

Private Initiatives within International Development Assistance

Analysis of a private NGO in Bolivia, and how they relate to stakeholders,
sustainability and the concept of development

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Abstract

In this thesis I will look at a gradual change that have happened within the field of development, which have enabled “ordinary” citizens to (once again) take an active part in securing the needs of less fortunate others, through Private Development Initiatives (PDIs). By having followed an PDI up close in the field, I have gained an understanding of how these “new” development actors perceive their efforts, and how they are being perceived by their main stakeholder in the form of partner organisation, recipients and government branches locally, and by their sponsors in Norway.

I will also discuss how PDIs assess the sustainability of their involvements, and how they, as unprofessional development actors, relate to the concept of professional development.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

In the Norwegian national – as in the overall international – aid context, Official Development Assistance (ODA) constitutes a field in perpetual flux. Throughout the last seven decades since the World War II, a period often referred to by scholars as the *'development era'* (Thomas & Allen 2000: 5-6, Sachs 1992: 1, Rist 2002: 71, Chomsky, Barsamian & Naiman 2011: 15), official development assistance has gradually become an integrated part of international relations and equally sensitive to external factors influencing political priorities and consecutive decisions. Examples of such factors are first and foremost related to the overall paradigms of development aid itself, crisis of conflict and financial turmoil, each country's political ideologies – and the urge to export these – as well as the overall global patterns of power (Haaland & Wallevik 2015: 1).

With an estimated aid budget of USD 4,1 billion (2016 figures) in Norway alone, ODA channelled bilaterally from one country to another, or multilaterally through international institutions and regional development banks, becomes a tool of influence and power. Such power can be exercised favourably in for example trade agreements, contract jobs, or in other connections where political influence is desirable. The ability to decide on and control discursive policies surrounding social and / or economic development in the "global south" have traditionally been possible for the "global north" by offering financial contribution and exercising influential power of trade and aid (Chomsky, Barsamian & Naiman 2011: 15). Although it can be seen as a big step up from the pure exploitation that prevailed during the colonial period, a continuing imbalance in the power relationship between developing and developed countries seems to still be an important factor for sustaining status quo in the globalised world anno 2016.

In an attempt to dissociate donor states from their development assistance – as well as to implement a conscious priority of strengthening local communities and foster development from the bottom up – more and more ODA have been channelled through non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The NGO sector is today the eighth largest economy in the world, worth over \$1 trillion a year globally, and employs nearly 19 million paid workers as well as an unknown number of volunteers (Hall-Jones 2016).

The growing number and reputé of NGOs has also been quite evident in Norway; a country not burdened by a colonial past as many of the other prominent donor countries in Europe, but with its officially expressed goal of being a “Humanitarian superpower” (Regjeringen 2003: 3).

Both in terms of financial framework and in numbers, NGOs started to emerge at full scale alongside the introduction of neoliberalism and structural adjustment programs in the 1980s – policies which called for less state interference also within the field of development aid (Haaland & Wallevik 2015: 1; Harvey 2005: 78, 177; Cordoba & Jansen 2015: 1). NGOs everywhere have since gradually attracted more – and also become increasingly dependent on – official state funding. Alongside this trend of increasing financial support from the government funds, there have also been an growth in demands put out by the state regarding professionalism in financial transparency, local ownership of development, economic and environmental sustainability, and the like. These demands have led to a massive bureaucratisation of the NGO sector in the form of application processes and regulations, which have thus changed both how NGOs work and their overall organisational structure (Gulbrandsen & Ødegård 2011: 43; Strømsnes & Selle 2012: 5). It can also be argued that the state-NGO relationship has further hampered NGOs’ operational flexibility, their ability to mobilise and reach target groups, as well as it has left very limited room for popular engagement beyond mere financial contribution (Haaland & Wallevik 2015: 1-2; Lorentzen 2010: 50). In this sense, the NGO-sector have evolved into an extension of the state itself, which may have several unintentional consequences for both how they work and how stakeholders perceive them in their operational areas.

One observable consequence of the strong ties between well-established NGOs and the state, which by far has passed the stage where these NGOs with full confidence can claim to

be non-governmental, is that a new set of actors have appeared from outside of this established NGO sphere (Kinsbergen 2014).

These actors represent a wave of private, “*Personalised Development Initiatives*” (PDIs), or what in the Netherlands been termed citizen initiatives for global solidarity (Pollett et al. 2014), and in the Norwegian context so far has been termed personalised aid (Haaland & Wallevik 2015). These are Initiatives which often start out as a small-scale desire to help, and eventually evolves into long-term involvements of considerable size and scope. Such development initiatives are the focus of this thesis, and will be systematically addressed as PDIs.

This thesis builds on on-going research regarding personalised aid initiatives from a Norwegian perspective. Together, these initiatives represent an emerging field of increasingly diversified development actors, in which many generate substantial amounts of funding and work independently from supervising organs like the Norwegian Control Committee for Fundraising’s formal registry (Haaland & Wallevik 2015: 5, Kinsbergen 2014). Even though these initiatives are broadly regarded and labelled as development organisations from the outside, research shows that the motivation behind them are not necessarily closely linked to the overall development discourse, and further, that they are not created for the sake of doing development in the first place, at least not in the academic sense of the term (Develtere & De Bruyn 2009; Haaland & Wallevik 2015: 1-2). All this further indicates that there is an overall knowledge gap regarding these development actors and their role within the development agenda that should be explored further.

1.2 Research Objective and Research Question

Having read about the emerging role of private development initiatives, I wanted to follow one particular organisation more closely in order to acquire a better understanding of how they interact with their main stakeholders in the areas they operate. Further, I wanted to learn more about how PDIs typically evolve their activities in the global south, and thus how they position themselves – both to attract sponsors back home as well as towards their beneficiaries and other key stakeholders abroad. Since PDIs are working independently of any government subsidies or control, one might also wonder whether PDIs represent a comeback of an older, more Eurocentric model of charitable giving where Western citizens take initiative and impose their own views and norms on the less fortunate? Or if they represent a new, more active approach to the development field, by simply aiming to address and offset social inequalities that are overlooked or neglected by the state and / or the professional aid sector? These are the overarching questions guiding my research.

The initiative (or organisation, as they address themselves) in which my research is based on originates in Sandnes, Norway. Despite their humble beginning – starting with a sponsorship of one single child through an NGO in the late 1970s – the responsibilities has since evolved, and “the PDI” is currently funding 19 day-care-centres and five orphanages all around Bolivia.

The PDI’s involvements are mainly funded with help from a large number of individual sponsors, mostly from their local region in Norway, who pay fixed amounts each month. Additionally, support are also received through e.g. schools, kindergartens and local businesses, which typically donate larger singular or annual contributions aimed specifically at new projects or maintenance and improvements of existing property (buildings, vehicles, etc.).

Even if there is a variety of terms applied to describe the phenomenon (PDI, citizen initiatives for global solidarity, personalised aid), no consensus are formed around a collective term, or exactly how wide such a term should embrace the various actors within

this highly diverse field of non-specialist aid initiators. Still, there are similarities between the various actors indicating a well-established and growing trend (Schaaf 2013: 272), a trend that neither the academic sphere, nor the development sector itself has paid considerable attention to up until recently (Develtere & De Bruyn 2009: 8). A shared aspect is the number of similar stories; where strong personal commitment has evolved into organised aid. These are found across the globe, in all shades of grey, often making significant efforts within fields where national authorities fails to uphold their responsibilities towards its population – particularly within healthcare and education.

Hence, my research objective has been to explore how the initiators behind the Norwegian private aid initiative I followed perceive themselves compared to how they are being perceived in the areas were they operate (in this thesis: Bolivia) – while paying particular attention to how the founders and key stakeholders connected to them understand the concept of development aid and sustainability. This includes exploring the motivation behind their engagement, as well as exposing what they consider to be key strengths and weaknesses connected with being a small development organisation working independently from – and on the outside of – the formal Norwegian development discourse.

This thesis consists of five chapters. The next chapter, Chapter Two, presents a review of the relevant literature and theoretical framework supporting this paper, as well as it provides an introduction to Bolivia – the geographical, cultural and political context of my fieldwork and findings. In Chapter Three, my methodical approach and the methods I applied throughout the fieldwork process are explained and elaborated.

In Chapter Four, I present the empirical findings of my study – and analyse these, which again form the basis of the conclusions presented in Chapter Five.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Introduction

Perceptions and theories regarding development aid are constantly shifting, and a belief that a universal solution for poverty reduction and positive social and economic development is starting to look like the utopia it was probably destined to be. As the record shows, the story of development aid is a story of trying and failing.

In the following section I will first present my research in regards to the idea of development and how it has been portrayed through international relations and cooperation. After that, I will continue by presenting some general facts about Bolivia in order to contextualise my research topic, before I continue by elaborating on the phenomenon of Private Development Initiatives (PDIs) and how they approach the field – exemplified through Bolivia.

2.2 Changes in Development Assistance

In 1947, two years after the devastating World War II, the US government instituted the Marshall Plan. “The plan”, named after then US foreign minister George C. Marshall, was first and foremost a political decision to give more than \$12 billion in order to rebuild and secure Western Europe’s state-capitalist economies – and is in hindsight widely regarded as the start of both bilateral and international development aid (Chomsky, Barsamian & Naiman 2011: 15). The main characteristic of the Marshall Plan was that the aid got transferred directly on a state-to-state level, an approach that since have been termed as bilateral aid, which subsequently became the most prominent way of channelling aid.

Without excluding that there was, and still is, a genuine wish to help and to improve the receiving end through bilateral aid, it should neither be a secret nor a surprise that such aid can be and often have been used as instruments to secure political / economical influence. This was also the case with the Marshall Plan, as it was partly given in order to secure allies in Europe, and further create a buffer to the communistic Soviet Union. Additionally, the US was in need of larger markets for their vastly growing industry, and just two years after the Marshall help was given, in 1949, European countries purchased more than a third of the total US exports with aid money given to them by the US. This naturally gave a further boost to the American economy and the international hegemony we to some extent still are witnessing today (ibid).

When it comes to (bilateral) aid, there might often be ulterior motives that is far worse and more harmful to recipient countries than to secure advantages in trade relations. Allegations of corruption have long plagued the overall aid industry, and especially within bilateral aid, where money is being transferred directly between government officials (TI 2007: 4-6).

There is a general perception that corruption impedes development in recipient countries. For instance Mauro (1995) estimates that an increase in corruption of one sample standard deviation decreases investment by 5%, and growth by 0.5% of a country's GDP.

However, bad governance through corruption has not been the only factor soiling the reputation of bilateral aid. The very concept of 'development' arose in the wake of decolonisation, mostly after World War II (Desai 2014). Although the ideas behind the development agenda might have had good intentions, there have been and still are some who see the whole concept more as a soft version of colonialism.

As an illustration, there are three different scholars on the field who together complements this imagery; Escobar (1995: 5) have portrayed Western Development theories "*...as an efficient apparatus for producing knowledge about and power over the Third World*". And Kothari (2006: 97) states that, "*...development can only be understood as unquestioningly 'good' – humanitarian, moralistic, and collaborative – when set against a colonialism that was oppressive and exploitative*". Lastly, Rist (2002: 1) elaborates further – in a more Shakespearian way:

The strength of development discourse comes of its power to seduce, in every sense of the term: to charm, to please, to fascinate, to set dreaming, but also to abuse, to turn away from the truth, to deceive.

Regardless of how one might evaluate development in theory or practice, the comparison with colonialism de facto shows that many prominent Western countries' mere background as such have utterly complicated both bilateral aid and development policies introduced to the global south through the years.

Hence these downsides and complications, a way around bilateral aid, while still fulfilling the ethical responsibility of helping underdeveloped nations, has increasingly been achieved through channelling aid via multilateral institutions like the UN and IMF. Over the decades and especially since the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s (a period strengthened by the induction of more than 80 former colonies as new UN member states), these institutions grew in parallel and benefited from the general distrust forming around state-to-state development aid. Multilateral organisations gradually became the preferred way to channel aid in order to help secure that resources reached the civil society at the receiving end – without alternative agendas.

Due to the size and scope of the UN have involvements in, and the prevalence of, multilateral institutions not only been reserved for former colonial powers to indulge in. All Western UN members, including Norway, continue to channel aid through multilateral institutions today, although the amount varies widely depending on political will as well as their own economic situation. When it comes how development measures are approached, implemented and followed through, multilateral organisations' means of doing it has often been described both as quite authoritative and policy-oriented (Develtere & De Bruyn 2009: 3), something which might reflect the strong hierarchy seen between the member states in the UN Security Council and between UN member countries in general. The outcome has thus been a strong hierarchy and performativity, which at times has created frictions and given undesirable associations to power structures from the past.

These frictions has in turn helped to create operational room for (International) Non-Governmental Organisation ((I)NGOs) to emerge and inhabit a gradually larger role within the overall development field. A key thought behind NGOs that have been used to justify their existence ever since, have been the notion that they could work unaffected by already established political guidelines and government control in order to ensure people and communities in need the help and assistance necessary – while being financed by both the state and private sector in donor countries combined.

NGOs were, and still are, by most researchers regarded as specialised and professional organisations that share a “...*domain specific set of values and norms, codes of conduct, and a proper discourse and vocabulary concerning development*” (Develtere & De Bruyn 2009: 3).

As briefly mentioned, non-governmental organisations have traditionally tried to live up to their name and purpose by dissociate themselves from – and work unaffected of – government control. NGOs often operate in areas characterized by political unrest and social inequalities, and thus it is conceivable that an obvious association with – or dependency on – a foreign government could be considered as unwanted political interference by the receiving end, which again might contribute to create functional hindrances to the efforts and accomplishments NGOs strive for.

Despite the possible pitfalls, there have for many years been both an Norwegian and an international trend where NGOs have actively ignored the long-term operational disadvantages of establishing increasingly closer bonds with their national authorities (Tvedt 2003: 20, 79). Norwegian NGOs has become more financially dependent on state funding than ever before, and have gradually taken an active role in the governments’ foreign policy, which, as described by former Foreign- and Development minister Erik Solheim, has been “...*coordinated and inspired*” by Norwegian authorities (Bistandsaktuelt 8/2005: 5). In other words, this development has been and continues to be a wanted one, for both the NGO sector and for the Norwegian authorities.

Perhaps as a consequence of not having a colonial past to take into consideration, and thus not having / not picking up on the potential disadvantages that a close relationship between the state and the NGO sector could bring about, Norway has had a rapid increase in NGO-to-State dependency with a considerable amount of money being channelled between them as

an result. Ever since 1999, when the Directorate for Development Cooperation (NORAD) began a more specific classification of its disbursements, and up until today, the budget support to NGOs has accounted for about 22% of Norway's total aid budget (Borchgrevink 2004: 47; NORAD 2016b). However, it is worth noting that Norway's annual aid budget has increased by almost 300% in the same period, and consequently has the payments to the NGO sector increased correspondingly (ibid). NORAD describes Norwegian NGOs as organizations that "*... neither are controlled or owned by the state, and [that] operates on a charitable basis*", but how independent are many of these NGOs, when 166 Norwegian NGOs received 90% of their funding directly from NORAD as early as 2004 (Lie 2006: 2, NORAD 2016b).

For the NGOs in concern, more direct consequences of the dependency are seen through a vast increase both in structurally and financially terms, as well as in terms of organisational bureaucracy. NGOs could of course choose to avoid applying for / receiving money from the government, but there are several reasons why this will not happen. This support makes it possible for NGOs to 'scale up' both in size and complexity, which can strengthen their operational impact and opportunities for interaction with decision makers in the recipient countries. Furthermore, it is conceivable that larger and stronger organisations might more easily attack underlying causes of poverty and distress, than what smaller NGOs and PDIs are capable of. The financial framework for NGOs also becomes more predictable with agreements on long-term governmental support, than with monthly payments from voluntary sponsors and sporadic and individual donations from e.g. schools, sports clubs and businesses.

The problems with scaling up may however be that NGOs are filled with contradictory demands. They must on the one hand justify their existence by referring to comparative advantages (such as popular support, the ability to directly and effectively work with the poor, and learning by succeeding / failing through experimentation). On the other hand, they must, because of their expansion and increased government funds, introduce and implement financial and technical management systems in order to satisfy bureaucratic regulations set forth by the state. They must also act even more responsibly and ensure sound and prudent use of the money in order not loose the support. In this way, scaling up

can stand in contrast to the NGO's comparative advantages and lead to less innovation and flexibility, more bureaucracy, and greater need to meet donors – as opposed to recipients – requirements, which together might cast shadow over the initial purpose of NGO involvements abroad.

