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Politics of Swedish humanitarian organizations: Exporting the welfare state?

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P 02-301

Politics of Swedish Humanitarian Organizations:

Exporting the Welfare State?

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Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Analyse sozialer und politischer Einstellungen im humanitären Sektor Schwedens, die die humanitären Organisationen wie auch die "Swedish International Cooperation Development Agency" (SIDA) einbezieht, enthüllt einmal mehr die Dominanz des sozialdemokratischen Modells Schwedens. Ausgehend von einer Auswahl von 23 humanitären Organisationen - bei einer Gesamtheit von etwa 200 nichtstaatlichen Organisationen -, zeigt ein erster Überblick hinsichtlich der historischen Entwicklung des Nonprofit Sektors auffällige Einstellungen im Bereich der humanitären NGOs. Der sozialdemokratische Ansatz selbst, der von den schwedischen Hilfsorganisationen verwendet wird, ist entwickelt worden in Abgrenzung zu dem Wohltätigkeitsansatz, der von den meisten angelsächsischen Staaten befürwortet wird. Der sozialdemokratische Ansatz zielt auf wertneutrale und universelle Hilfe im Sinne einer dekommodifizierenden (nicht-staatlichen oder öffentlichen) Alternativen für den Empfänger. Dem Staat wird somit die ultimative Verantwortung in diesem Bereich zugeschrieben. Betrachtet man die Beziehung zwischen staatlichen Akteuren und humanitären NGOs bzw. ihren organisatorischen Strukturen, zeigt sich ein Synergieeffekt in dem Sinne, dass wir ein Zusammentreffen von gemeinsamen Zielorientierungen im Feld der humanitären Hilfe und Entwicklungspolitik beobachten können. Zusammenfassend belegt diese Untersuchung die Dominanz des schwedischen Wohlfahrtsstaates und der sozialdemokratischen Ideologie, die in die Kultur der humanitären Organisationen hineinragen und diese wesentlich beeinflussen.

Abstract

This analysis of the social and political orientations of the Swedish humanitarian field, comprising here both NGOs active in humanitarian projects and the governmental Swedish International Cooperation Development Agency (SIDA), reveals once more the dominance of the Swedish social democratic model. This research is based on a selection of 23 humanitarian organizations from a survey of some 200 voluntary welfare organizations. A first review of the historical foundations of the nonprofit sector shows distinctive orientations followed by Swedish humanitarian NGOs. Indeed, the social democratic approach adopted by humanitarian NGOs has been created in opposition to the charity approach advocated mostly in Anglo-Saxon countries. The social democratic approach seeks to provide value-neutral and universal aid, in the sense of offering a decommodifying (i.e. non-governmental or public) alternative to the beneficiary. Though, the state is vested with the ultimate responsibility in this field. The relationship between governmental and non-governmental actors and their organizational structure, shows a synergy, a conjunction of views regarding the goals and humanitarian aid and development. In sum, this study brings to the front the welfare state's dominance and the social democratic ideology as dominant culture transcending the Swedish nonprofit organizational life.

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1. Introduction

Sweden is well known for its comprehensive welfare state. Indeed, the country has decided to follow a generous policy in the social field from family policy, old-age pensions, parental leave, to active labor market policy, guaranteed home care for the elderly and high student loans. In sum, a cradle to the grave welfare provisions. Consequently, the government gross social spending as percentage of GDP is extremely high, reaching 33.3% in 1997. It was the highest among OECD countries (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Paris OECD 1999).

As a result, the vigor of the civil society and the importance of the nonprofit sector of this state-dominated regime have been questioned. Boli (1991; 1992) and James (1989) in the first quantitative investigations of the Swedish nonprofit sector have concluded that Sweden has an insignificant nonprofit sector. Compared with other European countries and the United States, certain fields of the sector are indeed more modest, especially, the field of welfare including health care, compulsory education and social services. Admittedly, the nonprofit sector has a little role in these core areas of the welfare state (Lundström and Wijkström 1997, p.243). But this does not mean that the Swedish nonprofit sector is negligible for all that. Actually, Swedish scholars have shown that the estimates of Boli and James do not stand up to a systematic empirical research. Taking as an indicator, the levels of operating expenditures and membership (32 million members) (Lundström and Wijkström 1997, p.238) show that Sweden has a large sector, compared to Germany for example. Furthermore, the fields of labor and business, sports, culture and recreation are comparatively important (Lundström and Wijkström 1997, p.243).

A strictly quantitative analysis of the third sector can be misleading. If it remains structured and organized differently than in the USA or in continental Europe, it is due to its distinct historical development. As it was strongly intertwined with the emergence of the welfare state, the Swedish nonprofit sector has followed a distinctive historical development compared to other European countries. Therefore, two important points are especially revealing of the distinctiveness of the Swedish sector. First, at the beginning of the 20th century, the popular mass-movements, called *folkrörelser* in Swedish and which include mainly the labor movement, the temperance movement and the Free Church movement, have shaped what became the third sector. These democratic movements have strongly stressed the importance of the member, or volunteer: fundamental element of the organization. In this

tradition all members have a voting right. This development contrasts with that of Anglo-Saxon countries where a strong division is often made between the organization's council and its supporters or "paper members". In this case, the supporters donate money, get their membership card but do not enjoy any voting right¹. In this case, the active supporter (volunteer) is often considered as an outsider to the organization, a "reserve member", necessary to patch holes that the employees cannot take care of. Second, being the carriers of a new society of well-being, the Swedish popular mass-movements have been strongly opposing the charity approach of the 19th century flourishing under a conservative government.

Still, it is interesting to note that this welfare model has not been limited to the Swedish state and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active domestically. Swedish NGOs have also been intensely active internationally at the humanitarian and development aid front. The percentage of the Swedish budget allocated to humanitarian and development aid has reached the UN's objective of a minimum of 0.7% of the GNP. In 2002, this rate is expected to rise to 0.74%, the objective for 2004 0.86%.

In the field of political science, international humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are part of the international humanitarian policy field (Eberwein et al. 2002). Here, the constitutive element is the complementarity between state and societal actors. However, since humanitarian NGOs' vis-à-vis varies, the relationships are asymmetrical: 1) on the one side, they face international governmental organizations or recipient states, 2) on the other side, they deal with the governmental actor of their country of origin (here a donor state).

