CONSTITUTING INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL COLLABORATION FOR MINE ACTION HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: A CCO APPROACH

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Abstract

Many countries throughout the world are undergoing a governance renaissance as they move from top-down authoritarian structures to more citizen-centered governance systems. Like many countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) struggles to invent a transparent, participative government in hopes of developing a more free society and prosperous economic environment. Following the 1992-1995 Bosnian War that littered the country with landmines, BiH today has a goal of being mine-free by 2019. This goal requires numerous agencies and private sector organizations to work together using a system that aligns voices of citizens, public, and private-sector organizations. Three of the authors are part of a research team that is conducting interviews and designing workshops to help BiH organizations develop a transparent, participative inter-organizational collaboration to achieve a mine-free BiH. This paper uses data from the interviews and workshops using a communicative constitution of organizations (CCO) approach to analyze early stages of the inter-organizational collaborative system.

Introduction

Humanitarian operations throughout the world bring together myriad agencies including governments (both national and local), commercial organizations, militaries, inter-governmental organizations (IGOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and academics. While inter-organizational arrangements such as these are important and becoming more common, scholars know surprising little about the process of inter-organization formation.

The purpose of this paper is to gain a better understanding of how "organizing" (à la Weick) takes place among a group of organizations. To examine this process, a CCO (Communication Constitutes Organization) approach was used. More specifically, McPhee and Zaug's (2009) four flows of communicative interaction to analyze the early-stage creation of an inter-organizational system. The research question is: *How do organizational members constitute an inter-organizational system through co-participation in communication?*

To date, papers that apply or debate CCO theory have focused primarily on the <u>organization</u>-communication relationship (Ashcraft, Kuhn, & Cooren, 2009; Bisel, 2010; Browning, Greene, Sitkin, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2009; Cooren & Fairhurst 2009; Reed, 2010; Taylor, 2009). Little work has been done to apply this theory to <u>inter-organizational</u>-communication relationships. Drawing on data from this study, the authors hope to extend McPhee and Zaug's theory by applying it to an inter-organizational context.

This paper first describes the theoretical framework used to analyze the data. Then a short historical background of BiH and mine action in BiH is provided. Next data is used from field work to demonstrate how the flows inform both the organizational-level analysis as well as the inter-organizational analysis. Conclusions and implications are then offered for managers of inter-organizational collaborative efforts.

Theoretical Framework:
Communication Constitutes Organization (CCO) Theory and the Four Flows

An emergent body of work theorizes that communication is constitutive of organizing (CCO) (Cooren, Taylor, & Van Every, 2006; Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004; Riley, Thomas, Weitraub & Noyes, 2011; Smith, 1993; Taylor & Van Every, 2000). Putnam, Nicotera, and McPhee (2009) describe this approach as "unpacking the ontology of organizations" (p. 5) or in other words, examining the underlying communicative processes that relate to the elements that form an organization, or in this case, a system of organizations. CCO foregrounds the forming, composing, and sustaining of what people call "the organization." CCO can also be used to examine how organizations develop identities, stable ways of acting, and how they exercise authority.

Related to CCO, Putnam, Nicotera, and McPhee (2009) further describe organizations as "anchored in the continuous flow of communication" where "streams of interaction and organizing are reflexively and concomitantly constituted" (p.9). Further they say that "discursive forms and social practices flow continuously to create and recreate organizing but the organization as a whole mediates these communication processes" (p.9). Following Giddens (1984), CCO and the notion of communication flow aim for a balance between structure and agency where organizations are treated not as entities, but as systems that are anchored in social practices, texts, or memory traces.

The notion of flows builds on an earlier theoretical paper of McPhee and Zaug (2000) and is further debated and explained in a 2009 edited volume, *Building Theories of Organization: The Constitutive Role of Communication* (Browning, Greene, Sitkin, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2009; Cooren & Fairhurst; McPhee & Iverson, 2009; Putnam & McPhee, 2009; Taylor, 2009). McPhee and Zaug (2000) claim that the *four flows* of communication are necessary conditions for constituting organizations. The four flows refer to four types of interaction processes that communicatively constitute an organization. Each of the flows, they claim, is analytically distinct but any interactive episode can contribute to multiple flows, and the flows interact with one another to constitute the organization. A description of the four flows follows as portrayed by McPhee and Zaug (2009) and Browning, Greene, Sitkin, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2009).