2.3 Norway, the Superpower of “Doing Good”

The Norwegian government issued a strategy report in 2003 concerning Norway's public diplomacy and national image (Regjeringen 2003). The report stated that Norway had a central public diplomacy problem, which was that of invisibility, and at the same time revealed that several polls conducted since the early 1980s showed that Norway consistently lacked a clear and widely recognised identity abroad (ibid: 1-2). In order to manage Norway's reputation and perception abroad – or lack of such – four “stories”, or values, which were to create a clear common identity, was introduced to the public.

Three of these stories included Norway's *love for nature, passion for adventures, and equality* (in terms of gender and social class), while the fourth – the single value that actually scored highest against all the criteria presented – was Norway portrayed as a *humanitarian superpower*. As an outcome, the latter story was thus created and matured in order to further cement Norway's efforts in “...*outperforming all other countries in terms of its contributions to aid, its role in peacekeeping and peace processes, and its commitment to developing new kinds of global governance*” (ibid: 44).

While government officials chose the slightly bombastic term “humanitarian superpower” to describe Norway's new role in the development discourse, Terje Tvedt, an distinguished researcher who has written extensively on Norwegian development aid and the role of NGOs, have since applied the label “The regime of goodness” regarding Norway's role in the same discourse (Tvedt 2007: 621). Through this term the Norwegian aid regime is described as a virtual state within the state, which again cover a range of organisations, aid workers,

research institutions and universities who all contribute to study and legitimise Norwegian aid politics – while at the same time counting on the supportive role of national media institutions in order to construct the appropriate imagery (ibid; Haaland & Wallevik 2015: 4-5). Being a superpower in the context of foreign aid naturally means that significant financial contributions are being channelled out, preferably in the best and most efficient way possible. However, as the record shows, development aid is far from an exact science where the recipe of success from one place or a specific project automatically will be as successful in a different geographical or cultural setting. In the end, development aid has more often than not been about trial and error.

Hence, an effective way for Norway to live up to its self-proclaimed potential as a humanitarian superpower, while at the same time creating a healthy distance between the state and the receiving end of the aid given, one or several intermediaries could be both useful and desirable in the process. Thus there has been broad political consensus formed around the notion that NGOs is best suited to hold this role, which again has led to the fact that an increasing proportion of official aid have been channelled through them. Consequently the NGO sector takes much of the burden of critique whenever development aid fails to reach its objectives or in some way is being misused, as well as much of the praise and recognition when development aid has succeeded in helping those targeted. In this sense the NGO sector have played, and continue to play a central and cumulative role in fulfilling and portraying Norway's main value and hallmark abroad.

Additionally, former prominent politicians manage some of the largest NGOs in Norway who receive support over the Norwegian state budget. This aspect gives the NGOs a great deal of influential power, which can be a useful asset when it comes to lobbying annual budgetary negotiations. A great recent example happened in the fall of 2015; as the government proposed a plan to reduce the overall development aid with NOK 4,2 billion (about \$ 506 million), in order to use the money on domestic measures to meet expected cost in conjunction with the Syrian refugee crisis (Bistandsaktuelt 10.11.2015). The NGO sector responded quickly to the government's proposal by introducing impact assessments, arranging protests in front of the Parliament, and extensive lobbying. Less than two weeks later, the government withdrew the proposal, and instead decided to increase their grants

to the NGOs it concerned significantly (Bistandsaktuelt 23.11.2015). This way the NGOs reaffirmed their position and the importance of maintaining a long-term and predictable relationship in order to enable them to do sustain their responsibilities abroad.

2.4 Diversity in the NGO Sector; Introducing PDIs

For many Norwegians, “doing good” is not just a result of strategic communications work. Traditionally speaking, voluntary work and NGO support have had a deep grounding in the Norwegian society. The original purpose of voluntary and charitable work abroad has appealed to what many Norwegians regard as national characteristics long before 2003, and are key ingredients behind the start up-phase of most NGOs: travelling abroad and doing voluntary work, or what in Norway is known as *‘dugnad’*.

Norway’s long tradition of travelling abroad have evolved alongside being a seafaring nation, and is something that have gained momentum for over 1.200 years, back when Vikings traded and plundered as far away as Bagdad in the Middle East and Newfoundland in North America (Hall 2008: 29). Doing dugnad have been a Norwegian and Norse phenomenon dated back over 800 years ago. Dugnad is usually unpaid and voluntary work of importance to the community or individuals in need (Lorentzen & Dugstad 2011). Despite the long historical traditions of dugnad, many would still argue that it, in domestic terms, played a particular important role in the prevalence of the labour movement during the reconstruction of Norway after World War II.

This is why, even as missionary work have been on the decline for some time, the Norwegian traditions of adventurousness and dugnad have remained strong, and gradually been fused together and unfolded in practice through becoming key aspects to NGO involvement. This is also one of the reasons why most NGOs in Norway have started out as member-driven organisations that have based their work on collected funds – mostly from members and sympathizers in the local community.

However, as I have already highlighted, there have been a shift in recent years where NGOs have turned into what could be described as more professional organisations, and at the same time distanced themselves from the member-driven hallmark and instead become more like partners with the government in an political aid system (Borchgrevink & Hansen 2004: 5). In this way have aid and official development policies / priorities fused together and become “...an integral part of the states’ overall relations with developing countries” (Rattsørapporten 2006: 18).

This professionalization of the Norwegian NGO sector – and an overall ‘academising’ of development aid – has contributed to form an elite of large and well-known professional aid organisations (Elbers 2011). However, despite (and because) of both size and merits, the same NGOs might easily experience a decrease in public rooting and legitimacy, both in Norway and in the countries they operate in, as their ties with the political sphere becomes increasingly apparent (Ibid: 19).

Together with the changing nature of NGOs, a new set of actors – so-called non-specialists or Private Development Initiatives (PDIs) – has emerged in the field of development assistance (Kinsbergen 2014: 37). Although the emergence of PDIs has happened throughout Europe and in North America, it has been particularly noticeable within the Norwegian context. One of the more plausible reasons behind this evolvement, is that the traditional / professional development sector are in the process of fully obtaining the NGO sector, and – as with the multilateral organisations – NGOs now offer few alternatives for public participation other than merely giving or collecting money for others to do the actual work (Kinsbergen 2014: 42, 56). A consequence in Norway have thus become that sponsors to a certain degree have lost their sense of ownership and personal ties to traditional NGOs and their work, which again have left individuals, groups of friends, companies, and other non-specialists inhabiting the desire to engage more actively, with few other options but to take initiative and start projects on their own, or to find alternative ways to support volunteerism (Develtere and De Bruyn 2009: 8, Haaland & Wallevik 2015: 1-2).

Despite some obvious commonalities of how and why they have emerged in the field of development, PDIs are so diverse in their ambitions as well as in their focus area – both

geographically speaking and in terms of project types – that they could be divided further into countless sub-groups (Kinsbergen 2014: 56). However, for the sake of simplicity and the fact they have several key characteristics in common, particularly in regards to organisational structure and fields of involvement, it becomes useful not to. Examples of such common characteristics are portrayed by Kinsbergen (2014: 58) to also include strong personal or collective experiences from, or ties with, the area and community they are involved with, ability to convey and transfer their passion to others, willingness to learn and adapt as they go / grow, and a personal desire to make visible changes and help others. The initiators behind are also typically middle-agers (equal gender split), and a majority of them belongs to the active working population – and thus combine voluntary work with a paid job.

A typical example behind the birth of a PDI is when one or a few persons travel abroad, and, upon their return, have gained strong impressions and solidarity with a person or a community in which they have met and spent time with. Some of these people then take it one step further and develop an urge to help and improve people's wellbeing or a witnessed situation. In other words, their involvement in development is typically inspired by a sense of solidarity and shared experience, and their actions are enabled by globalised networks of communication and movement – rather than by political and populist priorities (Schaaf 2013: 272; Kinsbergen 2014: 63; Schulpen 2007).

Additional characteristics of PDIs is that they, due to the investment of themselves in the projects, often are committed to long-term involvement sometimes overlapping generations, depending on the scope and the efforts of involving descendants, other family members or close friends in their engagement. PDIs are also typically involved in projects operating in no more than one country, often within a specific community, and in fields that are easily fundable – like orphanages, educational institutions or healthcare projects. Their projects are more often than not targeted towards children or other vulnerable / marginalised groups within a society (Kinsbergen 2014: 60-62).

One might argue that non-specialised private initiatives have found themselves effectively filling a vacuum left behind by the comprehensive growth and professionalization process within the official aid sector, and by that utilised some of their own advantages of being

smaller and more flexible organisations; a more personal and direct interaction with both the community they assist and also towards their sponsors, a better ability to get fast and good results out of a significantly more limited budget, and a more extensive inclusion of local resources than what larger NGOs are known to manage (Ibid: 59).

Neither academics nor the development sector itself has paid much attention to the rapid emergence of PDIs – and yet it has grown substantially in number, size, economic scope, and in terms of repute (Allen & Thomas 2000: 212; Eidhammer 2012: 181). Researchers, who historically have been loyal to the traditional development aid industry, prefer to render their academic attention to “real” development aid, and by doing so they have actively ignored or minimized the emergence of PDIs. Within the development sector itself, staunch opinions and misconceptions are rife with regards to this array of “new” development actors (see Chelladurai, 2006; Kamara & Bakhuisen, 2008; Schulpen, 2007; Develtere & De Bruyn 2009).

If we were to divide the PDI industry into different segments, the one segment which would stand out the most would be the ‘do-it-yourself-segment’ (Develtere & De Bruyn 2009: 6): individuals, siblings or groups of friends, who join forces and use their leisure time to travel long distances, organising solidarity events, recruit and update sponsors, create and manage websites, involve and manage local partners, as well as looking after the projects on a regular basis. The people behind these initiatives is as diverse as the ones supporting them, ranging from international celebrities such as Madonna, Bono and Bill Gates, to any normal people who simply has a desire to make a difference in other peoples life and the courage to try and do so (Kinsbergen 2014: 31). Research shows that quite many starts out as individual explorers driven by emotional affiliation, but rather quickly starts to structure their initiatives and evolves into NGOs (Thomas & Allen 2000: 210; Develtere & De Bruyn 2009: 6-7). Further on – and worth noticing also for the particular research presented in this thesis – is that almost all PDIs end up coordinating their work with already established institutions, organisations or local communities by facilitating development solely through financial support (Thomas & Allen 2000: 210, Korten 1990: 149).

2.4.1 Sustainability and PDIs

Sustainable development is a popularised and well-known term that have gained increasing consensus ever since it was introduced through ‘Our Common Future’ – a report published by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987. ‘Our Common Future’, also known as the ‘Brundtland Report’ – named after the then head of the UN Special Commission on Environment and Development Issues, Gro Harlem Brundtland – included what has later become the “classic” definition of sustainable development: “...*development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*” (UN 1987).

Since then, sustainability has gained both political and popular importance throughout the development field, and its definition has thus been expanded and altered periodically in order to cover new specific areas of focus and new actors emerging within the development sphere (UN 2010: 6).

Through its classic definition, it might be difficult to see the direct relevance of sustainable development in relation to PDIs and their work, which often involve objectives such as building a school, orphanage, or healthcare clinic, and further bearing the responsibility of funding its operations.

Sustainability in the context of PDIs (and NGOs for that matter) is thus rather about how to best ensure that they can continue to fund their projects in the future, or alternatively, how they are working so that the same projects could be funded through alternative means.

In other words, the main objective in this context is not focused around the classic definition and how much one can utilise a given (natural) resource, while at the same time ensure that future generations can sustain this resource utilisation. So, as the classic definition can be misleading when referring to PDIs, an alternative definition for sustainable development in relation to PDIs could be: “...*the capacity to maintain a certain process or state indefinitely*” (Cabot et al. 2009: 1). Based on this definition, it is however interesting to notice how much of the traditional development work that was focused on empowering the recipient and enabling them to manage a future without the support from the outside, and how absent this seems to be for PDIs. Consequently, one might then ask if this definition – and PDI

intervention in general – really promotes and encourage sustainability in its true meaning? PDIs continue to be regarded as an isolated sub-group of development organisations, and even NORAD has a tendency not to distinguish NGOs and PDIs apart – but rather place all under the designation "Norwegian organisations". This was the case in a report NORAD published in 2007 (p. 41), where it was stated that sustainability for Norwegian organisations (PDIs/NGOs) working in Bolivia and South America in general “...continue to be a problematic concept”. When initiators behind the different projects and locals working on the ground are asked about this issue, there is an inconsistent understanding of what sustainability actually means, and how to handle uncertainties surrounding the future of the projects. Many development actors feel that sustainability is difficult to pin down because it is a very dynamic, largely indefinite, and highly contested term (Kinsbergen 2014: 129).

While some organisations have an exit strategy that enables them to phase out of certain projects – with or without continuing the intercontinental partnership relation through new or alternative projects – others have no strategy for the future of their involvements at all. For most of these organisations combined, making projects sustainable simply means to enable their local partners to apply for additional or alternative funding elsewhere (NORAD 2007: 41).

Norwegian PDIs are in general service delivery organisations – rather than advocacy organisations. Since they often both organise and finance the actual construction of required facilities, and further provide the funds needed to actually operate these, there is often nobody else to pay the bills or provide the services if the PDI decide to withdraw from their involvements (NORAD 2007: 41). In this context, the matter of sustainability requires new and improved funding mechanisms at the national level to be established and developed. Enabling this will firstly require extensive lobbying and increased priority – quite possibly at the expense of other social spending purposes – since countries who need voluntary assistance from service delivery organisations, such as PDIs, tend to have more comprehensive shortcomings than lack of social service capacity within one community or a single specific social service (ibid). Sustainability through alternative funding from domestic sources could also come as a result of new policies triggering financial transfers from the rich to the poor, or from private to public sector through e.g. direct taxation. However, in the

non-egalitarian nations of South America, and especially in Bolivia, where the majority lack social and economical safety nets through state funds such as pension and social security schemes – this becomes more of a utopia.

On that note, it becomes apparent that PDIs should strive to ensure their own sustainability, rather than to rely on help from governments or civil society in recipient countries.

According to Kinsbergen (2014: 157), sustainability in PDIs cut across operational lifespan, with some relatively young PDIs supporting interventions that are of lower risk compared with interventions of older ones. This indicates that organisations longevity is no guarantee for sustainability. On the other hand, Kinsbergen (2014: 157-159) argue that organisational features, like structure, conduct and performance are not self-contained facets, but collectively becomes strongly related parts to the sustainability of PDI interventions. In this manner, the scale of PDIs (structure) directly affects the type of interventions PDIs support (conduct), and thus the sustainability of these interventions (performance).

2.5 The Bolivian Context



(www.cia.gov)

Bolivia is located in the heart of South America and borders Peru and Chile in the west, Brazil in the north and east, and Argentina and Paraguay in the south.

It is an immensely diverse country; both nature-, climate- and people-wise, which often makes it a country of statistical extremes. The geography and topography of Bolivia is unique among the nations of South America. It is one of two landlocked countries in the region and at the same time the country with population living in the highest altitude on the continent. High mountains, deep valleys, vast volcanic terrain and dense jungle together makes Bolivia an authentic and somewhat isolated country, a notion which is strengthened by the fact that it is the country with highest indigenous population and the most well-preserved cultural heritage on the continent (World Bank 2011).

2.5.1 Political Landscape

Politically speaking, Bolivia is a republic state with Evo Morales holding position as president in his 10th consecutive year. President Morales, who are the first Bolivian president of indigenous descend, has incrementally deconstructed the opposition and changed the constitution to extend his ruling time twice; the first time in 2013 before entering his third term, and now attempting for second time in the beginning of 2016 through the national referendum. In the last referendum Morales lost, as 52% of the votes ruled against him, yet there is uncertainty whether he will continue to try to present himself for the next election. Morales himself has several times through the recent years expressed a strong desire to see through his government's "Patriotic Agenda", which is concentrated around "13 pillars of action" due by 2025 (Ministry of Autonomy 2013: 11). These pillars include important development goals in line with those of the UN and the international community, like eradicating extreme poverty, ensuring health and education for all citizens, and making sure Bolivia has an independent financial system based on national control over food production and the exploitation of national resources (ibid: 11-33).

