

TERMINATION OF NGO ALLIANCES IN CHINA:
TYPOLOGY AND DETERMINANTS

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ABSTRACT

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Termination of NGO Alliances in China: Typology and Determinants

In 2008, grassroots NGOs formed 13 alliances in response to the need for emergency relief and post-disaster recovery after the Sichuan Earthquake that occurred in West China and killed approximately 87,000 people. These alliances served to raise and deliver relief materials, train and supervise volunteers, promote information sharing, and assist victims with mental health and livelihood recovery. However, all alliances were terminated within less than four years. Although plenty of scholarship discusses how corporate alliances evolve or fail, few studies focus on interorganizational collaboration among nonprofits. To explore how NGOs developed collective actions in China's adverse sociopolitical environment, the author performed three years of observation in four coalitions and interviewed 60 alliance leaders, employees, and volunteers. This paper identifies four types of termination these NGO alliances experienced: three of them failed at their very births, five self-disbanded shortly after the end of emergency aid, three dissolved due to failed institutionalization, and the remaining two evolved into independent organizations. Tracking their life cycles, this study finds four main factors accountable for their terminations: political pressure, funding shortage, short-term orientation, and leadership failure. In particular, the repressive NGO regulation regime and limited funding sources fundamentally restricted all alliances' capacity and

sustainability. Further, the transient nature of disaster relief efforts and the conflict between disaster management and planned work areas contributed to the short-term orientation among alliance members and, thus, led to the closure of some alliances shortly after they provided emergency relief. In addition, though generally exempt from internal rivalry that often undermines inter-firm partnerships, NGO alliances of all types were confronted with leadership challenges—partner misfits concerning resources, strategy, and mission; flawed governing structures, and undesired individual leadership. The four factors interplayed and led to alliance dissolution through different combinations. The paper points out that, in addition to environmental uncertainty, leadership failure has become a major challenge for nonprofit collaborations.

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INTRODUCTION

Nonprofit organization alliances have grown with a striking speed in recent years (Brown, et al. 2000; Duwe 2001; Guo & Acar 2005; Retchie 1995). Some alliances are dedicated to social service, while others to policy advocacy and public education. With the assistance of information technology development and globalization, many alliances expand into international issues. However, there are relatively few studies on this phenomenon (Murray 1998). Also, most studies focus on why nonprofit organizations build alliances (Arsenault 1998; Blau & Rabrenovic 1991; Brinkerhoff 2002), which organizations tend to establish alliances (Foster & Meinhard 2002; Guo & Acar 2005), and how to improve alliance management (Yanacopulos 2005; Brinkerhoff 2002). Considering the inherent instability in alliances as an interorganizational establishment, little is known from current literature about the life cycle of nonprofit alliances, how they are terminated, and what determines their termination. Some cross-sectoral studies do involve alliance failure in nonprofit-government collaboration (Simo & Bies 2007; Boris & Steuerle 2006) and nonprofit-business collaboration (Crane 2000; Austin 2000), but findings from such research may not apply to intra-sectoral alliances of nonprofit organizations because of the unique nature of the nonprofit sector (Ott & Dicke 2001; Salamon & Anheier 1996). Another problem is that the majority of previous literature focuses on the analysis of individual organizations rather than alliances and, therefore, tends to be blind to the factors and mechanisms at the alliance level that lead to partnership dissolution.

Based on a sample of 13 nongovernmental organization (NGO) alliances engaged in disaster relief and post-disaster recovery after the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake (Note: also

called “Wenchuan Earthquake” because the epicenter was located in Wenchuan County, Sichuan Province) in West China, this study aims to explore how nonprofit alliances, especially in disaster management, are terminated. Such knowledge will increase the understanding of the life cycle of nonprofit partnerships and help evaluate the impact of interorganizational cooperation in the nonprofit sector. The second purpose is to reveal what accounts for alliance termination from the perspective of alliance management. Related findings will benefit nonprofit practitioners and policy makers in terms of risk management in multiple organizational partnerships.

As an empirical study of intra-sectoral alliances in the nonprofit sector, this explorative research attempts to answer the following questions: (a) Why do nonprofit organizations build alliances in disaster management? (b) How are nonprofit alliances terminated? (c) What causes alliance termination?

Restricted to data availability, in this study I focus on NGOs, a subsector of the entire nonprofit sector. NGO has varied definitions in different contexts (Martens 2002). But either as voluntary associations, grassroots organizations, people organizations, or some others, these definitions share some key elements such as participation, empowerment, locality, and community, in addition to making no profit and seeking no governmental office (Fisher 1997). In non-democratic regimes or premature democracies, distinguishing NGOs from the rest of the nonprofit sector is meaningful. The concept “NGO” indicates the pre-democracy disposition and also the grassroots traits independent from the state.

NGOs in modern China arose in the early 1980s and experienced a rapid growth after the 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women (Wang 2007). In the post-

communist context, NGOs acquired an identity distinguishing them from other nonprofit organizations: They usually refer to not-for-profit organizations independent from the state, nonpolitical, supportive of social justice, pursuing public good, and having complete management structures and regular programs. This definition excludes the following organizations: (a) nonprofit organizations that are affiliated with or mainly supported by the state (sometimes called governmental NGOs or GONGOs); (b) nonprofit organizations that are established for group interests such as self-help groups, trade associations, industry associations, and associations of professionals; and (c) volunteer groups that do not have complete governing bodies or regular projects.