1. Organization-Membership Negotiation. This flow focuses on the relationship of the members to the organization. It includes socialization, identification, and self-positioning activities. It asks the question, Who am I, how do I relate to the organization, how does the organization relate to me?

2. Organizational Self-Structuring. This includes self-reflexive structuring and control activities, especially managerial activities. These communication activities occur when interactions steer the organization in a particular direction. It includes formal organizational charts, policies, as well as informal processes of influence. It asks the question, What rules and norms guide organizing?

3. Organizational Activity Coordination. Distinct but intertwined with organizational self-structuring is the activity coordination flow. It serves to align and connect local work activities and allows members to organize their joint work. Activity coordination can be cooperative, wasteful, or conflicted. It asks the question, What work are we doing together, and how will we do it?

4. Institutional Positioning. This flow consists of the external communication with the purpose of positioning the organization in a field of other organizational entities, including suppliers, customers, competitors, government regulators, and partners. It asks the question, What external forces provide legitimacy, and what kinds of communication are necessary to survive in the institutional space?

Study Site and Research Method

Representing the U.S. Partnership for Peace (PfP) program, three of the authors are involved in a three-year mine action project with Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). This project follows on the heels of the 1992-1995 Bosnian war where BiH is still dealing with widespread landmines. While BiH has world-class mine clearing technology, they were struggling with inter-organizational collaboration around their mine action efforts. "Mine action" (MA) is defined as demining, mine risk education, victim assistance, advocacy, and destruction of stockpiled landmines (Electronic Mine Information Network [E-MINE], 2011).

The purpose of the three-year PfP project is to develop an inter-organizational collaborative capacity or an inter-organizational system among the key stakeholders with a focus on creating a mine-free BiH by 2019. This project offered a unique opportunity to study the dynamics behind the formation of an inter-organizational system. It also allowed testing of the application of the four flows theory in an inter-organizational context.

To date four activities have been conducted with the BiH partners: 1) In June 2010 one of the team members made an initial site visit to Sarajevo to interview 11 key stakeholders involved in mine action. The purpose of the initial interviews was to begin to understand the challenges facing the mine action in BiH, identify key stakeholders, and lay the groundwork for a series of workshops. 2) In September 2010, two of the researchers conducted a three-day workshop in Sarajevo. Fifteen key stakeholders attended. The purpose of this workshop was to affirm the vision and mission of mine-free BiH, define the benefits of achieving a mine-free BiH, map stakeholder contributions, and identify key issues and challenges. 3) A second workshop, *Working in the Same Spaces*, was held in Monterey, California and co-sponsored by the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, US Department of State and the Center for Stabilization and Reconstruction Studies, Naval Postgraduate School. Six BiH mine action stakeholders came from Sarajevo to attend this workshop. 4) A third workshop was held in Sarajevo, June 2011. The purpose of this workshop was to continue the work of building collaborative capacity and develop a strategic communication process in support of mine action for BiH. Archival data, meeting notes, and workshop exercises were analyzed for this study.

**The Case: Creating an Inter-organization System for
Mine Action in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The study focuses on the early stages of inter-organizational collaboration among several key stakeholders involved in mine action in BiH. McPhee and Zaug's flows were used to explore the ways in which communication constitutes an inter-organization system for mine action in BiH. Admittedly the flows exist on two levels: 1) the intra-organization level as organizational members discursively create their own organizations and 2) the inter-organizational level as several organizations attempt to develop an inter-organizational collaborative system to address mine action in BiH.

The next section begins with a brief description of the historical context of mine action because all communication is embedded in the interactions that preceded. In this case, mine action in BiH is necessary due to the 1992-1995 civil war, a war which came about in large part due to years of ethnic tension in the region. This backdrop is essential to understand the particular challenges of developing inter-organizational relationships and the discursive construction of the inter-organizational system.

