IMPROVING COOPERATION BETWEEN LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN ACTORS: THE CASE OF UKRAINE

By

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Author's Declaration

I, the undersigned Zarina Nurmukhambetova hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non-degree program, in English or in any other language.

This is a true copy of the thesis, including final revisions.

Date: 20 June 2016

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the cooperation between local and international humanitarian actors in the response to the crisis in eastern Ukraine (2014-2016). By doing so, it contributes to the ongoing response localization debate that has re-surfaced in the humanitarian field in the recent years, whereby the international humanitarian system established in 1991 is criticized as insufficiently supportive of local actors – volunteers and local humanitarian organizations. Building on the theory of constructivism and the current literature on the topic, the thesis formed an analytical framework with a "partnership vs. patronage" typology to characterize the relations between local and international actors in Ukraine. Over 23 practitioners in the field were interviewed in four locations in Ukraine. The analysis of the empirical findings revealed that the international-local cooperation in Ukraine has a potential for partnership amidst manageable shortcomings and risks. The thesis concludes with recommendations for practitioners and suggestions for further research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to dedicate this thesis to the people of Ukraine and the millions others affected by today's crises and our shared inability to end them.

At the risk of exceeding the allotted word limit, I have to express sincere thanks to my supervisor Professor Sara Svensson who kindly agreed to take on the challenge of supervising a work outside of her area of interest and expertise, and managed to provide invaluable guidance and support throughout the fieldwork and the writing process.

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To my husband Adil. Thank you for taking on all the roles imaginable and being there for me as a partner, a breadwinner, and a caring and loving father to our son Minar who spoke his first full sentences in Budapest.

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List of Abbreviations

HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IHA	International humanitarian actor
IO	International organization
LHA	Local humanitarian actor
OCHA	Office for the coordination of humanitarian affairs (United Nations)
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PoP	Principles of Partnership
PRP	Preliminary Response Plan
UNHCR	the UN High Commissioner for Refugees
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit

Introduction

The humanitarian crisis in Ukraine is one of at least 27 crises in the world today that require international assistance (GHO 2016). Since the start of the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine in April 2014, the crisis has affected close to 4 million people, of whom at least 3 million are in need of humanitarian assistance, ranging from food, healthcare and shelter to legal assistance and counselling (HRP 2016). As of 31 May 2016, the United Nations in Ukraine estimates that at least 9,404 people have been killed and 21,627 wounded (UNOCHA 2016). Despite international efforts to broker lasting peace, hostilities between government forces and armed groups in non-government controlled areas along the contact line have continued, causing massive population movements within Ukraine and into neighboring countries.

The civil society in Ukraine responded to the crisis immediately, mobilizing efforts and funds in order to evacuate people, find a place to live, help with employment and healthcare (PRP 2014). In 2014 and well into 2015, the response to the crisis in Ukraine was mostly locally driven, as people opened their doors to internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the East, left their jobs to volunteer full-time and provided personal means such as cars for evacuation and space for humanitarian activities.

As the conflict in eastern Ukraine escalated and the crisis worsened, international humanitarian organizations began to build up their presence (PRP 2014, HRP 2016). This meant the introduction of the international humanitarian system with its coordination arrangements (cluster system), funding mechanisms (joint appeal), and international standards and humanitarian principles. The system is made up of "a set of actors which are operationally or financially related to each other and share common overarching goals, norms and principles in responding to humanitarian needs" (Hamza 2015, 97). These actors can be

broadly divided into two categories[1]: international and local humanitarian actors. The first group comprises UN agencies, the international Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, and international non-governmental organizations. The second group includes local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and volunteers (ALNAP 2012).

In Ukraine, the humanitarian system quickly swelled to over 100 mostly local organizations providing relief to 2-3 million people (HRP 2015). In 2016, there are at least 154 humanitarian organizations, of which over 100 are local (HRP 2016). In support of this work, international actors in Ukraine launched three appeals in cooperation with local actors, requesting donors to provide $33 million in 2014, $316 million in 2015 and $298 million in 2016 (PRP 2014, HRP 2015, HRP 2016).

Given the degree of involvement and the invaluable role of volunteers and local organizations in the response to the crisis, international-local cooperation has been high on the agenda for international actors in Ukraine (HRP 2015). Based on the guiding humanitarian documents developed by international organizations in Ukraine, it can be concluded that international actors see their role as complementary to that of local actors (HRP 2015). Moreover, the key coordination body – the Humanitarian Country Team – pledged to work with all actors in a transparent and open manner (HCT 2015).

Working with local humanitarian actors is part of the global debate dubbed "localization of response" – meaning that response to crises should be led by local actors – authorities, non-governmental organizations, and volunteers – while international actors ought to play a supportive role (Hamza 2015). The rationale behind localization of response is manifold. Some view it as a necessary development to reflect the multitude of actors on the ground.

[1] Donor countries, national authorities and intergovernmental authorities are also an important part of the system but are beyond the scope of this thesis.

Most argue that it has the potential of improving the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of aid (Ramalingam, Gray, and Cerruti 2013). Localization can also mean that countries in crisis get back on their feet sooner and in a sustainable way (Hamza 2015).

Although the rhetoric is old (Smillie 2001) and rooted in internationally accepted normative frameworks (Fischer 2015 in Hamza 2015), local actors are still being denied proper attention and voice in emergencies (Bennett 2016) and the international humanitarian system is still being described as "an exclusive foreign club" and "an oligopoly" (Bennett 2016, 58). As such, the latter has been repeatedly accused of not fully understanding the local context, whereby international actors roll into an emergency, replace local actors, fail to recognize their capacity and knowledge, and ultimately fail to meet the needs of the affected at best or wreak havoc at worst.

The current literature has rather fully studied why cooperation between international and local humanitarian actors is far from perfect. The challenges cited by various authors and commissioned reports tend to collide on the following. First, the nature of a humanitarian crisis implies that the provision of life-saving aid should be prioritized over anything else, including building partnerships that take time and investment (Smillie 2001). Secondly, scarce funds leave humanitarian actors in competition for donors and resources (Bennett 2016). This issue has another dimension: local actors lack the capacity to spend at the scale necessary for donors (Ramalingam, Gray, and Cerruti 2013). This leads to the third set of challenges, which is the overall capacity of local actors, and that includes their knowledge of English (Bennett 2016), understanding of and complying with humanitarian principles (Bennett 2015), or their ability to travel to coordination meetings (Hamza 2015).

However, what is missing from the discourse on local actors is a reality check of whether cooperation between international and local actors can work well and under what

circumstances. This thesis fills in this gap in two ways. First, it looks at the issue from the constructivist point of view, which allows a more thorough analysis of both the advantages and disadvantages that come from working with international bureaucracies like international humanitarian actors. In doing so, the thesis relies on the book "Rules for the world: international organizations in global politics" by Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore (2004).

Second, the humanitarian response in Ukraine (2014-2016) is rather unique in how local actors mobilized and managed the lion's share of response before the international community agreed on its strategy. As such, it serves as a perfect ground for the international humanitarian system to test their commitments to local actors. In light of the localization debate, one could assume that the cooperation between local and international actors in Ukraine would set a golden standard in the humanitarian field. If the humanitarian community fails to truly empower local actors and build on local capacities in Ukraine, then in countries with lower capacity the chance that they will do so becomes substantially lower. Thus, understanding why cooperation between local and international humanitarian actors does or does not happen in such places like Ukraine is crucial for future response operations.