With respect to research design, the multiple case study method was applied in this research. Yin (1994, p.3) points out that “case study allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events—such as individual life cycles, organizational and managerial processes.” Another merit of case study lies in its applicability when “there will be many more variables of interest than data points” (Yin 2003, p.13). In this study I use the multiple case study method to explore NGO alliance termination for two reasons. First, the qualitative research methodology can facilitate an in-depth, process-based analysis on the interactions between alliance members and between alliances and their environments. This merit helps overcome the limitation of scarce information about the subjects in an explorative study (Strauss & Corbin 1990). Second, the small sample made impractical a quantitative research design requiring a relatively large sample. As a new phenomenon, the alliance of NGOs is little recorded for research purpose.

The research study is presented in four sections. After introducing the research background, research purposes, questions, and methodology in the first section, I review previous literature on the typology of nonprofit alliances, theories on alliance formation, and what causes alliance termination in the second section. The third section begins with an introduction of the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake, the background for alliance formation and dissolution in this study. Then I introduce case selection criteria, data collecting methods, and confidentiality issues. The fourth section presents the main findings. After a brief demonstration of why NGOs developed alliances in response to disaster management, four patterns of alliance termination are identified: failure at birth, abrupt termination, failed transition, and evolution into independent organizations. Four factors (political pressure, resource shortage, short-term orientation, and leadership failure) are found accountable for the dissolution of the 13 alliances. In the final section, I discuss the contribution of this study and its limitations and provide suggestions for practitioners and future researchers based on my findings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition and Scope of NGO Alliance

In the nonprofit world, there is a wide range of interorganizational collaborations and the corresponding multi-organizational structures (MOS), including “network,” “council,” “conference,” “forum,” “coalition,” “association,” “alliance,” “league,” “federation,” and “union.” They vary in terms of timeframe, purpose of partnership, communication pattern, membership structure and openness, structural formality, collaboration scope, and managerial centrality (Irandoost & Benaskeur 2008; Provan 1983; Selsky 1998; Yanacopulos 2005). Among the more popular MOSs is alliance, “a strategic restructuring that includes a commitment to continue for the foreseeable future, shared or transferred decision-making power, and some type of formal agreement” (Kohm, Piana, & Gowdy 2000, p.1). Alliances are widely used in nonprofits as a flexible interorganizational arrangement between a network, in which participating organizations are fully autonomous and not committed at all to others, and a union, in which members are fully integrated into one new organization. As a consequence, in nonprofit literature “alliance” is often interchangeable with other interorganizational configurations such as “goal-directed network” (Kilduff & Tsai 2003), “coalition” (Yanacopulos 2005), and “coalitional federation” (Selsky 1998).

Kohm, Pinana, and Gowdy (2000) point out that from the primary focus perspective, there are two types of nonprofit alliances: administrative consolidation and joint programming. Administrative consolidation includes the sharing, exchanging, or contracting of administrative functions to increase administrative efficiency, while joint programming involves collectively launching and managing programs to improve the

programmatic mission of the participating organizations. With respect to the timeframe, they include task-oriented and process-oriented alliances (McLaughlin 2010). A task-oriented alliance is created to accomplish a single defined job or series of jobs, and a process-oriented one is formed to have an impact on an ongoing area of management. As a result, “in the former, there is little expectation that the alliance’s life will extend the task at hand. In the process alliance, there is every reason to expect that it will continue as long as it is useful to all parties” (McLaughlin 2010, p.94). Murray (1998) identifies five basic types of nonprofit collaboration based on the integration level, including (a) information sharing or coordination of service; (b) joint efforts at community planning, advocacy, public education, or fundraising; (c) joint delivery of programs using “new” money (for instance, government grant); (d) rationalization of existing services; and (e) full partnerships and mergers. Other studies explore the functions of alliances in accountability (Sloan 2008), legitimacy and autonomy (Carino 2002), organizational learning (Brown 1991), staff development, and so on.

Researchers have several theories to explain the formation of nonprofit alliances, among which are resource dependence theory (Pfeffer & Salancik 1978), transaction cost theory (Dickson & Weaver 1997; Wood & Gray 1991; Williamson 1991), institutionalism (Dacin & Oliver 2007; Meyer & Rowan 1977), and network (Gulati 1998; Larson 1992). Most studies on nonprofit collaboration take a resource dependence perspective (Provan 1984; Zinn et al. 1997; Zuckerman & D’Aunno 1990) in which nonprofit organizations develop partnerships to acquire critical resources and reduce environmental uncertainty. In contrast, theorists of transaction cost argue that interorganizational collaborations are created to reduce transaction costs and maximize economic or psychological benefits.

Efficiency therefore serves as the main driving force for alliance formation. Moreover, the institutional theory (Meyer & Rowan 1977; Meyer & Scott 1992) claims that organizations demonstrate conformity to the norms and social expectations in its environment. Developing partnerships with other organizations can help them meet external requirement and improve organizational legitimacy (Dacin & Oliver 2007). Finally, according to the network theory, nonprofit organizations establish collective relationships based on the networks in which they are embedded and shared with awareness, trust, and commitment.

In addition to these theoretic efforts, other researchers empirically explore why and how nonprofits create alliances. Kohm, Piana, and Gowdy (2000) find that the motives for building alliances or mergers include increasing efficiency/efficacy, improving fundraising competitiveness, and reducing overhead expenses. Foster and Meinhard (2002) argue that organizational characteristics (including size, age, mandate, the share of female employees, and organizational structure), environmental pressures (including the increased demand to provide services and be accountable, the need to address inefficiencies and participate in for-profit activities, and an increased sense of vulnerability), and organizational attitudes toward cooperation account for the formation of MOSs. Guo and Acar (2005) find that organizations that have older ages, greater resource sufficiency, lower diversity of government funding sources, or more board linkages are more likely to develop formal types of collaborative activities. In addition, nonprofits in social services, education, and research are less likely to develop formal collaborations with other organizations.

