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LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of 'mandates' in humanitarian priority settings for international non-governmental organisations in situations of armed conflict

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1 Introduction

This literature review has been drafted in support of the implementation of HERE-Geneva's research study "The role of 'mandates' in humanitarian priority settings for international non-governmental organisations in situations of armed conflict" (hereinafter 'the Mandates Study or 'the Study'). The review is the product of a three-week desk-based research and analysis exercise, which has covered both primary sources, such as publicly available official standards and guidelines, and secondary works, such as articles, reports, books, and discussion papers. As an integral part of an ongoing study, the review has not aimed to provide an exhaustive account of all available literature on the topics covered by the Study, but rather to give a succinct view of the current state of research, and to facilitate further study.

The starting point of the Role of Mandates study was an interest to shed light on whether and how organisational mandates influence humanitarian priority settings in situations of armed conflict, and assess how the humanitarian community can best build on the strengths of both 'single-' and 'multi-mandate' approaches to foster effective humanitarian action. Central to this initial objective was a recognition that the majority of organisations that are active in humanitarian response define their purposes broadly, to include both short-term emergency response and long-term development engagement. In contrast, a small minority of organisations have a more limited, purely humanitarian focus. On the one hand, proponents of the latter approach have argued that relief work is more effective when carried out as a sole purpose, since other goals may detract from the priority of saving lives and can endanger perceptions of impartiality and neutrality. On the other hand, those who argue for more wide-ranging purposes view for example humanitarian relief assistance as more sustainable when shaped in conjunction with for example community development, livelihoods support, and peace-building.

Given most organisations approach their humanitarian work from the broader perspective, it is justified to question the usefulness of a theoretical mandate distinction. Nonetheless, and despite its limitations, the mandate distinction "may still tell us something about the different ways in which organisations approach conflicts, the choices they make and the particular problems and challenges they face" (Van Der Haar 2006:18). Beyond the theoretical debates on the virtues and vices of 'single' and 'multi-mandates', it appears however that there is a lack of evidence and understanding with regard to the practical opportunities and limitations that arise from the different approaches. It is this lack that the Mandates Study is set out to fill.

The Study is carried out from an objective and neutral perspective, and as such it does not intend to answer the normative question of 'which approach is best', but rather to clarify the different approaches taken by humanitarian organisations, their advantages and disadvantages, and the way they can be successfully combined. It is in this light, and with a particular regard to the controversies that may arise from a reckless use of the mandate-distinction, that this literature review identifies how the current research has dealt with the various issues that can be seen to have a bearing on the research objective of the Study. Thus, it first takes a look at how the term 'mandate' has been framed in humanitarian discourse, and the various ways in which organisational mandates can be classified. The review then considers whether organisational mandates have been found to inform the way activities are conceived and carried out, and whether differences in approaches can lead to practical tensions and/or complementarities. In doing so, it considers an organisation's decision-making and priority-setting broadly, bearing ideological, operational, and qualitative perspectives in mind, while highlighting practical examples that have been found in the literature. A fourth section of the review then attempts to draw conclusions from the previous sections in terms of the extent to which

humanitarian organisations have been seen to work with each other, and the degree to which the literature has identified functioning mechanisms of strategic complementarities.

At this point, it is important to highlight that in line with the rationale of a literature review, this document uses the terminology favoured by the authors it quotes, and references made to certain concepts which may have varied interpretations—for example "relief work", "emergency work", "humanitarian work", "organisations", and "agencies"—are not necessarily consistent. The title of the Mandates Study speaks of "international non-governmental organisations" (INGOs), and the research for the literature review has therefore focused on this type of organisation, albeit while bearing possible analogies with national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and United Nations (UN) agencies in mind. The text below uses the expression "humanitarian organisations" broadly, to include all of these actors, and when the discussion pertains only to for example NGOs and/or UN agencies, this is specified.

2 The 'mandate' in humanitarian discourse

Most literature that touches upon the work of humanitarian organisations in armed conflict makes use of the word 'mandate' at one point or another, but it is rarely defined in greater detail. Instead, there is a tendency both in policy documents and in academic works to make sweeping references to 'mandates', assuming a common understanding of the term, which does however not appear justified. Indeed, a closer look at the literature indicates that the concept of 'mandates' has been approached from a variety of angles, and that any conclusions drawn in this regard are heavily dependent on the meaning it has been given.

In its strictest sense, a 'mandate' can be defined as "a contract by which one person authorises another to act" or "an official order or commission to do something" (Oxford English Dictionary). Seen from this angle, the mandate of a humanitarian organisation would simply be the legal framework that defines its responsibilities, as given by a mandating authority (ReliefWeb 2008:38). Beyond this strict legal interpretation, the term 'mandate' has however also come to receive a wider meaning in humanitarian discourse, namely as "the different kinds of legitimacy, mission and values held by the wide variety of agencies engaged in humanitarian activities in armed conflict and disaster" (Slim/Bradley 2013:5). In this latter sense, a common understanding of the precise meaning of the term 'mandate' appears to be lacking. First, this can be seen in the very diverse vocabulary used in the literature. Indeed, if few authors specifically define what they intend with the word, it is because they use it more or less as synonymous with a series of other concepts: in addition to the word 'mandate', they for example also speak of the "identity" that informs the practices of an organisation (Schneiker 2015a:18-19, Schneiker 2015b), its "founding principles and organisational missions" (Gerstbauer 2010:850), its "objective" (Captier 2007:97) or its "responsibilities", "duties" (ICRC 2009) and "obligations" (Bugnion 2003). Other examples include references to tasks "entrusted" or "incumbent upon" an organisation, or mention of its "role" (ICRC 2009:399-404), "ethos" (Mills 2005:172-173, Frangonikolopoulos 2005) or "primary aims" (Hannum 2004:19). In the words of Giladi, "[i]f multiple sources make the limits of asserted mandate undetectable, sundry vocabulary obfuscates its very nature" (Giladi 2014:91). Second, in addition to this semantic confusion, variations in approaches to mandates can also be identified in terms of their possible taxonomy. Indeed, as will be seen below, attempts at identifying different types of organisational mandates have resulted in a series of classifications, each dependent on the specific focus taken by the author in question.

While there is little literature that focuses specifically on mandates in the humanitarian field, there are a few noteworthy case-specific analyses (Boulden 2005, Gerstbauer 2010, Giladi 2014). Explicit mention should further be made of Hugo Slim and Miriam Bradly's helpful contribution to the

discussion on types of mandates in humanitarian discourse, *Principled Humanitarian Action & Ethical Tensions in Multi-Mandate Organizations in Armed Conflict* (Slim/Bradley 2013), and Hilhorst and Pereboom's recent article *Multi-Mandate Organisations in Humanitarian Aid* (Hilhorst/Pereboom 2016). There is also a significant number of authors who do not specifically set out to classify the mandates of humanitarian organisations, but who contribute to this discussion indirectly as they look for example at the role of humanitarian organisations in armed conflict (Aall 1996, Abiew 2012, Anderson 1996, Mills 2005, Schneiker 2015a, Schneiker 2015b, Stoddard 2003), at the ethical questions these organisations are confronted with (Bell/Carens 2004, Jacoby 2015, Rubenstein 2015), or at the principles guiding their strategies (Buchanan-Smith/Maxwell 1994, Dijkzeul/Moke 2005, Heyse 2006, Krause 2014, Slim 2000, Weiss 1999). Insights on different types of mandates can also be gleaned from the wider literature on NGOs. Indeed, the argument can be made that the type of NGO either informs or is dependent on its goals and mechanisms (Hannum 2004:19-20, Heyse 2006:23-24), and it is thus valuable to draw a link between taxonomies of NGOs more generally (Korten 1986, Vakil 1997) and the mandating of humanitarian organisations.

Based on the combined insights from these various sources, it is possible to highlight four different perspectives informing classifications of organisational mandates: a legal-technical angle (section 2.1), a historical dimension (section 2.2), in terms of organisations' substantive focus (section 2.3), and based on their ideological approaches (section 2.4). These perspectives can be considered independently from each other, but they can also be combined to form more complex classification grids (section 2.5).

2.1 The legal-technical perspective

A number of authors have looked at the issue of mandates from a legal-technical angle, interpreting the concept strictly to mean the legal framework defining the responsibilities of an organisation. This is the way in which Jane Boulden for example discusses the value of mandates for UN agencies (Boulden 2005), and Rotem Giladi looks into the utility and limits of the mandate of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) (Giladi 2014). The legal-technical approach to mandates makes it possible to distinguish between organisations that have a mandate, and those that do not, and to argue that while organisations equipped with legal mandates can invoke them in varying forms, arenas and frequency, there are also organisations that lack a legal mandate and which "deliver assistance without grounding their work in any particular or general international legal right or obligation to do so" (Giladi 2014:81). Following this line of reasoning, Fiona Terry for example states that Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has "no official mandate", and therefore "freely chooses where it will and will not offer its humanitarian medical assistance" (Terry 2011:111).

Slim and Bradley also highlight that the mandating of agencies can be seen from a legal perspective, though they do not distinguish between organisations that have a legal mandate and those that do not, but rather between "self-mandated" and "state-mandated" organisations (Slim/Bradley 2013:5). Captier makes a similar distinction, when he speaks of certain organisations having "self-given" mandates (Captier 2007:97). In this view, state-mandated organisations include organisations and agencies with mandates that are legally recognised by states, for example UN entities, the ICRC, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Society (IFRC) and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. By contrast, the category of self-mandated organisations is largely made up of NGOs, which—though they are frequently regulated by states—do not carry a formal international mandate, but are rather set up as private, voluntary initiatives (Slim/Bradley 2013:5).