The national context of the donor state is a realm where humanitarian NGOs are active through, for example, interventions in the public debate, or fundraising campaigns. Therefore, the historical and cultural conditions of the donor state have an impact on the orientations of its humanitarian NGOs.

¹ Greenpeace Sweden has been criticized by the Swedish media for being undemocratic because it has a core of only 20 voting members, the rest of the membership can not take part actively in the decision-making process.

The case I present in this paper is an analysis of the ideological and historical trends stirring the Swedish humanitarian field *per se* and its linkage to the Swedish model. The present paper seeks to tackle the following issues regarding Swedish humanitarian NGOs:

- 1) Their ideological orientations.
- 2) Their organizational structure.
- 3) Their relation to the state and its bureaucratic structure as voluntary organization.

This research is based on a selection of 23 Swedish humanitarian organizations from a survey of some 200 voluntary welfare organizations. I refer here to welfare NGOs as nonprofit organizations dealing with service provision (i.e. childcare, advice, education, accommodation, health care, crisis, care), mutual support (i.e. self-help) and advocacy (i.e. pressure groups). I decided to adopt a broad definition of humanitarian NGOs: these are welfare NGOs, specifically or least partly, devoted to aid and development in developing countries.

The survey was conducted between spring 1999 and spring 2000 in collaboration with the School of Social Inquiry, Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia by Kevin Brown, Sue Kenny and Brian Turner. It was based on a random sample of 300 welfare organizations from the register of legal organizations (*företagsregistret*) from 3 Swedish counties: the metropolis (Stockholm), a regional center (Västerås) and a remote and small urban area (Gällivare in Northern Sweden). As our response rate of 65% (refusal: 15%; no response: 20%) happened to be lower than expected, the original list was completed later in 1999 with a random selection of organizations from counties' listings of voluntary organizations. The final result included 122 completed questionnaires from Stockholm, 60 from Västerås and 31 from Gällivare.

Most of the Swedish NGOs selected do not offer immediate humanitarian relief, but I consider they contribute to the humanitarian field by working on long-term objectives such as education, democratization, etc, in countries suffering from natural or human-made disasters (see list of NGOs in the appendix 8.2).

The analysis of the welfare field of the nonprofit sector tells us already that NGOs cultivate strong ties with the welfare state (Klaudi Klausen and Selle 1995). In the case of Swedish humanitarian NGOs, the linkage is due to two specific factors. First, the financial and leadership predominance of the stately Swedish International Cooperation Development

Agency (SIDA) shape NGOs' orientations. SIDA funds most of the humanitarian NGOs. Second, NGOs and state share, what could be called, a common ideology of welfare based on the *folkrörelser* (popular mass movements) tradition. They both reject the traditional Anglo-Saxon charity approach to favor the comprehensive objectives of welfare in humanitarian work. It favors long-term development and all the institutional building it requires instead of short-term relief.

Therefore, one can ask: what is the relation between humanitarian NGOs and the welfare state? Can NGOs preserve their unique voluntary character? More practically, do volunteers have some leeway or do they emulate professional, bureaucratic behavior like in the public sector?

I advocate that both the structure of NGOs and their ideological orientations suggest that Swedish humanitarian NGOs also are part - though abroad and on a lower scale - of the Swedish welfare model based on a relatively homogeneous culture.

2. Historical Foundations of Swedish Welfare: Social Democratism vs Charity Approach

I pay attention here to the driving rhetoric of the Swedish nonprofit sector. The comprehension of this ideology serves to understand the specificity of the Swedish political history and its repercussions on present humanitarian NGOs. Here I review the establishment of the Swedish welfare model since the beginning of the 20th century and designed in opposition to the Anglo-Saxon charity approach. To illustrate this, I give examples of the ideological evolutions of few NGOs. Even though, the illustrations I give are coming from the broad field of social policy, humanitarian NGOs originated from the same melting pot than welfare NGOs and therefore also stem from the social democratic approach. Adding to that, and as we will see below, humanitarian NGOs are obligated to adopt this approach to get funding from SIDA.

The historical development of Swedish NGOs is strongly intertwined with the emergence of the welfare state. The emergence of popular mass movements, future third sector organizations, came as a general revolt against the political conservatism of the country and its widespread poverty (Koblik 1975). Until the first few decades of the 20th century,

severe poverty touched a great proportion of the population as shortage of arable land could not provide a living for all the inhabitants. Still in 1900, 75% of the population lived off the land and the country lost about 850,000 emigrants (mainly to North America) during the period 1840 - 1900. Even though, the population exploded from 3 138 000 to 5 136 000 during these same decades.

The popular mass-movements sought to build a fair society, "the good society" as they called it. Led by the labor movement, the various popular mass movements would agree on a new comprehensive, but not revolutionary, social reform. It came to be symbolized by the *folkhemmet*, the generous "people's home", where everybody would benefit from a decent, honorable living. The state would be answerable for this general welfare, like the breadwinner to his family. The present NGOs are inheritors of this "society of welfare" carried out by the *folkrörelser*.

But before the edification of the welfare state, Swedish poor relief nonprofit organizations copied the Anglo-Saxon charity model. The Swedish equivalent of the term charity, *välgörenhet* has a very limited usage: it is used "at all conceptual levels, almost solely in the field of social care or welfare for the poor or needy" (Lundström and Wijkström 1997, p.18).

2.1. The Charity Approach

At the beginning of the 20th century, the London Charity Organization, or the Elberfeld system of poor relief in the Evangelical Lutheran region of Germany, incarnated charity approach. Its cornerstone was the responsabilization of the poor. The "help-to-self-help principle implied that the individual was seen as responsible for his or her own life." (Sjögren 1999). Following the Eberfeldt system, Swedish charities adopted a Christian attitude stressing the importance of a "personal" rapport between the helper and the helped. Voluntary poor relief established a cooperation with municipalities in the provision of services (Qvarsell 1993).