Alliance Termination

Nonprofit organizations establish a variety of collaborations in health care, youth development, education, disaster management, community development, and democracy promotion, among others. These partnerships are not merely restricted within the nonprofit sector—inter-sectoral collaboration has become increasingly popular. Nonprofits built close relationships with government agencies in public good delivery (Brinkerhoff 2002; Gazley 2007). Additionally, partnerships between nonprofits and corporations have also multiplied. They take various forms and often operate under the banner of “strategic collaboration” (Austin 2000) or “social alliance” (Berger 2004). Moreover, many great concerns brought about by globalization have expanded the influence of nonprofit organizations to international areas; numerous international alliances have been created in response to climate change, fair trade, labor and immigrant rights, human trafficking, climate change, and corporate social responsibility (Richie 1995).

While nonprofit alliances multiply with a striking speed, they are terminated almost as quickly. Though little literature involves a systematic scan of the termination of nonprofit partnerships, a few studies indicate high instability (Aiken et al. 1975; Singer & Yankey 1991; Snavely & Tracy 2000). Similarly, some business studies find that the failure rate of strategic alliances among enterprises is as high as 40-60% (Park & Ungson 2001).¹

Some authors claim that interorganizational collaboration is instable by nature. According to Williamson (1991), strategic alliances are inherently temporal, unstable,

¹ However, termination does not necessarily mean failure, though alliance failure indicates some type of termination (Lunnan 2007; Sadowski 2008).

and disfavored, as changes in an alliance cannot be made unilaterally (as with market consent) or by power (as with hierarchy). However, such an argument works only in a broad sense but fails to explain why some partnerships exist longer than others or why partnerships have different outcomes. On the other hand, while most studies focus on the formation and management of interagency partnerships, few involve their termination, even in the business sector where alliance research is comparatively rich (Cui, Calantone, & Griffith 2011; Sadowski 2008). Though some theories of coalition formation focusing on the initial conditions for creating collaborations (for instance, resource interdependence, opportunity of reducing transaction cost) may shed light on reasons for termination (Cui, Calantone, & Griffith 2011; Das & Teng 1996), the validity of such theories is limited. The reasons are simple: (a) those theories provide only a partial explanation of the formation of interorganizational partnership (Guo & Acar 2005); and (b) formation conditions are not necessarily the same as maintenance conditions because the latter involve the complicated process of organization management and the interaction between alliances and their environments during alliance operation.

Some scholars attempt to explain the termination of alliances from the point of view of organization science. Alter and Hage (1993) argue that networks fall into imbalance when the coordination and integration among participating organizations does not keep pace with structural development, which is defined by different levels of differentiation and complexity within the system. The imbalance then results in the failure of evolution. On the other hand, the game theory (Olson 1965) and agency theory (Jensen & Meckling 1976; Wood 1989) are widely applied to analyze internal conflict and disengagement within alliances. Some studies try to combine literature of both lines

(for example, Parkhe & Ungson 2001), but the integrated approach faces the same dilemma as many other all-purpose efforts: the different properties of each sector (politics, business, and nonprofit) require specific perspectives and models for the ad hoc understanding of its behaviors. Considering the very limited literature on the termination of nonprofit alliances, it is necessary to draw on alliance research in other areas. On the other hand, all types of MOSs share some common characteristics from the organization science perspective.

Termination of Political Alliances

The studies of political alliance dissolution mainly focus on parliamentary elections (King et al. 1990; Laver & Schofield 1998; Strom & Swindle 2002), coalition government (Browne, Frensdreis, & Gleiber 1986; Keith & Gibbs 1978; Narud 1995), and cross-national alliance (Bennett 1997; Goertz & Diehl 1995; Leeds & Savun 2007). Structural attributes of the alliance or the greater regime in which coalition politics is played out, the impact of exogenous critical events, and strategic interaction between and within parties are often claimed to account for the dissolution of political alliances (Lupia & Strom 1995). Also, political leaders play the key role in determining collaboration outcomes: “Decisions to terminate coalitions or call new elections result from party leaders’ rational responses to the constraints of legislative and electoral institutions and the anticipated feelings of the electorate” (Lupia & Strom 1995, p.648). These findings are echoed by Wright and Golderberg (1985) who claim that coalition members are vulnerable to the leader’s persuasion and manipulation because they are uncertain about their ultimate payoffs. Narud (1995) argues that the termination of coalition governments is conditioned by the cleavage structure and the ideological diversity of the party system

and partially determined by the parties' position in the policy space. With respect to international collaborations, Bennett (1997) examines 207 alliances from 1816 to 1984 and contends that security-autonomy tradeoffs and domestic politics modes affect alliance duration. Leeds and Savun (2007) find that bonding international agreements are likely to be opportunistically abrogated when members experience changes that affect the value of alliance, but factors influencing the cost of violating bonding terms can reduce the probability of breaking commitment.

Generally, the political alliance theories stress the impact of the environmental uncertainty (such as the complexity of the political system, exogenous critical events, and uncertain tradeoffs) and the role of coalition leaders upon collaboration outcomes. These properties may be shared by nonprofit alliances, since nonprofits are also characterized by environmental uncertainties and complex connections (Blau & Rabrenovic 1991). But on the other hand, the different goals of collaboration distinguish political and nonprofit organizations and thus their partnerships; political organizations rally around political power and country interests while nonprofit organizations rally around public good.