In order to retain power, president Morales and his government are leading an active battle to undermine opposing forces of both political and intellectual nature, and there have also been reports on implemented measures made to gain increased control of both the media and the NGO sector. This somewhat undemocratic shifting have been made possible through an stable and strong economic growth for the (lower) working class – by far the majority of the Bolivian population. Media have estimated that about 75% of the country's 10,9 million citizens supported Morales halfway into 2015, although such measurements has previously proven to be highly volatile from one time to the next, often depending on individual political decisions surrounding social or economical issues (BBC 2015; CEPR 2014; Freedomhouse 2014: 21; World Bank 2011).

There is no lack of political, economical or social challenges for president Morales to deal with. Just over 60% of Bolivians live below the national poverty line, which makes Bolivia the poorest country in South America. The poverty becomes most apparent in rural areas, where

as many as three out of four people live under the national poverty line (IFAD 2013: 1). Despite the negative numbers, Bolivia has shown steady improvements both economically and socially in recent years. Since 2004, the government revenue has gone up by almost 20% of the total GDP. Even though the increase started from quite low levels it is still an enormous improvement, which mainly have been a result of increased royalty payments from Bolivia's recently renationalised hydrocarbon industry (CEPR 2009: 12).

2.5.2 Aid Dependency

The Bolivian economy has had a historic pattern of single-commodity focus, which has caused merely occasional and often brief periods of economic expansion – more or less exclusively for the top of the country's rigid and steep class hierarchy. In the 1960s and 1970s, most nations in South America took advantage of credit loans offered with attractive terms in the global market and went heavily into debt as a result. The loans were aimed to finance domestic development and improvements of basic infrastructure, which again was believed to improve living conditions for the poor and disadvantaged (Arellano-Lopez & Petras 1994: 557). However, when the oil crisis hit South America in the mid-1970s and the flow of credit stopped, Bolivia had accumulated an enormous foreign debt. As part of the repayment plan, and thus a way out of the unbearable financial burden, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the Intern-American Development Bank (IDB) introduced a set of neo-liberal economic policies for Bolivia to adapt to. The main characteristics of these were; free-market trade, cutting expenditure for social services, reduced government regulations, and instructions to privatise state-owned enterprises (Martinez & Garcia 2000).

Bolivia did all they could in order to maintain a good relationship with the mentioned financial institutions throughout the 1980s by complying to – and implementing all the terms that was set forth (Dijkstra 2005: 114). Along with Chile, Bolivia's neo-liberal restructuring

was regarded as the most radical and comprehensive in Latin America (Kohl 2006: 305). To be fair, the neo-liberal policies did have some immediate positive impacts in some areas; they tamed Bolivia's extensive inflation at the time, and attracted foreign investment capital to the country's newly privatized industrial sector – at least for a while. But gradually the negative impacts started to show, as the measures to a large extent ended the government's role, both as an economic actor, and more importantly; as an provider of basic public services within vital sectors such as health and education (Larson 2008: 8).

As an example of the negative development, the Bolivian government initiated the process of divesting the state-owned mine industry and selling extraction rights to a variety of companies, several of them being foreign. This had fatal consequences for the medium- and lower middle class, as more than 12,000 mineworkers lost their job immediately afterwards (Larson 2008: 8). Additionally, the government's decision to privatise large parts of its healthcare and education sector soon after created an even larger quality gap, which resulted into a redistribution of opportunities (and income) upwards, which inevitably created even larger differences in the already rigid and steep class hierarchy (ibid). The rich got richer and the poor got a lot poorer, and by this Bolivia became burdened by a grotesque pseudo-democracy that had all but forsaken the nation's revolutionary-populist heritage of "social rights" (ibid).

The international NGO-sector registered this development on an early stage and gradually, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, charitable organisations became a large and important provider of basic rights regarding health and education for an increasing part of the Bolivian population. In line with neoliberal values, the influx of development organisations was seen as the ideal vehicle to replace the state when the latter privatised many of its functions (Cordoba & Jansen 2015: 1). In other words, it was initially a desired development that subsequently has been proven difficult to reverse.

Consequences of this trend continue to characterise Bolivia; as some welfare sectors are more or less exclusively managed by (foreign) NGOs and PDIs, while other again are divided between private and public actors, and further characterised by extensive differences in regards to repute, quality, and available resources due to lack of government funds. One example – connected with the research in this paper – is the high presence of PDIs

representing Bolivia's vast number of orphanages. In the department of Cochabamba alone – the third largest department in the country – are 46 out of 48 orphanages (about 96%) managed by PDI- and NGO initiatives, according to the Bolivian Department of Social Management (SEDEGES) (Interview 2014).

2.6 PDIs Relations and Cooperation in Bolivia

2.6.1 PDIs Relation to the Bolivian State

PDIs that are involved in projects, both in Bolivia and elsewhere, are usually bound to have some form of relation with the state through governmental ministries or departments. Laws and regulations must be followed, applications have to be dealt with, and the framework around projects and overall engagements should be studied to better meet practical challenges. While some PDIs appreciate a form of cooperation, or some type of supervision by state representatives, others again see them as nothing but obstacles for them to carry out their work in the most effective manner. Governments in certain developing countries are also plagued by corruption, which can be a disadvantage causing a lot of frustration and practical hindrances for voluntary organisations. As a result, many Norwegian PDIs therefore attempt to manage their project involvements outside of any government interference at all.

In many cases, Norwegian PDIs try their best to avoid any direct contact with the state in their recipient countries by solely cooperating with, and be represented through, local or regional development organisations (NGOs). These can often provide the best contextual knowledge of how to best approach the field, and thus becomes partnering intermediaries that help facilitate, manage and implement the projects – often set forth by the PDI and themselves in cooperation, and financed in full by the PDI. I will further explain the main

characteristics of the relationship and cooperation between Norwegian PDIs, cooperative organizations and the Bolivian government.

The fact that the Bolivian government are continuously failing to fund basic welfare services for a significant part of its population is troubling. In turn, this means that the need for assistance from voluntary organisations to cover these shortcomings will be present indefinitely. It is therefore naturally to think that the Bolivian government would show gratitude towards these organisations and the services they deliver – and further facilitate a good cooperation. However, after ten years of Evo Morales and the so-called post-neoliberal Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) government in Bolivia, the relationship seems to be characterized by uncertainty and conflicting rhetoric.

Already in the first term (2006-2010), the MAS government started to question the ideas and practices of the NGO sector (Cordoba & Jansen 2015: 2). The 2006 National Development Plan stated in its introduction that projects initiated by (foreign) voluntary organisations had been instrumental to the Western, neoliberal model. The critique was that *“Western civilizational guidelines, whose formal language hides the devices of domination and social control that endorse the practice of colonial power and knowledge”* (Ministerio de Planificación del Desarrollo, 2007: 5).

During the second term (2010-2014), the government sharpened its criticism further and targeted NGOs more explicitly. Both President Morales and his Vice President, Alvaro García Linera, repeatedly questioned the legitimacy and capacity of NGOs to represent the real needs of the poor. President Morales accused NGOs for “using the poor” and “inventing things to receive funding”, making reference to the organisations role as mediators with the state (Cordoba & Jansen 2015: 2). In 2012 some NGO representatives publicly stated that they felt threatened and attacked by the MAS government, and Vice President Linera responded by accusing voluntary organisations to work for foreign interests (ibid). Since then, the government expelled the US Agency for International Development (USAID) in May 2013 for “interference in public policy” and of conspiring against the “indigenous” government, before doing the same with a Danish NGO named IBIS on similar charges in December 2013 (ibid).

2.6.2 Cooperation with Partner Organisations

Some of the previously mentioned common key characteristics of PDIs indicates that they are dependent on some form of cooperation with one or more local partner organisations in the areas they are operating. Both the voluntary aspect, and the fact that a majority of private development initiators are part of the active working population in their home country – and thus combine their voluntarism abroad with having regular jobs at home (Kinsbergen 2014: 58) – naturally creates a number of practical challenges in regards to managing PDI involvements on the ground.

The actual type of cooperation that PDIs engage in with partner organisations abroad (single project or long-term), who has the last saying in decision-making processes, priorities being made around planning and implementation of projects, and the scope of the actual cooperation (local, regional or national level) varies a lot, and largely depends on the ambitions and the capacity of both parties. Calculations made by NORAD (2007: 39) confirm this variation, but at the same time argue that a majority of Norwegian organisations enter into partnership with organisations that are working at the national level in recipient countries – and which were established organisations prior to the partnership.

Norwegian PDIs (and NGOs) operating in Bolivia are known to have an ‘hands-off’ approach in their cooperation with local organisations (NORAD, 2007: 25), meaning that the partner organisations are given the opportunity to implement and control the project themselves, based only on an initial agreement regarding the content. This is traditionally not the case with other organisations originating in North America and central Europe, which tend to demand detailed reports regularly, and often wish to interfere in the practical work (NORAD, 2007: 25,40). This Norwegian hallmark, if you will, is highly appreciated by local partner organisations in Bolivia, and is also believed to contribute to strengthen the local civil society (ibid). Based on this, it is conceivable that the ‘Norwegian approach’ represents an important supplementary source of finance in addition to more hands-on support from other countries. The Norwegian support should thus not be considered in isolation from that of other donors.

There are a number of potential advantages by partnering with local / regional organizations. The Partnering Initiative (TPI), an UK-based interest organisation working internationally to support development organisations in their effort to partner effectively and strategically, highlights some of the most important ones (<http://thepartneringinitiative.org>). Firstly, engaging in a partnership provides *access*. Access to knowledge, which could mitigate risks and reduce potential mistakes by giving a greater understanding of the operational context. At the same time it provides access to people, which could lead to improved technical expertise, experience, skills, labour and broader networks. A second potential advantage is improved *efficiency and effectiveness*. Working through established networks could reduce unnecessary costs, avoid duplication and challenges that otherwise are complex for outsiders, and secure that services are more in line with local conditions and needs. The third advantage could come through *improved reputation and credibility*. Entering into a partnership with an already established (and known) organisation may help to boost PDIs organisational credibility and thus help reassure sponsors that their contributions are well managed. Additionally, if PDIs are able to secure and utilize these aforementioned advantages, it is conceivable that a fourth potential one will come through *increased sustainability*.

The non-interference policy of many Norwegian PDIs, as mentioned above, might however have some restraints to the partnership and the actual result of their work. The hands-off approach can imply that less knowledge is transferred in both directions, which again might reduce the possibility of transferring gained experience to other parts of the world or getting professional feedback in order to improve the various parts of the cooperation or its outcome (NORAD 2007: 25). The “generous terms” of Norwegian PDIs might then also reduce the sustainability of the projects in general, if they are not taken seriously or if the partner organisation(s) stop seeking funding from other donors due to the detailed control that these require (ibid: 25). This is particularly a concern in Bolivia, where partner organisations depends entirely on foreign aid.

TPI also highlights some risks that PDIs (and other organisations) who are seeking or already are in partnership should be aware of, which are worth sharing

<http://thepartneringinitiative.org>). The first potential risk is *loss of autonomy*. Shared decision-making processes require a need for building consensus before they can be made and implemented. Cross-cultural differences might thus create conflicts of interest and create hindrances to the wants of Norwegian PDI initiators and their sponsors – or the other way around. Secondly, and particularly in the initial phase of a partnership, there might be a *drain on resources* (both time and money) as terms of cooperation and priorities are being decided on. The same goes for the challenges surrounding the implementation-phase of these terms and priorities, as it entails additional requirements regarding management, tracking, reporting and evaluation. The third potential risk is the *negative impact a bad relationship could have on reputation and credibility*. A negative association with a partner organisation might cause great damage by scaring existing sponsors away, and prevent the recruitment of new ones. This could be particularly negative for PDIs, as they tend to be small-scale organisations with limited budget. As the potential advantages of partnerships could help secure sustainability of PDIs, the potential risks might cause equally large damage to it. It might therefore be wise to be aware of them, and try to offset the risks they entail at an early stage.

3. Methodical Approach and Ethical Considerations

3.1 Approaching the Field – Choosing Methodology

I will begin this chapter by elaborating around the key characteristics of qualitative methodology, and the benefits and restraints inherent in my use of (participant) observation and interviews in my fieldwork. I will further explain when and how I conducted participant observation, and how the interview process was completed in order to collect research data. Further, I will also explain how the collected data has been analysed and quality controlled in order to ensure credibility, (confirmability) and transferability. Finally, I will present and discuss ethical aspects and concerns connected with the study.

Qualitative research emphasizes an interpretive approach to research data. It further assumes that people create and construct their social reality within a system, and thus gives meaning to their own experiences related to this (Dalen 2004). The informants' own experiences of real life are in this context central, and qualitative data gathered through interviews and (participant) observation tends to form the basis of such research (ibid). This approach forms the thoughts behind what is known as phenomenological and hermeneutical science (ibid).

The first thing one should keep in mind when considering which methodological utilities to employ in a research is simply which method serves the matter best (Fog, 2004). One should thus carefully astray both the problem statement and the purpose of going into the study beforehand. If, by example, one is interested in how individuals relate to their environment and what it means for them, a set of few and intensive interviews will best be able to serve the purpose (ibid). Additionally, if one try to participate or at least spend time actively observing the research objectives and their reality, my notion is that it becomes easier to both relate to and understand underlying causes behind their realities – as well as it might reveal hidden differences between experienced and actual reality.

In regards to my research presented in this thesis, I had an ethnographic entry as I conducted the fieldwork in Bolivia. Since I knew Bolivia from earlier visits where I had conducted field, I already had a basic knowledge and understanding about the Bolivian society and its culture.

Even prior to the start of the fieldwork for this thesis my notion was that a qualitative approach would be the optimal option to pursue. I had used qualitative methods in previous research settings and due to limited amount of time and access to informants, my belief was that this thesis would benefit more if I could get an in depth understanding of one specific organisation (PDI), within the field of interest (personalised aid), and afterwards compare the findings to existing literature and other available data.

Based on my time previously spent in Bolivia, I also knew on a first hand basis just how challenging it would be to try and conduct extensive surveys through a quantitative approach – especially on an organisational level. There is a massive amount of PDIs and NGOs all having numerous projects scattered across Bolivia, but they are often operating off the beaten track, in anonymous houses behind high walls and fences.

Not only locating these organisations – but also be able to get access to the work they do and the people responsible of their evolvement – is not at all an easy task. The Bolivian government is currently initiating the implementation of a formal registration system for development organisations (NGOs, INGOs, PDIs, etc.) working in the country. This is quite a comprehensive task, especially given that many organisations seem to be reluctant to be registered in the first place. This reluctance is largely based on an overall distrust of the government, which have led to confusion and suspiciousness amongst these organisations in regards to what the actual purpose and motive behind the registration process is.

Based on the reasons above, as well as my intention to gain a detailed understanding of PDIs as a phenomenon rather than a general overview of the various organisations operating in the given area, my sense is that a qualitative approach is the optimal choice.

My fieldwork process started in the beginning of October 2014, as I travelled from Norway to Bolivia for the third time in less than two years. I had already conducted fieldwork for the bachelor thesis in the same area, and was now returning for a second fieldwork process. There are both obvious benefits and less obvious disadvantages connected with doing repeating research within a specific geographical area. When doing time limited research with an ethnographic entry, there are advantages in having already accumulated basic knowledge and understanding about the given society and its culture. It is however important to take a self-critical evaluation of such accumulated knowledge and understanding, in order to better prevent that new data are tainted by unjust or inaccurate perceptions made by the researcher in hindsight of previous studies. It is equally important to take the same critical evaluation concerning former acquaintances, assistants, key informants (gate keepers), and others whom may have direct impact on new research results.

During my first two visits to the country, totalling nearly six months, I had visited all major cities, various civil society organisations and NGOs working with both education and health care issues, the latter as part of the topic of my Bachelor thesis. During previous visits I had also spoken to numerous people in all levels of society, from former ministers and diplomats, to doctors, shamans and several of their patients. While doing research for my bachelor thesis, I became increasingly curious of exactly who the people behind the NGOs and PDIs that I had encountered were, how they became involved in the aid industry, and why they had decided to act on social issues often half a world away from home.

Upon my return a year later, in October 2014, I by chance met the board members of a Norwegian PDI as I arrived at the international airport in Santa Cruz. With the thought of doing my research on private aid and PDIs going through my head, I engaged in a conversation with some members of the group, and later the same day, I got invited to join them on a round trip through Bolivia in the following month. The purpose of their journey was to conduct an annual round of inspections of their project involvements, accompanied by a number of Norwegian key sponsors. Hence I was extremely fortunate, almost falling into the field and easily gaining access to a lot of information and to many different

informants through my journey with the group. Throughout this period, the objective of this thesis was further refined.