2.2 The historical perspective

A second way of categorising NGOs is to look at their historical background and the traditions in which they have evolved. As one of the first to argue that NGOs reflect the dominant values of the time in which they were established, David Korten identifies three generations of NGOs, each with a distinctive programming strategy. The first such generation aimed at providing immediate relief and welfare assistance, the second pushed for local self-reliance, in line with democratisation movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and the third and most recent generation reflected a willingness to improve sustainability, breadth, and impact. In Korten's words, "[a]ll three strategic orientations appropriately co-exist within the larger NGO community—and sometimes even within a single NGO", though there is still an underlying direction of movement that makes it significant to distinguish between them (Korten 1986:147).

Rather similar to Korten, Abby Stoddard also classifies humanitarian organisations based on three historical strands from which they have evolved (Stoddard 2003:27). The religious strand is the oldest of the three that she identifies, and it is argued to have developed from missionary work and charitable causes. Most faith-based organisations can be seen to have their roots in this category, and today they tend to combine more or less visible religious values with social goals (Stoddard 2003:27). The second historical category identified by Stoddard is the 'Dunantist' tradition. It is seen to have emerged from the establishment of the Red Cross movement, the codification of the fundamental humanitarian principles, and the willingness to assist civilians affected by conflict through action which is disassociated with state interests. In addition to the ICRC, Stoddard sees for example Save the Children, Oxfam and MSF as firmly established within the Dunantist tradition (Stoddard 2003:27). The third category forwarded by Stoddard follows a tradition of compatibility between humanitarian aims and foreign policy objectives (Stoddard 2003:27, Goodhand 2006:15, Reiff 2002), and it has been labelled 'Wilsonian', after President Wilson's ambition to project (United States) US values in the world as a force for good. For this category Stoddard gives the examples of most US NGOs (CARE being a prominent example), but also for example many Dutch NGOs that accept large donations from the Dutch government (Stoddard 2003:28).

Also following a certain historical logic, Anderson (1996) distinguishes between NGOs that have their origins in war and that were formed to aid war victims (for example the ICRC and CARE), and those that find themselves working in conflict settings though they were not specifically founded for these purposes (for example many faith-based organisations). Anderson sees their experience of working in situations of armed conflict as a relevant influence on the extent to which they define themselves as service agencies, their level of "purity of motivation" and their degree of non-partisanship (Anderson 1996:346-347). It is noteworthy that both Anderson and Stoddard see a link between an organisation's historical background and its ideological attitude, something which will be discussed further in section 2.4 below.

2.3 The substantive focus perspective

Possibly the most intuitive way of categorising NGOs is to look at their substantive focus, i.e. to consider what they do, with/for whom they act and/or where. On a broad level, this makes it possible to define an organisation's mandate depending on whether it is universal and general, or geographically and/or substantially limited (Hannum 2004:19-20). In terms of the possible limitations, it is then possible to categorise NGOs according to the sectors in which they intervene. Following this line of reasoning, Anderson argues that NGOs that provide assistance in the international sphere

> operate from what can be categorized as basically four different mandates: the provision of humanitarian relief to people in emergencies, the promotion of long-term social and economic development in countries where poverty persists, the promulgation and monitoring of basic human rights, and the pursuit of peace, including the promotion of the philosophy and techniques of negotiation, conflict resolution, and nonviolence (Anderson 1996:344. See also Aall 1996:436).

A number of authors adhere to this categorisation when they for example make a broad distinction between a "humanitarian" mandate and a "development" mandate, arguing that a strict humanitarian mandate would be limited to providing relief assistance in conflict and emergency situations, and a development mandate would focus more on the other three categories. It is increasingly evident however that 'relief' and 'development' are not clearly distinct categories, and in practice, the dividing lines between them are blurred (Goodhand 2006:16). On the one hand, there are organisations that started out with a 'pure' relief focus, and have then felt a need to expand their concerns, "mov[ing] the goalposts of humanitarian action from emergency to human rights protection, peace-building, economic development, and security sector reform" (Weiss/Hoffman 2007:55-56, Barnett 2005). Thus, Oxfam for example began as a famine relief organisation during the Second World War, but much of its work today deals with economic and social development (Bell/Carens 2004:309). Many humanitarian organisations have also expanded to include peace-building activities on their agenda (Gerstbauer 2010, Goodhand 2006). On the other hand, there are also organisations which started out with a peace or development focus, and that have then also come to carry out relief activities, for example because they were operational in a certain area when such relief was deemed necessary. Organisations which in this way combine two or more of the four types of "primary NGO mandates" identified by Anderson—relief, development, human rights and conflict resolution/peace-building—have been referred to in the literature as "multi-mandate" organisations (Gerstbauer 2010, Omaar/De Waal 1994:10, Van der Haar 2006:18).

It is important at this point to highlight that Slim and Bradley distinguish between mandates in terms of a specific technical or demographic specialism, and according to whether an organisation takes on a humanitarian or a development role. In their view, and as will be discussed more fully in section 2.4 below, the latter is rather linked to an organisation's position along a spectrum of ethical goals. As regards technical specialism, Slim and Bradley argue that the technical mandate of an organisation simply indicates the specific field and/or the demographic group it targets. This means that an organisation that works with a broad humanitarian mandate can be further distinguished based on whether it focuses on for example sanitation, children, health, *etc*. Some organisations focus on one such technical specialism (or a specific target population), and others specialise in different areas simultaneously. Slim and Bradley here give the examples of Oxfam, CARE and World Vision, whose "concern for a variety of socio-economic conditions leads them into a wide range of different technical specialisms that can include agriculture, health, water supply, education and legal rights." (Slim/Bradley 2013:5). While Slim and Bradley recognise that the term "multi-mandate" can be used here, they do suggest that it is better in this scenario to speak of "multi-sectorial" organisations. This since in their view, the word "multi-mandate" takes up another meaning when considering mandates according to how an organisation positions itself in terms of ethical goals (see section 2.4 below).

In addition to looking at *where* or *with what* organisations work, distinctions can also be made with regard to *how* they work. This has been done by various authors in a variety of ways. Goodhand for example identifies three broad working modalities which can identify the type of NGO: direct intervention, capacity building, and advocacy (Goodhand 2006:15). Also considering an organisation's actual tasks, Omaar and De Waal speak of "the 'enlarged' mandates" of operational NGOs, which would include for example primary or even exclusive responsibility for the delivery of services such as relief or health care, conflict resolution, publicity, lobby and advocacy on international response to

emergencies (Omaar/De Waal 1994:10). In his discussion on the type of activities that organisations carry out, Chandler identifies two strands of changes in the post-cold war approaches of humanitarian organisations. One strand has its roots in conflict situations, and has seen organisations going from focusing on providing immediate assistance to victims, to a greater commitment of solidarity, and more advocacy work. A second strand has developed in response to famine and drought, and has seen emergency relief NGOs add long-term developmentalism to their agenda (Chandler 2001:682. See also Abiew 2012:206).

It is clear from the above account that while it appears straight-forward to classify an organisation in terms of its substantive focus, it is in fact a very complex undertaking in view of the close inherent linkages between technical orientation and operational modalities. In this regard, Vakil's classification of NGOs is noteworthy, as she bases it on the interactions between what she calls the two "essential descriptors" of NGOs, namely their orientation and their level of operation (Vakil 1997:2063). By orientation she understands the activities of the organisation, divided into six categories: welfare, development, advocacy, education, networking, and research. As regards the level of operation, it can be international, national, or community-based. The sectoral focus and evaluative descriptors (for example accountability and effectiveness) are considered by Vakil as "contingent descriptors". In her view, it is possible to explain differences in NGO behaviour by considering and ordering them according to these descriptors. Heyse also classifies humanitarian organisation by cross-analysing technical orientation and operational modalities. She makes a main distinction between operational and non-operational organisations on the one hand, and then specialist and generalist NGOs on the other. In her analysis, MSF is considered specialist (focusing on medical aid and sanitation and with a welfare orientation) and operational (delivering services itself in the field), whereas ACT Holland is generalist (focusing on food, medicine, and education in a development orientation) and non-operational (providing local or national NGOs with funds to act) (Heyse 2006:26). In terms of differences with regard to technical orientation, it is also interesting to note that Hilhorst and Pereboom identify a distinction in the way international single- and multi-mandate organisations relate to national actors, and that single-mandate organisations are more frequently self-implementing, while multi-mandate organisations more frequently rely on national partners to provide aid (Hilhorst/Pereboom 2016:96).

2.4 The ideological perspective

It is not only very difficult to draw clear dividing lines between humanitarian organisations' operational modalities and technical orientation, but—as already referenced above with the mention of Slim and Bradley's take on humanitarian and development mandates and ethical goals—these issues are also closely linked to an organisation's ideological approach. Indeed, arguing that the mandating of agencies can also be seen in terms of "organisational positions along a spectrum of ethical goals", Slim and Bradley distinguish between "single-mandate" and "multi-mandate" agencies based on whether they work only with an emergency humanitarian mission (for example ICRC and MSF), or whether they combine this work with a broader, long-term development mission (like most other humanitarian organisations today) (Slim/Bradley 2013:6). In their view, responding to crises of poverty, human development, and social justice and not only to humanitarian emergencies necessarily implies advocacy work for political change of various kinds. This in turn means an increased risk of ethical tensions, where agencies attempt to "'balance', 'separate', 'finesse' or 'complement' the humanitarian and development aspects of their multi-mandate" (Slim/Bradley 2013:6).

Peter Weiss also takes an organisation's attitudes into consideration in his typology of humanitarian organisations, arguing that they can be placed on a spectrum, from 'classicist' to 'solidarist'. The differences between 'classicist' and 'solidarist' attitudes can be identified in terms of four different

aspects; an organisation's engagement with political authorities, its approach to the principles of neutrality, and impartiality, and its stance in regard to the necessity of obtaining the consent to intervene from the authorities in question (Weiss 1999:3). Figure 1 below provides an illustration of the spectrum developed by Weiss.