Termination of Enterprise Alliances

Partially because of the prominent application of interorganizational collaboration in businesses, interfirm alliances (usually called "strategic alliances") have become a hotspot in business research since the 1980s. Researchers performed numerous studies on the failure or instability of strategic alliances, equity-based and contract-based, business-oriented and learning-oriented, horizontal and vertical, among which the relatively comprehensive frameworks are developed by Das and Teng (1999), Park and Ungson (2001), and Serapio and Cascio (1996).

Daz and Teng (1999) create a management process framework to explain risk management in strategic alliances. Two types of risks threatening interfirm collaboration are identified as relational risk and performance risk. Relational risk is defined as the probability and consequence that partner firms of an alliance do not cooperate in a desired manner, and performance risk refers to those factors that may jeopardize the success of an alliance, even when the partners cooperate fully. Relational risk is regarded as critical in determining alliance instability because “alliance partners are primarily motivated in enhancing their self-interest at the cost of the partner firms and even the alliance” (Daz & Teng 1999, p.51). However, collaboration is threatened by relational risk in each phase of alliance management: selecting alliance partners, structuring the alliance, operating the alliance, and evaluating the alliance. As a result, the stability of strategic alliance depends on three balances—the balance between flexibility and rigidity concerning collaboration structure, between competition and cooperation among partners, and between short-term and long-term collaborative objectives.

Another important model of alliance termination was established by Park and Ungson (2001). They synthesize previous literature on alliance failure into an alliance governance model and argue that failures are caused by two sources of problems: (a) opportunistic hazards due to rivalry between partners and (b) coordination and agency costs resulting from complexity and uncertainty in managing a cooperative relationship. As shown in several theoretical perspectives, including the transaction-cost theory, game theory, resource-based view, learning theory, and resource dependence theory, opportunistic hazards are inherent in strategic alliances because of the competitive rivalry between participant firms. As a result, alliances become a costly governance structure to

arrange interfirm transactions as partners try to employ safeguards against potential hazards. On the other hand, “strategic alliances also fail because they require excessive effort to coordinate and integrate two independent organizations which result in a high level of managerial complexity and uncertainty” (Park & Ungson 2001, p.44).

Specialization and agency problems among alliance managers are two major sources of such complexity and uncertainty. Furthermore, two authors develop a dynamics model to explain the erosion/failure of strategic alliances, which analyzes ex ante conditions, in situ conditions, and ex post conditions in the collaboration management process that determines alliance success or failure.

Serapio and Cascio (1996, p.64) point out other causes of alliance termination, excluding alliance failure: (1) differences between partners (for example, incompatibility between people, different management styles, or disagreement over objectives); (2) breach of agreement; (3) the alliance no longer fits the goals/strategies of a partner; (4) a partner needs to exit the alliance because of financial difficulties or to take advantage of financial opportunities; and (5) the alliance has met its goals.

In general, business researchers have developed comprehensive theoretical systems and empirical models to explain the instability/failure of interfirm alliances. However, attempts to apply these findings to nonprofit alliances may face three challenges. First, strategic alliances in business studies are usually operationalized as a cooperative relationship between two firms (Lerner, Shane, & Tsai 2003), which significantly differs from MOSs in terms of managerial complexity, tradeoffs, and collaboration dynamics.² Second, business researchers put more emphasis upon the

² Axelrod (1986) and Oye (1986) identify the number of partners as one important factor influencing alliance stability.

influence of internal governance than upon the external environment. Like their political counterparts, however, nonprofit alliances are often faced with a great deal of environmental uncertainty. Third, business alliances are built to improve partners' competitiveness and also are fundamentally influenced by internal rivalry among partners. Firms are even warned not to be "good partners," so as to avoid being exploited by other opportunistic partners (Larsson et al. 1998). However, restricted by the non-distribution restriction and driven by the purpose of public good, nonprofit organizations may have different dynamics in their partnerships. This requires cautious and special examinations of nonprofit alliances.

Termination of Nonprofit Alliances

Scholars have not examined alliance failure or dissolution in the nonprofit sector until recently. Relevant literature is still scarce compared to that in business and politics research.

Murray (1998) identifies four sets of factors that influence the formation, performance, and duration of nonprofit alliances, including: (a) the type of collaboration, such as information sharing, joint efforts, joint delivery, rationalization of existing services, or merger; (b) characteristics of the parties; (c) the process of developing and implementing the collaborative activities; and (d) environmental or contextual factors, such as informal networks, third party influence, resource scarcity, and general community and social values.

Brinkerhoff (2002) points out that mutuality and organization identity together shape nonprofit partnership. Mutuality carries the spirit of partnership principles, while organization identity defines the rationale for selecting particular partners. When one

partner follows the more dominant partner and loses its own organizational identity, it will become an extension of the dominant partner or be incorporated into it; at this point the partnership comes to an end.

With respect to empirical studies, Berger (2004) identifies six problems that undermine nonprofit-company collaborations, including misunderstandings between partners, misallocation of costs and benefits, mismatches of power, mismatched partners, misfortunes of time, and mistrust. These problems are caused by two groups of factors: challenges in the nonprofit-profit fit and the structural characteristics existing in the partners and the alliance itself. Lowndes and Skelcher (1998) find out some practical factors that account for alliance dissolution in their study of three-sectoral partnerships for community regeneration, which involves business, community, and nonprofit organizations. The reasons include the absence of a dedicated budget to maintain the collaborative program, the fulfillment of partnership goals, the involvement burden upon local organizations and key individuals, and the sense of “network fatigue” (Lowndes & Skelcher 1998, p.329) among partners.

