a person on sight in order to be able to meet face-to-face with a partner. The correlation coefficient with 'understanding of the organization' is also higher. The two quotations that concern this co-occurrence show that closely collaborating by meeting face-to-face contributes to a mutual understanding of each other's organization (Libah, 2019, p. 7; Kibinakanwa, 2019, p. 8). The remaining co-occurrences relate to decision-making and information sharing. However, the relations are negligibly weak, so it hard to state that face-to-face meetings are directly linked to these characteristics.

As can be seen from table 14, equality is also determined by the extent to which organizations consult each other in decision-making. Of the 5 quotations to which the code of 'prior consultation' is attached, 3 co-occur with the code for equality. Moreover, of 13 quotations to which the code of 'joint decision-making' is attached, 4 are linked to equality. This indicates that making decisions cooperatively is also a part of constituting an equal partnership.

	EQUALITY 28
joint decision-making 13	4 (0.11)
prior consultation 5	3 (0.10)

Table 15: code co-occurrence

The code for ‘same sector of operation’ also shows up frequently in the data. Equality is thus often related to the sectors in which the organizations are working. This emphasizes the association with organizational capabilities that has been observed earlier in the case of CAFOD and KMSS. This largely explains why partners express themselves negatively about the sense of equality within the partnership, as can be seen in the table below.

	sense of equality: neg. 14	sense of equality: pos. 11
balanced organizational capabilities: neg. 4	5 (0.38)	
full information sharing 14	1 (0.04)	2 (0.09)
mutual knowledge sharing 11	2 (0.09)	2 (0.10)
open and transparent communication 11	1 (0.04)	2 (0.10)

Table 16: code co-occurrence table

More interesting, however, are the aspects that contributed to a positive sense of equality. With a correlation coefficient of 0.10, ‘full information sharing’, ’mutual knowledge sharing’ and ‘open and transparent communication’ largely explain the positive attitude of partners with regards to their sense of equality. These codes all relate to the mutuality in the communication between the partners.

The findings have given insights into the importance attributed to the different partnership practices. The next chapter discussed what this means for authentic partnerships for capacity building and how NGOs can improve their partnerships in the future.

6. Conclusions

As the localisation agenda proceeds, INGOs are increasingly looking for ways to invest strategically in the capacities of local partners. More than ever, partnerships are seen as the most suitable vehicle to sustainably guide local partners towards independence. Authentic partnerships can contribute to the creation of a partnership environment that is conducive to sustainable capacity building. This research aimed to identify the partnership practices that mostly contribute to authentic partnerships between INGOs and L/NNGOs. This chapter answers the research questions by discussing how the results presented in the previous chapter could be seen in the light of today's humanitarian system; how NGOs can use the results to nurture their partnerships; and to what extent the results can be projected on other partnerships. Additionally, the methodological implications and limitations are discussed, as well as some recommendations for future research.

6.1. Barriers, motives and contextual conditions

As earlier findings suggest, a large majority of partnerships are still characterized by unequal, project-based relationships. INGOs still make a lot of the decisions and therefore contribute to autocratic partner relations. Two explanations can account for this fact. Either INGOs are not willing to localise, because it potentially decreases the relevance of their existence; or external barriers block the possibility of engaging in authentic partnerships. The data confirm the latter explanation.

Two barriers account for the slow pace at which localisation is happening. Firstly, authentic partnerships require money beyond project funding. NGOs rely on projects for their funding, because the funding system is founded on projects. In times of sufficient project contracts, NGOs receive sufficient money to cover their core costs. In gap periods, however, a lack of money can mean the end for a L/NNGO. Since authentic partnerships require a long-term commitment, INGOs have to account for the overhead costs of their partners during those gap periods. INGOs, however, are as reliant on project funding as any other NGO. For that reason, INGOs have little resources to cover the overhead costs of their local partners during those periods. Consequently, partnerships remain stuck in project-based relations of one-sidedness.

