“Organizational Risks in Local Humanitarian Project Networks in South Sudan”

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Abstract:

Currently, we can observe two important trends in international humanitarian assistance: Firstly, humanitarian assistance is provided in increasingly risk-intense environments. Secondly, the local project networks through which humanitarian organizations implement their humanitarian projects are growing, with local actors gaining relevance. Looking at these two trends together, my research project asks: How do the local humanitarian project networks of NGOs in South Sudan influence their local organizational risks? “Local humanitarian project networks” are thereby understood as the sum of all direct and indirect relations that an NGO working in South Sudan creates and maintains while implementing a certain humanitarian project. This includes, but is not limited to, relations to aid recipients, local communities and authorities, partner organizations, local suppliers and other contractors.

The study is based on the idea that humanitarian action is taking place in a social arena where a variety of actors with different identities and interests interact in a multitude of overlapping social, political and economic networks and negotiate their individual agendas. Within this arena, humanitarian organizations build their own local humanitarian project networks, emerging out of their individual structures of interaction. It is assumed that these network structures have crucial effects on the types, extent and distribution of the organizational risks that are faced by the NGOs in their project activities. With this research interest, the project applies a formal-structural network approach to risk analysis in humanitarian assistance. It defines organizational risks as a form of negative social capital which is created, transformed and transferred within local humanitarian project networks.

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