Other studies involve intra-sectoral collaborations among nonprofits. Staggenberg’s early research (1986) emphasizes the influence of the environment and ideological conflicts in social movement coalitions. He argues that “once exceptional environmental conditions subside, ideological conflicts and the organizational maintenance needs of individual movement organizations are likely to cause conflicts within coalitions which may lead to their dissolution” (Staggenber 1996, p.388). In contrast, Dutting and Sugge (2010) place the emphasis upon the impact of inner conflicts among parties. Four factors are claimed to put collaboration at risk, including (a)

irreconcilable differences in organizations' ideologies and objectives; (b) irreconcilable differences in leadership styles that lead to transparency problems and insufficient mutual respect and trust; (c) competition among parties for donor funding and withdrawal of donor funding for collaborative activities; and (d) the fear of being submerged with others that results in the loss of visibility and means to claim accomplishments as their own.

Compared to politics and business literature, the impact of both environmental conditions and inner conflicts are emphasized significantly more in nonprofit alliance studies. But while focusing on challenges in collaboration formation and operation, most nonprofit studies do not explore the specific mechanisms of alliance termination. Moreover, considering the significant difference between intra-sectoral and inter-sectoral collaboration (Guo & Acar 2005; Milne, Lyer, & Gooding-Williams 1996), the dissolution of alliances within the nonprofit sector requires more in-depth exploration in terms of termination conditions, mechanisms, approaches, and impact.

By examining the evolution and termination of the 13 NGO alliances that were established in response to the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake relief in China, this article aims to: (a) make an explorative study about how intra-sectoral alliances of NGOs are terminated from the alliance perspective; (b) examine the impact of environmental conditions and intra-alliance tensions upon alliance termination; (c) identify other factors causing partnership dissolution and examine the interplay of different determinants; and (d) develop an empirical framework for analysis of alliance termination for future research.

METHODOLOGY

Sichuan Earthquake Relief

On May 12th, 2008, an earthquake of magnitude 8.0 struck attacked West China. With the epicenter in Yingxiu, Sichuan, the disaster caused more than 69,000 deaths and 17,000 lost people (The China National Commission for Disaster Reduction & the United Nations Development Plan 2009). The economic loss was estimated as high as ¥8.45 trillion (\$1.24 trillion by the ratio of 6.8: 1 in 2008). While more than 95% of the death toll and economic loss occurred in Sichuan, three neighboring provinces (Gansu, Shanxi, and Chongqing) also suffered significantly. The central government established the Disaster Relief Headquarters, directed by Premier Wen Jiabao, and sent more than 157,000 soldiers to assist in disaster relief. Four months later, the three-year Sichuan Earthquake reconstruction master plan worth ¥10 trillion was launched (the State Council 2008). In early 2012, the central government declared the rebuilding plan was finished.³

The voluntary sector's engagement in disaster relief was unprecedented in many dimensions. As a result, some scholars regarded 2008 as "the first year of China's civil society" (for example, Gao & Yuan 2008). More than 3 million volunteers participated in the frontline relief efforts.⁴ The total donation for emergency relief and post-disaster reconstruction was ¥76.7 billion, as much as 3.44 times than the total Chinese giving in

³ The state Council News Office declared on Feb 24th 2012 that the Sichuan Earthquake post-disaster reconstruction plan has been completed. See http://www.china.com.cn/zhibo/2012-02/24/content_24698719.htm

⁴ The State Council News Office released the white book "Disaster Reduction in China" in May 2012, which described volunteerism for the Sichuan Earthquake relief. See http://www.gov.cn/zwgk/2009-05/11/content_1310227.htm

2007.⁵ The disaster relief also featured NGOs involvement—more than 300 NGOs entered the earthquake-stricken areas and provided relief services (Zhu & Chan 2009). Their behaviors were regarded as “the first exposition of the Chinese NGO sector” by an NGO leader.

Most NGOs built various types of interorganizational partnerships in response to the disaster relief. Large NGOs (usually with an international background) mainly chose to partner with local governments, though a very few of them also supported grassroots organizations’ relief actions. Foundations partnered with media in terms of fundraising and disaster preparedness education and with local governments in collecting and delivering relief materials. Government-affiliated NGOs were in charge of private and corporate donations and registered and deployed volunteers. Other NGOs mainly collaborated with each other to develop joint relief programs. In addition, numerous volunteer groups were temporarily established in the frontline areas and in Internet-based virtual communities to deliver organized relief services. Owing to the striking outcomes of these collaborative efforts, some NGO researchers optimistically claimed that China has entered a new era of NGO partnership (for example, Zhu & Chan 2009). In fact, few NGO alliances, especially intra-sectoral alliances, were founded in the Chinese nonprofit sector before the Sichuan Earthquake. However, it turned out that almost all nonprofit partnerships that were founded for the Sichuan Earthquake relief came to an end within four years after the disaster, though the comprehensive community recovery is far from

⁵ See the Ministry of Civil Affairs (May 12 2009), Wenchuan Earthquake Donations (No. 140). See http://www.china.com.cn/policy/txt/2008-12/06/content_16907948.htm

being finished.⁶ The termination of these partnerships provides an opportunity to empirically examine what accounts for alliance dissolution in the nonprofit sector.

Case Selection

The criteria used to select cases in this study are as follows. (a) The alliance was composed of two and more NGOs. In other words, it was an interagency arrangement of formal organizations. (b) NGOs were the majority of the alliance, accounting for more than half the members. (c) Members had fully shared and publicly declared goals regarding earthquake relief or post-disaster recovery. (d) The alliance had a clear (rather than tacit) organizational structure. (e) The alliance took some type of joint actions in respond to the disaster.