Secondly, investing in authentic partnerships is not without any risks. Especially in Somalia and Burundi, corruption levels are high. This can result in fraud cases within LNGOs. INGOs cannot account for this loss of money, but are held responsible by their donors. Donors, in turn, are bound to political accountability. In other words, the extent to which a localized approach to aid is adopted depends on donors and politicians' willingness to share this risk.

Another question this research aimed to address concerns the motives of NGOs to collaborate. What brings NGOs to the table in order to engage in partnership together? The DIAD model suggests the level of conflict and the level of power asymmetry as two important aspects that inform actors' decisions to come to the table. The motives for INGOs and L/NNGOs to engage in partnerships

predominantly relate to their complementary strengths. The strengths of INGOs include access to the international community, access to donors and professional expertise. LNGOs possess completely different strengths, which include access to local communities, knowledge of the local situation and field experience. NGOs are also motivated to partner because their counterparts work within the same sectors. Since the organizations fit in terms of strengths and sectors, the level of conflict is low, which gives trust for further collaboration. This is in line with the DIAD model.

With regards to the level of power asymmetry, however, the DIAD model does not align with the results. Although there clearly is power asymmetry between INGOs and LNGOs, this is not mentioned as a motivation for engaging in partnerships. INGOs willingness to partner with LNGOs is currently more stimulated by the demand of institutional donors to 'go local'. Additionally, INGOs want to partner with LNGOs because they think it is the right thing to do. That is why INGOs like CAFOD and Oxfam Novib are frontrunners in advocating for localisation.

Besides the barriers and motives for partnerships, the findings also point to particular conditions on which partnerships rely in order to flourish. The cases show that the level of corruption and the level of conflict have an influence on the resources of the organizations, but not directly on partnership practices. Only ZOA and MIPAREC experienced some troubles in their partnership as a consequence of the level of conflict in Burundi. Close governmental scrutiny put barriers on the collaboration.

Other conditions are predominantly of an institutional nature. Current rules and regulations within the humanitarian system do not readily allow for authentic partnerships. Some periods in time, however, showed to be conducive to authentic partnership practices. The period of the MFS, for instance, constituted great possibilities for INGOs to invest in local partners in order to build their capacities. INGOs were funded for these practices and could therefore sustain these partnerships over the long run. This multi-annual funding is a vital institutional condition for enabling authentic partnerships. Another element in allowing INGOs to build their local partners' capacities is unrestricted funding. Earmarked funding leaves less space to invest in the things that are highly prioritized by local partners. For instance, less restricted funding enabled CAFOD and Oxfam Novib to invest in the capacities KMSS and Candlelight wanted to work on. Besides a multi-annual approach, the institutional environments of partnerships should thus also be characterized by less restriction.

6.2. Authentic partnership practices

Most authentic partnership practices as investigated in this research are not narrowly documented. This is in line with the non-binding character of authentic partnerships. Common vision, common goals and shared values are mostly included in project-based partnership agreements. Only ZOA and MIPAREC showed to have signed a strategic partnership agreement. However, this widespread non-documentation does not point to the absence of any activities beyond the project cycles. The partnership practices that go beyond project activities are given shape in an informal way. Some of these practices contribute considerably to the authenticity of partnerships.

As the data undeniably indicate, partners mostly value an equal relationship when it comes to partnership building. As shown in the analysis, equality is by LNGOs often interpreted in terms of resources and capabilities. LNGOs rely on external funding and hence the availability of resources is their prior concern. Of course, LNGOs are not equal to INGOs in terms of resources and LNGOs recognize this fact. However, in terms of power and decision-making LNGOs express themselves positively about the equality in their relationship with international partners. The literature suggests that partnership relations are autocratically ruled by INGOs, but LNGOs do not experience their strategic partnerships this way. Interestingly, INGOs are less content with the level of equality in the relationship when it comes to decision-making authority. They would rather see the relation to be more equal. An example is given by the case of Oxfam Novib and Candlelight. An explanation for this lies in the strong connection between power and resources. INGOs usually own and access financial resources, which makes them authorized to make decisions regarding its spending. This puts them insurmountably in a more powerful position than their local partners.