3.2 Applying the Tools

After the methodical approach is determined, it is time to decide which methodological means one should use in order to collect the actual data. Qualitative methodology is first and foremost a collective term for various means, or methods, of collecting data on cultural and social phenomena. David Silverman (via Thagaard 1998: 13) divides qualitative methodology into four sub-categories: *(participant) observation, interviews, analysis of existing texts and visual expressions, and analysis of audio and video recordings.*

The different methods, or categories, all have their advantages and limitations, and even though observation and interview is the most commonly used methods (ibid), my personal experience is that implementing as many of these categories as possible in the research gives the most comprehensive understanding of the given topic as a whole. In other words, they all have the possibility to complement each other and together give the research more credibility by cross-validating the accumulated data.

I will further elaborate what participant observation and qualitative interviews entails, as well as how and why I used it actively in the fieldwork. I will also explain my use of existing literature and audio recordings, two vital tools both during and after the fieldwork.

3.2.1 Participant Observation

Participant observation as a research method is, according to Fangen (2004: 29), when the researcher initiate active interaction with the participants, while at the same time observing their daily activities. In the search for meaning and understanding in human relationships, a significant number of the most influential social scientists regard participant observation as the single most useful research method when conducting qualitative fieldwork (Barth 1980: 14; Bruyn 1963: 224-235). The many potential benefits that active participation could bring to a study may seem obvious for most social scientists today, however one do not have to go far back in history before this was an unusual exercise to embark on. Some phenomena are difficult to understand through conversation or even observation alone, and people's actions often varies form their actual behaviour or spoken opinion. A participatory approach can thus help to understand human behaviour, beliefs and norms better – and at the same time be helpful in regards to build trust between me, as a researcher, and the people I encounter in the field.

Throughout the periods I spent doing fieldwork before I was able to speak and understand Spanish adequately participant observation were of especially great help. It allowed me to learn through interacting in various settings and take active part in activities happening at the time. Besides the positive aspect of learning a lot along the way, I also found that it is generally easier to be accepted and included by locals when one takes an active part in everyday activities and by that show an genuine interest to learn. My experience is that this is an opinion in which I, as a social scientist, shared with both the PDI representatives, as well as the volunteers who worked at the various institutions we visited throughout the fieldwork.

Unlike some social scientists, like e.g. Sara Delamont (2007: 205-207), who divides observation from the actual fieldwork like something one can turn on or off as one pleases, my opinion is that this overlaps and thus force the researcher to responsibly select what is good / useful data and ignore what is not. I also believe that useful observation starts more or less as soon as the researcher arrives in his or hers field – or even before.

How the fieldwork for this research started is a good example of when participant observation is not only useful when dealing with people from other cultures.

During the month I spent in the field alongside the other Norwegians who represented the PDI, I learned a lot by simply watching how they approached children and staff members in the various institutions we visited, as well as Bolivians in general as we travelled between locations. Since the group consisted of people with varied background (students, teachers, seniors, business leaders etc.), I learned how Norwegians abroad tend to behave in various situations – and how locals both regarded us as a fairly large group of strangers and as representatives of a foreign organisation. It is interesting to notice how, as soon as we engage in public interaction, we often unconsciously begin to collect and try to react to various impulses regarding etiquette, language and general characteristics of the applicable norms and rules of the society around us. And not to mention, how people perceive these impulses differently.

For me, a more focused and conscious type of observation starts as I actively and intentionally seek out the specific milieu I have chosen to base my research on, than observations done in everyday activities as a civilian. Yet, the latter might also be quite useful in order to get a more holistic picture of the surroundings.

Most of the time I spent doing concentrated and conscious participant observation in course of my fieldwork was when we visited the PDI's involvements in various parts of Bolivia, and later when I revisited some of them alone. Per 2015, the PDIs work in Bolivia involved about 1.020 children in 19 different day care-centres and five orphanages. The different institutions are located in and around the largest cities throughout the country, in Cochabamba, La Paz, Altiplano, Sucre, Potosi, Tarija, Trinidad and Santa Cruz. As already mentioned, I followed the people behind the PDI (two brothers), their family, and a number of key sponsors on a month long stay. The two initiators make these visits on a yearly basis, while different key sponsors are invited to travel along every two years. The expenses for these trips are covered personally, and thus do not affect the PDI's own budget. It was a quite useful exercise to take part in these visits. Primarily, I got to see the actual

involvements the PDI had built up or / and financed, some of them over the course of well over 30 years.

What I observed in these institutions varied significantly. The variations were mostly related to qualitative standards of the various institutions and its facilities, as well as the number and quality of staffing present. It also varied a great deal in terms of location, pedagogical and structural content, and other factors that might affect children's upbringing and general quality of life. Regardless, the common denominator in all the institutions we visited were affectionate children, which all were well prepared for our arrival with cultural performances usually in form of dancing and singing, and dressed in traditional costumes typical to the area they were representing. As we usually had several hours – if not the whole day – during our visits at the various institutions, I was able to spend quite a bit of time playing games and talking with both the children and the staff members, as well as getting a closer look at the housing and living conditions at each place.

The main purpose of the visits and the associated observations were not, however, any of the aspects mentioned above. In accordance with my research and research question (1.2), my main objective was to follow the PDI in order to see how their members and representatives interacted and positioned themselves in relation to their different stakeholders both home and abroad. By doing this, I would be able to observe and experience first hand how the PDI's activities had evolved, how their perceptions corresponded with local needs and desires, and further, an example of how Private Development Initiatives and their priorities coincides with and complements priorities within the professional development sector.

I have already mentioned some key challenges regarding my participant observation, but there are certain others, which fair to say are universally applicable for researcher about to conduct participant observation, and thus both deserves and require attention.

The first and main challenge a researcher might encounter in the field is to be accepted and included in the group he or she is researching. Fangen (2004: 60-61) emphasise the importance behind that the researcher presents him- / herself, as well as the actual research project, in a properly and trustworthy manner already in the initial phase. This tends to form the basis for the research in its entirety, it ensures voluntary participation, and it further

promotes goodwill from the available informants. There are usually one or a few people whom take it upon themselves to introduce the researcher to his / hers field of interest. It is important to be aware of the social role of these key informants, or “gate keepers”, in order to tell whether or not his or hers opinions reflects the opinion of others in the group, and further to avoid being persuaded and thus collect incorrect data (Wadel 1991: 54). If possible, it is usually a good idea to try and get perspectives from a different set of informants, having different roles and backgrounds within their society or group of interest. This will most likely help researchers to get a more nuanced understanding of the given topic, and hopefully an improved final product.

Prejudice occurs in most, if not all societies, and can possibly be a tampering barrier between a researcher and his / hers field of study. In various parts of the world, it might be many different reasons why researchers working in ethnographical settings feel the need to influence how they are being perceived when conducting fieldwork.

A useful trick in this context could be to apply what Hammersley and Atkinson (1996: 112-120) refers to as ‘impression techniques’. These techniques involves making an effort and adapt to the surroundings by e.g. use proper clothing, limit the use of jewellery, cell phones, or other things that might cause distractions – as well as being sincere and exert common courtesy and understanding towards others. Personally, I am not particularly eccentric in terms of appearance, but as I travelled around and visited various institutions inhabited by children I soon discovered how much chaos and disturbance for instance one smart-phone could cause. Early in the process I therefore decided to leave it in my bag while visiting these places.

There are of course certain features that are impossible to change or fully adapt to the surroundings. Age, gender and ethnicity are examples of features that researchers, as anybody else, have to expect being judged by. In this context it is important to try and be prepared for almost anything that might come. My personal experience is that most people greet me with openness, curiosity and benevolence, something I always try to reciprocate. However, once in a while I have received unpleasant racial remarks and maledictions, and a couple of times I have also experienced being pushed, spat on, and even robbed.

No matter how uncomfortable this is, it is important to remember that these unfortunate experiences are the exceptions and not the norm. These things typically happen when I enter areas with widespread poverty and crime, especially during evenings or at night. An example was when the PDI members and I joined the Salvation Army as they were giving out food and beverage to homeless people at night in downtown Cochabamba – an area plagued by poverty and violence. Without the easily identifiable uniform, I was merely considered as a tourist in the wrong place at the wrong time, and constantly received remarks and threats – despite giving out trays with food.

3.2.2 Qualitative Interviews

Despite the usefulness of participant observation, a research process should involve additional methodical approaches in order to be a more credible study. One methodical approach in particular is widely recognised as the most important and most used one, namely the *qualitative interview* (Ryen 2002: 15). I will further explain the characteristics of the different ways to conduct an interview, before I explain my use of it, both in terms of who and how I interviewed.

Interviews creates golden opportunities for researchers to ask the “right questions” and at the same time make close observations of reactions, body language and general behaviour that would be difficult to capture otherwise.

The purpose of an interview is to get a more private and comprehensive insight to how other people perceive their life, standpoints, and their perspectives on given issues that are addressed in the research (Thagaard 1998: 87) Interviews can hopefully also create awareness about various experiences, thoughts and feelings that the interviewee justifies his or hers actions with.

There are different ways to conduct an interview in terms of setup and execution. Firstly, it can be highly structured, with questions that are formulated and put in specific order beforehand. A key advantage to a highly structured interview is that the answers you get from different interviewees are more easily comparable to each other, which makes the collected data easier to process in hindsight. The drawback is that it offers little flexibility in the actual interview process, and thus some interviewees might feel that it becomes too much unidirectional communication and, as a result, they might become more reserved when it comes to opening up and sharing their true opinions and feelings (Thagaard 1998: 89).

A second way of conducting interviews is through a semi-structured approach. As the description indicates, a semi-structured interview has a determined set of topics or focus points beforehand, but enables the researcher to change the order of questions or focus along the way – depending on how the interview evolves (Kvale 1997: 39). In other words, there is generally more room to be flexible throughout the interview process than what is normal in a highly structured interview.

A third approach towards a interview process is through having little or no structure at all. In this sense, interviews become more or less like a conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee (Thagaard 1998: 89). An obvious advantage with having little or no structure is that it gives a lot of flexibility to change points of view along the way, or even deepen certain interesting aspects that may emerge during the interview. It is also considered as a valuable approach when the aim is to build trust and capture the respondents' immediate perspective on the topic of discussion (Ryen 2002: 97-98). However, it is important that the researcher do not deliberately take advantage of the "friendly tone" such interviews could bring about, and by that trick the interviewee to open up about things he / she would not otherwise have talked about in an interview- and research setting. Interviews with little or no structure are particularly useful in the initial phases of a research, as it enables the researcher him- / herself to become familiar with the topic of study, and the social and cultural aspects surrounding it.

There is no specific way to carry out an interview that automatically makes it better than the other. Personally, I tend to adapt the structural level to whom I interview, and also to where I am in the research process.

As Kvale (1997: 73) emphasise, it should be considered as more or less a prerequisite for researchers conducting interviews to inhabit basic knowledge and understanding regarding the topic they seek to address. This will help the interviewer to ask better questions and further improve the interpersonal relationship between interviewer and interviewee(s) based on an increased understanding and ability to relate to what is being said. When doing ethnographic studies, there are however times when even the most experienced researchers encounter issues so personal or cultural reasoned, that it becomes difficult to relate to it right away. Also, when speaking to initiators or people working for and with development projects, they all might have personal reasons and incentives for behind their involvements, which could be impossible to prepare for by studying the phenomena through books and reports.

In the initial phase of my fieldwork, as I met and began travelling together with the PDI and their supporters, I had limited knowledge about what a PDI actually was, their theoretical and practical approach to the development field, and who the people behind the initiative were and why they had decided to involve themselves in voluntary work.

Since I was going to travel and be with the group coherently for a month, I found it most appropriate to approach them and the PDI's project involvements gradually. Through this approach I found that the group showed increasing trust, both in me personally and my work with this thesis, by doing their best to be cooperative and available whenever I needed it. In this period I found it particularly useful to engage in interviews with little or no structure in order to get a better insight into their respective narratives before I started questioning it. I got what I now believe to be the most valuable information by engaging in more or less informal conversations as we travelled and visited projects together. This setting made it much easier for all of us to feel comfortable, and raise our concerns and justify our arguments better.

Some of the information given by the PDI is also a result of interviews done through mail correspondence in retrospect of the actual fieldwork. Such communication is important and

necessary due to the fact that there often are differences between what informants say and the researcher's experienced reality. These are differences that often become more apparent over time, or – as in my case – not noticed before I revisited some of the institutions without the company of Norwegian PDI representatives. These differences could also occur and be enhanced as a result of the circumstances. How the initiators behind the PDI – and their guests – refers to themselves and their involvements, might have been affected by us actually being there, and being ushered around day in and day out while assessing the outcomes. This is why repeated contact in different contexts can be an effective way to validate a study and its findings on your own.

After a month in the field, as the PDI representatives and their entourage returned to Norway, I spent about seven additional weeks revisiting some of their project involvements (orphanages and day care centres). During this period I continued to interview and interact with some of the people who had benefitted directly and indirectly from their efforts, as well as the government body responsible for organising NGO- and PDI interference in Bolivia, volunteers working in the institutions, and the PDI's partnering NGO's office in Cochabamba. This period was not to mention beneficial in terms of working and being perceived as an independent researcher, unattached from the PDI.

Some of the ones I spoke to throughout my fieldwork were people of Western origin (Norwegian and Finnish), and had travelled great distances in order to work as volunteers in orphanages, while others were part of the local, paid workforce. I had the pleasure of also getting an insight into the experiences of some of them, through both unstructured and semi-structured interviews. The unstructured interviews generally took place while I joined them in their daily tasks in and around the institutions, and the semi-structured ones usually took place in the city, away from their work place. I found that it was a good idea to take people out of the orphanages for interviews whenever this was possible. The orphanages I visited were, due to security reasons, surrounded by high concrete walls and locked gates, which are circumstances that could – and in some cases did – affect the people working there over time, and, as a consequence, also affect their contributions to my research in an unjustly manner.

During the fieldwork period I also interviewed three different governmental representatives – two from the Department of Social Management and one from the Secretariat for Integral Human Development in Cochabamba.

In these interviews I chose a semi-structured approach. The main reason behind this approach was that I did not know whom I was about to interview, or what job they had / answer they could give me. By bringing a set of different questions, I could juggle between different alternatives and ask them without having a specific order. By doing this I was able to better adapt the interview to the person I was talking to, their position, and their willingness to answer. In order to simplify the interview process, I decided to present myself, explain why I was there, and the different points I would like to know more about beforehand – and then start the actual interview.

In an interview with the head of the PDI's partner organisation in Bolivia, I deliberately chose to take a more structured approach. This interview took place late in my fieldwork, when I felt I had sufficient prior knowledge about the PDI, the partner NGO, and their cooperation, which made it easier to decide on what questions I needed to get answered. Additionally, I was told that the interviewee was on a quite busy schedule and that I only had 20 - 30 minutes to get through my questions, which meant that I had to have a specific list of what I considered as the best questions beforehand.

The head of the PDI's partner organisation, in addition to two out of the three state employees I interviewed, solely spoke and understood Spanish, which is a common thing for the majority of Bolivians. In order to make sure that these interviews would go as smoothly as possible without any misunderstanding, I brought an interpreter along to assist me. In the course of my fieldwork I was assisted by two different interpreters, and went through different preparations with them before each interview, I soon discovered just how important preparations for such interview settings are – both for the interviewer, the interpreter, and for the sake of the actual interview. During the first interview I had in cooperation with one of the two interpreters, I failed to properly introduce her to the purpose of my study beforehand, explain what information I hoped to gather from the interviewee, and how we together would conduct the interview. This experience gave me a

valuable lesson, as the interview process became significantly more challenging in regards to misunderstandings and time spent correcting and explaining these during the interview.

There are mainly two different ways to collect information / data, particularly in relation to interviews, but also while doing (participant) observation; take notes along the way or immediately after the session, or use an audio recorder (some might also use a video camera). The choice of tools here depends on the researchers' preferred way of working, the informants and what they are comfortable with, and what is made possible by the surroundings in terms of noise or other distracting elements.

As I conducted the different interviews, I used an audio recorder extensively and often made supplementary notes afterwards. Later I transcribe the interviews either partly or completely in order to make the information more accessible. This is a preferred routine for me because whenever I have tried to take notes along the way, my experiences have been that I either lose too much information due to the fact that I write too slowly compared to what are being said, or that I lose focus on the interviewee(s) and / or elements with or around us that could end up being of relevance to the research. In this way, writing while interviewing breaks the flow of the interview process, and bears the risk of ignoring information that could be valuable for the actual research.

3.2.4 Use of Existing Literature

The importance of existing literature is almost self-explanatory, as it adds credibility and increased theoretical depth to all parts of a thesis. In this sense, researchers use existing literature in order to highlight, evaluate or develop theories in their fields of study.