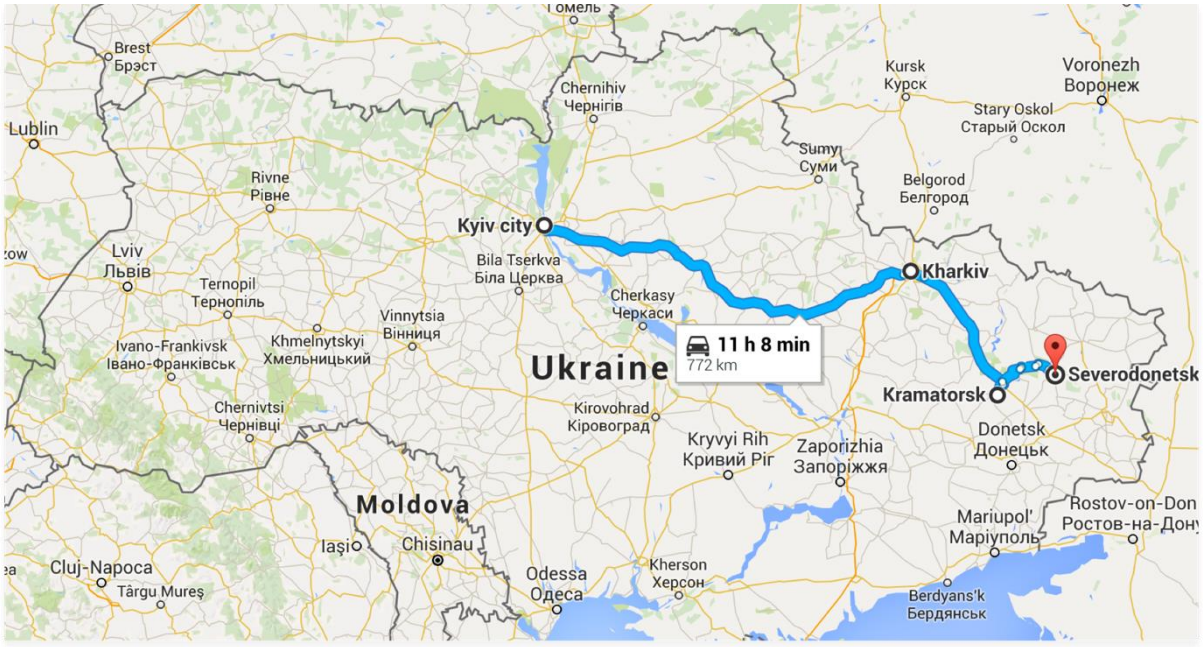
Through exploring the roles of local and international humanitarian organizations in the response operation in Ukraine, this **thesis sets out to understand how the local-international cooperation can be improved**. By doing so, the thesis aims to comprehend what directs international-local cooperation towards a true partnership or a lesser form of cooperation that may be described as patronage. The purpose of the thesis also includes the formulation of recommendations for practitioners, especially those who operate in protracted emergencies in countries with some institutional capacity like Ukraine. The knowledge generated through this thesis will be of use to academia and policy-makers, and areas for further research will be identified.

Methodology

In order to answer the research question, this thesis builds upon document and literature review, and semi-structured interviews. Document review looks at normative frameworks that inform understanding of the humanitarian system's written commitments and aspirations vis-à-vis local-international cooperation. The literature review includes an overview of the current academic literature on the topic of localization: why it is necessary and why international-local cooperation in its current form is inadequate. It consists of several thorough studies commissioned by think tanks and international humanitarian organizations with hundreds of field interviews.

Field research was conducted in the week of 25-30 April 2016 in four cities: Kyiv, Kharkiv, Kramatorsk and Sievierodonetsk (see map 1). As the capital city, Kyiv was selected because it serves as the headquarters for major international and some national organizations. Kharkiv for a while was the main recipient and a point of transit for people fleeing war in the east. In the recent months, most humanitarian organizations shifted to Kramatorsk in order to be close to the contact line and the people in need. Finally, Sievierodonetsk is one of the towns that was directly affected by the conflict and many humanitarian organizations on the ground are staffed by internally displaced people (IDPs) from Donetsk. Out of security considerations, fieldwork was limited to the government-controlled areas.

Figure 1 Map of fieldwork locations: Kyiv, Kharkiv, Kramatorsk and Sievierodonetsk



A sample of representatives from UN agencies, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and local non-governmental organizations (LNGOs) was chosen through a mixed strategy. The biggest and the most well-known organizations were given priority because of their reputation and experience in working with international actors. A review of key humanitarian documents names and informal discussions with former colleagues in the field revealed specific organization names. Finally, a snowball method was employed, as informants in the field recommended other appropriate sources for interview. Overall, interviews were conducted with 23 individuals with the following distribution: 6 UN representatives (including 2 Skype interviews), 8 INGO representatives (including one 4-member focus group) and 9 LNGO representatives (including one 3-member focus group).

The interviews were semi-structured, conducted in Russian or English (without interpretation) and included several key questions that explored the role of IHAs and LHAs as seen by both sides, discussed successful cases of international-local cooperation and analyzed challenges and obstacles to attaining partnership. The interviews were conducted with the goal of

understanding both sides of the reality on the ground in order to piece together a portrait of desirable and realistic cooperation between LHAs and IHAs.

This thesis is organized into three chapters. Chapter 1 reviews the theories and the current literature that help understand the cooperation between international and local humanitarian actors. Building on constructivism, this thesis first explores how the international humanitarian community as a bureaucratic machine adds value to, but at the same time may undermine local efforts. The literature review looks at the current studies on localization. The chapter concludes with an analytical framework that elaborates on the cooperation typology of partnership vs. patronage suggested by Ian Smillie (2001). Chapter 2 explores the role of international actors in responding to the crisis in Ukraine by analyzing the views of the international and local actors, and situating them within the analytical framework. The chapter ends with a few interim conclusions that discuss the potential for international-local partnership in Ukraine. Chapter 3 looks at the role of local actors in response to the crisis. It considers both the advantages of working with local actors and challenges that prevent this partnership from forming fully and ends with interim conclusions on the patronage elements of cooperation in Ukraine. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the findings and makes recommendations on how to move further away from patronage and closer to partnership. The thesis is concerned with actionable specific lessons that could be drawn from the experience of organizations working in Ukraine and applied to other crises.

Chapter 1 - Literature review

Various strands of literature must be woven together in order to situate and understand the topic of cooperation between local (LHAs) and international humanitarian actors (IHAs). In this chapter, three themes are explored separately and then synthesized into an analytical framework. **The first thematic area** looks at international actors as bureaucracies. This allows for a discussion of what IHAs can be expected to offer LHAs and how the bureaucratic features, advantages and disadvantages of international actors may affect international-local cooperation. **The second thematic area** considers the current literature on the localization debate. This way, the thesis explores the other side of cooperation – the value that local actors do add or have the potential to add to emergency operations in their countries. Finally, **the third thematic area** considers the forms of cooperation between IHAs and LHAs that are desirable versus the forms that prevail. This part of the discussion borrows Ian Smillie's typology of "partnership versus patronage" (2001), identifying which factors contribute to which type. Finally, the chapter ends with an analytical framework, a multi-faceted analysis of cooperation between local and international humanitarian actors, that sets the scene for exploring the case of Ukraine.

1.1 International organizations (IOs) as bureaucracies

1.1.1 IOs as bureaucracies: authority and power

There are no studies of cooperation in emergency contexts through the lens of constructivism and, in particular, seeing international humanitarian actors as bureaucracies. In this classification, the thesis relies on the work of Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore (2004) that studied the behavior and nature of IOs as bureaucracies. The authors argue that viewing IOs as bureaucracies opens up a new perspective into understanding **the power, influence and failures of IOs**. Applying this theoretical framework to the topic of this thesis can explain what

the merits and challenges of working with IOs (in this case, international humanitarian actors) in humanitarian response are.

Barnett and Finnemore find that as bureaucracies, IOs possess **authority**, which they define as "the ability of one actor to use institutional and discursive resources to induce deference from others" (Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 5). The authors hold that the authority of IOs is the sum of the missions ("socially valued goals") pursued by IOs and the ways of achieving these missions. The missions of IOs are not only about values and larger aspirational goals but also about the people to whose needs IOs purport to be catering. In order to wield power and encourage others to pursue the same goals that IOs do, the latter must act in a technocratic – and consequently, neutral and impartial – way in line with elaborate rules, which are both produced by and constitute IOs (Barnett and Finnemore 2004).

In discussing the authority of IOs, it is important to consider the classification of **sources of authority** put forward by Barnett and Finnemore (2004), which are: rational-legal authority, delegated authority, moral authority and expert authority. The authors state that as bureaucracies, IOs possess rational-legal authority by definition, whereas delegated authority is passed on to IOs by member states. While the authors recognize that this type of authority has some strings attached (whereby IOs act as implementers of the will of states), it nevertheless gives some scope and space for IOs' autonomy. Moral authority is about serving and protecting "widely shared set of principles" (Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 23). Finally, expert authority is derived from specialized knowledge, trainings and experience. Barnett and Finnemore conclude that the overall authority of IOs may come from a combination of these types of authority, which may at times collide and contradict each other.

The second trait that IOs are revealed to possess in the analysis by Barnett and Finnemore (2004) is **power**. The authors concur with neoliberal and neorealist theorists that the sources of

this power are material coercion and information, but emphasize that the real power of IOs lies in using these to effect change or direct action, as well as making state and non-state actors comply with international norms and rules. To Barnett and Finnemore, these may well be the virtues of IOs as bureaucracies, as they "… divide labor, create standardized rules of action, and deploy relevant social knowledge to solve problems in an orderly, rational way (Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 8).

Thus, viewing international actors as bureaucracies reveals certain features not illustrated by alternative theories. These features include authority and power that IOs exhume and use to effect change in their environment, often constructing a reality fit for the further involvement of IOs.