Despite the above, many partners in this study showed to have a sense of equality in the relationship. The question is which practices act as a foundation for such a relationship. First and foremost, face-to-face meetings nurture an equal relationship. By means of regular contact, face-to-face meetings enable partners to build their relationship. This can be done by meeting each other for trainings, conferences or other meetings, but it also includes drinking a cup of coffee in the partner's office in order to build that relationship informally.

An equal relationship is not build through face-to-face meetings alone. Decision-making also plays a role. As the results suggest, consulting each other before decisions are being made also contributes to equality. This practice of prior consultation also gives an opportunity to share new information in order to jointly decide upon the issue at hand. This requires open and transparent communication, through which information and knowledge is shared fully. Such a way of communicating can be enabled by having regular face-to-face meetings.

INGOs should therefore invest more in face-to-face meetings and dialogues with their local partners. Having a staff member based in the region of the partner constitutes the first step. A second step INGOs can take is to create a special staff position for managing partner relationships, in which face-to-face meetings are a requirement. Although some INGOs already made a staff member responsible for partner relations, a lot are still behind on this way of working. Other ways that are already adopted by some organizations is to share office space or to exchange staff members for a particular period, like ZOA and Oxfam Novib did. While doing their own work, partners can pick up conversations and can learn from each other in a way that does not involve additional costs.

Besides the authentic partnership characteristics as listed by Hoksbergen (2005, pp. 19-20), additional partnership elements show to be of crucial importance in building authentic partnerships. Mutual trust is one of these and is highly valued by the partners within this research sample. However, another, more important partnership practice which creates this trust concerns a long-term commitment.

Sustaining and building partner relationships over many years has three different functions. Firstly, it allows for learning processes within both organizations, for learning processes take time. Localisation therefore also comes in small steps. Secondly, it allows for relationship building, which can create more trust and reciprocity in the relationship and hence a better understanding of the partnership. Thirdly, long-term commitment gives an opportunity for a relationship of (financial) support that goes beyond short-term project cycles. When financial gaps can be covered by the INGO, LNGOs can get more continuancy in their organization, through which they can grow towards more independence. More multi-annual funding like the MFS, which allowed ZOA and Oxfam Novib to invest in their local partners more strategically, should be made available in order to make this long-term commitment feasible for INGOs. For now, INGOs are paying overhead costst of their local partners from project funding or from their own general funds, for which they are not financially covered.

The question is therefore how equal and long-term partnership relations can possibly be created. Systemic changes are needed for INGOs to be able to capacitate local partners over a long period of time. More multi-annual funding has shown to be a stimulus for authentic partnerships. If localisation is really the ambition of institutional donors, they should fund local organizations directly or share the risk of funding LNGOs with INGOs. And if a long-term commitment is indeed the way to capacitating local organizations, INGOs should continuously recalibrate, adapt and reflect on their partnership practices.

6.3. Limitations

Several choices regarding the research design limited the validity of the results. Regarding the internal validity, it has to be acknowledged that the qualitative nature of this study leaves much room for interpretation. Two examples emphasize this. Firstly, assumptions shaped the interpretation of the data. The main assumption concerns the positive relation between the number of times respondents speak about a certain topic and the importance of that topic. Equality, for instance, is a much discussed topic. However, there could be explanations for this fact, other than importance. Secondly, some codes include a value judgement. Statements within the data could have been interpreted as negative by the researcher, while the respondent did not necessarily see it negatively. Despite these limitations, the internal validity increases by the triangular way of data collection, involving semi-structure interviews, document analysis and participant observation. Another limitation concerns the fact that many partnership practices are done informally. As a consequence, measuring these was a challenge. This was partly accounted for by focusing on the differences and similarities of the answers between the INGOs and the LNGOs. If answers correspond, the information is more reliable. With regards to data collection, language constituted a barrier. Some respondents did not master the English language fully, which made it hard to communicate. This might have an influence on the amount and depth of the data acquired.