The topic of this thesis is based on a small-scale insight to an international trend within development assistance. Development assistance is in itself an immensely broad field that contains many different actors, opinions and trends, which in some cases goes back seven

decades and more. There are both new and traditional theories of aid distribution, all explaining what works better than the others and how. Additionally, there is a mix of both political and religious ambitions, which all want to be acknowledged and heard.

In other words, it is difficult to obtain a full and complete overview when it comes to the collected field of development assistance – and sources must be chosen carefully and always be read with a critical eye. Luckily, I found it helpful, both for the sake of my own knowledge, or lack of it, as well as for my interest and motivation, to go through what I found of existing literature and reports regarding this field.

Although there is a lot of information about development assistance and the different types of it, there seems to be a shortage of information focused on and around private development initiatives – particularly in the Norwegian context. This shortage is also one of the main reasons why I choose to do a qualitative research on the phenomena, and I hope this thesis will help to channel some attention to the PDIs and the work they do abroad.

3.2.5 Ethical Considerations

In order to make sure that the quality of a research is upheld, and that people involved are being protected from any negative consequences of their participation, a set of rules, norms and guidelines has been developed for researchers to adhere to.

The main points here include the requirement of *informed and free consent*, requirements of *confidentiality*, and requirements to *avoid injuries and serious traumas* connected with the participation (NESH 2006). I will further elaborate on how I approached these requirements in the field.

Before actively involving other people and their statements or opinions in research purposes, it is important that they are well informed about the study they are participating in, and further agree on the terms given. This is called informed consent (Fangen, 2010).

According to the principle of informed consent, the researcher is responsible for explaining his / hers informant(s) about the objectives and procedures connected with the research

beforehand. Additionally, the informants are at all times entitled to abort their participation without any consequences, which is a principle based on respect for individual sovereignty over their own life, and control over information about themselves that are intended to be shared with others (Thagaard 1998: 109).

In the period I travelled with the PDI, the principle of informed consent often came to mind. Most of the time as we visited their project involvements the people we met automatically assumed that I also was a representative of the PDI. Given the nature of these visits, I did not see any reason to tell them otherwise at the time, unless they asked specifically. However, when I revisited some of the places on my own at a later stage, I made sure to properly introduce myself, and the true nature of my visit. In connection to the question of informed consent, it is worth specifying that my objective during the first visits were not to question or observe either the children or the staff, but rather to observe and question the PDI representatives who I accompanied. I wished to genuinely see how the PDI representatives interacted with the people we met in the various institutions, and vice versa, in order to observe how these visits took place. So, since I had informed consent and permission from the PDI, I saw it as an advantage to be considered as part of them, rather than to stand out and create uncertainty among the employees and children on who I was and how to approach me.

The next key principle behind an ethically responsible research is the requirement of confidentiality. In accordance to the Norwegian National Research Ethics Committee for Social Sciences and Humanities (NESH 2006), are people who are made into objects of research entitled to decide whether or not the information they provide are to be treated confidentially. Researchers must thus prevent the use and distribution of information that in some extent could harm individuals who participate in the study.

In connection to this, research material must normally be made anonymous, and strict routines on how names or other information that makes it possible to identify individuals should be stored and saved have to be considered and implemented by the researcher (ibid).

In a fieldwork setting, there might be times where interviewees or other informants are reluctant to participate in the given research in fear of possible consequences it may bring for them or members of their family. This also happened in regards to this thesis, as I went to interview one of my informants at the Department of Social Management (SEDEGES) in Cochabamba. A few questions into the interview, the informant started to get second thoughts about being involved in my research. Consequently, I made a point out of stopping the interview and turning my voice recorder off, before I again informed about the full right to withdraw from the research entirely. At the same time I reassured that if we were to continue, that the participation in its entirety would be made anonymous. After our talk the informant agreed to continue with the interview, something that proves the importance of building trust between the researcher and informants based on ethical provisions. For the sake of simplicity and continuity, I decided to make all the contributors and informants in this thesis anonymous. This also includes the PDI in which I travelled alongside and studied in-depth, as well as their partner organisation in Bolivia.

The decision to make the PDI and their partnering NGO anonymous is based on the same notion around consequence thinking that justifies the choice of keeping other informants anonymous. It is not an objective for me through this thesis to advertise for or against any specific PDI or their work, but rather to focus on the overall group of development actors that PDIs represents.

Concerns around consequences is also a key aspect of the third basic principle behind an ethical research process, namely to avoid causing injuries or traumas to people participating in the thesis. In the context of this principle it is emphasised that the researcher shall work based on a fundamental respect for human dignity. Researchers shall at all times respect their informants' integrity, freedom and codetermination. Further, researchers also bear a responsibility of preventing that participants are being subjected to damage or other types of strain (NESH 2006).

By adhering to the principle of informed and free consent, and the principle of confidentiality, the risks of causing injuries or trauma becomes correspondingly smaller. There have been studies on how participants experience to take part in research, which has shown that they often find it to be a positive exercise (Thagaard 2002). Based on my own

fieldwork experience, I have noticed that most informants enjoys that they get to talk about themselves and about various topics they inhabit knowledge about to an interested listener. Some have also expressed that to participate in a research have helped them to reflect on – and get more insight into – their own life and issues addressed in the research, by being asked and further get the chance to talk freely about it.

Besides the three requirements addressed so far, there are certain other ethical concerns that emerged during my fieldwork. Firstly, I have mentioned that I prefer to use audio recorder when I conduct interviews. In connection to this, I find it ethical correct to make sure and ask if this is acceptable for the participant(s) before I started interviewing. Some interviewees are sceptical of audio recorders right away, but as soon as I explain the benefits it has for the whole process, and that the content of the interview will be used in accordance to what we have agreed regarding confidentiality, they usually get more comfortable with the idea of being recorded.

A second ethical dilemma emerged on an early stage of my fieldwork, as I travelled along with the PDI representatives. Since I spent so much of my time with the group of representatives, I eventually had to make deliberations about how personal and I should get in relation to the them. This is an issue that is elaborated by Thagaard (1998: 109), and questions whether the collected data becomes more or less reliable as the researcher spends more time and gets socially acquainted with the people in which the research concerns. There is no definitive answer to this, as it largely depends on each researcher and their professional integrity. In this sense are conclusions from qualitative research, like any other research, valid until they eventually become refuted.

As I followed the PDI around Bolivia, I got introduced and treated as an integrated part of the group by both the PDI members and the people we met along the way. And, as I explained in the beginning of this chapter, I saw no reason to reject this assumption. Being considered as part of the group gave me a close and personal point of view of what I found to also be the rest of the groups' experiences connected with the visits we made, and thus I learned a lot. It was however important for me, as a researcher doing fieldwork, to be conscious about my own position at all times, so that I made sure to avoid ending up as

biased and thereby incompetent when it came to conclusions around issues connected with my research.

The high amount of togetherness gradually made it hard to “turn on and off” the observations I did as a researcher – and thus also my changing role as a researcher / civilian. For a month, we spent most of the time together as a group, whether we were on project visits, attended stakeholder meetings, travelled between places, had joint meals, or did various cultural activities. In order to face this challenge and make sure to maintain a healthy and critical distance, and remember my role and duties as a researcher in the field at all times, I took a few days of hiatus from the group about mid-way in their stay. I found this break to be a useful way to digest my newly gained impressions, and gather my thoughts again.

To reflect on, be aware of, and remember my role and duties as a researcher were also important as I met with local representatives from both the PDI, the partnering NGO, and from state agencies. Ryen (2000) argues that this relation is imbalanced in favour of me, as a researcher with background from Western academics from the start. In order to prevent this to become a significant barrier with possible destructive effects on my research process and its outcome, it was important for me to remain as transparent and honest as possible about the objectives of the work I did. Besides that, and as I explained in the chapter about participant observation, there is little I can change about my background and appearance in terms of ethnicity, gender and age.

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4. Analysis of an Private Development Initiative

4.1. Introduction

In June 1981, a well-known Norwegian NGO named 'Nordic Children's Fund' (Nordisk Barnefond) went through a credibility crisis, which eventually proved to be the end of the organisation as a whole. Its founder, pastor Helge Nordahl, was met with severe allegations of fraud and embezzlement in the media. Doubt was raised regarding the whereabouts of sponsor money he had received, and whether or not the children Nordahl claimed to be helping truly existed at all. The heavy media allegations, which later proved to be unfounded, made Nordic Children's Fund look guilty without the chance to disprove it, and soon after caused most sponsors to stop their monthly financial support. In Bolivia, orphanages and care centres across the country had become highly dependent on the support they had received through Nordahl over the years, and obviously, so were the children living in them as well.

Back in Sandnes, Norway lived one of Nordahl's nearly 13,000 sponsors at that time. In dismay over what had happened to the organisation he had supported on a monthly basis for four years, the sponsor became eager to find out if the child he thought he had been helping all this time really did exist, and by that decided to take a long and somewhat uncharted journey to Bolivia, to find out first hand.

After about two weeks of travelling through Bolivia, he finally found the child he was looking for in one of the many institutions he visited in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

Most of the orphanages and care centres were managed by the same NGO, the NGO that had cooperated with Helge Nordahl and Nordic Children's Fund until the funding stopped.

In every place he saw the grim consequence of the boycott back in Norway, as most of the institutions struggled to provide basic supplies – such as food and clean water – to its young

residents, and the facilities they lived in were in a terrible condition. Upon his return to Norway, strongly affected by the precarious situation the children lived under, the man from Sandnes began to enlist sponsors amongst friends and colleagues in order to help the many less fortunate ones he had met. Being the charismatic, gentle, and popular figure he was known to be, many took interest in him and his effort to help children in Bolivia - and not long after, a new Private Development Initiative were established.

Since then, the PDI has outlived its founder who passed away in 2005, and now – under the management of his two sons – financially supports about 1,020 children through a sponsor program (Oct. 2015). These children live full-time, or spend much of their days, divided in five orphanages and 19 care centres all around Bolivia, depending on their domestic situation. The orphanages and care centres are, with one exception, managed by the same NGO as back in 1981 and funded by several organisations, including the PDI from Sandnes. In addition to the monthly support given by private sponsors to each children, the institutions receives additional support for maintenance or specific projects submitted by the NGO to the PDI, and further by them to many of the loyal beneficiaries in Norway.

4.1.1 First Encounter – Entering the Field

I arrived in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia's largest city, in early October 2014 on a flight from Buenos Aires, Argentina, and by pure coincidence, so did another flight from Frankfurt, Germany. As I waited to retrieve my luggage, I saw a large group of what I soon after discovered to be 16 other Norwegians who had arrived on the Frankfurt flight.

As they all gathered and waited in the main hall of 'Virus Viru International Airport', Santa Cruz, I realised that the large group, like me, was waiting for a connecting flight, and that avoiding any contact in this fairly small airport would be close to impossible, especially without breaking an unwritten rule when it comes to travelling alone; being rude to strangers. It seemed like a peculiar gathering of different people in the group, a mix between

young and old, short and tall, and all so oddly put together that it was hard to determine what connection they had with each other.

After a while I came in contact with what proved to be a married couple in the group, and initiated small talk as they approached me on a bench outside the terminal. It became apparent that they all were connected to a small Norwegian PDI based in Sandnes, on the southwest coast of Norway. Sandnes is a city with about 73,000 people, and many of its households have long had connection with the oil- and gas industry, since the city is the closest neighbour of Norway's "oil capital", Stavanger.

Gradually, several people in the group came and joined us, and as it became clear that both the group and I were headed to Cochabamba later that evening, they invited me to join them for dinner the same night. Both triggered by a growing curiosity and a solid amount of politeness, I decided to accept the invitation.

When I met them at the restaurant that evening, the group had grown additionally with amongst other two Norwegian volunteers from one of the orphanages nearby, the manager of that same orphanage, and a young lady with her husband and child. The young lady had turned 18 just days in advance, and had up until now been one of the initiator's sponsored child most of her life. The whole setting and the continuously shifting conversation all became a bit overwhelming at first, as I naturally felt like an outsider, but I eventually got around the table to greet them all and found a seat at the end of the large dining table.

After talking further I found that my initial thought – that the group was somewhat oddly composed – had its natural explanation. I learned that the group consisted of people with quite different background, but who all had a connection to the PDI as their common feature. While one of the brothers (initiators) had company of his wife and two daughters, others there had been friends and colleagues with their father, the original initiator, and had thus supported the PDI since the very beginning. Five others represented a school (two teachers and three students) in Norway who held annual fundraising events for the PDI, one person represented a local branch of a large Norwegian cooperative company, and another was, as me, a student travelling along and making a documentary film about the PDI and their work in an independent school project.

Before we parted that night, one of the PDI initiators asked me if I would care to join them the following day as well, as they were about to kick off their month-long program of visiting all the children and the facilities they had built and funded throughout more than three decades. I humbly accepted the invitation, and within the next month, I had accompanied the PDI and their entourage to 19 of the 24 different orphanages and day care centres across Bolivia.

4.1.2 Travelling with the PDI

As mentioned, we started the tour in – and continued around – the city and department of Cochabamba. The actual city is located in the middle of a vast valley with spring-like climate all year (called ‘the city of eternal spring’), which for centuries has enabled extensive agriculture in the surrounding areas. Agriculture in Cochabamba – and Bolivia in general – is characterised by hard physical labour and low wages, making rural families highly vulnerable to economic fluctuations, which in turn affects their children's welfare and education.

This is why, within the department of Cochabamba alone, the PDI are currently sponsoring three orphanages (two ones solely for girls and one for boys), and five day care centres, which facilitates children of both gender from early morning till late evening.

Typically, it is children from underprivileged families who benefit from these centres, where working families can place their children while they are out trying to make a living. Some of these children have also lost one or both of their parents, and instead of ending up in orphanages, they stay part time at other relatives and part time at these centres. The centres makes sure the children are fed, cared for, attending school and receives help with their schoolwork.

After almost a week of visiting institutions in and around Cochabamba, our journey continued to Trinidad, the administrative centre and largest city in the department of Beni –

sited on the Southern edge of the Amazon basin. There, in the tropics, the PDI had bought a plot of land and were in the process of financing the construction of a brand new day care centre a few hundred meters from the old one – a temporary building with mud floor and ceilings made of twigs and leaves. Since heavy rain had a tendency to flush down and make these buildings difficult to keep clean and dry, both the PDI representatives and the local personnel from the partnering NGO, looked forward to offer the children some much needed improvements. Although Trinidad is a significantly smaller city than Cochabamba with only about 130.000 people, they also have agriculture as its main industry and face some of the same social and economical challenges.

As we left Trinidad three days later, I decided to taken an hiatus from the group, as they went on to visit four additional day care centres and one orphanage in the constitutional capital, Sucre, the ancient mining city, Potosí, and at the capital of Bolivia's largest winery department, Tarija.

I met up with them again in La Paz five days later, where we continued in the six following days by visiting seven day-care centres and one all-boys orphanage. With the exception of Potosí, which is located a little higher in the Andean mountain range, the high plateaus in the outskirts of El Alto and La Paz offers some of the harshest living conditions in Bolivia. At about 4,500 MASL, the air is thin and quite polluted, the sun is so sharp that it constitutes a troubling health threat to skin and eyes, and at nights the temperature often falls down to freezing point. Rural peasants of Aymara origin dominate these areas, and a majority of them continue to make their living by farming, cattle raising and fishing – as they have been known to do for well over a millennium.

Aymara Indians are a proud and culturally rich people, and in all the places we went, we were received hospitable receptions with traditional potato-based food, Chicha (fermented drink made from maize), and folkloric tales presented through spectacular dances dressed in colourful traditional costumes. In almost all of the places, we also received gifts as token of appreciation, which was hand-made scarfs, wallets, miniature-llamas, beanie hats etc.

Aymara women are known to be quite skilled seamstresses, and the products they make are often a much-needed extra income to the household.

During a similar visit the PDI made in 2010, they had bought a number of instruments to the boys who lived in the orphanage in El Alto, in the outskirts of La Paz. To our great surprise

they had practiced these in hiding for four years since then, and held a great mini concert in our honour.

The day after, our round tour continued down to the tropics once again. This time to Santa Cruz, Bolivia's richest city, in order to visit the final two day care centres on the agenda, and sum up our joint experiences before the PDI and their entourage was set to return to Norway. These tours, where the PDI invites key sponsors to travel along to Bolivia, takes place every two years, and, according to the PDI representatives, works very well as a way of communicating both progress and future needs of the institutions along the way.