The following partnerships are excluded from the sample: (a) networks that did not have shared goals among parties and that did not have a clear organizational structure; (b) dead-lettered partnerships that took no joint actions regarding disaster relief or recovery; (c) cross-sectoral collaborations between NGOs and corporations or between NGOs and government agencies (including the government-affiliated NGOs); (d) contract-based projects between NGOs and foundations or corporations; (e) government-controlled federations, even if the majority of the members were NGOs; and (f) associations of individuals.

The research plan aims to include all NGO alliances that meet the selection criteria. The initial alliance list had several sources. The first source was my personal

⁶ Despite the government declaring the fulfillment of the post-disaster reconstruction in the sense of facility and infrastructure rebuilding, community recovery may require 10 or more years for disasters as huge as the Sichuan Earthquake. For example, Chang (2010) examines the Kobe Earthquake recovery and finds that the local economy experienced a three to four year temporary boost and then stabilized. Also, Kobe regained the same population 10 years after the disaster. Comerio (2004) found that more than half of the recovery projects in San Francisco and Santa Cruz were still under construction 15 years after the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake.

network in the NGO sector. Having worked for two well-networked NGOs in China's three NGO hotspots as a program manager, I was engaged in a well-informed community of nonprofit professionals. The information of most alliances would be exchanged in my community. Second, I read through all related issues of *Disaster Relief Observer for Social Organizations*, an electronic magazine published by a nonprofit media organization. During the Sichuan Earthquake, the magazine was the most comprehensive source about NGO relief efforts. Third, I searched the Internet by using all alliance-related key words, including “*lianmeng* (alliance),” “*zhongxin* (conference or network),” “*wangluo* (network),” “*lianhe xingdong* (joint action)” “*lianhehui* (conference),” and “*pingtai* (platform or conference)” to check for any other alliances missing from my list. Last, I asked NGO network leaders to double-check the list to examine redundancy and missing data.

The final list entails 13 NGO alliances as shown in Table 1. It demonstrates that as the major affected region, Sichuan, hosted four NGO relief alliances. Alliances also appeared in most neighboring provinces, such as Gansu, Shanxi, Guizhou, and Congqing, and in some NGO hotspot cities, like Kunming, Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Xiamen. The number of participating organizations varied from 4 to 28. Their focus areas included collecting and disseminating disaster information, assessing victims' needs, raising money and relief materials, recruiting and training volunteers, providing settlement services, taking care of children and the elderly, and enhancing public awareness on disaster preparedness. These alliances achieved a great deal even only from the point of view of relief materials and funding.