Regarding the external validity, the selection of cases brings limitations to the results. As opposed to most process tracing studies, the sample of this thesis is large. A smaller sample would have

allowed for a more in-depth analysis of the findings, by tracing the causal mechanisms further down. However, this would have limited the generalizability of the findings. The size of the sample now neither implicates that the conclusion of equality and long-term commitment being the most important aspects in building authentic partnerships can readily be generalized to all partnerships. However, the external validity is strengthened by the fact that all cases concern different countries. The findings that return in all cases, like the importance of covering overhead, are therefore particularly valid.

6.4. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, a few recommendations can be directed to INGOs. As discussed above, investing in face-to-face meetings with partners is crucial for authentic partnerships to flourish. Working through local partners merely from the North is therefore not conducive to authentic partnerships. Sufficient staff should be available locally in order to meet the partners. In-office working and inviting partners for meetings must be widely adopted as a common partnership practice. Regarding financial support for LNGOs, INGOs sometimes have to accept the risk of losing money if they really want to commit to localisation. Until the point on which institutional donors decide to start sharing the risks with INGOs, the latter have to live with the current system. However, INGOs can contribute to improving institutional conditions for authentic partnerships by advocating for the importance of multi-annual and less restricted funding. For ZOA, CARE Netherlands and Oxfam Novib, this means investing in joint initiatives like the DRA, in order to organize and coordinate such undertakings. INGOs have to show the requirements for real localised action in order to force institutional donors to put off their mask of collaboration.

Although this research contributed to the knowledge on building authentic partnerships, it has not addressed the relation between authentic partnerships and sustainable capacity building to its fullest. Further research is needed to create a complete picture of the way in which authentic partnerships can contribute to capacity building. Firstly, more in-depth research is needed regarding the way in which partnership characteristics have an influence on sustainable capacity building. How does a shared commitment contribute to more aligned interests? And how does equality lead to more (financial) independence between two organizations? The nature of these causal relationships are important to address in future studies.

Secondly, studies that build on the results of this thesis should focus on revealing tacit knowledge among research participants. Since a lot partnership practices happen informally, there could be valuable information hidden in particular values, presumptions and heuristics. Identifying these is beyond the scope of this study. For this reason, additional research is needed.

Thirdly, future research has to focus on the influence of civil society on the ability of NGOs to build authentic partnerships. Can authentic partnerships be more easily build in strong civil societies, than in weak civil societies? Vice versa, the influence of NGOs on civil society should also be closer examined. The question still remains whether investments in LNGOs, which essentially replace

governments in public service provision, in the end strengthen or weaken civil society. Moreover, civil society is not always consensual and can be a fertile soil for conflicts and abuse (Eade, 1997, p. 20). This should be taken into account in future studies.

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Annexes

Annex I: Operationalisation table

Dependent and independent variables	**Intervening variables**	**Indicators**
DV: Sustainable capacity building IV1: level of diversity of interests IV2: level of interdependence of interests	ORGANISATIONAL RELATIONSHIP • autonomous, self-standing organisations • complementary strengths • a strong, compatible working relationship	The share of total income raised from own constituency
		Number of projects beyond the partnership
		Percentage of funding acquired beyond the partnership
		Inclusion of competencies and comparative advantages in role division
	SHARED UNDERSTANDING • common vision, • sense of purpose, • clearly articulated goals • a common understanding about the future of the partnership	Existence of non-binding agreement with strategic partner
		Existence of a clear vision and mission statement/statement of intent
		Existence of documented similar beliefs, values and principles
		Existence of documented start- and end date of the partnership (possibility of termination before end date included)
	SHARED COMMITMENT • shared responsibility • clear understanding of roles • mutual accountability	Existence of documented acceptance of joint responsibilities
		Existence of clearly formulated and documented roles and obligations
		Extent to which one organization has the lead in proposal development, fundraising and program implementation
		Existence of pre-set standards of accountability (checks and balances)
		Existence of M&E system