Here, volunteers, often upper-class females - personified in George Farquhar's "The Beaux' Stratagem" by Lady Bountiful - give their "precious time" to help the poor. These dressy volunteers' visits to poor families in the slums was like a *mise en scène* intending to teach a lesson to the beneficiary, to impregnate with a sentiment of remorse for being indigent. The organizations intended that short-term interventions could break poverty, laziness, and provoke a return to a honorable living. The upper-class and middle-class

volunteers "retained from the past the sense of noblesse oblige, a feeling of responsibility for persons of inferior economic and social status." (Ross 1968, p.78).

With the advent of the social democratic movement, "charity" was strongly attacked as upper-class means to maintain class cleavage: "The wealthy have not only given because they have more but because, by alleviating distress, they have secured their own positions against those who might displace them and thus have avoided revolt" (Ross 1968, p. 78). In fact, typical charities during the 19th century active in poor relief were "exclusive organizations for the elite of the emerging capitalist society" (Lundström and Wijkström 1997, p.57). These charities would strictly see the working class as beneficiary and not partner: "In practice, persons from the working class could not be members of these associations, and the charity organizations were built on an ideology that honored bourgeois ideals" (Lundström and Wijkström 1997, p.66). Many publications during the 1930s specifically aimed at devaluating voluntary social work, claiming that its intention was to create a docile workforce. (Qvarsell 1993, p.235).

The fact that many were dependent on these "capricious arrangements" was untenable for many. This rejection of the charity approach has ramifications up to the present nonprofit sector: "The idea of charity is not politically correct in the Swedish nonprofit or voluntary sector, not even internationally oriented charity organizations are, officially, labeled charities in Sweden (Lundström and Wijkström 1997, p.19). Instead, the authors add, a majority of these organizations favor to be categorized as popular mass movement or humanitarian organizations (Ibid.).

2.2. Social Democratic Approach

Around the 1930s, the creation of the welfare state has the purpose that this one can bear the responsibility of the population's well-being.

This orientation was clearly expressed in the discourse of the welfare state founders. During the 1928 election, the social democrat Gustav Möller, who would become the longest lasting minister for social affairs with 17 years, explained why social benefits should replace dependence on charity and poverty care. He said that the charity approach is humiliating because morally beholding the receiver (*tacksamhetsskuld*), instead the new social politic would be based on equal and universal rights (Qvarsell 1993, p.234).

Consequently, the focus of the approach to social care "has shifted from the relief of immediate want to long-term planning that will prevent future want." (Ross 1968, p.80). The

social democratic approach estimates rationally and addresses present and future needs in regard to the "total well-being of the individual" (id., p.72).

The beneficiary should receive benefits from a neutral, anonymous, reliable state and not the arbitrary good will of other individuals. The responsibility is incumbent upon the "society" at large (meaning here the government, be it local, regional or national) and not on sole individuals.

Table 1.0, Charity vs Social Democratic Approach

| | Charity Approach | Social Democratic Approach |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| Agent | Nonprofit Organizations | State |
| Term of Action | Short-term | Medium-term |
| Gift | Personal | Anonymous/bureaucratic |
| Attitude towards Beneficiary | Individual Responsabilization, Moralization | Social Responsabilization, Value-neutral |
| Strategy towards Market | Commodification | Decommodification |

Contrasting both approaches in a synthetic way as in table 1.0, allows us to see clearly that they differ in their stance towards the marketization of welfare. The charity approach is still in a logic of commodification as Esping-Andersen (1990) means: dependence from the market economy. The volunteer helps momentarily the poor so that he can be able to endure selling his workforce in exchange of necessary commodities, or if invalidated, so that he can be reintegrated in the labor market. In contrast, the second approach is more a decommodification where the state breaks the dependence to the market through universal welfare provisions.

With the coming of major reforms in the field of social services, charities appeared as an obstacle to comprehensive welfare (Qvarsell 1993). The opposition state vs. welfare NGOs was then obvious. In Anglo-Saxon countries, the strong liberal movement saw voluntary charity organizations "as bulwarks against complete state control" (Ross 1968, p. 76). In Sweden the confrontation was not as stark. The welfare state took the main responsibility for alleviating poverty while NGOs agreed to assume a complementary role.

2.3. *Evolution of NGOs: Two Cases*

I take two examples of the evolution of charity-based organizations with the coming of the welfare state.

The Charity Organization Society of Stockholm (Föreningen för välgörenhetens ordnande), founded by a female aristocrat at the beginning of the 20th century, started the development of an umbrella organization for the coordination of voluntary and public poor relief. Both directly and indirectly the FVO was influenced by common developments in Europe towards the individualization of poor relief. Many public and voluntary methods of poor relief had an impact on the FVO, but the London Charity Organization stands out as the major inspirational model (Sjögren 1999). FVO favored the containment of poverty instead of its elimination and started to practice casework based on the idea of a help-to-self-help (responsibilization of the recipient) (Sjögren 1999).

With the growing welfare state, FVO lost much of its clientele and influence after WWII. Today, FVO keeps a low profile in the public debate but is still active with almsgiving and social work (Sjöberg 1999). It reoriented itself by targeting specific clienteles not comprehensively covered by public care, for example homeless people and alcoholics. Many other charity-based organizations oriented themselves towards research foundations, giving away scholarships for research in the field of welfare (Qvarsell 1993, p.236). Despite the state takeover of social services and the suspicion they triggered from public authorities, many charity-based organizations still survived the emerging welfare state. But with the lack of public support to afford a direct confrontation with the state, the price they had to pay was strong marginalization and slowly they vanished from the social policy public debate.

The two "epochs" of the temperance movement provides another example of the contrast between charity and social democratic approaches. The Swedish Temperance Association (Svenska nykterhetssällskapet), built by upper-class people and priests, belonged to the "old" movement and was imported from the US and active around the mid-1800s. The new movement, the International Organisation of Good Templars (IOGT-NTO) had working class foundations and came to life after mergers with other temperance organizations to become the largest of all *folkrörelser*. Interestingly, it brought in a new social category of volunteers with different motivations. The social democratic approach of IOGT-NTO meant reciprocal help among workers, instead of upper-class benevolence. IOGT-NTO saw and still sees workers struggling with alcohol as potential members, potential assets and not as passive

recipients (deserving poor). Furthermore, the volunteer belonging to this clientele can benefit directly from the services of the organization. The motivations to volunteer are then not exclusively altruistic.