	Classicists	⟷	Solidarists
Engagement with political authorities	Eschew public confrontations	⟷	Advocate controversial public policy
Neutrality	Avoid taking sides	⟷	Take the side of selected victims
Impartiality	Deliver aid using proportionality and non-discrimination	⟷	Skew the balance of resource allocation
Consent	Pursue as *sine qua non*	⟷	Override sovereignty as necessary

Figure 1: The political spectrum of humanitarians and their attitudes towards traditional operating principles (Weiss 1999:3)

Based on this spectrum, Weiss identifies four different groups of humanitarian organisations. The first group is that of "classicists", who argue for a strict separation between humanitarian action and politics. The second group on the other hand, the "solidarists", takes a specific stance in favour of selected victims, even at the detriment of the principles of neutrality and impartiality. In between these two extremes there is also a group of "political humanitarians", which can be divided into "minimalists" and "maximalists". Generally speaking, this group believes that it is not possible to separate politics and humanitarian action. Some go for a rather minimal "do no harm" policy, whereas others are more ambitious in terms of using humanitarian action as part of a strategy to transform conflict (Weiss 1999:2-3). It is interesting to note that Weiss identifies the ICRC and MSF as polar opposites, with the former espousing a strong classicist view, and the latter a strong solidarist view. This classification has led to some criticism, both from the organisations themselves, and from other scholars (Sommaruga 1999, Tanguy/Terry 1999, Dijkzeul 2004).

2.5 Mixing perspectives

The above account illustrates how one organisation can be said to have a different type of mandate depending on the angle from which the typology is made. MSF, for example, if one takes a strict legal view, can be argued to have no mandate at all, but it can also be said to be self-mandated. Further, it can on the one hand be argued to have a single, 'Dunantist', humanitarian mandate, but it can also be seen as multi-mandate in terms of its working modalities, which cover both direct intervention based on neutrality and impartiality, and political advocacy (Mills 2005:173, Krause 2014:107). Similarly, while many authors would argue that the ICRC is a—if not *the*—typical example of a single-mandate humanitarian organisation, it could also be argued to have multiple mandates since as the guardian of the Geneva Conventions it has a long practiced legal role along its operational activities in the field (Giladi 2014:83, 86).

The discussion on the types of mandates becomes even more complicated if a temporal element is added. Depending on the perspective used, many organisations can be said to have changed from being 'single-mandate' to 'multi-mandate', either because they have changed their substantive focus, or because they have extended their repertoire of activities (Abiew 2012:206, Chandler 2001:682, Krause 2014:108-109). Financial and logistical aspects can also be seen to complicate the question of organisational mandates. Indeed, many authors forward the perhaps cynical, but certainly pragmatic, argument that mandates are often not only dictated by an organisation's history, substantial focus

and/or ideological attitude, but also in terms of humanitarian access and funding conditions (Hannum 2004:22). On the one hand, authors have argued that organisations emphasise their humanitarian mandate since donor governments have come to see a broad variety of issues through the lens of humanitarian emergency (Krause 2014:168, Rieff 2002, Frangonikolopoulos 2005). On the other hand, it has been shown that humanitarian organisations work with a defined budget, and that they therefore tend to consider resources, access and their own prior experience when they decide which projects and activities to take on (Krause 2014:168).

These difficulties are recognised in the literature, and the usefulness of distinguishing between the activities of different types of organisations based on simple dichotomies, such as legal/not legal, or humanitarian/development has been questioned (Slim 2001:291). In light of this difficulty, it should be noted that some authors have attempted more nuanced taxonomies of organisations, taking more than one perspective into account. For example, Dijkzeul and Moke make an interesting mapping of humanitarian organisations which looks both at the legal-technical question of whether or not organisations are independent or public service contractors, and at the ideological perspective, considering whether organisations are "impartial" or "solidaristic" (Dijkzeul 2004, Dijkzeul/Moke 2005). Dijkzeul and Moke's theory is similar to that of Weiss, in that they consider a spectrum of attitudes, but they allow for more variation in the departures from the classicist view (Krause 2014:110). A version of Dijkzeul and Moke's 'mental map', with their categorisation of a number of humanitarian organisations, can be found in Figure 2 below.

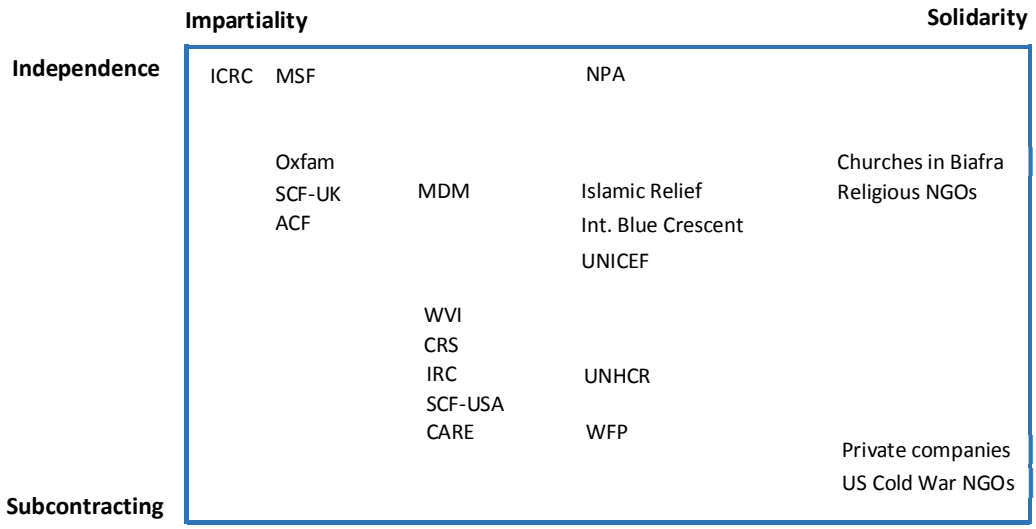

Figure 2: Mental map of large international humanitarian organisations (Dijkzeul/Moke 2005:679, Dijkzeul 2004:218).

The horizontal axis of Dijkzeul and Moke's mental map positions organisations depending on their relationship to the parties of a conflict, running from 'impartiality' to 'solidarity'. The choice of using 'impartiality' instead of 'neutrality' is deliberate, and follows the argument that in humanitarian action, neutrality can only be properly understood in the context of the ICRC, where it is more an operational principle than an abstract idea (Dijkzeul 2004:217). 'Impartiality' is seen as a more meaningful term. It centres on providing assistance to people rather than states or rebel movements, and it can be exercised more or less actively (Dijkzeul 2004:217, Slim 1997:349). At the opposite side of the spectrum, 'solidarity' is defined as an explicit choice to side with a group of people and their political cause (Dijkzeul 2004:218). In this regard, Dijkzeul is careful to distinguish between solidarity in this

sense, and solidarity as a willingness to share the suffering of the population and to be physically present with them.

The vertical axis of Dijkzeul and Moke's mental map positions organisations with regard to their relationship to states, and especially to the main donor in the 'home' country. It basically questions how 'non-governmental' an organisation really is. On one end of the spectrum is independence, and this includes both financial and political aspects. For example, an independent organisation would receive the majority of its funding from non-governmental sources, and can operate without the support of big institutional donors (Dijkzeul 2004:218). Political independence is more prone to subjective interpretation, but it essentially means an organisation that is capable to taking a public stance that is different to that of the state. On the other side of the spectrum is 'subcontracting' (Dijkzeul/Moke 2005), or 'public service contractor' (Dijkzeul 2004), and it refers to for-profit organisations that execute contracts for donor governments or donor institutions.

Krause recognises that Stoddard's, Weiss', and Dijkzeul and Moke's typologies all are valuable since they point out important differences among humanitarian organisations, but finds them lacking in that they classify positions rather than the way distinctions between positions are drawn (Krause 2014:110). She therefore argues for a field-theoretical mapping of organisations, where the goals of humanitarian organisations are considered in relation with each other. The basis of her argument is that the positioning of humanitarian organisations is not so much a question of their different orientations and histories, as of their reactions to each other, and to the opportunities and constraints of the humanitarian field in the present (Krause 2014:112). Krause argues that instead of placing organisations on two axes, it is better to see them as part of a dynamic which takes various aspects into account simultaneously. She uses the vocabulary of "purity" and "pollution" in the field, arguing that "in its pure form, humanitarianism is humanitarianism for humanitarianism's sake" (Krause 2014:113), but that consideration has to be made of a variety of sources of heteronomy, or "pollutions". Such sources of influence could be for example donor governments, non-state political actors/social movements, and religious agendas (Krause 2014:113-114). Figure 3 below shows Krause's illustration of the humanitarian field, and the way in which she considers the mandates of humanitarian organisations in relation to each other.