	EQUALITY • a sense of equality in the relationship • joint decision making • open and transparent communication • a practice of listening to and learning from each other	Difference between total amounts of funding and total amounts of staff
		Number of same sectors of operation
		Existence of documented equal rights
		Balanced organizational capabilities
		Existence of documented acceptance of the principle of prior consultation
		Existence of a clear distribution of authority statement
		Existence of documented commitment to full information sharing
		Existence of a jointly designed capacity strengthening plan
		Number of face-to-face meetings in one month
	RESILIENCE • a constructive method of resolving conflicts and disagreements • willingness to compromise	Existence of a collaborative strategy to conflict resolution
		Existence of a general sense of reciprocity
		Existence of a collaborative strategy to solving problems of mismanagement

Annex II: Themes and topics semi-structured interviews

INTERVIEW PHASE	THEMES AND TOPICS
Introduction	1. Putting the respondent at ease
	2. Elevator pitch (personalities and relevance)
	3. Request recording
	4. The organization (vision, mission, structure)
	5. The respondent (professional background, function)
Localisation	6. Vision on localisation agenda
	7. Grand Bargain signatory
	8. Impact of localisation agenda on the organization
	Case selection
Humanitarian context	9. Country description (political, cultural, economic)
	10. Impact of level of conflict/crisis on access and availability of resources
	11. Impact of level of corruption on good governance
	12. Enterance into the region
Authentic partnership	13. Start-up phase (initiative, motives, mutual gains, barriers)
	14. **Shared understanding** a. Common vision (strategic partnership agreement) b. Clear goals and purpose (vision and mission statement) c. Termination of the partnership (documentation)
	15. **Equality** a. Organisational characteristics (funding, staff, sectors) b. General sense (rights and capabilities) c. Joint decision making (prior consultation, authority) d. Open and transparent communication (information sharing, face-to-face meetings) e. Listening and learning (capacity strengthening plan)
	16. **Organisation relationship** a. Autonomy (own constituency, own projects, own funding) b. Complementary strengths (competencies and comparative advantages)
	17. **Shared commitment** a. Responsibilities (documentation) b. Roles and obligations (documentation) c. Mutual accountability (standards and M&E system)
	18. **Resilience** a. Conflict and problem resolution (comprehensive strategy)
	b. Compromises (reciprocity)
Wrap-up and follow-up	19. Remaining questions (of researcher and respondent)
	20. Follow-up (connections)
	21. Word of thanks

Annex III: Interview respondents

RESPONDENT	ORGANIZATION	FUNCTION	DATE	LOCATION	NATURE
Sanne de Boer	ZOA Burundi	Program quality manager	July 29. 2019	Apeldoorn	Skype meeting
Nok van de Langenberg	CARE Netherlands	Head of humanitarian action	August 12. 2019	The Hague	Personal meeting
Laura Donkin	CAFOD	Emergency response officer Africa	September 17. 2019	Apeldoorn	Skype meeting
Nienke Hiemstra	Oxfam Novib	Project Leader Humanitarian Aid	October 10. 2019	The Hague	Personal meeting
Celso Dulce	ACCORD	Disaster Risk Reduction Consultant	October 17. 2019	Apeldoorn	Skype meeting
Zono Mawia	KMSS	Humanitarian Project Manager	October 22. 2019	Apeldoorn	Skype meeting
Abdirizaq Libah	Candlelight	Chief executive	October 22. 2019	Apeldoorn	Skype meeting
Kibinakanwa Dieudonné	MIPAREC	Legal representative	November 7. 2019	Apeldoorn	Skype meeting