Today, IOGT-NTO is still active - though its membership is declining - while the Swedish Temperance Association has disappeared. From this self-help principle appeared a new wave of welfare NGOs after WWII : NGOs for disabled people, cooperatives, parents associations, etc. Today the expertise of these welfare NGOs is recognized by the state. The amount of research and information gathered and produced by these organizations have played a significant role in social policy-making (Qvarsell 1993, p.233).

When NGOs had to relinquish control of their social services at the benefit of the state, certain organizations invested in new social niches, for example home visits of people suffering from loneliness. Others turned to advocacy, started simply lobbying for the social group they represented. However, high unemployment and high public debt in the 1990s led the state to ask voluntary welfare organizations to play a more active role in welfare provision. Consequently, social volunteering has been publicly rehabilitated (Qvarsell 1993, p.236).

In this section, we analyzed the historical evolution of domestic welfare NGOs and will show in the following section how it has ramifications also for contemporary humanitarian NGOs. Domestic and humanitarian NGOs are born in the tradition of the *folkrörelser* and share similar principles. However, we should not overlook the distinctiveness of humanitarian NGOs. Humanitarian NGOs and domestic NGOs do not have to face the same reality. Their fields of activity are different: strength of the state and institutional infrastructure are at the antipodes in developing countries to Sweden. Representing a country without colonial past, facing a weaker state and undeveloped infrastructures, Swedish humanitarian NGOs may have the leeway to assume greater responsibilities than they could domestically, though the necessity to first address urgent basic needs, such as nutrition or housing, greatly limits the scale of the reforms. These issues are not easy to answer since the literature on Swedish humanitarian NGOs is almost non-existent. But I hope that this brief historical background can help to better understand the relation between humanitarian NGOs and the Swedish state today. Now I turn to the present structure of humanitarian NGOs compared to welfare NGOs.

3. Structure of Swedish Humanitarian NGOs

The elements presented here as part of the organizational structure of NGOs are : geographical location, date of establishment, numbers of employees and volunteers and hours worked, communication means, organizational focus, and finally funding sources. This section serves to draw up the main organizational features of humanitarian NGOs and to see what distinguishes them from other welfare NGOs.

3.1. Geographical Differences

For the survey, we have decided to construct the sample from a variety of Swedish urban areas (see Table 2.0). Of course the metropolis, Stockholm has been chosen, alongside a regional center, middle-sized county like Västerås in the center of Sweden and to represent a lowly populated region, the small urban area of working-class Gällivare in Northern Sweden. Representing the economic and political importance of these three counties, the distribution of humanitarian NGOs is quite similar to the distribution of welfare NGOs. We can note some level of concentration of humanitarian NGOs in the capital, but not extreme.

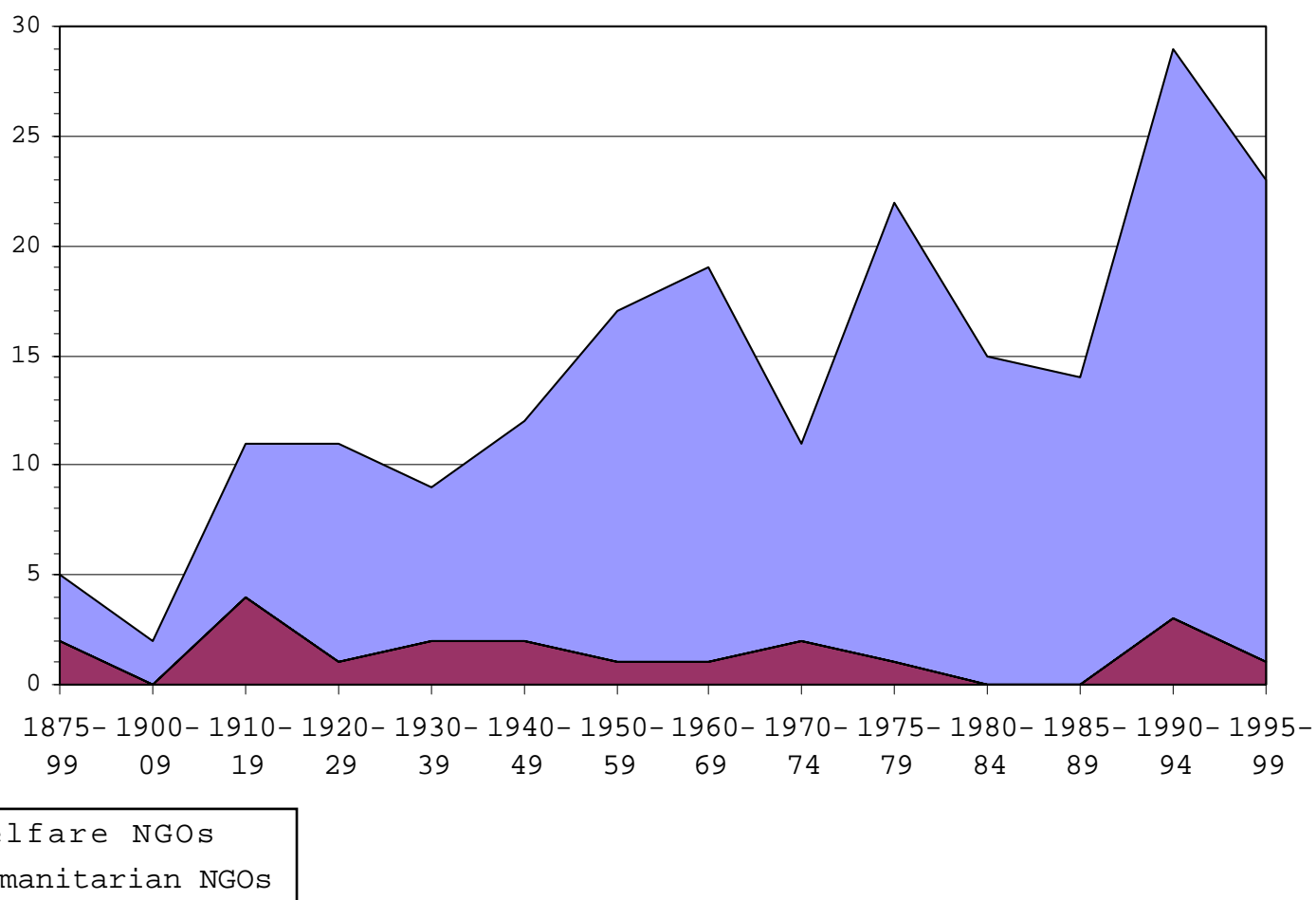
Table 2.0, Geographical Distribution of NGOs in the Survey, in Percentage.