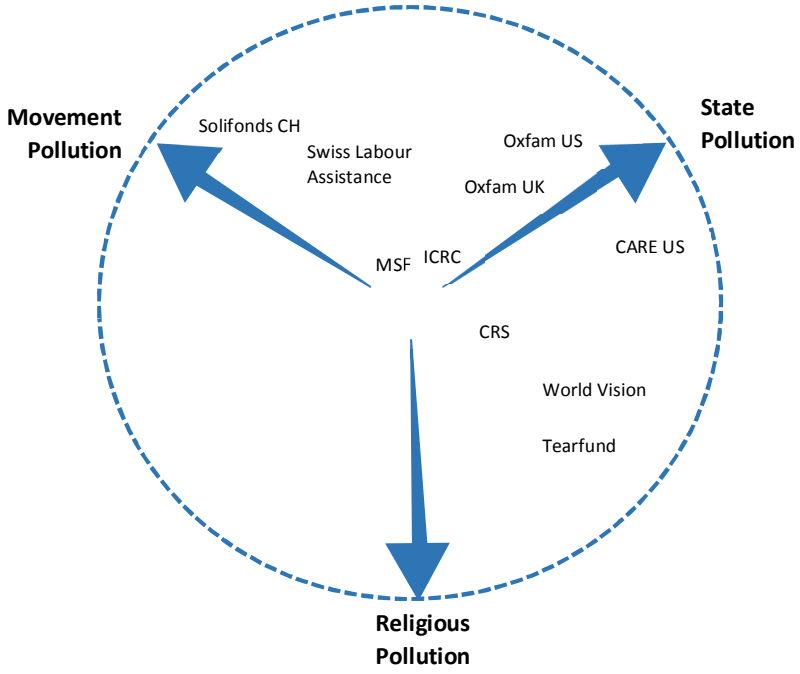

Figure 3: Krause's illustration of purity and pollution in the humanitarian field (Krause 2014:11113)

In Krause's view, MSF and ICRC can be found closest to the pole, and they are therefore relatively "pure" in terms of their humanitarian activities. There is a slight variation in the ways they are independent however corresponding to different dangers of pollution. The ICRC adheres very strictly to the principle of neutrality between warring parties, but this implies a certain dependence on the system of nation states since they have to accept for example a state's right to control access to its territory. MSF on the other hand asserts independence vis-à-vis host countries through its practice of witnessing, but in Krause's view, this position risks bringing it closer to certain non-state political actors, for example social movements of rebel groups (Krause 2014:113. See also Dijkzeul/Hilhorst 2016 and Hilhorst/Pereboom 2016).

The discussion in this section has demonstrated that the concept of 'mandates' has been considered from a number of angles, engaging a large and confusing vocabulary. The next section will look at the utility, limits, and impacts that have been associated with mandates in more detail, and discuss the extent to which the literature has perceived humanitarian organisations' varying mandates to inform their ideological, operational, and qualitative stance. At this point it is important to highlight that, while bearing the existence of varying interpretations of the concept of mandates in mind, the discussion below will continue to speak generally of 'mandates' as it refers to the issue at the basis of this research in light of the existing literature. This also means that despite their limitations (Hilhorst/Pereboom 2016:85), the broad concepts of 'single' and 'multi-mandate' organisations will sometimes be used below to distinguish generally between organisations with a more limited humanitarian focus, and those aiming for a broader spectrum of purposes. A specific operationalisation of the concept of 'mandates' for the purposes of this Study can be found in the separate methodological note.

3 The utility, limits, and impacts of varying 'mandates'

The preceding section of this review has indicated that the question of mandates tends to touch upon a series of related issues, for example how an organisation frames its legitimacy and how it sets priorities for its activities in terms of whom they target, how and why. Above, this interconnectedness was essentially discussed in terms of how different factors inform different types of mandates. This section will look at the other side of the coin, and consider whether—and if so how—the literature has found that different types of mandates impact differently on the way organisations conceive and carry out their activities, and whether differences in mandates can lead to practical tensions and/or complementarities.

The discussion below will highlight examples drawn of an ideological, operational, and qualitative nature. Thus, the extent to which authors have argued that organisational mandates influence the values and principles that guide the work of humanitarian organisations will first be discussed (section 3.1). Second, consideration will be made of the way in which authors have linked the mandates to the contextual and temporal perspectives in which organisations conceive of their activities (section 3.2). Third, the qualitative or evaluative perspective will be borne in mind, with a discussion of how different mandates have been seen to impact on efficiency and effectiveness in action (section 3.3), and the ways in which accountability has been approached (section 3.4). Importantly, the sections below do not set out to provide exhaustive accounts of the literature available with regard to each angle, but rather to highlight examples of possible tensions and/or cross-fertilisations of ideas and approaches that have surfaced in debates relating to mandates.

3.1 Challenges and compromises regarding the 'principled approach'

Within the domain of humanitarian action, the values of life and the worth and fundamental dignity of every human being have been translated into the four core humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence. Over the past fifty years, these principles have achieved a central role in humanitarian action, and they are supposed to function as a common denominator within the humanitarian community. Nevertheless, given the diversity of approaches of humanitarian organisations, a number of questions can be raised. How do different humanitarian organisations understand and implement the humanitarian principles? If we use an ideological perspective, are there other or additional values or principles that organisations apply in fulfilling their broader long-term development mission? Are there any tensions between these different sets of 'ideological values and principles' and how are they resolved? This section will examine how these questions have been looked at in the literature.

There is a vast literature on the role and history of the humanitarian principles, discussing for example their importance for underpinning acceptance approaches in insecure environments (Slim 2007, Macdonald/Valenza 2012, Egeland *et al* 2011, Collinson/Elhawary 2012), and challenges organisations face in maintaining these principles (Egeland *et al* 2011, Schenkenberg 2015). It is noteworthy however that most literature on the humanitarian principles is of a general and secondary nature rather than based on empirical, field-level research. Schreter and Harmer have highlighted in particular a lack of evidence-based research with regard to how humanitarian organisations put the humanitarian principles in practice (Schreter/Harmer 2013:37). Similarly, this literature review has not found any sources that explicitly and empirically compare and contrast the various ways in which different types of organisations understand and implement these principles. In terms of the degree to which mandates inform the organisational approach to the humanitarian principles, two main strands of debates can however be identified: the extent to which different types of humanitarian organisations are ready to

compromise on these principles, and the discussion on their precise interpretation, and understanding in practice.

First, there are numerous authors who make a link between the organisational mandate, and the extent to which organisations follow—or are perceived to follow—a principled approach.[1] As seen in section 2.4, Weiss has argued that while 'classicist' humanitarian organisations aim for a strict separation between humanitarian action and politics, 'solidarists' are more at ease with taking a political stand, even though this may be detrimental to the respect for the principles of neutrality and impartiality (Weiss 1999:2-3). Schreter and Harmer have for example highlighted that "while continuing to call for respect for humanitarian principles, many humanitarian organisations have willingly compromised a principled approach in their own conduct through close alignment with political and military activities and actors" (Schreter/Harmer 2013:37. See also Egeland *et al* 2011). Arguing for principled humanitarianism, Bookstein demonstrates the necessity of agility of dynamism in order to achieve independence from military, political, economic, or other determinants, and the requirement of being flexible and carefully attuned to circumstances, while still remaining based on a "strong, principled core" (Bookstein 2007:144). In her study on humanitarian organisations' advocacy activities, Bridges argues that organisations with "narrower" humanitarian mandates would be more protective of their perceived neutrality, and would be likely to "experience the negative effects of a political engagement that they have no control over." (Bridges 2010:1258). Interestingly, Bridges also highlights how confusion with regard to the level of political engagement of an organisation not only creates problems between agencies, or between agencies and beneficiaries, but also *within* the organisations themselves. Interestingly, Hilhorst and Pereboom hightlight as a major paradox of humanitarian aid that "the ideal-typical representation of aid, the single-mandate principled humanitarian organisation, only corresponds to a handful of agencies among thousands, and that the organisation and principles these few agencies stand for nonetheless continue to dominate humanitarian policy, academia and debate" (Hilhorst/Pereboom 2016:88).

A second issue that can be identified in the literature, and which has a bearing on the impact of mandates on an ideological level, is their precise interpretation. Indeed, the debate with regard to the willingness to compromise on principles essentially boils down to how the principles are interpreted, and the extent to which they are seen as an imperative basis for operational action, or rather as a guiding tool which can be re-evaluated with regard to specific decisions. Most organisations for instance include claims of neutrality in their literature, but the exact use of the term and the applicability of it to the precise actions of the organisation are not always the same (Dijkzeul 2004:217, Schenkenberg 2015). In their 1993 Nobel acceptance speech, MSF for example explained that its advocacy activities were perfectly in line with the principle of neutrality, arguing that silence is not to be confused with neutrality, and is as such not a necessary condition for humanitarian action (Mills 2005:172-173. See also Schenkenberg 2015:4). The ICRC on the other hand approaches neutrality as an 'operational principle', rather than an abstract idea, following a culture of silence which emphasises confidentiality and refutes advocacy work (Dijkzeul 2004, Slim 1997, Brauman 2012:1525, Rieff 2002:19-20). This example is significant with regard to this study, since it highlights that two organisations which both follow an essentially humanitarian goal, and which purport to go by the same principles, may still implement these in different ways, based on their different outlooks. Heims *et al* take this reality in consideration, arguing that "it is useful to translate some of the fundamental principles […] into a different language" when taking a series of different actors into consideration

[1] See for example Abiew 2012, Barnett 2005, Barnett/Weiss 2008, Bell/Carens 2004, Bridges 2010, Buchanan-Smith/Maxwell 1994, Carpenter/Bennett 2015, Chandler 2001, Eade/Vaux 2007, Frangonikopoulos 2005, Givoni 2011, Jacoby 2015, Leebaw 2007, Lindenberg/Dobel 1999, Mills 2005, Rieff 2002, Rubenstein 2015, Stoddard 2003, Slim/Bradley 2013, Weiss 1999, Weiss/Hoffman 2007.

(Heims *et al* 2016:2). Schenkenberg also sets out to clarify various aspects that can be derived from the definition or context of the principles, with a view to enabling humanitarian organisations to gain a better understanding of the opportunities and obstacles they offer (Schenkenberg 2015). He argues that "[a]ssessing the application of the principles can be done by analysing them for their different elements and verifying whether and how organizations have reflected on these issues in their decision-making and operational choices" (Schenkenberg 2015:6). Figure 4 below summarises the elements that Schenkenberg identifies as inherent to the principles of neutrality and independence, and which he finds can be used in an assessment of how organisations take these principles into account.