Figure 1 Location of the 13 NGO Alliances for the Sichuan Earthquake Relief

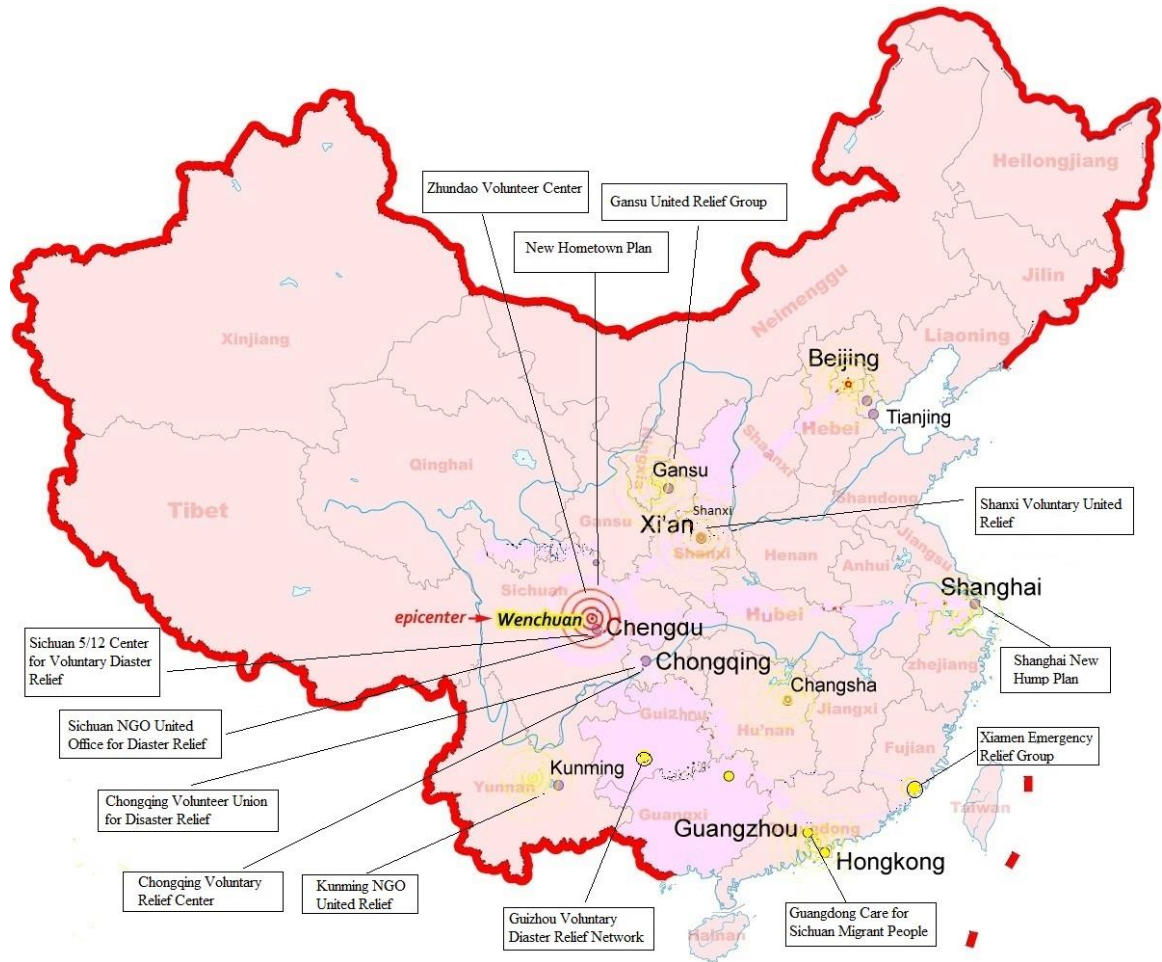


Table 1 Basic information of 13 NGO Alliances after the Sichuan Earthquake

Alliance	Abbr.	Location	Formation	Closure	No. of Members	Focus Areas	Main Outcomes
Sichuan United Office for NGO Disaster Relief	SUO	Chengdu	May 2008	June 2008	24	Raising and delivering relief materials; information collection and dissemination	Raised relief materials of ¥10 million; conducted 12 disaster investigations
Sichuan 5/12 Center for Voluntary Disaster Relief	CVDR	Chengdu	May 2008	March 2012	28	Information sharing; strategy coordination; volunteer training; capacity building	Raised relief materials of ¥2 million, supervised 133 volunteers, received more than 240 organization visitors
Zundao Volunteer Center	ZVC	Zundao Town, Sichuan	May 2008	June 2009	20	Raising and delivering relief materials; volunteer recruiting supervision; child education; community-based victim service	Raised relief materials of ¥10 million, supervised 400 volunteers, established 10 community culture centers
New Hometown Plan	NHP	Chengdu	June 2008	March 2012	4	Integrated community recovery service	Established an integrated community center, developed three victim self-help organizations, hosted 30 long-term volunteers
Kunming NGO United Relief	KUR	Kunming	May 2008	May 2008	6	Raising relief materials	Raised relief materials of ¥70,000
Xiamen Emergency Relief Group	XERG	Xiamen	May 2008	May 2008	7	Raising relief materials	Raised relief materials of ¥567,000
Shanxi Voluntary United Relief	SVUR	Xi'an	May 2008	June 2008	13	Community-based victim service; raising relief materials	Raised relief materials of ¥700,000 and supervised about 40 volunteers
Shanghai New Hump Project	SNHP	Shanghai	May 2008	May 2008	5	Raising relief materials	Raised relief materials of ¥2 million

(Continued)

Alliance	Abbr.	Location	Formation	Closure	No. of Members	Focus Areas	Main Outcomes
Guangdong Care for Sichuan Migrant People	GCSMP	Guangdong	May 2008	May 2008	15	Mental health assistance for victims	Almost nothing
Gansu United Relief Group	GURG	Lanzhou	May 2008	June 2008	7	Disaster information collection raising relief materials	Raised relief materials of about ¥ 50,000, investigated one township, and trained about 20 volunteers
Chongqing Voluntary Relief Center for the 5/12 Earthquake	CVRC	Chongqing	May 2008	May 2008	8	Disaster information collection; raising relief materials	Raised relief materials of ¥ 20,000 or so
Chongqing Volunteer Union for Disaster Relief	CVFDR	Chongqing	May 2008	July 2008	9	Raising relief materials; recruiting and supervising volunteers	Raised relief materials of ¥ 700,000 or so and recruited 130 volunteers
Guizhou Voluntary Disaster Relief Network	GVDRN	Guiyang	May 2008	February 2009	18	Raising relief materials; volunteer recruiting and supervision; community-based victim service	Raised relief materials of ¥ 500,000 or so and recruited 60 volunteers

Data Collection

After identifying relief alliances, I use three methods to collect data: observation, semi-structured interview, and document study.

Observation “examines the intricacies of interactions and relationships of individuals” (Lunenburg & Lrby 2008, pp.92-93). With respect to the complicated sociopolitical environment for Chinese NGOs, observation can help researchers acquire an in-depth understanding of organizational behaviors in NGOs and of the interactions and relationships between NGOs, governments, and the public. Two types of observation were applied in this study: participant observation and nonparticipant observation. According to Swanwick (1994), in participant observation the researcher adopts an integrated full-time role with research participants (usually for a long time) to observe their behavior in a natural setting. Often used in qualitative research, this method enables the researcher to acquire knowledge-in-action from the perspective of insiders (Chatman 1992). In contrast, non-participant observation is a relatively unobtrusive qualitative research strategy for gathering primary data about some aspects of the social world without interacting directly with its participants (Williams 2008). Compared to participant observation, this method provides the researcher with a relatively objective perspective to obtain information about research subjects. I used both methods in this study to combine their merits of acquiring in-depth and objective data about NGO alliances.

Participant observation was performed in the NHP and the NRC. I worked as program manager in the NHP between June 2008 and July 2011 and participated in its establishment and restructuring. This position gave me an opportunity to observe the

entire process of alliance operation from within, as I was involved in making all important decisions. The main content of my observation notes included alliance formation, team building, grant application from foundations, interactions with the local government and the community, relationships among participating organizations, and the interactions between our alliance and other NGO partnerships. In particular, oriented as an NGO collaboration pilot project, the NHP governing body decided to establish an interactive self-evaluation plan, which encouraged me to share my observation with other participants for review. On the other hand, I also performed participant observation in the NRC between June 2008 and July 2011, as my organization joined them as an organization member. My observations on NRC were relatively few: I, on behalf of my organization, attended some important meetings, including its restructuring meeting, an organizational learning workshop, and three disaster management symposiums. In addition, I worked with the administration team on two occasions, totaling seven work days, and observed how the team managed alliance affairs.