| Urban Area | Humanitarian | Welfare |
|-------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Large: Stockolm | 52.4 | 57.3 |
| Middle: Västerås | 33.3 | 28.2 |
| Small: Gällivare | 14.3 | 14.4 |

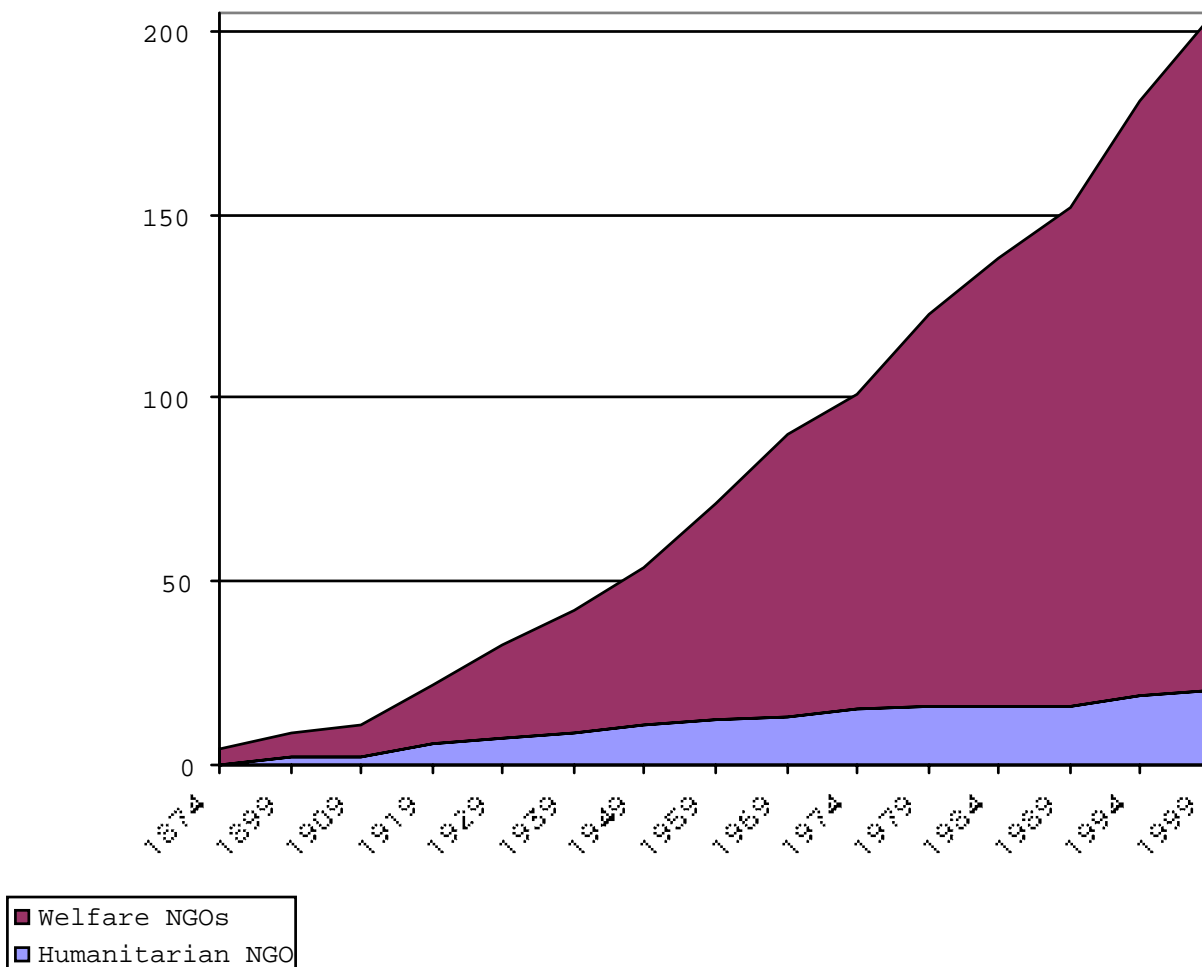
3.2. Date of Establishment

The analysis of the foundation dates of NGOs shows us that welfare NGOs and humanitarian NGOs roughly follow similar foundation patterns.

**Graph 1.0, Number of Swedish NGOs by
Foundation Date, 1875-1999, n=184**



**Graph 2.0, Number of Swedish NGOs,
1874-1999, Consolidated Basis, n=184**



As we see in graph 1.0, welfare NGOs follow a steady increase across the century, while the rhythm of humanitarian NGOs foundations is slower, even stagnating in the 1980s. The consolidated graph 2.0 shows that the development curve of humanitarian NGOs is smoother and more moderate than the evolution of welfare NGOs. Yet, humanitarian NGOs encounter two main upsurges: around WWI, responding to the greater need of relief aid during war time, and in the 1990s (see graph 1.0). This decade seems to reflect prosperous years for the nonprofit sector as an unprecedented number of new welfare NGOs appear. In the case of humanitarian NGOs, it is certainly linked to the constitution of the humanitarian field with the establishment of the Swedish International Cooperation Development Agency (SIDA) in 1995.

3.3. Number of Workers and Hours Worked

Table 3.0, Number of Temporary Employees and Volunteers in NGOs, Means.

| | Humanitarian NGOs | Welfare NGOs |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Male Employees | 3.38 | 2.27 |
| Female Employees | 5.14 | 4.43 |
| Temp. Male Empl. | 0.24 | 0.17 |
| Temp. Female Empl. | 0 | 0.18 |
| Male Volunteers | 3.15 | 3.96 |
| Female Volunteers | 4.55 | 3.94 |
| Total | 16.46 | 14.95 |

Looking at table 3.0, we can notice that more workers are active in humanitarian NGOs than in welfare NGOs (16.46 vs 14.95). This difference is found among employees (8.52 vs 6.70): every humanitarian NGO employs slightly more than one supplementary employee than a welfare NGO. Another point in table 2.0 is the feminization of humanitarian NGOs, both among employees and volunteers. There are 9.69 female workers per organization versus 6.53 male workers, it represents a domination of almost 20%. The feminization was also observed more generally in the entire welfare field (Jeppsson-Grassman 1994).