1.1.2 IOs as bureaucracies: shortcomings and disadvantages

Despite the virtues of international organizations (IOs) as bureaucracies, there is a growing body of knowledge on the **failures of IOs** on various fronts – economics, peacekeeping, development, and humanitarian. Barnett and Finnemore (2004) see these failures as a result of mechanisms that IOs tend to develop because of their reliance on "rules, specialization, and compartmentalization" (Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 39). These mechanisms are the following: 1) irrationality of rationalization, 2) bureaucratic universalism, 3) normalization of deviance, 4) insulation, and 5) cultural contestation (Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 39-41).

The first "**pathology-producing" mechanism** is the process of tailoring organizational missions "to fit the existing, well-known and comfortable rulebook" (Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 39). The second mechanism stems from the need to have universal rules that could be applied across various contexts but may not be fit for every purpose and every particular situation. The third mechanism – normalization of deviance – occurs when organizations bend

rules in a systematic way, adding what used to be deviant practice to the rulebook. The fourth – insulation – is the lack of feedback or inability of an organization to receive, process and apply feedback to its operation. Barnett and Finnemore single out two causes for this mechanism: professionalism and the difficulty in measuring performance. The final fifth mechanism – cultural contestation – is in essence, division of labor gone wrong, leading to internal clashes due to different views of the same issue, as well as different cultures developed in various units of the same organization.

Thus, analyzing IOs as bureaucracies points to a number of disadvantages and shortcomings, as they are found to create certain debilitating mechanisms that may lead to unintended results. The lack of flexibility, falling into "one-size-fits-all" frame of thinking, extreme concern with rules and procedures at the expense of the larger missions are the negative effects expected to come out of big bureaucracies such as IOs. These disadvantages in turn are likely to affect the cooperation between international and local actors in humanitarian settings by undermining the principles of partnership – equality, transparency, results-based approach, responsibility and complementarity – which are elaborated in the concluding part of this chapter.

1.2 Local humanitarian actors (LHAs)

1.2.1 Working with LHAs: benefits and advantages

In lieu of theoretical framework on the role of local actors, the following sections rely on the literature review in building a portrait of local actors in humanitarian response. The majority of the literature on the topic of cooperation between local and international humanitarian actors has been produced in the last six years and especially in the years preceding the World Humanitarian Summit. This literature includes studies commissioned by INGOs (Oxfam International), consortia of INGOs (VOICE), the International Red Cross and Red Crescent

movement, think tanks (the Overseas Development Institute and the Global Public Policy Institute). While these organizations and institutes are overwhelmingly of Western origin, they agree on the fact that the international humanitarian response system has been dominated by a group of international actors, marginalizing national and local partners (Hamza 2015, Cohen and Gingerich 2016, Bennett 2016). There is unanimous agreement in the humanitarian field that the system ought to change and preferably in favor of empowering local actors – localization of response (Cohen and Gingerich 2015, Hamza 2015). To localize response means to foster better cooperation between international and local actors.

In the absence of a theoretical framework that could describe the role and the added value of local actors in response, a literature overview that follows will help build **a reference framework** that includes both the advantages and disadvantages of working with local actors. There are many advantages of localization, as demonstrated in the studies under review. These advantages include, but are not limited to, **access, trust, and local knowledge**. The rest of the section explores each advantage one-by-one.

A more local response through better partnerships is argued to facilitate better **access** to affected people (Ramalingam, Gray, and Cerruti 2013, Hamza 2015, Bennett 2016, 2015). This is true for both natural disaster contexts and conflict settings. International actors experience access constraints when the government or non-state parties deliberately restrict access or because of other insecurity concerns, such as ongoing fighting (Howe, Stites, and Chudacoff 2015). In particular in conflicts (Darfur, Somalia, Syria), international actors may have no access to certain groups of people for considerable stretches of time and they have to completely rely on local actors for provision of aid and assessing the needs (Cohen and Gingerich 2015).

Access enjoyed or gained by local actors is also about the **trust** of local communities. Trust for local actors is often "the primary and most important system for maintaining both

organizational and operational success" (Howe et al. 2015, 8). Trust is essential to a collaborative environment, therefore, it adds to the effectiveness of humanitarian response. In some contexts, even activities such as purchasing of basic goods can only be possible if the local vendors have trust in their buyers (Howe et al. 2015). Trust can also help in scaling or re-focusing emergency response (Hamza 2015), thus saving time and improving efficiency. A 2011 study of response in conflicts has found that being affiliated or endorsed by a trusted local organization opened doors to international actors (Egeland, Harmer, and Stoddard 2011).

Local actors are also valuable to emergency response because of their **knowledge**, which may include understanding local context, culture, speaking local languages and dialects, as well as navigating social and political nuances (Pouligny 2009). Local knowledge can help reduce the costs of aid as locals know the prices in the local markets, as well as logistical shortcuts (Ramalingam et al. 2013). Local knowledge can also be harnessed to better understand the needs of the affected people, assess damage, spot new risks and trends (an outbreak of disease, mental issues among the affected), thus save more lives, and make the overall humanitarian response more appropriate, relevant and effective (Cohen and Gingerich 2015, Ramalingam et al. 2013).

1.2.2 Working with local actors: risks and disadvantages

Although the literature agrees that the advantages of working with and empowering local humanitarian actors (LHAs) far outweigh the disadvantages, there are still important **risks** that require consideration, namely, **lack of capacity** and **non-compliance with humanitarian principles**. The lack of local capacity is the very rationale for the international humanitarian system, as international actors are expected to act when local and national capacity is overwhelmed, as stipulated in the UN GA resolution 46/182:

> "The magnitude and duration of many emergencies may be beyond the response capacity of many affected countries. International cooperation … is thus of great importance." (1991)

The notion of local capacity may mean a number of things: a physical inability to respond (after a devastating disaster), absence of funds, corruption, lack of experience in working with international donors (proposal writing, implementation and reporting) or language barriers. It may also include the issue of adherence to international standards and humanitarian principles, which is described separately in this thesis.

Compliance with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and operational independence is essential to humanitarian work. In a perfect world, the principles allow humanitarian actors to provide aid that is free of ideologies and that reaches the neediest. However, an overwhelming consensus exists on LHAs' lack of understanding of or compliance with humanitarian principles (Hamza 2015, Bennett 2015). While the principle of humanity underpins every aspect of humanitarian work, the principles of neutrality and impartiality are found to be the most controversial, especially in conflict situations (Smillie 2001). Local actors may be seen as channeling aid to military groups or giving preference to one group of people who may not be the most vulnerable over another that might require urgent aid.

Thus, given the benefits and risks of partnering with local actors, it is no wonder that the localization debate has continued for all these years. Although the literature acknowledges that the rhetoric in the humanitarian field has tilted towards "as local as possible", in practice this does not translate to the kind of cooperation that local actors would prefer and international actors aspire to. What is important to this debate is understanding **what this preferred and attainable form of cooperation can look like in reality** – which is the focus of this thesis, as discussed in the empirical analysis. What follows is a typology of the forms of cooperation that can occur between local and international actors and the challenges of improving it.

1.3 Cooperation: partnership or patronage?

This section builds a portrait of desirable cooperation between local and international humanitarian actors. A "patronage vs. partnership" typology is borrowed from the work of Ian Smillie (2001), in which he discusses the importance of local capacity-building in response to humanitarian crises. While Smillie does not define what constitutes either concept, a composite definition of both can be put together based on both his work and the wider literature on the topic.

Both the literature and the humanitarian system agree on the need to build partnerships with local actors. In 2007, the Global Humanitarian Platform – a group of 40 UN and non-UN humanitarian organizations – agreed on a set of Principles of Partnership (PoP) in "[acknowledgment of] diversity as an asset of the humanitarian community and [in recognition of] the interdependence among humanitarian organizations"(ICVA 2010). The PoP includes principles of equality (mutual respect), transparency (dialogue and trust), results-based approach (reality-based and action-oriented), responsibility (mutual ethical obligation), and complementarity (building on comparative advantages) (ICVA 2010). Although the original intent of the PoP framework was focused on the relationships between UN agencies and non-UN organizations, it was later recognized to be applicable to partnerships with national and local actors (ICVA 2010).