Historical Context

To appreciate the complexity of mine action in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), it is important to know something about its recent history, ethnic tensions and governance systems. Today, the major ethnic, religious and linguistic groups in BiH are Bosniak (Slavic Muslim), Serb, and Croat. At the end of World War II, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was established under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito with Bosnia and Herzegovina as one of the republics in the federation. After the death of Tito in 1980, Yugoslavia began a decline that would culminate in its dissolution in the 1990s. The rise of nationalism led by Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia as well as a similar movement in Croatia led by Franjo Tudjman exacerbated ethnic tensions in the ethnically diverse Bosnia and Herzegovina in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Slovenia and Croatia both declared independence from Yugoslavia in June 1991. In 1992, Bosnia and Herzegovina also declared independence. However, the independence of BiH was opposed by Bosnian Serb representatives who were in favor of remaining in the increasingly Serbian-dominated Yugoslavia. BiH spiraled into a civil war made especially brutal due to geographically intermingled ethnic groups and historic ethnic tensions. The war displaced approximately two million people, or about half of the population (BBC News, 2011). Approximately 41% of the dead or missing from the war were civilians, primarily the result of Serb nationalist "ethnic cleansing" against Bosniaks and Croats (Paffenholz, 2010). Fighting between Serbs and Croats as well as between Croats and Bosniaks also resulted in some ethnic cleansing perpetrated by Croats and Bosniaks (Woehrel, 2011).

The war lasted until 1995, when the General Framework Agreement for Peace (also known as the Dayton Agreement) was signed. According to this agreement, BiH was divided into two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (51% of territory) and the Republika Srpska (49% of territory and populated primarily with Serbs) (Permanent Mission of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations). Each has its own president, government, parliament, and other state organizations, while a central Bosnia government encompasses all. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of ten cantons, some mostly Croat and some mostly Bosniak, with the entity and canton governments holding most of the power (Paffenholz, 2010). While the complicated governance structure was necessary to achieve the peace agreement, many argue that this has resulted in a weak central government. A weak central

government coupled with the complex structure of governance, as well as continuing ethnic tensions, has made effective governance in BiH challenging in the years since the Dayton Agreement was instated. In April 2006, a constitutional reform package that would have strengthened the central government by replacing the three-member collective central government presidency with a single President and increased the powers of the Prime Minister and central parliament, was defeated (Woehrel, 2011). Constitutional reform has continued to flounder in years since. After the elections in October 2010, BiH was unable to re-form its central government. At the time of this writing, BiH is still at a political stalemate and has now gone several months without a functioning central government.

Mine Action in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)

After the end of the war, BiH faced many challenges in demining. At first, these included inadequate financing, weak governance, and lack of cooperation and mistrust between different ethnic and political groups. In 1996, the United Nations Mine Action Centre (UNMAC) was established to manage mine action in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The European Commission, U.S. State Department, U.S. military and Norwegian People's Aid along with other international government and non-government organizations aided in demining training, finance, equipment or explosive ordinance disposal (EOD). While the widespread response across the international community was well-meaning, it resulted in many incongruent efforts that did not effectively or efficiently address the problem as a whole. In 1997, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Centre (BHMAC) was established to give BiH national-level control of mine removal efforts.

While the number of mine incidents per year has been decreasing, BiH continues today to be one of the most mine-impacted countries in the world with over three and a half percent of the land is still afflicted by mines. Government statistics show that more than 12,231 micro-locations still need to be cleared in BiH. According to the Landmine Impact Survey (LSI), 154 communities are categorized as high-impact areas, 696 as medium-impact areas, and 516 as low-impact areas (Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Ministers, 2008). BHMAC continues to have the responsibility for coordinating mine action, surveying, and minefield database maintenance for the National Demining Commission. The initial mine action strategies of 2002-2009 and 2005-2009 have been described as overly optimistic about how quickly mine removal would occur, The peace treaty commitment to have the mines removed from BiH by 2009 was not met and a 10-year extension has been granted. However, this failure demonstrates the challenges of achieving this goal.

Funding mine action has always been and continues to be an increasing problem as donors switch their attention to other problems in the world and internal politics thwart necessary increases in BiH funding.

Communication Flows Constituting the Organizations Involved in BiH Mine Action

Mine action in Bosnia and Herzegovina involves a variety of governmental and non-governmental actors. Below, McPhee and Zaug's four flows are briefly described as they apply to some of the organizations in this study. While the communication constitution of individual organizations is not the primary focus of the study, this understanding is foundational to how the flows are used to explain the constitution of the inter-organizational system of BiH mine action actors.

Organization Activity Coordination

Within each organization involved in mine action in BiH, members organize around a set of unique activities. The flow of communication constitutes, aligns, and connects local work activities and allows individual members to coordinate their joint activities within their respective organizations. Table 1 lists a partial list of key mine action stakeholders and describes the particular work activities for each of the organizations that are included in this study.