We also asked for the number of hours worked by all individuals in the humanitarian NGOs during a normal workday. The results show that each worker works in average 4 hours and 26 minutes per day. The similar figure for welfare NGOs is less: 3 hours and 36 minutes. In sum, the work intensity of humanitarian NGOs is greater than in the welfare NGOs in general.

Table 4.0 : Percent of Paid Workers Working in Average 40 Hours per Week

| % Working Full-time | Humanitarian | Welfare |
|---------------------|--------------|---------|
| None | 28.6% | 37.0% |
| >0-25% | 23.8% | 12.4% |
| >25-50% | 0% | 3.1% |
| >50-75% | 4.8% | 11.2% |
| >75-99% | 19.0% | 16.5% |
| 100% | 23.8% | 19.7% |

The first element noticeable from table 4.0 is the significantly lower number of full-time employees working in humanitarian than in welfare NGOs. As high as 37% of welfare organizations have no employees working full-time. This proportion is lower in humanitarian NGOs at 28.6%. Fewer full-time schedules evidently means that in counterpart there are more part-time workers. We can therefore assume that - if full-time work is a sign of continuous, constant work output - humanitarian are more professionalized than welfare NGOs.

3.4. Communication Means

In order to assess the communication means used by NGOs, we asked in the survey about email and fax. The results showed a rather high connection level: 67% of humanitarian NGOs had used email, only the week preceding the survey, while a small 32% had never used it. Furthermore, as high as 91% of the organizations had a fax number. These numbers were very similar to the figures of welfare NGOs. It shows that Swedish humanitarian NGOs are relatively well equipped for communication.

3.5. Organizational Focus and Function

We have categorized the various surveyed NGOs' foci in order to assess their fields of activity. This non-exclusive categorization shows that the organizations we categorize as humanitarian do not have humanitarian objectives as primary focus. Indeed, they combine different foci or functions. Yet, they contribute to the humanitarian field by participating in

humanitarian projects. For example, *Rädda Barnen* (Save the Children), one of the biggest NGOs in Sweden is mostly active domestically in advocacy campaigns, and but contributes also to humanitarian projects abroad. Evidently, as shown in table 5.0, the main focus of humanitarian NGOs is more focused in two areas (youth and health), while welfare NGOs reach out to various fields. Almost half of humanitarian NGOs are active in the field of youth and children (47.7%).

Table 5.0, Humanitarian NGOs' Main Focus.

| Primary Area of Organizational Focus, % in Sample (9 most significant) | | |
|---|---------------------|----------------|
| | Humanitarian | Welfare |
| Youth | 47.7 % | 14% |
| Health | 23.8 % | 14% |
| Community Education | 14.3 % | 6.4% |
| Poverty | 9.6 % | 2.2% |
| Other | 9.5 % | 12% |
| Consumer | 9.6 % | 0.8% |
| Arts/Publications | 4.8 % | 7% |
| Elderly/Age | 4.8 % | 6% |
| Environment | 4.8 % | 2.6% |
| Function of Organization (two most significant) | | |
| Child care/Day care | 14.3 % | 7% |
| Neighborhood House | 4.8 % | 2% |

3.6. Funding

When asked about the main source of funding, 40% of the humanitarian organizations surveyed answered public money, while another 40% comes from private donations (see Table 6.0). This figure shows a slightly lower financial public support for humanitarian NGOs than for the welfare nonprofit NGOs (47%).

Table 6.0, Primary Funding Source of Humanitarian NGOs

| Source | Proportion |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| Private Donations | 38.10% |
| County (<i>kommun</i>) | 19.05% |
| National State | 19.05% |
| Member fees | 9.52% |
| Other | 9.52% |
| Not funded | 4.76% |

We expected greater public funding. Three reasons lead us to believe that this percentage is higher in reality. Firstly, it may be that the question was phrased in such a way that the answer was somewhat imprecise about public funding. Asked about the main source, the respondent may have split public funding up between county and national state. Had they been added up, they would have emerged as the main source.


Secondly, SIDA distributes its budget to some 13 framework NGOs which in their turn redistribute the money to other NGOs. Therefore, the almost 10% of “other” sources of funding could also include funding from one of these framework NGOs and therefore be of public origin.

Finally, in a more comprehensive survey of the nonprofit sector, Lundström and Wijkström (1997) have established that NGOs dealing with international activities (mostly peace, solidarity and relief work) receive 50% of their revenues from the government, 37% from private donations and 12,2% from their own earnings. These may be more reliable figures than the ones we have, due to the reasons mentioned above and because of the small sample

In sum, this overview of the structure of humanitarian NGOs draws up an interesting picture. Looking at the second half of the 20th century, it appears that many humanitarian NGOs were created in the 90s. These organizations employ a small number of people (average of about 10 per organization) and almost as many volunteers (in average almost 8). The workers are mostly female and as employee more part-time than full-time.

4. SIDA: The Humanitarian Governmental Actor

The Swedish International Cooperation Development Agency (SIDA) is the main agency responsible for bilateral aid and cooperation. Established in 1995, SIDA is expected to provide more than 1 billion euros in 2002 for cooperation. This sum excludes the Swedish contribution to multilateral organizations, mostly the UN agencies. Part of this budget (291 million euros) is assigned to NGOs for some 2000 projects.

SIDA has a comprehensive program. Infrastructure and institution building are at the core of its approach. Actually, SIDA advocates the necessity to connect short-term (emergency relief) and long-term (development) interventions: "Poverty should be tackled both in a short-term and long-term perspective. Development work encompasses therefore both humanitarian aid to disaster zones and projects to increase the access of the needy to education, land and credit" (my translation, source: www.sida.se). 

The Swedish agency thus demonstrates greater ambitions than the prevailing definition of humanitarian aid as stated by the former president of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) : "L'action humanitaire est celle qui vise, sans aucune discrimination et avec des moyens pacifiques, à préserver la vie dans le respect de la dignité, à restaurer l'homme dans ses capacités de choix" (Brauman 2000, p.9). The definition of SIDA does not seek only to "restore" but to expand the conditions for free decisions ("capacités de choix") through education, etc.