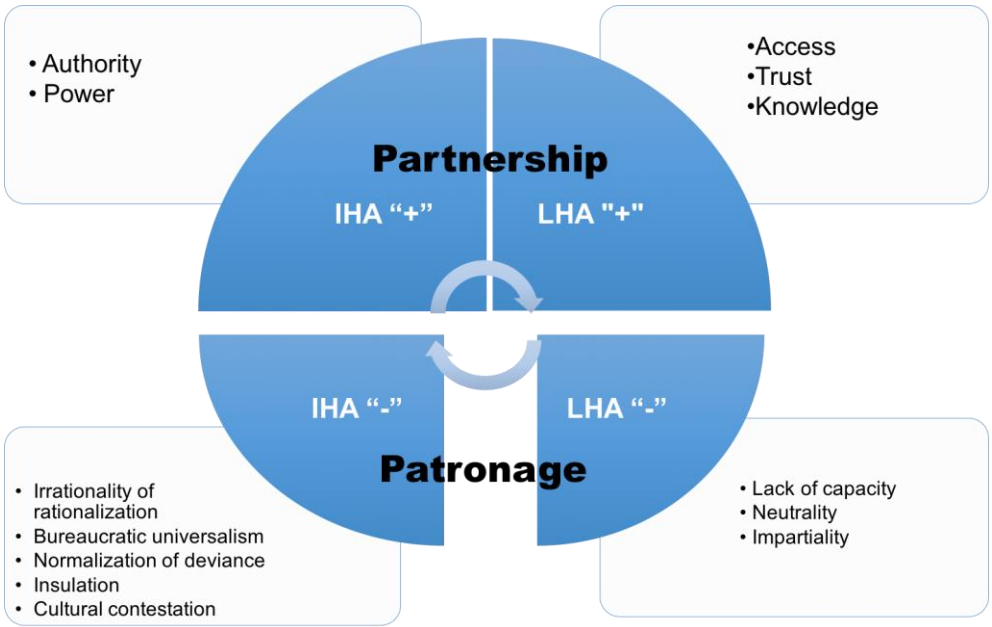
Nevertheless, the literature concludes that international-local cooperation today is far from the ideal form of partnership described above. The tendency of IHAs to approach partnerships with LHAs as patrons still rings true 15 years after Smillie's book first used the term to describe IHA-LHA interaction. Patronage in this use can be understood as an asymmetric relationship between actors that enjoy different levels of power, which they derive from resources and influence (Pouligny 2009). This form of cooperation is mostly attained through the modalities

of direct implementation and sub-contracting, which exclude participation in decision-making (Howe et al. 2015). Numerous case studies point to this view by IHAs of LHAs as project implementers (Ramalingam et al. 2013; Bennett 2016).

1.4 Analytical framework

Having studied the two sides of cooperation (international and local humanitarian actors) and considered the forms that relations between the two can take (partnership or patronage), it is important to conclude this part of the discussion with an analytical framework that would synthesize these three themes into one, thus setting the scene for analyzing the case of Ukraine. Below in Figure 2 is a depiction of the suggested framework:

Figure 2 Partnership versus Patronage analytical framework



As can be seen in the analytical framework, both international humanitarian actors (IHAs) and local humanitarian actors (LHAs) offer certain advantages ("+"), but suffer from a number of shortcomings ("-"). For a partnership to be formed between the two sides, the principles of partnership (equality, transparency, results-based approach, responsibility and

complementarity) should bring together advantages that each side offers. The principles of are the glue that sustain partnership. In addition, partnerships are aware of and are working with the disadvantages – overcoming or mitigating their effects. The arrows point to the importance of knowing and working with these disadvantages.

On the other hand, patronage as a form of cooperation between IHAs and LHAs takes place when the principles of partnership are violated, failing to connect the advantages of both sides and to acknowledge and address the disadvantages. Moreover, in patronage the disadvantages are more pronounced because they are either ignored or perceived as insurmountable obstacles. The arrows here also show that patronage could resemble partnership by building on some advantages of LHAs or IHAs.

This framework is used in this thesis to analyze what benefits and shortcomings both local and international actors bring into the humanitarian operation in Ukraine, and what implications they have for the local-international cooperation. The following two chapters apply the framework to the empirical findings gathered in Ukraine.

Chapter 2 – International actors and cooperation

In order to understand whether cooperation between international and local humanitarian actors in Ukraine takes on the form of partnership or patronage, this thesis undertakes a three-step analysis. First, the role of international actors in responding to the crisis is discussed from two points of view: international and local. It is important to understand how international actors perceive their own added value and to compare that with local perceptions. This juxtaposition can reveal agreement on some aspects, but disagreement on others. Similarly, the next chapter analyzes the role of local actors from both perspectives and situates the findings within the reviewed literature. Finally, the relationship between local and international actors is analyzed with the help of the analytical framework described in the previous chapter.

2.1 International actors in Ukraine: authority, power and advantages

2.1.1 Authority and power

International humanitarian actors (IHAs) in Ukraine are found to use all types of sources of authority in order to act in at least two important roles: 1) mediating between local actors and authorities; 2) safeguarding norms and standards. In the first instance, the IHAs draw on their delegated authority, as well as to a more limited extent on the expert and moral authority. The second role is carried out based on the rational-legal and expert authority. Both roles demonstrate the power of IHAs to influence the environment and the course of the response operation. Each role is considered in more detail below.

2.1.2 IHAs as mediators

A strong and important role of international humanitarian actors (IHAs) and, in particular of the UN, is that of "opening doors to authorities" and playing mediating functions (IHA8). While the UN representatives perceive this to be within their advocacy mandate (IHA1), some local NGOs hold that international actors (the UN and donors in particular) are the only ones who can make the government listen to the needs and demands of local people and local actors (LHA2, LHA4, LHA5).

Several examples illustrate the importance and relevance of this role of a mediator between local actors and national or local authorities. A former head of OCHA office in Ukraine brought up the case of an early ad hoc meeting with local volunteers organized by OCHA and partner agencies OHCHR and UNHCR in the eastern city of Kharkiv in June 2014 (IHA8). At the time of the meeting, local actors in the city and the wider region of Kharkiv were filling in significant gaps left by local authorities in responding to the crisis. The meeting was organized in two parts: the first part was used to take stock of the challenges experienced by volunteers and to prepare for the second part, to which UN agencies invited local authorities. The discussions revealed that there was a lot of fear and uncertainty concerning legal issues amidst rumors that local actors would be fined for accepting funds to help IDPs. Therefore, this meeting served several functions: gauge needs of local actors, calm their worries, communicate issues to local authorities and educate all sides on key legal concepts such as the difference between IDPs and refugees and the important ramifications of this distinction. In this case, IHAs used their authority to literally open the doors for local actors.

IHAs also acted as intermediaries between local actors and authorities through cluster meetings. Interviewees spoke of the tension that existed (and still has a place) between local actors and authorities marked by the lack of trust and the lack of understanding of each other's limitations

and added value. However, constructive joint approaches were made possible, as a result of cluster meetings. The education cluster in Kharkiv is a good case in point. Roman Sheiko, the Head of Unicef office in Kharkiv shared this cooperation success story:

> "For the local authorities, the lack of human resources is always a challenge. Take the Center of Social Services for Children, Family and Youth. They have very few psychologists, but the administration tells them to work in regions and to assist the IDPs. [At the cluster meeting], local actors informed that they had dozens of volunteers who could help but they needed an office space. The Center invited them to their premises, and it was a win-win situation. For the administration it was an achievement because they got the job done, while the volunteers got access to the people who needed assistance" (IHA3).

Local actors also agreed that in the context of Ukraine the authoritative role of the international actors has been extremely important. A case in point came from the head of "Vostok SOS" rights NGO Oleksandra Dvoretska. The government invited local actors to participate in drafting a new law. The invitation she attributed to IHAs' advocacy. During the discussions, the government insisted on excluding one provision on the grounds that it was too costly. She and her team felt that the government was using the lack of funds as an excuse to avoid making a commitment. IHAs intervened by saying they will support the implementation of the provision financially. Dvoretska said it was a signal to the government that the provision was necessary and that they would have to implement it. She concluded:

> "International actors amplify our voice. They speak where we [local actors] cannot" (LHA2).

Closer to the contact line, several organizations shared the same sentiment but in a different context. Many local actors have been involved in evacuating people from the war zone, using personal cars or donated vehicles. Early evacuations were not regulated by the government, but as the conflict progressed bureaucratic hurdles such as obtaining passes in order to enter the non-government controlled areas of Ukraine were introduced in January 2015. Local actors shared how these measures made the process even more unpredictable, chaotic and unreliable,

but underlined the crucial role of IHAs. Here is an example of the UN playing an intermediary role:

> "Before the UN facilitated civil-military cooperation, we were supposed to present lists of people we are intending to evacuate well in advance, but that is unrealistic. Now the process is a lot faster and we do not have to deal with the authorities directly. We just sent a letter to OCHA and it takes about two days to get permission" (LHA3).

The context in Ukraine, with the Euromaidan signifying the country's pro-Western orientation, set the scene for international actors' possessing some authority and power. Meanwhile, the country's weak civil society and governmental accountability set the conditions for local actors' reliance on IHAs' authority. In line with the theory of IOs as bureaucracies, the case of Ukraine shows how international actors can exercise power drawing on different sources of authority. The fulfillment of this role shows the principle of complementarity serving as a basis for effective international-local partnership.