The PDI initiators stated that these tours were of vital importance in terms of marketing their work. Their experience was that many of the guests went home being convinced that the PDI served a good purpose in Bolivia, and often recommended them to others, which often resulted in new sponsors and good publicity. If the tours had not had this new effect, they would not have done it, because of the amount of pressure it applied to the various institutions and the personnel working there.

In general, the children seemed to enjoy our visits and took initiative to include introverted tourists in their games, showing us around and asking questions. It became obvious that they were highly experienced and drilled when it came to these visits, and knew that when we came visiting there would be what they considered as a party with abundance of food, desserts, and presents. When we saw how they approached us with trust, assertiveness and joy, it was difficult to imagine that many of these kids had been betrayed, abandoned and mistreated by their closest family. After each visit, it was a quiet ride back to the hotel for the people in the entourage as a result of all the impressions it provided. In this sense, it was easy to see why the PDI believed that these visits were so important and effective.

The round trips are in themselves both intense and tiring, and at the end most of us had suffered some sort of illness due to huge climatic differences in the various places and varying food security along the way. It is challenging to travel around in Bolivia. Flights of 20 - 30 minutes might easily take up to 10 - 15 hours by car or bus because of the many high mountains and steep valleys stretching across large parts of the country. Since the PDI are involved in projects and institutions located in seven out of Bolivia's nine regional departments, these month-long trips offer an, at times, exhausting schedule and major

variations altitude-, climate- and people wise. Ranging from the thick tropical jungle 130 meters above sea level in Trinidad, and up 4,500 meter to the city of Potosí, it is a hard test in bodily endurance. The rewards in terms of gained impressions are however massive. How complex Bolivia is as a nation, with its different ethnic groups (36 recognised), became quite apparent as we visiting all the different cities and projects – where the people we met often had prepared music, dance and food typical for their region and cultural background. These round trips initiated by the PDI are also featured and mediated through a blog, where sponsors and others can follow the various visits and get an insight on the state of affairs at the different institutions.

4.2.3 Influencing Lives – Responsibilities and Results

Besides the volunteers and the staff in each orphanage and day care centre, I met and talked with the children currently living in and benefiting from these institutions – as well as some who had lived there previously. Despite the fact that these children lived together and regarded each other as extended family, they all had unique background and a different set of reasons for being there. In many cases they were more than aware of how and why they were living in an orphanage. Other times they had no idea of their background, but had made up (often romanticised) stories of an ideal family waiting for them somewhere outside the institution.

In terms of childhood and education, some of the children had a troubling past, and several of them had consequently missed out on one or more school years. The PDI has long supported their partner organisations' work of adapting their qualifications to children with special needs, by providing extra tutoring or possibility of repeating whole semesters or years in school, special hygienically care, and available expertise for psychological support. Children with what is considered as special needs constitute the exception to the rule that children shall move out of the orphanages as they finish school and become adults, at the

age of 18-19. Many of the institutionalised children / youths run away and are never to be seen again, while others are having a hard time leaving at all. In some special cases, children have ended up becoming part of the institutional workforce themselves. The ideal however, is that they eventually leave the institutions, and hopefully pursue a career or higher education or profession. By doing that, they have better possibilities for getting a job and take care of themselves and a potential family – as well as it opens up free capacity for accepting other children in need into the institutions.

As we travelled around on visits, my understanding was that most of the children in the institutions funded by the PDI seemed to be unaware of who we actually were, but at the same time quite aware of the type of visit we represented. We were simply “los noruegos” (the Norwegians), who came visiting on a yearly basis. In the various places, there were examples of children who knew their individual sponsor by name as a result of correspondence through receiving gifts, letters, or meeting him / her in the conjunction of the PDIs visits – but that seemed to be the exception and not the rule. A few of the children maintained however a continuously close relationship to their individual sponsors and / or the PDI well into their adult life. During my fieldwork I met several, but there were especially two women in their early 30s, who had closer ties with both the PDI, their family, and a couple of their closest sponsors than most of the others I met. The two travelled with us for much of the time I was there as an included part of the group, and referred to the PDI as family. They had known the family in charge of the PDI for most of their lives, as they had grown up with support from sponsor families closely connected with them. Both had previously been in Norway to visit their former sponsor families, and even spoke some basic sentences in Norwegian. I could not help being surprised. It was the first time I met and heard about children growing up in a sponsorship programme who, when they became adults, continued to have such close contact with their sponsor families. It evoked associations to adoption more than what I had read about and experienced through sponsorship programs before. I recall wondering if this also represents a difference between the results one might expect when supporting a PDI, as opposed to larger NGOs offering similar sponsorship programmes – and what reasons and responsibility that comes with this difference. It at least goes to prove that certain sponsors are not afraid to take a more active

role in the lives of those they are helping, especially if PDIs or NGOs facilitate such opportunities. As one of the brothers representing the PDI stated:

“Most sponsors give money each month without getting further involved, which is completely fine. Others decide to get more personally involved in both the PDI and their sponsored child’s life and wellbeing, these people have traditionally been great ambassadors for us, and help us attract additional sponsors”.

Some of the children in the PDI’s sponsorship programme develop special academic abilities or some form of other talents. In order to help these children achieve their goals, the PDI has chosen to support them economically beyond what is normal, so that they can help secure the education or get the tools required in order to succeed. During a dinner in La Paz, we met two such students – one male and one female. The male had proceeded to study Finance at the University in La Paz, while the female was done with her education as a social worker, and now worked with helping other orphan children with special needs in the poor parts of the neighbouring city, El Alto. The male student had brought with him a photo album from when he, as well, had been in Norway to visit his sponsor family there. He had developed a great relationship with them throughout most of his life. Together they represented examples of how much positive influence small PDI involvements could have on both individual’s life – and through them – on the society as a whole. At the same time, the PDI and their partnering NGO can only provide a basic replacement to how an ideal childhood should be, and I cannot help thinking that the responsibility of funding human rights for Bolivian children should ideally be secured through other, more sustainable means. The mentioned students represent examples of concrete result from aid assistance. My experience from talking to the people behind the PDI – and their sponsors – is that most professional NGOs fails to convey such small “success-stories”, and make their involvements personal enough for their individual sponsors. Several emphasised that visible results and the sense of ownership of the process of giving was decisive for the choice to support the PDI. Once again my thoughts goes to the PDI’s description of how important these trips were for the reputation and the recruitment of new sponsors, and the considerable effect that personalising aid involvement could entail.

4.2.4 Planning the Future

As pointed out, many PDIs start out as more or less impulsive reaction to social injustice and visible poverty, and gradually find themselves in a situation where they are accountable to several stakeholders than what was perhaps originally intended. The two most important stakeholder groups are obviously recipients and donors, but as described throughout this thesis, there are also a local network evolved around their operations, which they also become accountable to. Consequently, besides the actual time and effort they invest in their involvements, the commitment require a fundamental openness, both in terms of the organisation's achievements and future aspirations.

To manage a PDI demands a great deal of time, and like the majority of initiators behind voluntary organisations, the two brothers responsible for the PDI are also working full time beside their voluntary efforts. Accordingly, their administrative work takes about 3 hours per week, and about one workday per month in connection with setting up lists of gifts and donations that have been received during that time. Together this accounts for approximately 20 hours a month. Additionally however, is the preparation and dispatch of letters to all sponsors twice per year – in the summer and right before Christmas.

Considering that there are currently about 1,000 sponsors, this is estimated to take up a working week each time. Lastly, there is more or less six days or evenings of lecturing and information meetings with sponsors on a yearly basis and the scheduled three to four-week long trip to Bolivia each year. This is the administrative workload divided between the two brothers alone, and do not include the work done by other volunteers.

When it comes to future operations, the initiators do not see any obstacles in Norway that would threaten their engagement. This is perhaps evidence of a much needed attitude in order to maintain a “take it as it comes” – and “get things done”-mentality. Even the very idea that their contributions were not needed did not seem to take away any motivation:

“In recent years, there have indeed been signs of gradual improvements regarding social issues in Bolivia, but it would probably take several decades before the need for externally

funded projects and institutions would cease to exist – especially those working with children and marginalised groups of the society. If (or when) that need disappears, it would not automatically mean the end for the PDI's presence in Bolivia. First, they would see if they could change the way of helping, rather than doing a sudden and complete withdrawal”.

4.2.5 Funding – for Survival and Sustainability

A key priority for the PDI I followed, as with all organisations doing charitable work, is to attract a healthy number of sponsors and keep these over time. Without a steady and preferable increasing income flow – private organisations have a hard time retaining or expanding their charitable involvements. As shown in *chapter 2.4.1*, this priority is also a main concern in regards to the organisational sustainability and how it is best ensured through the ability to attract funding. I have previously also explained how some organisations “goes professional” and seek funding through e.g. the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) – and also how PDIs chose to deliberately work on the outside of this increasingly mainstream trend.

In the case of the PDI, there has never been a desire to apply for financial support from NORAD or make any other efforts towards joining the “professional aid industry”. The considerable administration (costs) that are both necessary and demanded by NORAD in order to receive financial support, would, according to the PDI, be at the expense of both ownership and volunteerism. Their idea has always been that all collected funds would go via them and directly to their partner NGO locally, without any administrative cost on the way. From there, the PDI in cooperation with the partner NGO decide on how, what, and where these funds could be at best use at any given time.

Despite, or because, the PDI have operated without any support with binding terms and conditions, they have experienced both increased funding and expanding responsibilities in

33 consecutive years. The PDI regard themselves as far more economically vulnerable than professional NGOs. They operate on considerable smaller budgets, and personally bear all responsibility in addition to having regular job and other obligations. This unprofessionalism that characterise PDIs makes it even more important for them to be moderate in terms of engaging into new projects and expanding their responsibility through growing to fast. This economic vulnerability and unprofessionalism were expressed reasons of why the PDI did not envisage further expansions of their responsibilities in Bolivia beyond what they already are engaged in, as it would be difficult to reconcile with what they refer to as their *“modest, voluntary form of operation”*.

Regardless of vulnerability and unprofessionalism, the PDI consider themselves as a sustainable managed organisation, both in terms of project engagements, and in terms of funding. As they see it, one of the main reasons behind their sustainability is that they, as mentioned, work independently of NORAD or any large individual donors, and instead at the mercy of around 1,000 small sponsors giving money on a monthly basis. Although the two brothers in charge of the PDI have a constant job of maintaining and increasing the number of sponsors, they feel it would require a lot more resources for them to satisfy Norwegian governmental demands regarding administration and report writing – in addition to continuously satisfying the sponsors' requirements for positive results.

In reality, it is not necessarily any less challenging to meet expected achievements put forward by 1,000 small donors than those required by NORAD, but my experience suggest that these expectations are of different nature. A large number of small-scale donors have a tendency to be impatient in terms of results, and, at a time when worthy causes from around the globe are competing for attention, the result may become that potential donors are turning more apathetic towards seemingly “less grave” problems, like securing education for what looks like otherwise healthy children. This thought became apparent for me as the manager of one orphanage told me about a repeated experience where small-scale donors had said that the children in “her” orphanage obviously did not need further financial support. This assumption was based on photos communicated on the PDIs blog, showing some of the children posing as *“too smiling, playful and healthy”*, and further that *“they even*

had a dog there, which would not be prioritised if they did not already have everything else that they need”.

The fact that there are such conceptions amongst certain donors might very well be a consequence of the traditional aid actors’ abundant use of images showing suffering, and children living under miserable conditions – perhaps in order to play on the conscience of potential donors. It is a well-established truth that suffering “sells” in the aid industry, but if this “strategy” occurs more often in traditional aid organisations than in PDIs is hard to ascertain for sure. Information retrieved from interviews and discussions with both the PDI initiators and those managing the projects / institutions on the ground, indicates that private development initiatives put a great deal of effort into nurturing sponsor-to-project relations, and, in the case of this research, a more personal sponsor-to-child relationship, than what large professional NGOs have the capacity to manage.

In this sense, it might be conceivable that PDIs will benefit more from a persistent and increasingly positive development for its given projects – given that their projects are fewer, of smaller scale, and thus more transparent than the ones international NGOs are involved in.

The PDI I followed has not directly experienced complaints about the standards in any of the institutions they are financing (neither too high nor too low) from any of their sponsors. Although, two of the volunteers working at two different orphanages pointed out that one institution in particular, the only out of the 24 that are not managed by their partner NGO locally, seemingly have higher standards in terms of facilities and number of staff than the others. When confronted by this, the PDI felt it was important to highlight that any differences in terms of standard was a result of the fact that this particular institution was an institutions that had systematically been more successful in attracting additional funds besides the amount that was given to them via the PDI. The fact that the various institutions through the PDI’s partner NGO actively seek new possible ways to get additional funds from local sources, or from other organisations than the PDI, is not only encouraged by the PDI, it is seen as an absolute necessity in which they have encouraged all along.

When it comes to the PDI's sponsorship program, they have clung to a premise since the start-up; that each child shall not have more than one specific sponsor, at least through them. This decision is based on mainly two reasons. The first reason is more of a practical one, as multiple sponsors per child could more easily complicate the flow of information between the PDI and their individual sponsors regarding the children and projects that concern their wellbeing. Examples of such complications are when gifts or mail correspondence for birthdays, Christmas or other personal occasions in a given child life end up with the wrong receiver or in the wrong institution, and / or if project updates, letters of appreciation, or other information are sent to the wrong sponsor – or not at all. Hence, the tracking system of these things are, in addition to using names, kept in order by a simple number system where the sponsor and his / hers beneficiary are linked together. And, since there are solely the two brothers in charge of the PDI who manage all relations to their sponsors – as well as the relations between these sponsors and the recipients in Bolivia, the key is to keep it as simple as possible and yet sufficient enough to keep all parties satisfied. Every single incident of wrongly or misdirected information could hurt their overall credibility, which they repeatedly argued was the backbone of the PDI, and the very premise of their existence.

Despite the assertive determination, the PDI admits that their decision to operate with one sponsor per child in periods have made it economically challenging to operate their increased involvements in Bolivia optimally. As a small organisation, they are more financially sensitive to new regulatory requirements, and various external factors, such as the unfavourable development of the dollar, which the Bolivian currency, Bolivianos, is highly connected with. In 2015 alone, the value of US Dollars increased by 30% compared to Norwegian Kroner (NOK), meaning that the PDI basically get 30% less value for the money they collect and send. This is a big deal for the PDI with its limited annual budget and small margins.

The second reason behind having one sponsor per child that was mentioned was based on what I would consider to be more vainly grounds than the first. According to the PDI, the justification also evolves around that many sponsors have had an expressed desire to *“have one sponsored child exclusively for themselves, and preferably also the possibility to choose*

which one – in terms of age and gender". This goes to prove the somewhat naive and misunderstood perception some sponsors have regarding sponsorship programs, which has been an topic of discussion not only for the PDI initiators, but generally in Norwegian media and also amongst the three largest NGOs offering such sponsorship schemes in Norway; *SOS-Barnebyer, Redd Barna* and *Plan Norge*. Together, these three NGOs have 366,000 individual sponsors enlisted into sponsorship programs, in contrast to the PDI who has about 1,000. Amongst the three major NGOs, *Plan* is the only organisations that makes it possible for sponsors to choose the age and gender of sponsored child(ren), something they have received a lot of critique for this as it is more expensive to administer and raises questions about sponsors' motives for helping (Bistandsaktuelt 02.09.2015).

The PDIs sponsorship program generates a minimum of NOK 220 (about US \$30) per child on a monthly basis, although many voluntarily choose to contribute with more. This is still a marginal amount when considering the costs each institution has with food, clothing, education, hobbies and maintenance etc. – even in a low-cost country as Bolivia.

The PDI's demand of keeping their administrative work simple, effective, and on a voluntary basis, clearly mirrors one obvious aspect that should be taken into account when assessing the nature of PDIs; that their structure automatically both limits and determine their overall organisational size, and thus also both the type and scope of their involvements abroad.

Besides its sponsorship programme, the PDI also receives larger contributions intended for specific projects, given by collective sponsors such as schools, businesses, kindergartens, associations, or private individuals with special connection to the PDI in general, or one of the 25 institutions in particular. The projects that these contributions cover are many and vary in both size and costs. Some are small, like digging a well, painting a building or building a staircase. Others are medium-sized e.g. a new car, a new kitchen, or new bathroom facilities. And finally there are big projects, like a new house, or even multiple houses. By using different bank accounts, the PDI separate the contributions received through the sponsorship program and those received from larger sponsors intended for projects.