Neutrality

Political engagement or not?	Do activities, in particular advocacy, imply an actual engagement in controversies of a political or related nature?	
Perceptions	Have the perceptions of all relevant actors with regard to the neutrality of humanitarian aid been gauged?	Acceptance Accountability to affected populations
Balancing neutrality with other principles	What compromises need to be made in order to ensure a reasonable balance with other principles?	

Independence

Institutional and political independence
Financial independence
Operational independence, including technical and logistical aspects

Figure 4: Aspects to consider when assessing neutrality and independence (based on Schenkenberg 2015)

Generally speaking, the question of protection provides an interesting example with regard to the subject of this research, as it can be seen to crystallise some of the issues analysed so far. The overall primary responsibility for protection lies with the states, by virtue of the various instruments of international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law that they have signed. Humanitarian organisations can play a significant role when states are unable or unwilling to fulfil their role. Until the end of the last century, it was really only the ICRC and UNHRC that were concerned with the topic, but it then developed beyond agencies with specific protection responsibilities, into a core component of wider humanitarian action (DuBois 2010:2, Niland *et al* 2015:10, Slim/Bonwick 2005). When events in for example Somalia, Bosnia, and Rwanda indicated that the existing political calls for application of standards by states was not enough, a number of NGOs added protection to their agenda. This development can be considered in the context of the above-mentioned debate on the enlargement of the mandates of humanitarian organisations, and the possible consequences that this may have on an organisation's perceived neutrality and impartiality (Ferris 2011, Gentile 2011:1188, Harmer 2008:538-539). Gentile shows for example that there is a risk that protection activities on behalf of humanitarian organisations be perceived as a sign of a Westernised political agenda (Gentile 2011:1188-1190). However, it has also been argued that "[a]dherence to an overly principled and politics-free approach to civilian protection in mass atrocity settings may be both unwise and risky for humanitarian actors as well as the intended beneficiaries of protection" (Labonte 2012:996). This argument is based on the idea that protection is necessarily a political act, so it cannot be accurately carried out in conjunction with an insistence on operational neutrality and independence (Labonte 2012:996).

As mentioned above, the majority of humanitarian organisations today do not engage solely in humanitarian activities, but also take on a number of different roles, such as for example capacity-building and advocacy. In light of this reality, it is interesting to question whether the literature has drawn attention to additional principles that come into play for organisations that combine humanitarian and development work. While not as clearly defined as the humanitarian principles, some guiding 'principles' informing development aid, human rights, and peacebuilding approaches can be distilled from a series of manuals and declarations.[2] Poverty Reduction Strategies are for example to be country-driven, results-oriented, comprehensive, partnership-oriented, and long-term. Similarly, donors are to aim for Sector-Wide Approaches, which draw on the perspectives of a wide range of actors within a country, and which devolve responsibility for implementation to lower levels of government (Fowler 2003:19-20). Results-Based Management principles moreover proclaim that performance should be measured in terms of outcomes and impacts rather than inputs, and activities; Good Governance principles emphasise the importance of adequate citizen's participation and public accountability; and Rights-Based Approaches to Development state that international human rights law can be considered part of the overarching framework in which development actors operate (Fowler 2003:22-25). The *Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States* (Global Humanitarian Assistance website) are also noteworthy, as they include for example the idea of recognising the links between political, security and development objectives, aligning with local priorities in different ways in different contexts, and agreeing on practical coordination mechanisms between international actors (OECD 2007). It is clear that these various principles can be perceived as difficult to implement while at the same time advocating for the strict implementation of the humanitarian principles. As highlighted by Hilhorst and Pereboom:

> Selecting specific disadvantaged groups can (seem to) be contrary to the impartiality principle. Raising causes of conflict can be contrary to the principle of neutrality. Looking for structural solutions requires working with national and international governments, which can be contrary to the independence principle. The confused practice around principles can lead to problems in communication and images of humanitarian aid. The principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence are in the eye of the beholder. Even if organisations operate according to these principles, they can be seen by the population as partial. (Hilhorst/Pereboom 2016:94).

Generally speaking, there is a limited understanding of the principles that concretely guide the approaches of different actors in conflict contexts (Schreter/Harmer 2013). Schreter and Harmer highlight that is particularly challenging for humanitarian action to ensure that humanitarian principles are upheld in contexts where the principles informing resilience programming equally come into play. They argue that it is "important to understand how these various principles are applied, whether they are complementary or contradictory and to what extent the simultaneous application of various sets of principles makes programming more challenging" (Schreter/Harmer 2013:40).

3.2 Diverging contextual or temporal perspectives

As seen above, there is a close relationship between organisational mandates, and the values and principles that guide an organisation. This section will take this discussion one step further, and highlight the extent to which the literature has linked the mandates of humanitarian organisations to their operational approaches in terms of which goals they pursue, and through which activities. Do different types of organisations engage in different types of activities, i.e. is it in fact the mandate that

[2] See for example the Development Assistance Manual: DAC Principles for Effective Aid (OECD 1992:iii), the 'Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness', the 'Accra Agenda for Action' and the 'Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States' (Global Humanitarian Assistance website).

impacts on how organisations approach their operations? And if so, does this result in tensions and/or does it provide potential for complementarity?

The literature review bears witness to a discussion with regard to differing approaches in terms of the contextual perspective. One of the main premises of Hilhorst and Pereboom's recent article on multi-mandate organisations is that the way multi-mandate issues play out depend essentially on whether it is question of an open or violent conflict, a refugee situation, a fragile post-conflict setting, or a natural disaster (Hilhorst/Pereboom 2016:89-93). They conclude that "single-mandate humanitarian agencies are particularly prominent in open, violent conflict whereas in all other types of crisis, multi-mandate organisations appear to be more dominant and better suited to provide services." (Hilhorst/Pereboom 2016:93). While they do not elaborate on the precise reason for this in detail, they do explain that scenarios of open, violent conflicts are often local and periodic, and the international community is frequently seen in them either as a 'neutral outsider' or as a 'warring party' depending on the speaker's political point of view (Hilhorst/Pereboom 2016:89). They find that in such situations, "ICRC typically plays a large role and MSF is usually at the forefront of aid delivery" (Hilhorst/Pereboom 2016:90). They do highlight however that this "does not mean that multi-mandate organisations are not around or have no role to play", since "[i]n many cases, some parts of the country are subjected to heavy fighting while in other parts of the country aid is being delivered for reconstruction or development" (Hilhorst/Pereboom 2016:90).

Another example of this type of discussion is the question of the "transition gap", and the increasing realisation that the different phases between emergency and development can occur simultaneously. The concept of 'LLRD' ('linking relief, rehabilitation and development')[3] has come and gone in the literature over the past decades, and it focuses on 'filling the gap' between humanitarian work and development work. The term 'LRRD' was initially considered in a linear fashion (relief → rehabilitation → development), but authors are now emphasising that it needs to be considered as a continuum, with movements "in 'both' directions and between all of the different stages" (Mosel/Levine 2014: 3. See also Buchanan-Smith/Maxwell 1994, Otto/Weingärtner 2013, Hilhorst/Pereboom 2016). Humanitarian funds are often stretched to cover both humanitarian and early recovery in the transition phase, meaning that humanitarian organisations may need to decide whether to use humanitarian funds to cover all activities, or take up stabilisation funding in areas that are not stable—at the risk of compromising perceptions of neutrality and the impartiality of their response (Macdonald/Valenza 2012:22).

Many authors also draw attention to the tensions that can arise between organisations taking a long-term or a short-term perspective, and in these discussions they particularly highlight the differences in approaches between humanitarian actors on the one hand, and development or peacebuilding actors on the other. Carpenter and Bennett talk of the "cultural differences" between humanitarian and development actors, arguing that they do not only pertain to their values and assumptions, but also to the focus of their operations (Carpenter/Bennett 2015:8). This argument flows from the idea that development or peacebuilding activities and humanitarian projects simply serve different goals. The latter focus on the humanitarian imperative; humanitarian ethics seek to ensure direct survival and dignity of an affected population. Development, on the other hand, focuses on transforming a community or society in order to make it self-sufficient, well-governed and flourishing (Carpenter/Bennett 2015:8, Slim/Bradley 2013:7). A similar tension can be identified when mixing more traditional humanitarian work with peacebuilding activities, since while humanitarian action is

[3] Though this review does not discuss rehabilitation as such, insights can be drawn from the literature on LRRD to the extent that it makes a link between an organisation's mandate (in a broad sense) and whether—and if so how—it combines relief or humanitarian assistance with development aid.

conceived to be neutral, independent, and guided by need, peacebuilding has clear political implications (OCHA 2011, Goodhand 2006:111). The different types of goals observed between humanitarian action and development/peacebuilding activities mean that operational activities tend to be conceived in different perspectives, either in the short-term or the long-term (Slim/Bradley 2013:8). As noted by Goodhand, for most 'multi-mandate' NGOs, peacebuilding is not their primary objective, and "the operational challenge for them is more complex than simply weighing up benefits and harms; it also involves balancing […] negative or positive externalities with other primary objectives related to relief, protection or development" (Goodhand 2006:109). Some commonalities have however also been identified between humanitarian work and peacebuilding, as both types of activities for example aim to build resilience, albeit that humanitarians focus primarily on the community level, and peacebuilders on the societal and political levels (OCHA 2011:4-5).