2.1.3 IHAs role in safeguarding norms and standards

Another role of international humanitarian actors (IHAs) in Ukraine as understood by the actors interviewed is to safeguard international humanitarian norms and principles. One of the issues tackled / being tackled by international actors in Ukraine is contextualizing international norms. Herewith, an example in the field of protection is worth noting. In the first months of humanitarian response, the government operated in line with its pre-crisis vulnerability criteria. These criteria, while rather elaborate (for instance, having several disability categories), were, nevertheless, inadequate for humanitarian response (IHA1). Drawing on previous experience, international actors were able to realize that certain groups of population such as males of working age were "falling through the cracks", because everyone was focusing on one vulnerable group, namely, elderly people (anonymous).

International humanitarian actors (IHAs) eventually came to see their role and duty to sensitize and teach local and national actors the basics of humanitarian response and best practices. Some elements of this role seem more important to international rather than to local humanitarian actors (LHAs), and a couple of examples illustrate this divergence in perceptions. Both IHAs and LHAs spoke about evacuations under shelling. From the IHA point of view, evacuations under shelling should not be taking place. However, for LHAs getting people out of the active warzone is more important than complying with the best practices even when they are aware of them. A representative of a local NGO "Right to Protection" in Kramatorsk said that a UN officer 'reprimanded' her after she and her team evacuated people under heavy shelling. Nevertheless, they continued responding to calls for evacuations, because waiting could cost people's lives:

> "How can we wait until the shelling stops, when it is a pregnant woman trapped in the yard of her apartment block which is being shelled from all sides?" (LHA 5)

This tension is reflected in the theory of Barnett and Finnemore, as they admit that while "…authority often consists of telling people what is the right thing to do. Compliance is not automatic" (Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 20). Therefore, while international actors in this role drew on their rational-legal and expert authority, this area of work in the context of Ukraine and in the context of an ongoing war demonstrates its limits. Nevertheless, some standards brought in by the IHAs were more welcome by local actors. These examples include gender-based violence, children's rights and freedom of movement (LHA2, LHA3, LHA5).

2.1.4 Additional advantages of IHAs

Some important additional advantages of international humanitarian actors (IHAs) were revealed through the fieldwork in Ukraine, most notably – the ability to scale up and provide substantial funding. Both international and local actors in Ukraine are well aware that the

former can help the latter scale up and cover the needs of more people in more areas than they could otherwise. In fact, many IHAs consider funding as their most important added value to response efforts. Funding can come from different sources and in various ways. An IHA that does not have resources can refer LHAs to other potential donors.

A representative of a local NGO "Humanitarian mission Proliska" Evgeny Kaplin said that without winterization aid[2] that was costly and massive "people would have simply frozen to death" because local organizations or government would not have been able to cover the needs (LHA4):

> "Consider these two numbers – over the course of 1 year and 6 months my organization mobilized a total of 200 tons of humanitarian aid; UNHCR alone contributed 3,000 tons of diesel in one go" (LHA4).

International actors can also help in not just scaling up but diversifying activities of LHAs. Roman Sheiko from Unicef recalled several instances when local partners turned to Unicef for advice on a finished project:

> "We then sit down to discuss where this project could go, what would be the next level for that kind of initiative. Once identified, we see if we or other donors can fund it. [Local actors] can always rely on other forms of support from us through organizing joint events, seminars or conferences" (IHA3).

Sheiko also spoke of a case that was in the early stages of development at the time of the interview. Several local volunteers shared at the last cluster meeting their observations that there seemed to be a second wave of post-traumatic stress among the children previously treated for PTSD. They are now looking into the issue together as a cluster. While the outcome of this development or the cluster's further engagement is not yet known, the case demonstrates two important things. First, it shows the value of local actors, as described by Hamza, in registering issues that are not on the "radar" of international organizations (Hamza 2015, 5). Second, it

[2] The type of assistance aimed at helping people survive winter: distribution of warm clothes, blankets, coal, diesel.

shows the level of trust and the value of regular contact through informal correspondence and formal meetings between local and international humanitarian actors. By helping local actors financially, as well as with professional guidance, international actors act on the principles of responsibility, complementarity and results-based approach.

2.1.5 Interim conclusions: a partnership budding?

The examples on the roles and advantages of IHAs in the response operation in Ukraine, paint a rather optimistic picture of international-local cooperation in Ukraine. The international presence is welcome by local actors, and their added value is understood by both sides. This section showed that there is a good potential for cooperation between local and international actors through partnerships in Ukraine. Features that defined good forms of cooperation in Ukraine aligned with the partnership features described in the literature review section, including mutual trust and respect, regular contact and dialogue. Complementarity and results-based approach featured as important elements of partnership, whereby the two sides brought together international expertise with local knowledge and capacity to attain better results.

2.2 Working with IHAs: challenges

Both local and international actors spoke extensively about challenges in working with the latter. Most challenges fell within the bureaucracy framework of Barnett, Finnemore with a few additional observations. Some of the challenges were more profound than others, as is evident in the following discussion.

2.2.1 Irrationality of rationalization

While some informants commented on the overly bureaucratic process, nobody expressed a strong feeling that the process became an end in itself, as suggested by the theory of Barnett and Finnemore. Two topics came up during interviews that fit under this “pathology-producing”

mechanism of international humanitarian actors (IHAs): reporting on grants and reporting humanitarian information. On the former, both sides agreed that reporting on grants was necessary and, although complex at times, they could overcome it with the right guidance and assistance from IHAs. Some organizations like the Norwegian Refugee Council pride itself on having the easiest reporting policy, while agencies such as UNHCR and UNICEF offer support and opportunity to report in local languages.

Local actors understand that reporting is necessary. Part of this understanding stems from the fact that many local actors had been reporting on the donations they received from ordinary people before they received foreign grants. A local actor in Kharkiv during the interview showed a big stack of documents he prepared each time he received a donation. Therefore, additional donor requirements that came with IHA funding were, if not welcome, then at least understood and embraced. Another factor that might have affected responses of LHAs was the fact that most of them were either current or former recipients of funding from international actors. Finally, this is where the specific context of Ukraine is evident once again, whereby people are used to bureaucracy.

Nevertheless, it was not reporting on grants that local actors felt affected international-local cooperation, but rather reporting on humanitarian situation. While the latter is essential to effective coordination and hence effective humanitarian aid, it came to be seen by some LHAs as a bureaucratic procedure that became an end in itself. This refers to regular information products such as humanitarian bulletin or cluster information products. For these products, both local and international actors are asked to provide regular inputs. However, LHAs do not have dedicated people who can process information and translate into English under oftentimes unrealistic deadlines. More importantly, international actors decide which information gets included in the final product. The lack of transparency on how this is done affects the willingness of LHAs to report and undermines their trust towards IHAs.

> "We did not provide inputs to cluster report last month and are probably not going to provide this time. I do not even know if the quality of the end product has suffered in any way" (LHA2).

Despite the challenges of irrationality of rationalization, some international actors in Ukraine demonstrated a great degree of flexibility in working with local actors. Whereas in Syria local actors complained about unrealistic standards such as being operational for 3 years in order to qualify for funding (Hamza 2015), in Ukraine some IHAs worked with partners without contracts or without requiring registration in the early days of the crisis. A local actor in Kyiv said her organization "was barely four months old when the UNHCR approached" (LHA1). In Kharkiv, an IHA representative spoke of instances of partnering with local actors without any agreements or contracts.

2.2.2 Bureaucratic universalism

Both sides particularly stressed he ramifications and evidence of this pathology-producing mechanism of international humanitarian actors (IHAs). In discussing localization, all interviewed IHA representatives underlined that it was a challenge for them at first to understand how different the context of Ukraine was compared to previous experiences. This challenge arose because, as Barnett and Finnemore suggest, IHAs "orchestrate numerous local contexts at once" (Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 39). In Ukraine, internationals coming into contact with the highly educated and competent local actors did not at first realize that local actors' understanding of humanitarian affairs could be so limited. One anonymous source contrasted Ukraine's context with all other humanitarian contexts, where literacy levels might be a lot lower but knowledge of humanitarian principles, tools and mechanisms far more advanced than in Ukraine.

> "In Ukraine we weren't good enough as internationals in general. People would fly in and assume that everyone knows what humanitarian system is" (anonymous).

Another IHA representative lamented that the practice of inviting short-term consultants further exacerbated this issue of not fully understanding the context.

> "It is good if you have consultants that grasp the operational reality quickly enough, but we had consultants coming in for two months who could take a full month just to get acquainted with the context" (IHA3).