Regardless the size of received contributions, it is important for the PDI to ensure that funds given by sponsors, both for the children's sake and the projects benefiting them go directly

where they are supposed to, and that it is further being used for the benefit of the receivers – namely the Bolivian children. This is important, not only for the PDI, but naturally also for the sponsors and, most of all, the beneficiaries.

Another key aspect in the context of funding, which I have briefly mentioned above, is the one that perhaps more than anything else distinguishes PDIs from professional NGOs; The amount of money being spent on administration and advertisement campaigns in order to attract additional funds. This is a issue that have received quite a lot of attention in connection to charity work done by NGOs through the years, as sponsors giving money obviously want to see the money ending up where they are supposed to. A calculation from 2011 (Plan Norge 2011), had the largest and most popular (professional) NGOs pitted against each other in order to calculate how much of the collected funds had ended up with the beneficiaries or the targeted projects. The review showed that the NGO with lowest score only transferred about 63% of its collected funds to the purpose of their operations, while the NGO that scored best transferred about 91%. The usefulness of such estimates can however be discussed, as NGOs operates in different fields requiring different approaches. At the same time, it is understandable that large professional NGOs, which often generates multiple millions of dollars annually, needs sufficient and professional management in order to do satisfying work while at the same time ensuring continued sustainability of their organisation and of their commitments both at home and abroad.

The actual institutions managed by the NGO are not solely financed by the PDI I travelled with, although I felt it certainly could be perceived so in regards to how the PDI spoke about the various institutions we visited, and the improvements and maintenance of them. The NGO also receives donations and cooperate with a number of other PDIs and NGOs, mostly in Europe and in US. Funding is also a key concern when it comes to how the NGO regards the sustainability of its operations. The NGO, like most organisations working with development issues, are largely dependent on continuously receiving foreign support. How fragile this dependency is became apparent as they experienced an overall decline in funds after the 2008 economic crisis. Particularly NGOs originating in Spain (as it used to be lots of throughout South America), and other severely affected countries has gradually withdrawn from voluntary activities in the recent years. As a result, contributions have become more

scattered, making calculations of incoming support in the future have become more difficult and unpredictable to assess, and managing development projects have in general become more challenging than before.

In order to meet these challenges, the NGO has been forced to adapt and find new and alternative ways to attract more funds locally. They have done this by engaging their employees and the children (living in orphanages / staying in care centres). Examples of such measures have been to start bakeries, outlets of clothes and crafts made at the various institutions, and other income generating ideas that can bring more money into the organisation and further benefit the projects. This helps the NGO financially while they simultaneously continue their search for new long-term contributors abroad, since these measures are far from profitable enough on their own.

It is difficult to say, on a general basis, how PDIs operate in relation to the costs of administration and campaign management. It depends on several factors, including their size and type of involvement. PDIs as the one I followed often operate in a specific area / country in which they have personal ties to, they are family driven, and they tend to gradually increase their involvement first and foremost based on the willingness of sponsors in their local communities and / or through collegial bonds. This in itself limits the need for having an administration, especially in other countries than where they actually operate. As mentioned, the PDI I followed operates with no administrative costs. According to them, this is something almost all sponsors are quite concerned about, and wish to be informed on before they decide on whether or not to contribute. As a result, it also becomes a highly emphasised key factor in the recruitment process of new sponsors.

The PDI are, as most voluntary organisations, crucially dependent on maintaining their reputation as a serious and credible organisation. This is important not only to retain existing contributors, but also in order to attract new ones through them. By today's extensive use of social media, both positive and negative reputation travels quickly among potential contributors. If handled right, social media can be of great benefit to small PDIs, who have less – if any – room for costly promotion campaigns in their organisational budgets. One group of people, who more than anybody, have the possibility to help spreading information regarding PDIs efforts, are those engaged in the PDIs as volunteers. In this sense it becomes

apparent that social media and '*voluntourism*' are two aspects that enables and simplify the marketing aspect of PDIs.

4.3 Relations Between Government, the PDI and its Partnering NGO

I will in the following section present the Bolivian government's perspective on the need of foreign voluntary organisations in Bolivia, and how they relate to them. Since the Department of Social Management (SEDEGES) had no prior knowledge of the particular PDI I followed, they could only speak on general terms about the necessity of development assistance, and the role that foreign actors inhabits. On the other hand, I naturally had contact with the PDI's partner NGO in Bolivia. Since being a large professional NGO with a lot of contextual experience from Bolivia, it is plausible that they have a better insight to the political sphere, and got the potential to work as an intermediary between the governments' requirements and the PDI's aspirations. The NGO's perspectives on the cooperation with the Norwegian PDI, and their own role as a provider of basic social services, will follow in section 4.3.2.

4.3.1 Relations to the Government - an Ambivalent Reality

It is important to bear in mind that the MAS government won the first election in late 2005 due to widespread support amongst the poor working class in the country. They are highly dependent on continuous support from this group, which still constitute the majority of Bolivians, in order to remain in office. Gradually, a large portion of the people are starting to feel left behind and excluded from the economic development that has taken place over the last ten years. A persistent dependency on foreign NGOs could in this context possibly be

regarded as bad publicity and proof of failure for the government's social policy and credibility.

In order to get the government's views on foreign voluntary organisations in general and PDIs in particular, the work they do, and how they interact and cooperate with each other, I visited the SEDEGES' regional office in Cochabamba. I talked with two representatives, which in order to speak freely insisted on being anonymous in this text. The following are excerpts of that meeting.

Despite suffering under what is described by themselves as very limited resources, the SEDEGES has grown both in activity and reliability in the last ten years. Several new policies have been implemented, which all aim to reduce the high number of orphanage children throughout the country. The Bolivian government have recently implemented a policy saying that as long as children who lives in orphanages have some sort of family outside the institutions, they should primarily live with him / her / them. The SEDEGES claims to go through a thorough process (called *Relación Familiar*), which involves interviews, psychological reviews and legal hearings, before children are taken out of orphanages and reunited with their family. However, several representatives from the orphanages – as well as the organisations behind them – have little faith in this process, and more or less unanimously allege it unfavourable for the children involved. They further claim that these children are being used as shuttlecock in and out of the system, something that gives them even more psychological problems and traumas than they had to begin with.

This was also expressed in a conversation with a representative from a local organisation working with after-school activity programs for children in urban Cochabamba:

“There is a reason why children end up in orphanages in the first place. They were betrayed by their nearest family, and the state department's process for reintegrating the children is currently far from good enough to justify the risk of it to happen again, and by that traumatise these children even more”.

Several people I spoke with also argued that the President, with such policies, deliberately tries to influence and mislead statistics concerning Bolivia's significant number of homeless

people – and particularly orphan children. According to critics, this is done out of mainly two reasons; first of all in order to regain some of the declining support amongst his core voters, working class Bolivians with indigenous background. The Second reason is that many regard these social policies as an attempt from Morales to appear more successful for both his allies and critics amongst the other heads of state in the region. With political crisis spreading amongst the other “socialist” countries in the region – like Brazil and Venezuela – Morales are starting to feel the pressure to deliver results and show progress for Bolivia’s poorest.

In Cochabamba alone, there are approximately 2,000 orphan children institutionalised in 48 different orphanages. In Bolivia as a whole, estimates shows that there are currently around 320,000 orphan children living both in orphanages and in the city streets (Hirst 2012).

During my interviews, the representatives from SEDEGES emphasised a couple of main reasons why Bolivia are continuously struggling with very high numbers of orphan children. This is an issue they characterised as a major social problem that hampers the development and welfare of the country.

During their periods in office, President Morales and Vice President Linera have placed the blame for many social issues on foreign capitalist forces – at times in a borderline conspiratorial fashion. It became apparent for me that some of this rhetoric might also have spread to other government branches, as one of the representatives from SEDEGES started to elaborate around the first main reason behind Bolivia’s struggle with broken families: For a long time, and at least up until the economic crisis of 2008, a considerable number of Bolivians left the country in order to apply for work in European countries or in the US. Doing this enabled people to pursuit higher income and the possibility to save up money, which often ended up as remittances. While away, these people often left their child(ren) either with family members, friends or others – pledging to return within weeks or maybe months. However, upon their return, often several years later, many made the sad discovery that their child(ren) had been handed over to the authorities (orphanage) – allegedly without them knowing. Some of these parents have since initiated legal struggles to get their child(ren) back, but most times it ends up being both long lasting and too expensive to pursue, forcing many of them to give up and their children to remain institutionalised. The SEDEGES have allegedly seen this trend reversing after the 2008 economic crisis, which can

also be seen by looking at the total of personal remittances in 2013, which amounted to 3,9% of Bolivia's total GDP, a significant decrease from 2007 when personal remittances amounted to 8% of Bolivia's GDP (World Bank 2013(3)). Another main reason why nearly 10% of Bolivia's population under 15 years is regarded as orphans (Hirst 2012) is, according to the SEDEGES representatives, based on a mix of culture and religion. 78% of the Bolivian people pledge allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church, which is highly noticeable both in schools and in the community at large. The apparent presence of Catholicism in the school system may be part of the reason why Bolivia has a quite high adolescent birth rate of 71,9 per 1,000 births of women aged 15-19, and that only 40,7% of males who reported having had more than one sexual partner within 12 months used condoms (UNDP 2014: 173,185).

The SEDEGES confirm that only two of the 48 orphanages in and around Cochabamba are managed by the state itself. The rest are managed by (international) NGOs and PDIs, often in cooperation with more locally oriented organisations in the area. Although that orphanages, as most institutions or projects managed by PDIs / NGOs, get economical support from the state on a monthly basis, this only amounts to about 6 - 7% of their total expenditure. In perspective, it barely covers the cost of a small bottle of water and a piece of bread per child on a daily basis. Quite obviously, this means that funds must be obtained elsewhere, usually from inter- and multinational donors.

Both the PDI and the partnering NGO agree with the SEDEGES representatives on the shortcomings of social services in the country, and at the same time add that a change in distribution of responsibility on these issues is quite unlikely in any foreseeable future. While the organisations are concerned about this issue, the SEDEGES choose to be worried about the future existence of development projects in Bolivia, and particularly those who are fully funded by foreign sponsors.

Bolivia is considered by the World Bank as a *Lower Middle Income Country* – a step up from the previous *Low Income level*. This upgrade is in most ways a positive sign, but it also have some unfortunate short-term effects. One of them is that it automatically makes it more difficult for Bolivia to attract as much foreign aid as they have been receiving as a Low Income country. This is expected to have most effects on bilateral and multilateral aid, but my experience is that this is a shared concern in projects financed by PDIs and NGOs as well.

There are also concerns in regards to the fear of losing support from PDIs and NGOs as a result of external events. A fresh example is the affects that the financial crisis had on many Spanish NGOs, where several of them withdrew from projects abroad in order to address domestic problems.

The SEDEGES, PDI, and their partner NGO all expressed that as long as there are no domestic alternatives for funding their services in Bolivia, they just have to continue and make sure to manage their involvements cost effectively and in the best possible manner, so that foreign sponsors can see that their support matters, and are providing results by making a positive difference for those targeted.

Furthermore, SEDEGES confirms that the relationship and contact between the government, the development projects (in this case, orphanages), and the PDIs and NGOs who supports them financially are at a bare minimum. The little contact they do have comes through quality inspections, which is scheduled to take place two times per year and is according to people I spoke with in these institutions, to a large degree characterised by mistrust and scepticism from all parts. One of the repeatedly mentioned reasons for this is the firm belief that the Bolivian government have a long-term plan to seize control over private development projects, solely to get to the funds they receive from foreign donors. When confronted with this, the SEDEGES representatives called it a case of paranoia without any basis in reality. For – as all parties agreed on – a government takeover would most likely put an effective end to all foreign funding and PDI / NGO participation in Bolivia. So, as long as the Bolivian government lacks the funds to provide the services in which PDIs and NGOs provides, they are bound to accept the foreign interference that comes with it. However, SEDEGES confirm that the government are putting resources into mapping all NGOs and their projects. This is done both in order to acquire information about who they are and what type of issues they tackle, as well as rooting out disreputable aid actors. All sources, including the SEDEGES representatives referred to the government and their public services' well-established reputation as both corrupt and inefficient when asked about the future role of the Bolivian state as a welfare provider.

The fact that it is perceived as close to unthinkable for the Bolivian state to provide basic public services for all its citizens within key sectors like child care, health and education –

both now and in the foreseeable future – is a sad and troubling thought. A point stated by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Committee in their report to evaluate NGOs as a channel in development cooperation becomes relevant: *“...a further disclaimer by the state when it comes to public services will maintain what could be labelled an unhealthy aid dependency”* (Rattsørapporten 2006: 21).

There are many and complex reasons behind why the Bolivian government fails to self-fund their welfare services. As already mentioned, inefficiency and corruption are two of them. Another factor that hampers the governments' abilities are the large informal employment. 80% of the total urban and rural employment in Bolivia is informal, which is by far the highest in Latin America (World Bank 2013). This naturally makes it difficult to generate sufficient tax revenue to support welfare services. In fact so difficult, that the SEDEGES revealed that there had been discussions around the possibilities of outsourcing the remaining two public orphanages left in Cochabamba. The cause behind Bolivia's high informality rate has been blamed on several factors, including the burden of regulation, the weakness of public institutions, and lack of perceived benefits of being formal (World Bank 2013). The obvious need for voluntary organisations in Bolivia, and the government's awareness of this need, puts Morales and his government in a pinch. On the one side is the public rhetoric characterised by claims and threats against the (foreign) organisations, while they at the same time are completely dependent on the work they do.

4.3.2 Perspectives from the Partner NGO

The PDI's partner NGO has been doing social work since 1909, and in Bolivia since 1920. It is a large international Christian organisation, and part of the universal Christian Church. Its message and the lifestyle they advocate are based on the Bible's teaching. Faith-based (mainly Christian) organisations dominate the established NGO-scene in Bolivia (Norad 2007: 9). According to the representatives from the Bolivian Department of Social Management,

faith-based NGOs are also the kinds whom bear best reputation throughout the country. Several faith-based organisations, both PDIs and NGOs, originating from Norway have ongoing projects in Bolivia. Close to 57% of the \$3,7 million Norway (NORAD) gave to Bolivia in official grants during 2015, was channelled through the Christian NGO *Strømmestiftelsen* (Stromme Foundation) and *Digni*, an umbrella NGO for several religious organisations, including the *Norwegian Mission Alliance* (NMA), the *Norwegian Lutheran Mission* (NLM) and *Norwegian Church Aid* (NCA) (Regjeringen 2015). The PDI in which this thesis evolves around regard itself as an organization without religious or political affiliation.

The cooperation between the PDI and the NGO came about as a result of the PDI's founder visit to one of the orphanages they managed in Cochabamba in 1981. While the NGO, with almost a century of experience from Bolivia, has been responsible for operating and managing care centres and orphanages, the PDI has ensured funds for an increasing number of children and the institutions they benefit from. The rest of this section is excerpted from my interview with the head of the NGO's Cochabamba office, where we discussed the NGO's ability to adapt to changes in the aid industry, and their relationship with both the PDI and the state.

As I sat down with the head of the NGO, he immediately and in a diplomatic manner emphasised that the organisation cherish the close contact they have with all organisations supporting them, especially small PDIs. His experience was that the PDI and organisations alike are always the fastest when it comes to answering inquiries, easiest to communicate with and relate to, as well as they tend to give the most constructive feedback on their work and cooperation. A key reason for the latter is that the PDI and the NGO together work towards the same goals, meaning that they both put the needs of the children first. Since the two organisations have 35 years of cooperation between them, both sides feel that their relationship is solid, predictable, and based on a mutual understanding of what is best for the children.

Further, the local head of the NGO explained that earlier in the cooperation with the PDI, when the father of the two who now manage the PDI was alive and in charge, doing charitable work was generally speaking far less complex than today, and it was also easier

when it came to get projects approved and funded. The original initiator, the father, was described as a very open, caring, and straightforward man to deal with. When his two sons took over, it marked a shift towards a more professional cooperation:

“After 2005, when the two sons took charge, the PDI became a more professional and technical organisation. The change in the PDI has also turned the relationship between our two organisations more professional and technical than it used to be, which I believe is good for our projects and will help us to reach the results we are aiming for”.

According to the NGO representative, this mirrors the development of the aid industry in general – as they experience increased pressure to be professionally managed and accountable in their work. This pressure is not only coming from the governments and lawmakers – but more importantly from the several thousand individual sponsors who are financing and thus enabling the projects, often located a world apart.