It is noteworthy that the literature review has highlighted suggestions for bridging gaps between different perspectives, and even some concrete examples of where this has been done. Recognising the need to associate between long-term and short-term activities in situations of armed conflict, and efficiently link relief and development, Buchanan-Schmidt and Maxwell for example argue for a more developmental approach to relief: "[w]here an international relief operation is needed, it should be planned to incorporate the basic principles normally applied to development projects" (Buchanan-Smith/Maxwell 1994:6). In their view, this would for instance mean engaging local (governmental) institutions, who would be trained, equipped, and financed to act as first responders. Other authors have also highlighted how humanitarian actors—who are typically more dependency focused—could draw from the concept of Participatory Development (PD), and learn from their colleagues working in development aid how to relate efficiently with the local population (White 1994:27, Byrne 2003). The PD concept developed in the 1970s as part of the basic needs approach to development, and it is an alternative to the top-down aid provision which is still more common in humanitarian assistance. Thus, a participatory approach has been put forward as a way to ensure that resources are used effectively and that humanitarian assistance has an impact in the long-term (White 1994:27, Byrne 2003). Furthermore, Lange and Quinn highlight that humanitarian agencies that also engage in peacebuilding efforts have a chance to positively contribute to the transformation of the conflict without jeopardising their core mandate and humanitarian principles. Despite the challenges identified above, they suggest that besides 'doing no harm', humanitarian actors can actually 'do good' by incorporating a so-called "'conflict sensitive' approach in planning and programming", which would include analysing the root causes of a conflict situation and the political context. One of the manners in which they argue this could be achieved is by focusing on 'human security' and 'complementarity'. In their view, these concepts link humanitarian assistance, development and peacebuilding in a way that creates a secure environment for affected communities to start meeting their own basic needs (Lange/Quinn 2003:20).

In terms of actual examples of where different perspectives have been jointly considered, mention can be made of how the definition of protection has evolved in humanitarian discourse. Indeed, in his article *Humanitarian Organizations Involved in Protection Activities*, Gentile demonstrates how the concept of protection evolved through the combined efforts of humanitarian and human rights actors (Gentile 2011:1172-1175). In the late 1990s, the ICRC organised a number of inter-agency workshops, which resulted in the report *Strengthening Protection in War: A Search for Professional Standards* (Giossi Caverzasio 2001). This document clarified that the concept of protection would encompass:

> all activities aimed at ensuring full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law, i.e. human rights law, international humanitarian law, and refugee law. Human rights and humanitarian organizations must conduct these activities in an impartial manner (not on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, language or gender). (Giossi Caverzasio 2001:19).

This definition has become the standard definition of protection for humanitarian organisations (Gentile 2011:1172, IASC 2002:11, ICRC 2013:12, The Sphere Handbook 2011, Slim/Bonwick 2005:33) and it emphasises safety, personal dignity, integrity, and empowerment. In doing so it has been argued to have helped in establishing "greater understanding between humanitarian and human rights actors, and prompted the former to increasingly adopt a rights-based approach" (ICRC 2013:12. See also Slim/Bonwick 2005:33).

Slim and Bonwick point to the balancing act that humanitarian organisations need to carry out with regard to which activities they take on, arguing that they face a two-fold challenge. First, humanitarian organisations need to tackle the strategic political task of getting responsible authorities to respect their obligations. This task is very likely to require both urgent and long-term advocacy, in combination with structural support for national authorities and civil society movements (Slim/Bonwick 2005:39). MSF for example does not carry out protection work themselves precisely for this reason, arguing that were they to serve as protection agents, they could compromise their neutrality and endanger their operations (Weissman 2010). Second, they are faced with a tactical challenge, to ensure that humanitarian workers collaborate effectively with populations at risk in view of meeting their practical protection needs (Slim/Bonwick 2005:39). The next section will look further into whether authors have found mandates to inform the degree to which humanitarian organisations achieve their objectives in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

3.3 Linking the mandate to efficiency and effectiveness

With regard to possible links between the mandates of organisations, and their capacity to carry out their work, Gerstbauer highlights that engagement in politically contentious issues—such as peacebuilding or development—can affect a humanitarian organisation's perceived neutrality, or complicate its relationship with governments and donors. This in turn risks negatively influencing the degree to which affected populations receive aid (Gerstbauer 2010:847). She further points to a related concern that organisations which traditionally focus on relief activities may lack the adaptive analysis skills and capabilities that are needed for effective peacebuilding (Gerstbauer 2010:847). Slim and Bradley highlight that the ICRC and MSF—traditionally seen as the two main 'single-mandate' organisations—use their principled approach to distinguish themselves from 'multi-mandate' organisations (Slim/Bradley 2013:6), thereby implying that it is their single mandate that allows them to work in a more effective principled manner. This argument is based on the idea that organisations that for example also engage in development and advocacy work would be more prone to speak out about injustices or take a particular stance with regard to victims, and hence also to feel political pressure (Slim/Bradley 2013:8, Egeland *et al* 2011:38-39). Flowing from this line of thinking is the idea that a purely humanitarian mandate organisation would be less prone to political influence, and therefore more likely to uphold the principles of impartiality and neutrality, and to carry out effective humanitarian action (Terry 2002:245, Rieff 2002:286, Frangonikolopoulos 2005:72). Here, mention could be made of a study which emphasises that humanitarian organisations are more successful in securing access when they communicate who they are and what they do, and in doing so refer to the humanitarian principles (Macdonald/Valenza 2012. See also Schreter/Harmer 2013:37). Another group of authors have however taken a contrary view, arguing that a more flexible understanding of principles allows organisations to engage in more sustainable action (Anderson 1996, Barnett 2005, Carpenter/Bennett 2015, Mosel/Levine 2014, Otto/Weingärtner 2013, Weiss 1999). In this regard, Schreter and Harmer mention an ODI study on humanitarian space in Pakistan, which found that greater humanitarian outcomes were achieved through compromised, or unprincipled, action (Schreter/Harmer 2013:37).

The issue of protection provides an example of how an imprecise understanding of a concept can make efficient and effective implementation difficult. Despite protection being a crosscutting theme, staff in different organisations arguably continue to struggle to understand what this means in practice (World Vision 2012:9. See also Niland *et al* 2015:11, DuBois 2010:2-3, Gentile 2011:1164-1165). In the words of Gentile:

> While states and political, military, and humanitarian actors can sometimes share a common objective that their intervention has a protective impact, their activities are often fundamentally different by nature. Their mandate, roles, and responsibilities differ, as do their modi operandi. When humanitarian actors speak of their role in protection they are clearly interested in defining the set of activities that they can implement. (Gentile 2011:1171).

While Gentile therefore claims that it is important to know specifically how to tackle protection, the argument has also been made that ambiguity and flexibility in the concept is a positive thing. In this light, Kamm has for example highlighted that the Danish Refugee Council has been able to "modify its mandate more than once by adapting and extending the original understanding of the concept of protection" (Kamm 2010:66), thereby better responding to needs in reality. For example, he explains how changes in migration flows have pushed them to extend their mandate to also cover for example IDPs and irregular migrants. At the same time, the author does highlight that assisting these new groups of beneficiaries has raised new challenges", as for example, "offering assistance to IDPs has required the organisation to become adept at humanitarian diplomacy" (Kamm 2010:67).

In his consideration of the utilities and limits of the mandate of the ICRC, Giladi raises the concept of "mandate ambiguity", and argues that whether such ambiguity can be found in the text, in the source, or in the vocabulary of a mandate, it is what enables an organisation to mediate between the different imperatives that come from having different roles across different arenas (Giladi 2014:105). He also specifically highlights how difficult it is to find an adequate balance between legitimacy of action and flexibility: on the one hand, the assertiveness of the ICRC is backed up by its clear legal mandate, but at the same time, it does impose certain political and operational constraints (Giladi 2014:101).

Looking into the types of justifications given for decisions in the case of MSF-Holland, Fuller finds that the mandate was the most recognised constraint on the choice of activities and populations (2006:66). In her words:

> While MSF's mandate, or 'mission', is not a rigidly interpreted set of requirements, it is seen by most people to have both ascertainable boundaries and significant weight. As such, it is often cited as the justification for ruling out certain activities or populations as appropriate for MSF-H involvement. (Fuller 2006:67).

At the same time, Fuller argues that it is useful to have a mandate which is open to change, since it can represent "a 'middle-way' between the priorities set by the organization and those demanded by the needs and circumstances of the recipients" (Fuller 2006:68). In a more recent piece, Fuller also looks at the balancing act that is required between morality in action and effectiveness, by discussing Thomas Pogge's stance for cost-effective resource allocation in NGOs (Fuller 2012). Pogge's resource allocation principle states that

> an INGO should govern its decision making about candidate projects by such rules and procedures as are expected to maximise its long-run cost-effectiveness, defined as the expected aggregate moral value of the projects it undertakes divided by the expected aggregate cost of these projects. (Pogge 2007).

Arguing that Pogge's position "misses the point", Fuller emphasises that all international NGOs are moral agents with their own commitments. In her view, these commitments could constrain their ability to maximise harm reduction in every instance, and are also what triggers "cases in which it is

necessary to 'stand up for principle' in order to maintain the moral integrity of the organization" (Fuller 2012:9).