Table 1. Activities of Key Organizations Involved in Mine Action

Key Stakeholder	Activities
Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Centre (BH MAC)	BH MAC is responsible for the overall planning and execution of mine action activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). BH MAC is overseen by the Demining Commission, which is directed by the BiH Ministry of Civil Affairs. BH MAC's activities include surveying minefields, maintenance of a mine database, planning and prioritizing mine action projects, defining technical and safety standards, testing, quality assurance, and coordination and monitoring the implementation of the National Mine Action Strategy and Mine Action Plan.
International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims' Assistance (ITF)	The ITF raises funds, provides services, and manages mine action projects in BiH. The ITF focuses on fundraising and support to humanitarian mine action in the Balkans area. It was established by the Government of Slovenia to specifically assist BiH in mine action activities, but has since been expanded to aid other mine-affected regions worldwide.
EUFOR	EUFOR is the European Union's military forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina. EUFOR was originally deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2004 to take over the peacekeeping mission that NATO had kept in the area since the end of the war. Today EUFOR's troop numbers have been reduced since the original deployment, but the core objective is still to contribute to a safe and secure environment in BiH.
Civil Protection Administrations	Mine action activities include implementing de-mining programs, emergency interventions for removal of unexploded ordinances, and rescuing people injured in minefields.
Ministries of Health	Exercises administrative and other tasks pertaining to all health-related laws.
Bosnia and Herzegovina Ministry of Defense	The Ministry of Defense is one of nine Ministries in the Bosnia and Herzegovina government. It oversees all aspects of defense including the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It also ensures that BiH complies with all international commitments in the area of defense.
Bosnia and Herzegovina Ministry of Foreign Affairs	The Ministry of Foreign Affairs represents BiH in diplomatic relations with other countries and international organizations.

Bosnia and Herzegovina Ministry of Civil Affairs	The Ministry of Civil Affairs oversees matters regarding citizenship, personal data, residence registration, and demining. Of the BiH Ministries, the Ministry of Civil Affairs plays the most leading role in mine action. The Ministry of Civil Affairs oversees the Demining Commission and BH MAC, and chairs the board of donors for mine action in BiH.
Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina (AFBiH)	Up until 2005, BiH had three armed forces: Bosniak, Croat, and Serb. The Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina are the unified armed forces which came about through the integration of all three forces in January 2006. Demining activities are one of the five core tasks of AFBiH.
Bosnia and Herzegovina National Demining Commission	The National Demining Commission consists of representatives from the Ministries of Civil Affairs, Foreign Affairs, and Human Rights and Refugees. The National Demining Commission provides senior political guidance on mine issues, and oversees BH MAC.
NGOs and IGOs	Examples include: • Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) is an international organization that works for the elimination of landmines and other explosive remnants of war. • Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) is one of Norway's largest NGOs. It funds mine action activities in BiH as well as other mine-affected countries worldwide. • Stop Mines is a mine action NGO in the Republika Srpska. • World Without Mines is an NGO that supports mine action in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as other countries worldwide. • Red Cross Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina is the largest humanitarian organization in BiH. It is composed of the Red Cross of the Federation of BiH, the Red Cross of Republika Srpska, and the Red Cross of Brcko District. • Hope '87 is an Austrian-based international NGO. It executes programs for the rehabilitation of mine victims in BiH as well as other mine action programs internationally.

Organization Membership Negotiation

Recall that this flow links interactions among organizational members and the organization and answers these questions: Who am I, how do I relate to the organization, and how does the organization relate to me? It includes socialization, identification, and self-positioning activities. To illustrate this flow and the next two organization-level flows, the authors focus on a single organization from this study: the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina (AFBiH). People who serve in the AFBiH constitute their organization identity through flows of interaction with superiors, peers, subordinates, and those outside the AFBiH. These interactions help them negotiate the boundaries of the organization, establish personal meaning, and develop a sense of belonging. In a newsletter, two soldiers assigned to a multinational brigade in the AFBiH show how they negotiated their role as a way to have more impact.