Two examples illustrate this challenge in practice. One comes from an IHA representative who brought up the case of a security training that discussed the kinds of hazards that people operating in Ukraine did not find relevant. Such trainings are a waste of resources that can undermine the trust of local actors who would prefer the resources to be spent on their real rather than perceived capacity needs. Another example comes from a local NGO representative in Kramatorsk who remembered a survey local actors were given to use in assessing the needs of affected population. The questions of the survey were not adapted to Ukraine's context and included references to refugee camps, although there were none set up. There were also questions that offended the dignity of people – for instance, in a multiple choice question on where people got their water from, one answer option was "from a water puddle" (LHA5).

The challenge of bureaucratic universalism violated the principle of transparency which as a prerequisite includes early communications and dialogue (ICVA 2010). In turn, this had at least three implications for the local-international cooperation in Ukraine. One, it undermined the trust of local actors that the internationals are on top of the issues. Two, it led to some inefficient decisions. Three, it delayed capacity-building initiatives, because IHAs did not fully understand what the institutional needs of LHAs were.

2.2.3 Normalization of deviance

International actors as bureaucracies do deviate from certain rules in response to new developments in Ukraine, albeit local and international actors see distinct manifestations of this

mechanism. For IHAs, the issue comes down to competition for funding, while for LHAs the question of funding may only be implied, as they express other concerns.

Some international actors acknowledged that working with local actors meant they would have to share rather scarce funds, so organizations found "creative" ways out by deliberately cutting the number of local partners so as to keep their own staff and adequate workload (IHA6, IHA7). One INGO even managed to increase its budget and hire more staff after it decided to limit the number of local partners.

Other international actors did point out that from 2015 to 2016 there was a substantial increase in the number of local partners that were due to receive funding through the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) (IHA2, IHA4). However, while the number of local projects in HRP may constitute 2/3 of all projects, in monetary terms this statistic does not hold, as the share of funding requested by LHAs is still far less than that of IHAs.

Meanwhile, local actors perceive other cases to be troubling. First, LHAs feel internationals are "stealing" local staff by offering salaries and benefits that LHAs cannot compete with. While at the heart of the issue is once again the question of funding, LHAs saw it more as a matter of deviant behavior. "The more professional we are, the more vulnerable we become", lamented LHA representative in Kyiv. This practice becomes especially problematic when people leave in the middle of an ongoing project. The second type of behavior is related to bending rules to fit bureaucratic procedures. For example, telling a local organization to apply for a call for proposals in order to make the competition look more solid while knowing that the funding will go to a specific organization. As such cases become known in small humanitarian circles, they erode trust and undermine cooperation between local and international actors.

Normalization of deviance alienates key partners and violates the principles of equality, transparency, responsibility and results-based approach.

2.2.4 Insulation

International actors in the Ukrainian context are found to be prone to this behavior, whereby the lack of feedback mechanism or clear performance indicators prevents them from knowing what the impact of their work is and whether local actors receive the support they need. For instance, while IHAs may see their added value in advocating better legislation, including freedom of movement and tax laws, several LHAs still reported that these were the key issues they are facing today. The principal document in the response operation – Humanitarian Response Plan 2016 – lacks clear indicators on this objective, resorting to vague language of "advocating for conflict related legislation" and as a performance indicator using the number of people reached with aid by the end of the year – 2.5 million (HRP 2016, 21). It is clear that any success under this indicator can result from many different interventions amidst the same ineffective legislation that obstructs the work of both local and humanitarian actors today.

The tendency of IHAs not to properly gauge their own impact and progress undermines the principle of result-based approach. In this example, to LHAs the act of advocacy alone does not have as much meaning as it does to IHAs. Local actors are interested in advocacy results that could make their operational reality more conducive to aid. This mechanism also makes a dent in the role and added value of international actors as guarantors of standards and principles. In the absence of robust performance indicators, it is not clear how they would know if they are succeeding or not.

2.2.5 Cultural contestation

There was little discussion on the record on cases of cultural contestation, when "autonomous pockets" within one organization sprung up and clashed with each other (Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 40). While the cases discussed off the record do point to the presence of this

pathology-producing mechanism of international actors, it did not have the same salience as the challenges described earlier.

2.2.6 Interim conclusion: elements of patronage

The overview of key challenges faced by local actors in dealing with international actors through the prism of Barnett and Finnemore "pathology-producing" mechanisms has revealed elements of patronage in local-international cooperation. By falling into typical traps of IOs as bureaucracies, international actors violated several principles of partnership, raising doubts about the effectiveness of the humanitarian operation.

Chapter 3 – Local humanitarian actors and cooperation

This part of the thesis discusses the role of local humanitarian actors in the response in Ukraine. The section will reflect on the interviews through the analytical framework outlined in the literature review, discussing the advantages of working with local actors – access, knowledge, and, to a lesser degree, trust – and disadvantages, such as lack of capacity and poor understanding of humanitarian principles. An additional disadvantage of internal competition is also revealed through the fieldwork.

3.1 Local actors in Ukraine: role and advantages

3.1.1 LHAs role in ensuring access

In line with the analytical framework, local actors in Ukraine were the first to have access to people in need, including those in areas under shelling as well as those hiding underground in non-government controlled areas (NGCA). Particularly, in the latter case, local actors were and still are often the only ones who have access (Bennett 2015). However, operations in the NGCA are beyond the scope of this thesis.

Many local initiatives in Ukraine sprang up immediately after the crisis broke out in April 2014 and carried on throughout the year without any significant international support (LHA7). Local actors helped with evacuations, welcomed incoming IDPs, linked new arrivals with other local partners that came into being in response to the many needs that emerged as a result of the displacement. LHAs that received the newly arrived IDPs would help with information, some basic assistance and try to crowdfund a response by posting online what a particular family needs. This led to more initiatives organizing more forms of aid – finding a place to live,

medical expenses, clothes, helping with paperwork and with finding employment. By widening the scope of aid, local actors expanded their access to people in need:

> "[Local actors] do not emerge from Kyiv, it is people who have been on the ground and started some work because there was a need. Some of them then moved up to Kyiv where the advocacy takes place. [Local actors] have context on both sides – government controlled and non-government controlled – which has simplified work in terms of providing aid to affected people on both sides" (IHA2).

Local actors also gain access to areas where international actors may not actively seek or are too slow to pursue. As was discussed in the previous chapter, local volunteers singlehandedly evacuated thousands of people from non-government controlled areas, often using personal vehicles. One local volunteer, himself an IDP, said during evacuations he and his friends would pass by international actors that stayed at a secure distance, away from the fighting:

> "We asked [IHAs] to escort us, but they would tell us it was not safe for them to go into the area" (LHA6).

Hence, in Ukraine the role of local actors in accessing the affected people confirms the rationale for localization debate – locals are the first on the ground and often best placed to access people in need. However, in some cases there are security concerns with shifting access to locals who take huge personal risks. International-local partnership, therefore, should stress transparency, open dialogue among actors involved and complementarity.

3.1.2 LHAs role in building trust

Local actors in Ukraine enjoyed some degree of trust, despite the political nature of the crisis and the propaganda war that has defined the conflict (Quintanilla, Parafeniuk, and Moroz 2015). However, trust has been uneven. A volunteer in Kharkiv who has evacuated over 1,700 people from NGCA shared stories of how certain actors tried to breach the trust of the affected people towards volunteers and aid workers (LHA4). These cases are documented in the media. For example, in March 2015, the de facto authorities of the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's

Republic (LPR) stopped a bus with women and children who were being evacuated to Ukraine (Kozachenko 2015). The people on the bus were told that they were lied to – that they were not being evacuated but were going to be sold into slavery and their children would be used for organ trade (LuhanskNews24 2015). The incident was broadcast on national TV in the NGCA with an apparent goal of stopping people from leaving (Quintanilla et al. 2015). Although the case was resolved and later the people were finally evacuated, such incidents can damage one of the key advantages of local actors in the humanitarian response – trust of the affected people.

Paradoxically, local authorities also demonstrate trust towards local actors by referring cases to them (LHA4, LHA7), despite relations between them being clearly tense as described in the previous chapter. Evidently, local authorities recognize that local organizations and volunteers have proved their ability to help people in need.

> "During peak times [in January 2015] I received about 300 phone calls a day from people who asked to be evacuated. The hotline set up by the government would give my cellphone number to anyone who called for help. Each trip would cost 20,000-40,000 UAH and, yet, the government never gave us any assistance" (LHA4).

In regards to local-international cooperation, the trust of local communities towards LHAs was not perceived by anyone to directly affect the trust enjoyed by IHAs. The interviewees cited no cases where LHAs helped build trust between IHAs and local people, as local actors did in places like Syria (Howe et al. 2015). This could be due to the authority that IHAs had that allowed them to enjoy a certain degree of deference and trust, without relying on LHAs.