The NGO appreciates the regular visits from the PDI, and believes that the active involvement improves the quality of the various institutions that they have helped build and finance:

“They come to Bolivia every year, and bring with them key sponsors every two years as well. They then travel around and observe a number of things connected with our cooperation. Most importantly they check that the children are healthy and happy, how the material condition is, and what should be focused more on in the future. During their stay, we also have meetings where we go through their observations and discuss any thoughts they might have on how we operate”.

There are certain differences between the NGO and the PDI, both in terms of culture and religious beliefs, which is decisive for how the Bolivian children are being raised and thus how the projects are being managed. The NGO are well aware of these, and confirms that such issues have been addressed in meetings with the PDI on a regular basis.

These issues include corporal punishment, which is a common practice in Bolivia, but is prohibited by contract in all institutions financed by PDI. Example of another issue has been

the fact that the NGO operate with all-girls and all-boys homes. The main reasons the NGO have for separating girls and boys are, first of all, that it is “not natural” for girls and boys who are not really related to be living together. Secondly, the large age-difference amongst the children living there, which could be from 1 - 3 to 19 - 20 years of age, could possibly create undesirable situations. Combining this with the fact that the orphanages – or homes, as they call it – managed by the NGO usually have limited staffing, the lack of sexual education in the school system, and the faith-based upbringing the children get, this is a non-issue for the organisation.

Regarding the religious aspect in the NGO’s work and upbringing, their representative states that even though religion is a large part of the children’s lives, they do not force them to believe. Personally I think that this becomes a question of how to define coercion, and what opportunities one have to avoid being religiously influenced when living in a orphanage managed by a devout organisation. Nevertheless, in agreement with the PDI, I would hesitate to look at the religious aspect in the upbringing with Western, secular eyes. Knowing these children’s background, the Bolivian culture (broad religious grounding), and the difference in quality between religious and non-religious NGOs working in Bolivia (confirmed by the Department of Social Management), it is hard to argue that the religious aspects is an all-negative one for their cooperation.

As mentioned, the NGO have quite limited staffing, which seems to be consistently in all the projects where they are cooperating with the PDI. Further, the NGO have a policy stating that all employees must be repositioned between the different institutions at least every five years, or as required. However, after speaking to several of their employees, it seems like “as required” is the leading principle in this matter. The NGO’s employees are repositioned whenever a colleague retires, quit, have long absences due to illness, or for other reasons decides to leave. Repositioning are not only between the different institutions located in Bolivia, but also between all the countries they are represented in throughout South America, which also includes Chile, Peru and Ecuador. When I spoke with staff members, several of them assumed that this is a practice that lingers from the past, when a large part of their work consisted of doing missionary work and it was unusual for employees in the NGO to marry and establish families of their own. The head of the NGO’s Cochabamba

office labelled this policy as a “tradition”, without presenting any advantages of it or reasons for continuing it. On the other hand, one might put in question the potential downsides this policy could cause for both the children and their employees – and particularly those who have families of their own.

For instance, the manager of a day care centre we visited in Santa Cruz told me that he got repositioned after spending only two months at his previous position. He further expressed how both he and especially his own daughter was struggling to settle down because of this policy, and pointed out that *“we never know when we have to move the next time, it can be next month or in five years”*. Since the policy is hard to cope with for the employees working at the different orphanages and day care centres, one can only imagine how the children perceive it. The children, whether they live full-time in the orphanages or spend most of the week in a day care centre, they tend to need as much consistency as they can get in terms of who the institutional leaders are, as they are the closest thing many of these children have to a mother or a father.

In terms of how the NGO assess their relationship between them and the state (SEDEGES and in general), the short description would be that it is very limited. The NGO feels that the state is spending too much efforts on what the representative describe as “pointless monitoring”, rather than helping them by facilitate greater predictability regarding the future of their projects. When elaborating on the mentioned state monitoring, the core of the argument is that the state in recent years has begun to, among other things, physically check expiration dates on items in their food cabinets, and other more extraneous measures. The NGO is fully aware of the limited resources given by the government to SEDEGES, which seem to damage the institutional infrastructure of these departments. They however feel that the state offices can prioritise differently by e.g. having more focus on the overall wellbeing of the children. The NGO try to influence the SEDEGES on a regularly basis in regards to these aspects, but often feel that they are met with suspicion rather than understanding, something that do not help the overall relationship.

Prior to 2006, Bolivia had close to no rules or regulations on how organisational work should be carried out, the burden of responsibilities in terms of working with children, or rules regarding financial management. Today, most aspects surrounding NGO activities are

covered by such rules and regulations. However, the Bolivian government continue to lack resources to rightly supervise that these rules and regulations are being followed adequately. The NGO supports the intentions behind having more rules and guidelines for all voluntary organisations, and particularly for those who are working for and with children. However, at the same time they emphasise that the state should use their resources – and more focus – on whether or not the children get what they need in regards to health care, education and upbringing, rather than discredit the organisations and insist on full insight to who they receive donations from and collecting the details around what these funds are spent on at all times. With often more than 50 children which all have their own specific needs living in the different institutions, it becomes impossible to keep detailed score down to e.g. how many litres of water each child consume per month or how many diapers they use. Due to the overall financial constraints, projects managed by the NGO are struggling with limited workforce to begin with, and a few years ago it became a requirement for orphanages to have psychologists and educated social workers available for the children on a weekly basis. These are aspects that have to be prioritised over additional management dedicated to detailed control.

Besides the mentioned shortcomings in terms of resources and how to best prioritise these, the NGO acknowledge that there are apparent signs indicating that the child protective services in Bolivia have been fundamentally strengthened throughout the nearly 10 years of Evo Morales' presidency. They also emphasise that there has been a strong positive shift from when it almost was an epidemic of people abandoning their children on street corners – or at best – at orphanage's doorsteps before disappearing. Today, the norm is that the government demonstrates more proactivity and increasingly intervene in cases where children suffer from negligence.

4.4 Summary of Main Findings

In the coming sections I will summarise and present the main thoughts I gathered concerning Private Development Initiatives in general, and the PDI in which I followed around Bolivia in particular. I will address the PDI's perceived role versus how they are regarded by their key stakeholders, and their views on professionalism, sustainability and development.

4.4.1 The PDI – Reflective Thoughts

A key issue in this thesis has been to identify how the PDI perceive themselves and their work, in relation to how they are perceived by their main stakeholders in Bolivia.

In 2.6.1 I explained how development organisations initiating projects abroad in usually are bound to have some form of relation with the national government. And further, how the PDI I followed – like most PDIs to my experience – often tend to avoid such direct relations. This is made possible due to their small organisational size and the way they facilitates their engagement by cooperating with, and be represented through, local or regional development organisations (usually NGOs). These NGOs can often provide better contextual knowledge and insight on how to approach the field, and thus becomes a partnering intermediary that helps facilitate, manage and implement the projects locally – often set forth by the two in cooperation, and financed by the PDI.

My Experience is that the PDI's role in development, and how their stakeholders perceive them, is more as financial facilitator and a somewhat anonymous supporter to their partner NGO. When asked, I felt that the PDI had a tendency to overvalue their own importance in terms of how exclusive their cooperation with the NGO was. By all means, the partnering NGO was full of praise when it came to the Norwegian PDI and their cooperation, but it

became apparent that the PDI were one of many equally important partners, and thus a bit less exclusive than what I could understand from how the PDI portrayed themselves.

However, the PDI had a proven influence on the NGO, as they amongst other things had entered into written agreements regarding “do's and don'ts” in the children’s upbringing. I also attended strategy meetings where the PDI took the initiative and decided on how and where the funds they had collected would be of best use.

This influence, which the PDI gets for providing the funds, is very important to them. It gives them the opportunity to go back to their sponsors and say; “look at what we managed” and “this is how your money came to use”. And equally important, they are able to say; “this is what we are going to do next”. I find that these are statements that in most cases constitute the main concerns for the sponsors behind private development initiatives.

When it comes to stakeholder influence, there is also the type of influence that the PDI – through their efforts – have on the main stakeholders, in this example the children. In 4.2.3 I wrote about some of these influences, or impacts if you will, and how they becomes an important feature for certain sponsors supporting the PDI.

Some of the individual sponsors had a far closer relationship with their sponsored child than what I have experienced from sponsorship programmes through large NGOs. As I explained, it reminded me in some ways about a form of long-distance adoption, as several of the now older children had maintained close relationships with sponsors in Norway, and even visited them half a world away. Without getting into whether or not this is a healthy or ethically correct relationship, it surely enables a more active approach to sponsorship programmes and gives individual sponsors the opportunity to take a more active part, which, as written in 2.4, is an aspect of development aid that some sponsors apparently longs for.

The Department of Social Management (SEDEGES) had not heard about the specific PDI I followed, and could thus only speak on general terms. Despite being a governmental agency, they denounced President Morales and Vice President Lineras’s rhetoric when it came to foreign organisations working in Bolivia (4.3.1). The SEDEGES saw the indisputable need for foreign voluntary organisations in order to cover several basic needs for a considerable part of the population, and accordingly worked purposefully to improve their relationship with the active organisations in their department. When asked about organisations like the PDI,

who collects and donate money to local NGOs, they saw the obvious importance of them, but felt that much of the donations happened in hiding and thus made it difficult for the state to assess the actual costs connected with operating the institutions compared to how much money they received. SEDEGES wished for greater transparency on this issue.

4.4.2 The Aspect of Professionalism

A discussion between professionalised development assistance distributed through NGOs, and the unprofessional – or private – development assistance provided through PDIs, tend to evolve around the importance of being professional when it comes to facilitate development.

On the one side, professional NGOs often have an extensive administration with highly educated employees – often justified by the opinion that they are better equipped to secure longer lasting and more sustainable improvements in developing countries. On the opposite side are a growing number of private initiatives, which, in many cases, are considered by members of the established professional aid industry as unqualified due to lack of expertise and experience.

As a result of lacking formal prerequisites for doing development work, there seems to be a belief that private initiatives are in general working based on a trying (and failing) mentality. Attention to potential negative effects from their involvements is, in some cases, fully ignored as long as their intentions are good.

Of course, one might also argue that the entire development era (as referred to in section 2.2) in itself is based on trying and failing, and that no matter how professionally grounded development aid has been portrayed, the track record shows that it is no guarantee for success.

As explained in section 4.2.5, the PDI have never had a desire to apply for financial support from Norad, or take part in the 'professional development discourse'. In fact, they also regard themselves as a more sustainable organisation because they are operating on the outside. A reason for that is the belief that the considerable administration (cost) demanded (particularly in the Norwegian context) by professional NGO's main contributor, the government, detracts the focus from those the efforts are intended for (Bolivian children), and further overcomplicates the whole process of helping in the first place. The thought is to some degree that local partners in the recipient community – and the sponsors back home, together can ensure a better quality control than what is possible for bureaucrats in a state agency. As a result, operating on the outside of Norad has been a conscious choice for the PDI from the very beginning.

4.4.3 Strive for Sustainability

As shown in 2.4.1, the classic definition of sustainable development is difficult to adjust to development organisations in general, and PDIs in particular. As a result I suggested applying a definition introduced by Cabot et al. (2009:1) in connection with PDIs, which states that sustainability is: “...*the capacity to maintain a certain process or state indefinitely*”.

Although this definition might be applicable, it fails to inform just how PDIs should go about to secure the future of their involvements, and what kind of factors that can affect a PDI's sustainability.

There are certain underlying factors that tend to determine the level of sustainability. My experience from travelling alongside the PDI and questioning them on the subject, is that in the case of Private Development Initiatives, and particularly those involved in service-delivering projects, these factors seem to mostly evolve around the number of members / sponsors, and the amount of money these are able to generate to the organisation. To the extent service-delivering organizations can be fully sustainable, further depends on the

question of whether or not they are managed well and in a credible manner, their focus on maintaining a continuous flow of information to sponsors and other stakeholders regarding goal attainment and plans for future operations, and last but not least their ability to attract new members / sponsors within a field with countless alternatives.

Whenever I mentioned sustainability or asked representatives from the partnering NGO or others in direct connection with the institutions about it, it struck me that most of the time they did not seem to know what sustainability entails at all. This is in line with what I conveyed from Kinsbergen (2014: 129) in 2.4.1, that many development actors feel that sustainability is difficult to pin down because it is a very dynamic, largely indefinite, and highly contested term. When I asked the two brothers in charge of the PDI about how they regarded the sustainability of their organisation, they quickly referred to the PDI's longevity of 35 years, and how much more professional the PDI have become, compared to before. However, this is still not a good justification when considering the aforementioned fact that sustainability cut across operational lifespan, with some relatively young PDIs supporting interventions that are of lower risk compared with interventions of older ones (ibid: 157).

4.4.4 The Concept of Development

The volunteer effort that the PDI have put into helping Bolivian children through 35 years deserves respect and is in itself difficult to criticise. Due to the PDI, many children have been given a second chance in life to grow up in safe surroundings, and pursue an education or vocational training.

Access to education is a human right and essential for individuals' personal development. Education is an important engine for economic growth, and a prerequisite for economic development, employment and development of a number of key areas in the society. The Norwegian government has a stated goal that around 13% (about \$550 million) of the total aid budget will be earmarked for educational purposes in recipient countries (Regjeringen 2014). The fact that education is a key priority for the PDI can therefore be said to be in line with public development aid priorities. The PDI's efforts in Bolivia clearly makes a difference

for individual recipients, but it is however unclear how significant this effect are on the structural challenges Bolivia are facing in terms of its social policies.

The efforts of providing basic rights for children are obviously both important and necessary – and the PDI are honest about not having any ambitions of achieving more structural results than what they could facilitate on the individual level. In this sense, it seems like the PDI’s idea of “doing development” are – as their view on sustainability, and efforts in general – on the outside of the formal development discourse.

My experience is however that the aspect of operating on the outside is exactly what sponsors find appealing about PDIs. The attitude and approach PDIs have of “getting things done” (4.2.4), their ability to continuously show progress results – and personalising these, creates enthusiasm amongst the sponsors and motivation for the PDI initiators.

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5. Conclusion

In order to conclude, I would like to once again address the main questions I presented in Chapter 1. Regarding how the PDI perceive itself, compared to how they are perceived by the main local stakeholders (the state, partner NGO, and recipients), I found that the PDI in general (naturally) overplayed their role as development actors and their importance towards the partnering NGO. In the beginning, my understanding was that the PDI possessed more or less an exclusive partnership with the local NGO. However, I gradually understood that they were one of several partners contributing to the various institutions. One example is the PDI's rule of having one sponsor per child, which both makes it easier to manage the sponsorship programme, as well as it gives each sponsor a feeling of being sole provider. In reality, the amount of about \$30 per month is not nearly enough to cover all the costs of housing, food, education and spare time activities, which is solved by having other PDIs who are facilitating the same sponsorship scheme, with the same children. I cannot help wondering if all sponsors are aware of this fact.

Having said that, the PDI have in all fairness been partners with the NGO for 35 years, and the PDI have repeatedly been the exclusive sponsor for several large projects (construction of buildings, purchase of cars, e.g.) in addition to having the sponsorship programme, something that the NGO also emphasised.

A key factor for PDIs as the one I followed is to choose the right organisation to partner up with. It becomes much easier for PDIs to focus on their relations with sponsors and getting the funds needed, when they at the same time know that the projects themselves are in good hands and other local stakeholders are being handled.

By further assessing the PDI's efforts, how they are being portrayed, and the impact they make, I have the notion that there might be a misconception amongst the initiators that "helping", or "giving aid", is the same thing as "doing development". The term "development assistance" consists of two words that should be used with caution together, as the one does not automatically guarantee the other. Having said that, it feels wrong to criticise the volunteer work the PDI do simply because it is by definition unprofessional, or

lacks a plan regarding its sustainability – when it do however create visible easily measurable results.

My belief is that PDIs do a great job of helping – or aiding – marginalised groups in recipient countries, and further, that PDIs do this perhaps just as satisfying as professional NGOs – adjusted for their organisational size. A key reason for this is because they have the advantage of being more flexible and personally oriented in their work, precisely because of the modest size of their organisational structure and generated revenue. PDIs appear to be more successful in creating ownership to their projects; both for their local recipients and for their sponsors back home. A result of this is that PDIs might reflect a new approach (or return of an old one?), where development assistance is based more on relationships between individuals, rather than between systems or large organisations.

From this thesis, and my own experiences, it becomes apparent that people who initiate PDIs are “doers” who seek the unknown – and enjoy both the process and its results. It is also apparent that as PDIs mature, grows in scope, and get more responsibility – they tend to become more professionalised in terms of planning their project involvements better, and in their approach to both the field they work in, and towards their sponsors.

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