When you first arrive as a member of the Multinational Brigade North (MNB(N)), you are full of promise. You know your team of highly trained professional soldiers will make a difference in the lives of those that live in BiH. Then it sets in. Your six-month tour of duty doesn't allow you time to finish what you start. So what is it you can do to make a difference in only six months? This is the exact question that started the process of developing the National Guard Demining Initiative in BiH. This initiative was undertaken by the U.S. Army National Guard, an adjunct to the U.S. Armed Forces. There are multitudes of issues you can work to resolve in BiH. MNB(N) plays a supporting role in most of these, but we wanted to do something more. We wanted to bring a fresh idea to the area of operation (AO) that would make a significant impact on one of the many critical issues facing BiH. To make our choice, we focused on two key concerns: "What will have the biggest impact on the daily lives of the people?" and "What will instill confidence in the international community to speed up economic recovery?" We chose the issue of demine (Barnett & Shaffer , 2006, p1).

Organization Self-Structuring

Many argue that the Armed Forces are particularly suited for conducting demining activities. In BiH, significant military resources are dedicated to demining. These tasks are performed by well trained demining teams. Interactions among AFBiH organizational members establish demining norms, rules and procedures that are reinforced, contested, and transformed (Barrett, Thomas, & Hocevar 1995). As Boden (1994) might say, AFBiH organizational members "talk the organization into being."

Organization's Institutional Positioning

AFBiH leaders write mission statements, give speeches, and interact with constituents that position them in the demining community. Leaders employ rhetorical strategies to gain internal consistency, to garner legitimacy from external actors, to overcome any external adversaries (McGuire & Hardy, 2009; Thomas and Stephens, 2011).

Applying the Four Flows Analysis to the Constitution of an Inter-Organizational System

The following segment of the paper is the focus of the analysis and attempts to answer the research question: *How do organizational members constitute an inter-organizational system through co-participation in communication?* Granted, each organization is actively engaged in creating and maintaining itself through the four interactive communicative flows as discussed above. However, in this case, actors are also in the stages of becoming an inter-organizational system. It is this phase of their

organizing that is most central to the study. Here McPhee and Zaug's (2009) theory is extended by adding an additional four flows at the inter-organizational level. Together, the eight flows indicate the increased complexity of communication as actors organize within their own organization and simultaneously develop more tightly coupled coordination systems with their mine action co-stakeholders.

Inter-organizational Membership Negotiation

In this flow, mine action organizations in BiH see themselves not only as individual organizations involved in mine action, but also as part of an interdependent system of organizations with a common goal. The data show that, until recently, collaboration among the various actors has been rather difficult. Stakeholders complain about limited access to information and lack of voice in determining mine action priorities. At the September 2010 workshop, participants identified several benefits for building an inter-organizational collaborative system:

1. Better understanding of mine action problems from different perspectives.
2. Higher level of stakeholders' awareness.
3. Improved coordination leading to better efficiency and effectiveness of resources.
4. Better planning, management, and execution.
5. Faster achievement of goals.
6. Fair distribution of tasks and responsibilities.
7. Faster implementation.
8. More rational use of available resources.
9. More equalized acquisition of resources through different parts of BiH.
10. Better conclusions as a result of sharing of opinions and creating synergies.
11. Easier drafting of budgets.
12. Increased visibility of mine action.

At the workshops many participants explained that this was the first time they had come together to discuss the benefits and challenges of mine action. By meeting as a group, stakeholders see themselves as becoming a more formal network and see avenues for shaping their role in MA in BiH. Inter-organizational membership interactions have the ability to transform the power that participants have in the network.

At the Monterey workshop, six key MA stakeholders became identified as the "core team." They now serve in an advisory capacity to help develop a more formal mine action inter-organizational network.

Inter-organizational Activity Coordination

This flow serves to align and connect inter-organizational activities. As mentioned earlier in the paper, activity coordination can be cooperative, wasteful, and/or conflicted. This flow asks the question, What work are the organizations doing and how will activities be coordinated across the various organizations?

During the September 2010 workshop, participants discussed their desired involvement in key MA activities. Table 2 presents the results of their discussion. "L" means that they believed they should be

leaders of the activity. "P" means they should participate in the activity, and "I" means that they would have limited involvement in the activity.