This ambition is explicitly defined in the six main objectives, established by the Swedish government, that SIDA has to follow to fund projects:

- "1- Economic growth. To help increase the production of goods and services.
- 2- Economic and social equality. To help reduce differences between rich and poor and ensure that everyone's basic needs are met.
- 3- Economic and political independence. To help to ensure that countries can make their own decisions on their economies and policies and create the conditions necessary for national self-determination.

4- Democratic development. To help to ensure that people are given greater opportunities to influence developments locally, regionally and nationally.

5- Environmental protection. To promote the sustainable use of natural resources and protection of the environment.

6- Gender equality. To promote equality between men and women".²

It is striking that this list of objectives, combining both emergency relief and development together, could in sum stand for the definition of the welfare society in a nutshell. The program is extremely ambitious and aims at laying the foundations of a democratic and welfare society. This approach of humanitarian aid is rooted in the Swedish social democratic model as it stresses primarily democratization, education and equality.

The discrepancy between the prevailing definition of humanitarian aid and the objectives of SIDA is evidently boiling down to the distinction between development and relief aid. But in practice, the distinction is blurred. For instance, when MSF builds a clinic to answer an immediate relief need. The organization will not move this hospital to another emergency area once the crisis is over. They keep the clinic running and after a while it becomes a permanent hospital which is integrated into the national infrastructure³. The majority of Swedish NGOs focus on institution building and do not perform emergency relief work.

The organization of SIDA funding of Swedish humanitarian NGOs is based on a long-term association of a multiple-year contract with only some 13 framework NGOs. In return, these NGOs finance smaller NGOs projects. Up to 165 million euros are transferred to these 13 "framework" Swedish humanitarian NGOs. SIDA allocates 80% of the project budget at the condition the NGO contributes with their own 20%.

The official position of the Swedish government about the contribution of NGOs in the humanitarian field is that they should contribute to strengthen the civil society in developing

² Source: <http://www.sida.org/Sida/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=160&a=4306>.

³ This following example illustrates the ambiguous border between relief aid and development: "In October 1999, an MSF project supporting three health centers in Cazenga, a slum area of Luanda, was successfully handed over to the Ministry of Health after a ten-year intervention." (I underline here) Activity Report, Angola, 2001, www.msf.org.au.

countries. They can achieve this purpose by exchanging their competence, knowledge, organizational methods with local NGOs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and SIDA 2000).

For this purpose, SIDA does not limit its support to strictly international and highly specialized humanitarian NGOs. SIDA is involved in a variety of programs in collaboration with the different branches of the *folkrörelser* such as:

- 1) Children's education with popular education centers (ABF).
- 2) Gender equality with feminist organizations (Kvina till kvina).
- 3) Democratization with political parties such as the Liberals.
- 4) Developing unionization with the main Swedish trade union (LO-TCO bistånds nämnd)
- 5) Ecological projects with the main ecological organization (Svenska Naturskyddsföreningen).

In sum, under the leadership of SIDA, the Swedish humanitarian field is characterized by two constitutive elements. First, the Swedish humanitarian field is based upon a domestically consensual broad definition of human rights (including gender equality, education, etc) which goes beyond the limited and temporary solution of the charity approach. Second, this conceptual approach goes hand in hand with a tradition of high spending levels in this field allowing for comprehensive programs that are more ambitious than the more targeted emergency relief.

But is this favorable approach of SIDA towards humanitarian NGOs reciprocated? Do NGOs share this approach themselves? How to they relate to the state?

5. Relationship NGOs-Swedish State: Synergy

"The international humanitarian relief system comprises two sets of actors we assume to be complementary: governmental and non-governmental actors. Complementarity implies by definition role complementarity" (Eberwein 2001, p.2). This statement refers implicitly to the relation between recipient state or international governmental actors and humanitarian NGOs. But does this relation of complementarity also work domestically? In aid work, can governmental actors and non-governmental actors coordinate their efforts? Or do they rather

feel in a situation of competition? In our survey, we asked a series of questions on how non-governmental actors perceive the role of the state, that is how financially present and influential the state should be in the non-governmental humanitarian field.

Table 7.0 Questions Concerning Relation Humanitarian NGOs - State

| Question | Strongly Agree/ Agree | Don't Know | Disagree/ Strongly Disagree |
|--|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1: More competition in the community sector will lead to better services. | 39% | 14% | 48% |
| 2: Government/state control over what we do is more today than it was two years ago. | 24% | 38% | 38% |
| 3 : Our organization's major responsibility is to those who provide the funding rather than the members. | 10% | 38% | 48% |
| 4 : When there is a State or County budget deficit it is reasonable to have cuts to funding for community organizations. | 19% | 19% | 62% |
| 5: Governments should guarantee grants to community organizations. | 72% | 10% | 20% |
| 6: Competition for funding increases the effectiveness of programs. | 29% | 29% | 43% |
| 7: Our organization prefers not to be involved in political activity. | 62% | 14% | 14% |

In table 7.0, question 1 deals with competition in the nonprofit sector. It seeks to know if an alternative to non-competitive environment such as guaranteed state grants could foster service improvements. Phrased differently in question 6, it shows a moderate rejection of competition as means to increase the quality of their contribution. However, the answer is inconclusive, NGOs are very divided on their evaluation of competition for the sector: up to 29% of the respondents are indecisive to question 6. Actually, if we consider the arrangement

of SIDA with the frameworks NGOs, they do not compete for funding but act more like permanent partners, like a cartel. Indeed, the NGOs' environment is not yet really competitive.

The answer to question 2 on state control yields a somewhat negative answer. No, state control is not greater say 38%, but the same percentage of respondents has no answer. The results of question 3 are clear. We can assume here, due to the strong consensus on the importance of the members in the sector, that NGOs would claim that their prime loyalty goes to members (more of 70% of respondents) and not to the funding actors, being the state or others. Here again in question 4, an important proportion of respondents judge they should not be sacrificed if the state experiences budget problems at 62%. In question 5, there is a very clear support for guaranteed state grants by NGOs. Finally, the results of question 7 reflects what we have seen often in NGOs' charts: no involvement in political activity. Indeed, a good majority of respondents, 60% does not want to deal with politics. However, the answer could have been misunderstood if the respondents understood partisan politics instead of politics at large which we had in mind when phrasing it.