3.4 Finding common ground with regard to accountability

During the first years of the 1990s the humanitarian sector developed into today's "multi-billion-dollar enterprise" (Joint Standards Initiative website). Increased professionalism ensued and so did the demands from the humanitarian community for mechanisms ensuring the quality of humanitarian assistance. Some of the efforts initiated in the mid and late 1990s were also the direct result of the exposure of accountability gaps in for example Rwanda and Somalia (Callamard 2006:183, Joint Standards Initiative website, ALNAP website, Davis 2007:1). This literature review has identified few authors who specifically explore the interrelationship between different mandates and organisational accountability frameworks, but certain elements can be deducted from the literature on the development of an 'accountability culture'. Indeed, over the past 20 years, various 'types' of accountability and ways to respond to the failings of the humanitarian system have been argued to have emerged (Mitchell 2003, Davis 2007, Callamard 2006, Scharf 1999). Mention can for example be made of distinctions between individual vs. collective accountability (Serventy 2015), vertical vs. horizontal accountability (Nightingale 2012:7, Featherstone 2011:5), upward vs. downward accountability (Jacobs/Wilford 2010:79. See also Mango 2015, Jacobs/Wilford 2007:2, and Ebrahim 2003:824), and internal vs. external accountability (Ebrahim 2003).

In light of this study, it is noteworthy that Mitchell specifically argues that the different ways of improving accountability are dependent on humanitarian agencies' "organisational mandates, identity and raison d'être" (Mitchell 2003:2,). He identifies three main approaches or "lanes on the accountability highway": rights-based, principles-based and outcome-based. The first approach focuses on the rights and needs of the people affected by crises, emphasizing participatory methodologies, contextual programming and mechanisms for listening to the so-called 'beneficiaries'. The second approach stresses the importance of humanitarian principles, codes of conducts, legal instruments and bodies of ethics and philosophy. The last approach emphasises technical standards and results in terms of performance and impact. These approaches are not mutually exclusive and several initiatives striving for greater accountability in the humanitarian sector may encompass aspects of more than one single approach (Mitchell 2003:2. See also Davis 2007:8).

Fuller makes the argument that most NGOs lack formal systems of accountability to their recipients because they are "self-mandating and self-regulating" (Fuller 2006:60). In her study of MSF-Holland, she does however speak of three types of justifications for decisions given to beneficiaries. Among these is the "mandate-based" justification, i.e. the answer "it is not in line with who we are", when asked why a certain activity is not undertaken (Fuller 2066:67).[4] Hilhorst describes the difference between accountability systems for development aid and humanitarian assistance as inherently linked to the different focuses of the systems (Hilhorst 2015:109). Development aid aims to strengthen institutions and works through state authorities and NGOs. Mutual accountability for development results exists therefore mostly on the level of donors and partner countries. Humanitarian assistance on the other hand focuses more on relations with individuals and household in needs and accountability of humanitarian organisations therefore is more one that is to those service recipients. In terms of accountability mechanisms for the different types of work, Hilhorst believes that the *New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States* "to some extent bridges the two types of accountability" with

[4] The other types of justifications discussed by Fuller are the "population health justification", and the "advocacy-based justification" (Fuller 2006).

the concept of mutual accountability, traditionally more of a developmental term, gaining prominence also in fragile states (Hilhorst 2015:109-110).

The literature is remarkably silent on how a well-functioning system of collective accountability would have to crystallise in practice, and this in particular when different actors have different mandates. An important and critical contribution to this discussion however is Michael Serventy's article *Collective Accountability: Are We Really in this Together?* He understands responsibility to mean taking ownership of collective decisions and accepting credit or blame when it is due. He believes this last part is the most challenging. It would require organisations with sometimes strongly varying missions, mandates, and objectives to not only work on establishing common ground on how to deliver effective humanitarian assistance, but also to accept that they collectively answer to the affected community for their coordinated activities. In his view, establishing such well-implemented accountability systems would require partner organisations to be more flexible with regard to how they approach their work (Serventy 2015:83, 87, 90-91).

Jacoby and Wilford argued that the way accountability mechanisms work is of real practical importance, as they strongly influence how funds are obtained and used (Jacobs/Wilford 2010:79. See also Mango 2015, Jacobs/Wilford 2007:2; and Ebrahim 2003:824). The NGO-sector is largely mission driven and donors, besides having their own prescriptions for accountability, choose which NGOs to fund based on concordance of their views and principles with the mission of the NGO. Jane Nelson sees a distinction between three categories of mechanisms holding NGOs accountable: legal or regulatory mechanisms driven by governments, 'civic' mechanisms driven by external stakeholders, and self-regulatory or voluntary mechanisms driven by the NGOs themselves (Nelson 2007:22. See also Ebrahim 2003:825). This argument is interesting, since it could be connected to the questions of different mandates, and different stances in terms of a principled approach. Clearly, an organisation which is financially able to function completely independently is not subject to the same pressure to provide reports upwards and externally to donors and other external stakeholders with a view for instance to gain new funding.

Overall, this section of the literature review has borne witness to an ongoing debate on whether or not humanitarian action has a bigger impact when focusing only on humanitarian activities in their 'purest' form, or when carried out in conjunction with more developmental tasks. To a large extent, this debate centres around the question of the political engagement of humanitarian organisations, and its possible effect on their adherence to the principles of neutrality and impartiality, both real and perceived (Abiew 2012, Barnett 2005, Barnett/Weiss 2008, Bell/Carens 2004, Bridges 2010, Buchanan-Smith/Maxwell 1994, Carpenter/Bennett 2015, Chandler 2001, Eade/Vaux 2007, Frangonikopoulos 2005, Givoni 2011, Jacoby 2015, Leebaw 2007, Lindenberg/Dobel 1999, Mills 2005, Rieff 2002, Rubenstein 2015, Stoddard 2003, Slim/Bradley 2013, Weiss 1999, Weiss/Hoffman 2007). In terms of this debate, certain authors also consider the 'should' in an ethical light, whereas others look at the actual outcome of an organisation's activities, and claim either that humanitarian action is more effective when carried out as a sole purpose (Terry 2002:245, Rieff 2002:286, Frangonikolopoulos 2005:72) or that it is more sustainable when shaped in conjunction with development activities (Anderson 1996, Barnett 2005, Carpenter/Bennett 2015, Mosel/Levine 2014, Otto/Weingärtner 2013, Weiss 1999). Much of this debate is rather theoretical however and, as seen above, literature that specifically—and empirically—evaluates the role played by mandates in humanitarian action, and the comparative advantages of various approaches is scarce.

4 Synergies between humanitarian organisations in armed conflict

Section 3 has pointed to a wide variety in approaches of humanitarian organisations, be it in terms of their ideology, and the principles that lead their work, or the ensuing operationalisation of activities, or position with regard to accountability. One of the main aims of the Study at the basis of this literature review is to assess how the humanitarian community can best build on this variety of approaches in terms of fostering effective humanitarian action. Has the literature considered how well—if at all— organisations currently use their comparative advantages? In this light it appears particularly important to look at how different humanitarian organisations view their place in the global humanitarian system, and how they work with each other. With regard to the literature, particular mention should be made here of Heims *et al*'s recent book on the challenges of cooperation inherent in a system which includes numerous different "cultures of humanitarianism" (Heims *et al* 2016).

The concept of synergies is far-reaching, and can be approached from a wide variety of angles: is it question of collaborations between different humanitarian NGOs, between NGOs and other humanitarian actors, such as UN agencies or Intergovernmental Organisations, or within the various departments of a 'multi-mandate' NGO? And is it a question of synergies on specific issues, or at an institutional level? Long-term or short term? While these questions are all highly significant in their own right, this section will not discuss them in further detail, as this would be the subject of a rather different, and much larger project. Instead, this section will briefly consider the way the literature has drawn attention to the way humanitarian organisations—and in particular NGOs—have worked with each other. This will be done by first fleetingly looking at the role played by NGOs in the wider global institutional framework for humanitarian coordination (section 4.1), before mentioning a few examples of specific coordination mechanisms through which NGOs can, or have, forwarded coherence and complementarity in action in-between themselves (section 4.2).

4.1 Working as part of a system

UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182 (1991) laid the foundations of modern efforts to coordinate humanitarian response at a systemic level, and in 2005 the Humanitarian Reform Agenda introduced the Cluster Approach to further strengthen preparedness and technical capacity. In her thorough account of humanitarian coordination, Humphries explains that the Cluster Approach can be understood as an attempt to find a middle-ground between two schools of thought on how synergies are best found in humanitarian relief (Humphries 2013). The first such school is driven by governmental and inter-governmental bodies, and it emphasises a centralised, unified, hierarchical structure as being more effective and efficient. The second school of thought is favoured by NGOs, and it forwards a looser approach, focusing on how a diversity of efforts and approaches can be combined for success. Proponents of this latter approach mean that to preserve their humanitarian principles, NGOs need to protect themselves, and ensure that they are being coordinated *with* rather than *for* (Humphries 2013, Currion/Hedlund 2010:4).

The International Council of Voluntary Agencies' 2010 report *Strength in Numbers: A Review of NGO Coordination in the Field,* argues that the main weakness of NGOs with regard to mechanisms for building synergies is their reactive nature. This is explained by the fact that most NGOs do not consider working with others as a core part of their mandate, something which is "increasingly unacceptable to host governments, donors and beneficiaries alike" (Currion/Hedlund 2010:3. See also Charles *et al* 2010:159). Similarly, McGoldrick also claims that the success of humanitarian reforms, including the cluster system, has been hampered by the primacy of individual agency mandates and interest, and

that "with individual agencies worried about losing profile and resources for their core mandate", there is no hope of a truly inclusive framework (McGoldrick 2011:990. See also Schreter/Harmer 2013:41). With regard to these arguments, it is significant to highlight that individual organisations have also openly stated that working with organisations is not a primary concern for them. Thus, the ICRC, for example, does not actively seek to integrate any coordination mechanism—be it at the level of the UN or elsewhere[5]—in view of safeguarding its own mandate, and its perception of neutrality and impartiality (Grünewald 2009:4). Similarly, Christian Captier, former Director of MSF-Switzerland, has stated that "retaining a diversity of actors and, in particular, the capacity of truly independent humanitarian organizations to reach those on all sides of a conflict is of greater benefit to populations in need than attempted all-encompassing coordination" (Captier 2007:97). At the same time however Captier does highlight that MSF's approach "is and will remain a pragmatic one", and that in the interest of the populations in need it is important to liaise on the ground with all relevant actors and counterparts, albeit while retaining autonomy with regard to analysis, actions, and means (Captier 2007:97). This rejoins Van Brabant's argument that "[t]oo much is made of 'mandate' issues" when it comes to identifying barriers to effective coordination (Van Brabant 1999:15).