Table 2. Desired Level of Involvement in Key Mine Action Activities

Stakeholders	Training and Retraining	Develop, Maintain, and Improve Donor Relations	Build National Capacity in Mine Action	Acquire Necessary Resources	Conduct Operations	Influence and Advocate with Members of Parliament	Communication and Risk Education	Evaluation, Assessment and Reporting	Set Priorities for De-mining Activities	Develop BiH De-mining School	Victims' Assistance
BHMAC	L	L	L	L	L	P	L	L	L	L	L
ITF	L	L	P	L	L	P	L/P	L/P			L/P
EUFOR	P	P	I	P			P	P		P	
Civil Protection RS	P		P	P	P		P	P	P		
Federal Civil Protection	L		P		P		P	P	P		P
Federal Ministry of Health	P	P		P			I		P		P
Minister of Defense BiH		L	P	L			P	L/P		L	
Ministry of Foreign Affairs		L				L					P
Ministry of Civil Affairs		L				L					
Armed Forces of BiH			P	P	P		I	P	P	L	
NGOs					P	P	P				P

In the June 2011 workshop, participants further discussed the desired group norms that would characterize how they could work together in the future. A visioning exercise helped them imagine how

they could best collaborate to achieve their common goals. The norms they discussed are summarized in their words below.

1. Clear tasks, clear goals, and target-oriented
2. Expert leaders
3. A team of experts who are professional
4. Motivated
5. Committed and dedicated to the success of the team.
6. Good communication within the team
7. Cooperative
8. Flexibility (creative, responsive, and proactive)
9. Good external communication
10. Transparency (including the public)
11. Clear responsibilities
12. Ongoing monitoring process for review, evaluation, and continuous improvement
13. Unity of effort/good coordination
14. Supportive, open-minded, mutual respect

Inter-organizational Self-Structuring

This flow includes self-reflexive inter-organizational structuring and control activities, especially managerial activities, as well as formal documents and informal influence processes. This flow asks the question, What rules and norms guide inter-agency organizing? Inter-organizational self-structuring is distinctively different from organizational self-structuring where individual organizations have a formal leader and a more evident command and control aspect. In the case of inter-organizational self-structuring, the participants have a more consensual process of granting authority.

The workshop participants expressed the importance of having a more citizen-centered governance system where citizens more freely participate in political and social decision making. In this way civil society could have a stronger voice in BiH affairs. Thus mine action becomes one way for BiH to build capacity for good governance. One of the aims of building capacity for mine action in BiH is so that BiH is capable of planning and implementing the country's mine action program to support humanitarian and postwar recovery processes and meet their obligations to the mine action strategy. Capacity is the ability of individuals and organizations to manage their own affairs successfully. To be able to manage a national mine action program successfully, BiH will need to be able to develop and implement legislation, undertake long- and short-term strategic planning, and manage mine action activities well, while engaging multiple stakeholder interests. Developing mine action capacity has been linked with good governance which means developing corrupt-free processes that are transparent to the public (Roberts, 2006).

Numerous documents will shape the development of the inter-organizational structuring. An example is the mine action vision and mission statement:

VISION
Bosnia and Herzegovina free of mines by 2019.

MISSION
Ensure conditions for a continuous and efficient mine action program aimed to establish a safe environment for normal and prosperous living for all citizens in BiH, and with mine victims fully integrated into society.

The Strategic plan together with its annexes is based on realistic approach to problem solving, consideration of achieved results and needs, and complete fulfillment of responsibilities toward the Convention banning the production, use, stockpiling and transport of AP mines.
With adequate support by 2019, realization of this Strategy will see BiH as a country free of mines, with no mine incidents and with mine victims integrated into society.

Mine Action Strategy 2009-2019 was the basis for an extension of the Convention deadline for total removal of mines. Official request towards Convention was submitted in March 2008 and officially accepted at the States parties meeting held in Jordan 2007.

The Strategic plan is based on realistic approach to problem solving, consideration of achieved results and future country funding and technical needs, and all in accordance to the requirements and expectations of local authorities and international community. (http://www.bhmac.org source, 2011).

As roles and responsibilities are discussed among the actors, negotiations are occurring that contest a top-down authoritarian structure in favor of a more open and participative structure including decisions about resource acquisition, planning, prioritization, and implementation.

Inter-organizational Coalition Institutional Positioning

The last flow discussed is the interaction that occurs among stakeholders both internal and external to the network. Institutional positioning means that Mine Action in BiH needs to be seen as legitimate in the eyes of the international community. If the actors are not able to make good progress toward their goals in a timely fashion, it is likely that donors will reduce funding. Interactions among multiple levels of BiH government, the public, media, and all other mine action participants are scrutinized by many outside actors including donors, the EU, and others. The network's success or failure will have far reaching impacts. In the September 2010 workshop, the participants summarized the impacts of a mine-free BiH.