From answers to the few questions we asked about the state, we can infer that humanitarian NGOs prefer non-competitive environment and guaranteed grants but not at the expense of their loyalty to their members. In sum, the Swedish humanitarian field proves to introduce a rich cooperative relationship between the state and the civil society's NGOs. The state delegates a good share of its responsibility and of its budget to few trusted actors of the civil society, the so-called framework NGOs. This integrative approach seems to indicate that the state and the NGOs share common interest in Sweden. Yet, this is not the case everywhere. There are examples of humanitarian NGOs pursuing a confrontational approach to the national policy. In some countries like France, NGOs have reacted to decreasing public social expenditures by challenging the state's responsibility in the domestic field of social services. For example, MSF has recognized that the French health system was not providing adequate health care to foreign nationals on the French territory. Consequently, MSF has opened health centers in Paris for this neglected population⁴.

⁴ Please see: activity report, 1999-2000, www.paris.msf.org.

This voluntary "delegitimization" of the donor state by NGOs is untypical of the Swedish approach. Swedish NGOs favor cooperation than confrontation with the governmental actors. But at the same time, due to their comprehensive development program, Swedish humanitarian NGOs may undermine, or at least involuntarily, the legitimacy of already weak recipient States. These development efforts seriously affect the institutional frame of these emergent nations. In possession of important funds, NGOs can take over *de facto* entire social fields of a developing country.

6. Conclusion:

To draw conclusions from the analysis, we can point out that first, as I showed, Swedish humanitarian organizations seem to contradict the principle of independence that humanitarian NGOs pretend to defend. Independence from governmental actors is one of the fundamental humanitarian principles NGOs, laid down by the Red Cross' code of conduct. The Swedish context shows that a strong welfare state, high public spending in the humanitarian field and the institutional synergy between NGOs and SIDA severely undermine this independence claim. In this highly-channeled semi-public humanitarian field, charity-oriented humanitarian NGOs have little chance to be able to get the funding necessary for projects.

The predominance of the social democratic approach among nonprofit organizations, as obviously illustrated by the continuous reference made to the *folkrörelser*. Therefore, as Heclo and Madsen argue one can relate the Swedish NGOs to the "social democratic hegemony" (Heclo and Madsen 1987). With this label, they refer to the predominant leadership and ideology of the Social Democratic party on the public administration. I would go further as well by claiming that the whole social democratic ideology transcends other spheres of the society, including the ideological orientations of the nonprofit sector. Perhaps, it would be more appropriate to speak of a Swedish cultural model, since this "social democratism" is so ingrained in the organizational fabric of the nation.

In terms of the relation between donor and recipient countries, I would say that the social democratic approach likens a form of ethnocentrism. Indeed, this model seeks to apply the historical features of the Swedish welfare model to developing countries: going from education (the literacy rate has always been comparatively high in Sweden since many centuries) up to gender equality and sustainable development. Two areas when Sweden is

well known for its avant-gardism. Yet, it is true that many donor countries are guilty of ethnocentrism. Western countries have been often criticized for projecting and imposing their model of development upon very different societies. But what is distinctive in Sweden is the scale and the domestic unanimity on this approach. NGOs and SIDA largely share the humanitarian objectives. While other donor countries seem to combine a range of - sometimes - conflicting interests. For instance, Canada has over the years adopted a tied aid policy to developing countries. It means that the Canadian agency (ACDI/CIDA) has proposed aid packages to recipient countries attached with the obligation of buying Canadian goods and services either to complete these projects (such as harvesters, seeds, etc) or once completed (food). This approach seeks at the same time to satisfy both humanitarian objectives and to serve Canadian economic interests. However, aid with strings attached may not be the optimal way to help the population in developing countries according to humanitarian NGOs⁵. Canadian harvesters may be more expensive than say, the local ones, sacrificing precious aid funds to the equipment at the expense of other aspects of the program. In Sweden, however, these diverging views do not seem to foster much debate: no one speaks of tied aid and Swedish economic interest, only of welfare. More generally, the image of consensual Sweden seems to hold tight. For the moment the politics of the Swedish humanitarian field remains a conflict-free domain.

⁵ The Canadian Co-operative Association wrote: "Clearly Canada needs to take steps to reduce the amount of aid that is currently tied to Canadian goods and services. While Canada may still choose to source some aid -- particularly food aid -- domestically, there should be very clear checks and balances to ensure that Canadian products do not supplant local production, or that the cost of Canadian products is not dramatically out of line with other food choices." Source: www.coopcca.com/new/AidEffectiveness.htm

7. Appendix

7.1. SIDA's Framework Organizations

For a list of organizations and projects please go to:

<http://www.sida.se/Sida/jsp/Crosslink.jsp/a,4648> and

http://www.forumsyd.se/fs_medl.shtml.

7.2. Humanitarian NGOs Surveyed

Organizations included in the survey and which had completed the questionnaire:

1. MALMBERGETS MISSIONSFÖRSAMLING
2. VÄSTERÅS MISSIONSFÖRSAMLING
3. ÄLVSJÖ MISSIONSFÖRSAMLING
4. TILL LIV - EVANGELISK-LUTHERSK MISSIONSTIDNING
5. ABF STOCKHOLM
6. ABF VÄSTERÅS
7. UNGA ÖRNAR GÄLLIVARE
8. UNGA ÖRNAR VÄSTERÅS
9. PMU INTERLIFE
10. RÄDDA BARNEN
11. BROMMA KFUK-KFUM
12. KFUK-KFUMS
13. HOPPETS STJÄRNA
14. SVENSKA BAPTISTSAMFUNDET
15. SVENSKA KYRKANS UNGA I HUBBO PASTORAT
16. SVENSKA NATURSKYDDSFÖRENINGEN (SNF)
17. SVENSKA RÖDA KORSET (SWEDISH RED CROSS)
18. FATIMA
19. INTERNATIONELLA ARBETSLAG
20. IOGT-NTO STOCKHOLM
21. SOS-BARNBYAR
22. BARNENS RÄDDNING ARK
23. BRÖDET OCH FISKARNA

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