4.2 Working together

On the one hand therefore, the literature indicates that while NGOs have a role to play in formal coordination mechanisms, they are reticent to compromise their principles and autonomy for the sake of working with others (Heins *et al* 2016). In this regard, Weiss even argues that humanitarian culture is moving away from an agreed "culture of cooperation" to a "contested culture of competition" (Weiss 2016). On the other hand however the literature has also identified a push towards increased synergies between NGOs themselves. This is seen in part as the result of the realisation that given the interdependence of the operational environment, cooperation is in everybody's best interest (Schreter/Harmer 2013:41). More significantly however it has been argued to have flowed from the shared perception among NGOs that the formal coordination system is not functioning (Currion/Hedlund 2010:7). In this view, the biggest problem is therefore arguably not a lack of willingness on behalf of NGOs to work with others, but rather a question of resources.

As mentioned in section 2.2 above, Stoddard identifies a link between an organisation's historical background and its ideological attitudes, and she problematises this in terms of whether or not they are in favour of working with each other (Stoddard 2003:29). In this light, she superimposes on her Dunantist/Wilsonian categorisation the question of what sort of community NGOs would like to institute among themselves: "one based on shared codes and rules and eventually a formal accountability structure, or a more atomistic structure containing a collection of independent and diverse entities" (Stoddard 2003:28). Stoddard argues that whether or not they can be classified as Dunantist or Wilsonian, some humanitarian organisations are in favour of working with other agencies to form a community of practitioners, whereas others insist strongly on their independence, and it is therefore possible to categorise them into four groups. Figure 5 below illustrates the lines of demarcation drawn by Stoddard, and the examples of humanitarian organisations she gives for each of the four categories (2003:29).

[5] It should be noted that the ICRC frequently has an observer status in UN coordination mechanisms.

In favour of rule-based coordination	CARE Save the Children US IRC	Oxfam Save the Children UK Concern Worldwide
Independent/rule-averse	Americares Other in-kind donation organisations	MSF Action contre la faim Médecins du Monde
	Wilsonian More dependent on and cooperative with governments Short time horizon Service delivery emphasis	**Dunantist** More independent of an oppositional toward government Long time horizon Advocacy emphasis

Figure 5: Lines of demarcation within secular NGO traditions (Stoddard 2003:29)

With regard to this argument, it is noteworthy that Dijkzeul also draws a link between the idea of different types of organisations and the issue of coordination. He highlights that some organisations have not signed up to the Codes of Conduct out of a desire to protect their independence. In his view

> it is likely that organisations that insist on independence will more easily team up with organisations that do the same. And those that feel comfortable in closer cooperation with their donor governments will also come together more easily. (Dijkzeul 2004:224).

It has been argued that improvements in NGO coordination can be linked to their increased professionalisation, and the establishment of appropriate collaboration networks (Charles *et al* 2010:157). Thus, while recognising that the diversity of humanitarian organisations may initially make it difficult to find a collaboration network, Charles *et al* argue that such a network can be helped by the fact that most organisations are connected to one another in principle through their desire to provide aid effectively. Furthermore, the network is facilitated if there is a general awareness in an organisation of the aims and competencies of the other principal actors (Charles *et al* 2010:159). If humanitarian organisations are well acquainted with each other's work, they can also better draw on each other's strengths. This argument has been particularly well developed in the literature on protection, where the key concept of complementarity emphasises the importance of diversity and cooperation (Slim/Bonwick 2005:44).

There are few authors who specifically and empirically evaluate the extent to which organisations identify and make use of their 'comparative advantages'. With regard to the discussion on strategic complementarities more particularly, Labbé *et al* however make a valuable contribution by looking at the various ways in which humanitarian organisations can maximise their comparative advantages (Labbé *et al* 2012). While their study as such is centred on the issue of engaging non-state armed groups to improve the protection of children's rights, they make a number of observations which apply to the wider context of humanitarian coordination as well. Labbé *et al*'s point of departure is the recognition that humanitarian actors are characterised by their diversity in terms of mandate, scope, and approach, and they then argue that these various attributes shape their ability to respond to specific humanitarian needs, giving them comparative advantages that, "if used in a strategic, coordinated and complementary manner, may overcome their respective shortcomings" (Labbé *et al* 2012:4). Thus, intergovernmental organisations, and especially UN agencies, would for example benefit from having significant resources, a strong mandate, and deriving their authority—and potential leverage—from member states. At the same time however they can be perceived as biased because of their state-centred set-up, and local actors may not want to engage with them. On the other hand, "[m]ulti-mandate organizations […] engaged in development and emergency relief" would be likely to have been present in a country for a long time, and consequently to have a good knowledge of the context and the ability to engage with local partners (Labbé *et al* 2012:5). Similarly, smaller

organisations, that undertake less visible action, and thereby face fewer political constraints, would have the advantage of being able to engage more easily in low-profile dialogues. And local and community-based organisations "can balance their more modest financial means and their greater exposure to the dangers of the conflict with an incomparable knowledge of the local culture, network of contacts, and acceptance within grassroots communities." (Labbé *et al* 2012:5). Labbé *et al* provide a table with a non-exhaustive list of attributes and qualities that help identifying the comparative advantages of different humanitarian actors. They have drawn the table with regard to the case of actors wishing to engage with non-state armed groups, but a simplified version of it—which lists the types of attributes/qualities from a general perspective, and with regard to all local stakeholders and not only non-stated armed groups—can be found in Figure 6 below.

	Attributes/Qualities	**Considerations**
Political	- leverage and constraints - access - perceptions of neutrality and acceptance by local stakeholders	- Does the actor have credibility in the eyes of local stakeholders? - Would the initiative benefit if carried out by a high- or low-profile actor, or a combination of different actors? - Is the actor able to overcome the sensitivities of the state concerned? - Do local stakeholders allow intervention by the actor in the areas it controls? - Is the actor perceived as biased by local stakeholders?
Contextual	- knowledge of local context - quality of relationship with local stakeholders - ability to manage security risks - availability of resources and capacities	- Does the actor have the necessary understanding of the conflict situation and dynamics? - Can the actor use or establish relevant contacts? - How risk averse is the actor? Would the activity expose the actor's staff to specific risks related to the type of organisation? - Can the actor attract the necessary resources and capacities to conduct the intended activities?
Attributes	- type of actor - type of dialogue with local stakeholders - publicity of compliance or noncompliance - impact or assistance	- Would local stakeholders more likely engage with local, national, international, or a combination of different actors? - What type of dialogue (persuasion, denunciation, coercion, *etc.*) are local stakeholders most likely to respond to? - Would the initiative benefit from high visibility? - Are local stakeholders sensitive to negative publicity? - Could engagement by any particular actor impact on assistance delivery?

Figure 6: Non-exhaustive list of attributes and qualities to help identify comparative advantages (based on Labbé *et al* 2015:6)

A well-known example of how the mechanism of strategic complementarities has been used in practice is the "egg model" (See e.g. Slim/Bonwick 2005). This model developed from inter-agency discussions on protection initiated by the ICRC, and it uses the shape of an egg to think strategically about in which spheres of action protection work can be carried out. In the words of Slim and Bonwick, the 'egg model' "allows humanitarian agencies to think together about how different agencies can complement one another in their efforts to work with authorities, with each other, with people at risk and with civil society movements" (Slim/Bonwick 2005:44. See also IASC 2002:115).

Carpenter and Bennett also contribute to the discussion on coherence and complementarity by looking at the relationship between humanitarian and development organisations. Calling for "collective approaches to crisis management", they suggest for example joint planning, context and capacity assessments, timely programming, proactive engagement with the state where possible and appropriate, and more predictable, flexible, and diversified arrangements for financing (Carpenter/Bennett 2015:1-2). In their view, previous approaches to improve coherence between humanitarian and development activities have been "impeded by different timeframes, a bifurcated architecture and fundamental differences in culture, values, structures and ways of working" (Carpenter/Bennett 2015:2. See also Mosel/Levine 2014). This line of argumentation re-joins that of Dijkzeul, who emphasises that if humanitarian organisations do not understand each other's basic differences—for example in terms of how they perceive and apply the humanitarian principles—they cannot communicate properly, making any meaningful collaboration impossible (Dijkzeul 2004:225).

5 Conclusion

Generally speaking, this literature review has demonstrated that the 'family' of humanitarian organisations is large and eclectic, and any effort to type-cast a specific member of it on the basis of its 'mandate', requires careful consideration of a variety of issues. While this may indicate that it would be unnecessarily difficult, or even unjustified, to proceed with such an exercise, the literature has however also highlighted that there are linkages to be drawn between the ways in which organisations perceive their 'mandate' (broadly interpreted), and the ways in which they approach conflicts, the choices they make, and the problems and challenges they have to face (Van Der Haar 2006:18).

Literature that specifically—and empirically—evaluates the role played by mandates in humanitarian action is scarce, though there are numerous sources that discuss whether or not humanitarian organisations should focus only on humanitarian activities in its 'purest' form, or whether they should also take on a more developmental role. This debate remains highly theoretical however, and whether it is question of the way in which humanitarian organisations have approached their values and principles, their operational role or their level of accountability, the review demonstrates a lack of evidence and understanding with regard to the practical opportunities and limitations that arise from the different approaches.

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