1. The safety of BiH citizens. Citizens will be able to live in a safe environment without threats of mines and unexploded ordinance (UXO).
2. The development of a mine-free status is a precondition for any development plan.
3. The fulfillment of the international Ottawa Treaty.
4. The return of refugees and freedom of movement.
5. Infrastructure development and the use of national resources.
6. Resources now directed toward mine action can be directed to other national priorities.
7. Step closer to acceptance in the European Union (EU).

Discussion

This study was designed to answer the question: "How do organizational members constitute an inter-organizational system through co-participation in communication?" To answer this question, the

authors analyzed the early stages of the creation of a mine action inter-organizational collaboration building on McPhee and Zaug's (2009) theory of the four flows of interactive processes. Previous studies using the four flows theory have centered on the organization-communication relationship. Extant research has not addressed the flows related to inter-organization systems. In this study, archival and field data were used from an ongoing inter-organization project for mine action in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Specifically, the authors were interested in the communication interactions that were present in the early formation of an inter-organization system. Consistent with the four flows at the organization level, the authors were able to apply the four flows at the more complex inter-organization level. Table 3 provides a summary of findings at both levels.

Table 3. Summary of Findings

	Organizational-level	**Inter-organization-level**
Organization-membership negotiation	Interactions allow members to negotiate organizational boundaries, establish personal meaning, and develop a sense of belonging	In addition to negotiating intra-organization membership boundaries, employees begin to see themselves as part of an inter-organizational system
Self-structuring	Interactions constitute the norms, rules, and procedures within an organization	Without a formal inter-organization authority, organizational members develop consensual processes for granting authority within the system. Through participative processes, key organization stakeholders develop a common vision, mission, and strategic plan that can guide their relationships. Key organizations negotiate norms, rules, and procedures for collaborative work.
Activity Coordination	Interactions constitute, align, and connect member activities within an organization	Key organizations negotiate inter-organizational roles and responsibilities that will allow them to meet their common goals.
Institutional positioning	Interactions allow organizational leaders to strategically position their organization	Key organizations work together to build a more effective and efficient system to meet common goals. An effective system that is capable of meeting its goals is more likely to be seen as legitimate by important external stakeholders.

The results suggest that interactions constituting inter-organization collaboration are extremely complex. In addition to the interactions needed to constitute an organization, organizational members must <u>also</u> develop interactions that constitute an inter-organizational system. While organizations typically grant formal authority to senior leaders who guide the organization, inter-organization systems, such as the one studied, must develop consensual processes to build collaborative capacity. Tensions will exist between what is best for a single organization versus what is effective for the common inter-organization goal. Organizational leaders must decide a proper balance between effective intra-organization interactions and effective inter-organizational interactions.

The findings should be of interest to communication and organization scholars who are interested in studying the complex communication interactions of organizational alliances and other inter-organizational systems. Previous studies show that more than 50% of alliances fail (Lunnan & Haugland, 2008). Clearly more needs to be done to understand the way that communication constitutes successful and unsuccessful inter-organizational arrangements. These results also have practical value to practitioners who are developing inter-organizational systems. The study points to complex communication interactions that are key to building a successful system.

The authors consider this an exploratory study that will be further developed as the mine action project unfolds. The authors are particularly interested in learning how the context (ethnic tensions and conflicts within the larger government system) impact their ability to build a collaborative inter-organization system. Further research should explore the CCO concepts in other inter-organizational systems.

Conclusion

The CCO approach (communication constitutes organizations) focuses on the organization-communication relationship or in the case the *inter*organization-communication relationship. In this way, communication is defined as *the dynamic, interactive negotiation of meaning through symbol use* (Ashcraft, Kuhn, & Cooren, 2009, p. 6)*.*

This study allowed the authors to unpack the making of an inter-organizational system by analyzing the interactions of the actors and the negotiation that goes on among actors as they create an inter-organizational system. The authors believe this perspective puts language at the forefront of collaborative activities and helps organizational actors realize the power of communication in the formation of the inter-organizational system. It allows actors to be self-reflexive in their use of communication and see the impact of their communicative acts. In this case, it allows the authors to reflect on the complex interactions constituting both the intra- and inter-organizational system for mine action humanitarian operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the hope of reducing mine accidents and moving Bosnia and Herzegovina closer to the society they want to become.

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