To the contrary, there were cases when international actors had to step in to enforce trust of local communities towards local actors. In Sievierodonetsk, an INGO representative admitted to cases when affected people beat up local volunteers that partnered with international actors. This happens when locals think that volunteers steal what is meant for them. This also takes place when the affected do not understand vulnerability criteria and demand more than what

they are entitled to. In one particular case, the INGO had to come in and threaten withdrawal of aid if attacks against the volunteer in charge of aid distribution continued (IHA6).

Thus, the experience of Ukraine shows that trust can come in unexpected forms. It can be earned but not enjoyed fully, as in the case of local authorities trusting that local actors can help, and it can be enforced with external support. Therefore, trust of local communities towards local actors does not seem to have substantial salience in Ukraine. International-local partnership can foster trust, if it is based on the principle of responsibility.

3.1.3 LHAs as sources of knowledge

In Ukraine, local knowledge that has been of particular use to IHAs and the overall response came down to knowing people who were in need of humanitarian assistance, as well as to spot new alarming trends. By being the main and only providers of humanitarian aid for some time, local actors possessed the most accurate information on the affected people, their needs and the overall situation. This role is recognized by international actors both globally and in Ukraine.

Through direct and frequent contact with affected people, LHAs are the first to pick on new threats and developments. This advantage of LHAs was briefly addressed in the chapter on the role of international actors in response, as well as in the literature reviewed. An example from from a local organization in Kyiv illustrates the point. In the midst of the first wave of the displacement crisis, volunteers at "CrimeaSOS" sensed that some media portrayal of IDPs could undermine their assimilation into host communities. This trend was captured in a UNHCR report in July 2014 that shed light on instances of discrimination particularly because of negative media portrayal (UNHCR 2014). The need for training journalists on reporting on conflict-related issues and especially IDPs was also underlined in the Internews report "Trapped

in a propaganda war" on the information needs of the affected people (2015). This is how the head of "CrimeaSOS" Tamila Tasheva describes how her organization addressed the issue:

> "When the first wave of discrimination against IDPs took place in 2014, we met with journalists and soon realized that what was needed was a training for journalists. We prepared a project proposal and applied for funding. This is a typical scenario – we either feel intuitively that something is wrong or find out through phone calls and consultations [with affected people]. We develop ideas how to address problems and then search for funding" (LHA1).

Therefore, the knowledge that local actors possess evolves as a crisis develops, thereby increasing its added value in ensuring the relevance and appropriateness of humanitarian aid and the overall success of the humanitarian operation. Herewith, the principle of equality is crucial so that local actors feel confident coming to international actors with intervention proposals, while international actors listen and take action in response to local actors informed perceptions. Several informants on both sides said that local actors did have a say in program development through sharing knowledge. A former head of the UNHCR office in Kharkiv shared this insight:

> "If somebody came to us with a super good proposal, we would seriously consider funding it directly or present to other donors. We also include different organizations as part of donor visits and delegation tours – this is an opportunity for local organizations to pitch their project" (IHA9).

3.1.4 Interim conclusions: a glimpse of hope for partnership

This section discussed the added value of local actors in response in Ukraine, as perceived both by local and international humanitarian actors. Overall, the advantages of working with local actors in Ukraine bring along some benefits outlined in the literature on the topic: access and knowledge. However, both are not fully harnessed by international actors. The case of Ukraine also shows that trust can take different forms, whereby local authorities may trust that volunteers can help people in need but do not necessarily embrace local actors. It also shows that trust is both a given because many volunteers come from within the affected but can be

vulnerable to external manipulations and may necessitate the engagement of international actors.

3.2 Working with LHAs: challenges

The following sections look at the challenges of working with local partners and discuss them within the wider localization debate. The challenges of lacking capacity and non-compliance with humanitarian principles will be addressed in line with the analytical framework. In addition, the issue of competition between LHAs emerged through the fieldwork in Ukraine.

3.2.1 The lack of capacity

Local (LHAs) and international humanitarian actors (IHAs) spoke about the issue of capacity and the need to build the capacity of local actors in Ukraine. Similar to the literature on the topic, in Ukraine actors were using the term "lack of capacity" to signify different aspects, ranging from working with international donors, language barriers, funding constraints to understanding of the international humanitarian system, humanitarian principles and humanitarian law.

It is clear that in Ukraine the most pertinent challenges for local actors stemmed from the lack of prior humanitarian experience. IHAs and LHAs frequently invoked the fact that Ukraine is new to humanitarian crisis. This meant that LHAs were not aware of the cluster system (coordination system by thematic areas), humanitarian terminology (IDPs vs. refugees), or legal aspects. As mentioned in the chapter on IHAs, this lack of humanitarian background was seemingly compensated by high literacy and competency among local actors. However, it exacerbated the issue of lacking capacity, as it took time for both sides to realize that they were not on the same page in terms of understanding the key humanitarian issues and concerns, as one IHA representative in Kyiv concluded, "We were not aware that people were not aware".

Of comparable importance to international-local cooperation in Ukraine was the lack of capacity among LHAs in dealing with international donors. Many LHAs particularly spoke about the lack of financial reporting skills, as well as other organizational skills and knowledge. One LHA suggested that IHAs should attach a long-term consultant (akin to a Peace Corps volunteer) with key local actors to help them with day-to-day issues (LHA5). While this may or may not be a feasible option, the suggestion points to the fact that LHAs in Ukraine require regular contact and guidance.

Thus, the lack of capacity of local actors in Ukraine has implications for the principles of partnership, especially for the principle of equality. Starting a partnership on an unequal footing in terms of specific knowledge may set cooperation dynamics accordingly, unless partners are aware and are making an effort to address the issue and enforce equality.

3.2.2 Non-compliance with humanitarian principles

Concerns about local actors' compliance with humanitarian principles are common in the humanitarian field (Bennett 2015, Smillie 2001), and Ukraine is no exception. Particularly problematic has been the principle of neutrality. Many informants on both sides spoke about the lack of understanding among local actors of these principles. An example (shared on the basis of anonymity) demonstrates this tension. A well-known donor (a local businessman) ran for office, using his humanitarian donations as part of the campaign. He supported a well-known grassroots local NGO that became one of the largest LHAs in the region. The organization also came out publicly supporting the candidate in an apparent breach of the principle of neutrality that says that "Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature" (UNOCHA 2012).

This led to internal disagreements, later involving an IHA that funded the organization alongside the businessman in question. The IHA concluded that there was no breach of neutrality, as it was their civil right to support a political candidate they wanted. However, other LHAs and IHAs did not share the feeling, as they thought that such cases undermined the trust towards the aid community overall and particularly local actors (IHA7, LHA7). Therefore, the question of compliance with humanitarian principles rings true for Ukraine.

In "Patronage or Partnership", Ian Smillie reflects on the principle of neutrality in humanitarian settings, reminding that "working through local organizations holding partisan views creates several potential risks for outsiders," including "the danger of being charged with partiality and thus of being denied access to one side in a conflict" (Smillie 2001, 188). In Ukraine this can also be a problem, given the political nature of the crisis and, particularly, the pro-West vs. pro-Russia sentiments. By supporting an organization that openly backs a political figure, an IHA runs the risk of being perceived as a political rather than humanitarian actor. Because few IHAs are allowed to work in NGCA, where humanitarian needs are highest, such risks should be avoided.

3.2.3 Competition

Although the literature is mostly concerned with competition between local and international actors, interviews in Ukraine revealed that there is considerable competition among local actors. In fact, interviewed local actors did not feel they were in competition with international actors, whereas local-level competition can pose serious challenges to humanitarian work, as demonstrated in the cases below. Competition between local actors was captured well in the following metaphor shared by two local actors speaking on the basis of anonymity:

> "Local response in Ukraine is like putting out a fire. You have the first wave: the true humanitarians who come to extinguish the fire. They do not care who is extinguishing

> the fire next to them: what are their ideologies, principles and political beliefs. They are all united by one common cause. Motivations may differ but they are not evident. Then the second wave arrives – people who help out with finishing the job and clear out some rubbish. Finally, the third wave arrives – people who come to bake marshmallows on the leftover coal" (LHA7).

Several local actors spoke about the type of local organizations that fit the description of the "third wave" in the above metaphor. These organizations are established in response to opportunities rather than needs; they may or may not demonstrate good compliance with reporting requirements (LHA1, LHA3, LHA7). Information about such organizations travels informally within humanitarian circles. An IHA representative in Sievierodonetsk spoke about an attempt to put together one database akin to a black-list, where corrupt local actors would be traced. However, the initiative did not last, as few updated the list (IHA6).

Competition is particularly troubling when it leads to open confrontation and smear campaigns. In Ukraine, two big volunteer organizations in separate interviews accused each other of lying, stealing and mistreating IDPs. The two organizations cooperated in the past, as they referred IDPs to each other for services. However, as allegations of maltreatment and theft came to surface, one side demanded that a donor IHA investigates the case. According to the IHA representative, they did not see their role as a mediator in this conflict and that it was up to the resolve. Still, an investigation was launched into the dealings of one of the organizations but nothing was found. The result of the ad hoc investigation was not welcomed by another side to the conflict which to this day works on compiling evidence to bring down the other organization.

This case has a couple of implications. Whichever side is right, humanitarian principles of impartiality and humanity are evidently being transgressed, as some IDPs are being mistreated or are not receiving the aid they are entitled to. It also undermines international-local cooperation, as it introduces doubt into otherwise established and trusting relations.

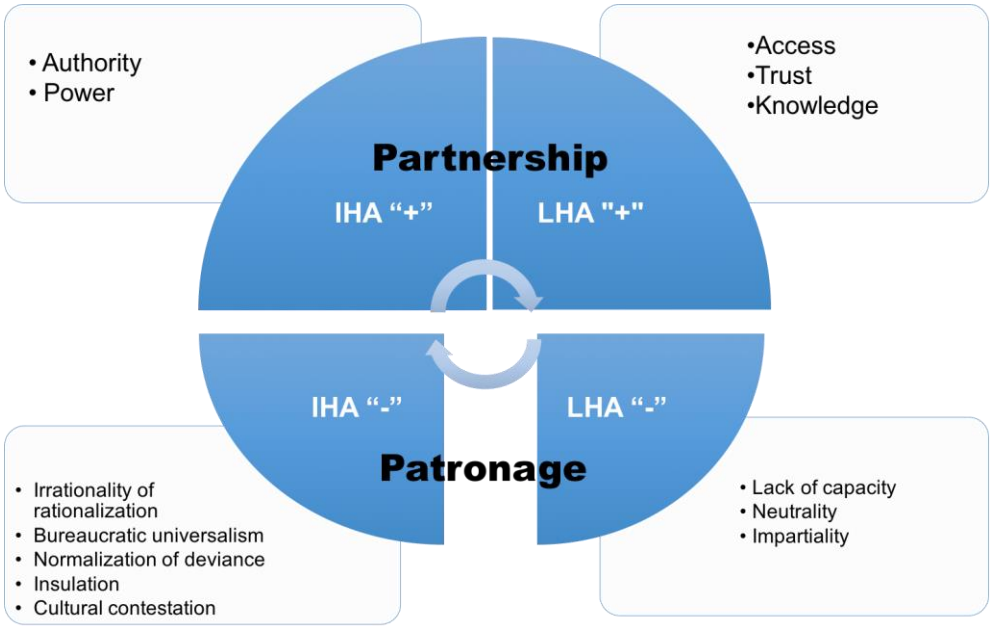
Interim conclusions: manageable elements of patronage

This section discussed the challenges that have arisen in working with local actors in Ukraine, including issues foreseen by the analytical framework (lack of capacity, non-compliance with the principle of neutrality), while also looking at the under-discussed issue of competition among local actors. These challenges are manageable if they are well known, talked about and addressed. Otherwise, they threaten good local-international cooperation through weakening the principles of partnership.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to understand what preferred and attainable form of cooperation between local and international humanitarian actors can look like in practice with the underlying purpose of improving that cooperation. The rationale for this exploration came from the ongoing aid localization debate that questions the dominating role of international humanitarian organizations in response to crises and advocates a more local approach. The thesis sought to contribute to the debate by exploring the most recent and understudied case of humanitarian crisis in Ukraine.

Figure 3 Partnership versus Patronage analytical framework



An analytical framework (see Figure 3) was put together to explore how cooperation can take on either the elements of **partnership**, whereby the advantages of both sides are brought together through a set of principles, while disadvantages are acknowledged and worked with, or **patronage** which does not honor the principles of partnership and fails to match the complementary advantages of both sides. To better understand the advantages and disadvantages of international actors, the thesis employs a constructivist approach, while

relying on the current literature in taking stock of the benefits and shortcomings of working with local actors.

By applying this framework, the thesis arrived at the conclusion that the cooperation between local and international humanitarian actors in Ukraine has demonstrated some potential for partnership, while suffering from manageable features of patronage. Through their authority, international actors in Ukraine have demonstrated an important added value in mediating between local actors and authorities, as well as in safeguarding international norms, standards and principles. They have used the power they draw from the authority to give voice to local actors when necessary, while also offering the means to access more people and enabling a response that is attuned to the changing needs on the ground. In doing so, international actors incorporated the knowledge of local actors and their ability to reach those in need of humanitarian aid. Given the context in Ukraine the advantages of local actors such as trust and to some extent access proved to be more elusive than the literature suggests. However, what is important is that international actors can step in to enforce trust, once again drawing on their authority and thus demonstrating their ability to complement local capacity and efforts.

Nevertheless, for the international-local cooperation in Ukraine to take the form of an equal partnership, international actors ought to acknowledge and work to mitigate the pitfalls they suffer from, including the irrationality of rationalization, bureaucratic universalism, normalization of deviance, and insulation. These shortcomings, while expected of international humanitarian actors as bureaucracies, are both foreseeable and manageable. In particular, the challenges can be best dealt with if the principles of partnership, such as transparency, responsibility and results-based approach, are complied with. The disadvantages of working with local actors like the lack of capacity and the patchy adherence to humanitarian principles are similarly foreseeable given previous experiences. Meanwhile, competition that takes place

among local actors deserves more attention as it risks undermining the effectiveness of the response operation.

Recommendations

The following recommendations can help address the issues raised in the thesis and improve the international-local cooperation in Ukraine and in other contexts:

- Streamline transparency as the key principle of cooperation. Even in cases of bureaucratic hurdles or internal conflicts, being transparent helps find solutions or in worst-case scenarios helps maintain trust.
- In understanding the operational context, prioritize assessment of the needs of local actors through early, open and regular dialogue. In addition, a separate capacity-building survey should be conducted periodically to understand what local actors require and how the needs change.
- Encourage operational flexibility on the part of international actors in partnering with local actors, allowing for various forms of cooperation (based on memoranda of understanding, contractual or non-contractual).
- Establish some feedback mechanisms or potentially a 'hotline' for local actors (in addition to cluster meetings). This way local actors can get both regular guidance and have the ability to voice concerns about the deviant behavior on the part of donors/IHAs or the irrelevance of humanitarian tools and approaches.
- Result-oriented approach should be boosted through specifying performance indicators in the humanitarian response plan.
- Build the capacity of international actors in terms of understanding the value and importance of local actors from early days of the response. This can partially address

the issue of the wrong incentives in the system that motivate international actors to cut out local partners.

Further research

- Expand the research to include actors operating in the non-government controlled areas where the local actors' advantage of access is more profound.
- Include national authorities in the scope of the research as crucial actors in crisis response and recovery.
- Expand the study of cooperation beyond response operation into crisis prevention and post-conflict recovery.

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Appendix 1: List of interviews and interview codes

Name, organization, location

Local humanitarian actors (LNGOs, volunteer groups)

LHA1 – Tamila Tasheva, "CrimeaSOS" NGO,coordinator, Kyiv

LHA2 – Oleksandra Dvoretska, "VostokSOS" NGO, head and co-founder, Kyiv

LHA3 – Irina Bazarova, volunteer group "Slavyane", co-founder, Kharkiv

LHA4 – Evgeny Kaplin, humanitarian mission "Proliska", head of organization, Kharkiv (focus group)

LHA5 – Irina Stepanova, "Right to protection" (R2P), chief consultant, Kramatorsk

LHA6 – Oleksandr Petrov, "Kraina Vilnykh Ludei", coordinator, Kramatorsk

LHA7 – anonymous, Kharkiv (focus group)

International humanitarian actors

IHA1 – Protection cluster coordinator, Kyiv

IHA2 – UN official, coordination, Kyiv

IHA3 – Roman Sheiko, Head of UNICEF office, Kharkiv

IHA4 – UN official, coordination, Kramatorsk

IHA5 – Nataliya Dymkovska, project coordinator, Norwegian Refugee Council, Sievierodonetsk (focus group)

IHA6 – Stas Dymkovsky, project coordinator, Norwegian Refugee Council, Sievierodonetsk

IHA7 – anonymous, Sievierodonetsk

IHA8 – Marcel Vaessen, UNOCHA, acting head of OCHA Ukraine 2014, Kyiv

IHA9 – Aslak Solumsmoen, UNHCR, former head of office, Kharkiv

IHA 10 - Yuri Ilin, ADRA, financial manager, Kramatorsk (focus group)