Nonparticipant observations were conducted in another three NGO alliances: ZVC, NGOUO, and GNRC. I worked with the administrative team of the NGOUO for eight days and of the ZVC for seven days as a member of an independent evaluation team, in May 2008 and February-March 2009 respectively. In addition to face-to-face interviews with alliance leaders, staff members, and volunteers, I observed how they organized daily work. The nonparticipant observations of the GNRC were conducted when my organization joined it as a regular member. Because of the failed joint action, my observation of this alliance totaled two work days.

The second method was semi-structured interview, which was applied to all 13 alliances. This approach generates reasonably standard data across alliances but also allows the flexibility to probe answers deeply and collect plenty of in-depth information from various participants (Gall et al. 1996). For each alliance, at least two leaders or important team members were interviewed face-to-face or by telephone. Each interview lasted 30 to 90 minutes and was audio-recorded. The core questions included: (a) motives for developing alliances; (b) goals and objectives; (c) membership structure and management structure; (d) focus areas and strategies; (e) interactions with governments, foundations, and media; (f) major achievements; (f) challenges in alliance management; (g) causes of termination; and (h) lessons learned from the collaboration experience (see Appendix “Interview Questions”). These interviews were performed between May 2008 and February 2012. All alliances were interviewed after their dissolution, but four were also interviewed before the dissolution. As a result, 60 alliance leaders and important sponsors participated in the interviews.

Finally, I collected archival data to obtain information supplemental to the data obtained from interviews and observations. Restricted by the length/depth of observations and biased by the observer’s position, observational data is often partial and incomplete; meanwhile, interview data can be flawed by inaccuracy, incompleteness, and communication noise. Archival data therefore can help offset such flaws by providing information from diverse sources. The document sources in this study included alliance websites, meeting minutes, program pamphlets, progress reports, self-evaluation reports, announcements, organization blogs, and newspaper articles.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is composed of coding and categorizing, identifying similarities and differences, and constant comparison. Data were coded and compiled both by each alliance and by categories. A special file was created for each alliance, which consisted of related data from all three sources. Another coding system was based on different categories, alliance life cycles, operational modes, work areas, and environmental and managerial factors.

Additionally, data triangulation was used to improve internal credibility, which includes two aspects: comparing data from the same type of source and between different types of sources. Alliances were observed in different scenarios from office work to board meetings and in different developmental stages from formation to dissolution. For a given alliance, interviewees were selected from different organizations to restrict institutionalized viewpoints that might bias the findings. On the other hand, data from different sources were compared to keep the findings consistent. For example, archival data were analyzed in combination with observation notes to compare similarities and identify discrepancies.

An important approach to improve external validity applied in the study was the longitudinal observation. I have tracked the phenomenon of NGO partnerships in China since 2006, two year before the Sichuan Earthquake, and kept observing them even after the termination of the 13 relief alliances analyzed in this article. The longitudinal observation gives me an opportunity to go beyond individual alliances and understand the interactions between interorganizational collaborations and their environments from a systematic and long-term perspective.

Confidentiality

Considering the small sector of Chinese NGOs, confidentiality is a challenge for a qualitative study involving important organizations and figures. In this study, three measures were taken to improve confidentiality. First, no personal information (such as sex, nationality, employment, health, etc.) of the research subjects was collected during observations and interviews to reduce risk to the minimum level. Second, all observation and interview data were saved in a computer hard drive to which only the searcher has access. Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed into text in which interviewee information was disidentified and separately saved. Third, no interviewee's name will appear in the official research report. Instead, a general title, such as "an alliance leader" or "an NGO leader," was used to indicate their role in the alliance.

FINDINGS

Formation of NGO Alliances after the Earthquake

Chinese NGOs began building interorganizational partnerships in the early 2000s, primarily in the fields of women's development, rural development, and the environment. For example, the Gender and Development of China, a national network of women's NGOs, was established in 2000 to promote women's rights and poverty reduction. After the outbreak of the SARS in Beijing in 2003, nine NGOs and educational organizations collaborated to open a hotline and provide consulting services to the public. In addition, 50 NGOs made a joint appeal to improving biological security (Fu 2003). A local network, the Guizhou Development Forum, was built in Guiyang in 2004 to provide training service for local grassroots NGOs. For the most part, such partnerships were restricted to information sharing, staff training, and public education in the form of conferences, training workshops, Internet-based communities, and individual-based joint projects. In fact, few, if any, formal MOSs appeared in the nonprofit sector before the Sichuan Earthquake. As a result, some researchers (for example, Zhu & Chan 2009; Han 2009) claim that the NGO collaboration era started in China when NGOs built various partnerships in response to the earthquake disaster in 2008.

Some factors significantly contributed to the unprecedented growth of NGO alliances. First, the large number of victim needs could not be met by governments alone and therefore required NGO assistance. In addition to the 69,000 deaths and 19,000 lost people, the earthquake also caused injuries in 370,000 people. Approximately 4.8 million residents lost their houses, accounting for 5.4% of the total population in Sichuan

Province.⁷ Moreover, the rainstorm lasting two days shortly after the earthquake significantly aggravated victims' suffering. Likewise, local governments were also seriously hit in the disaster. With the weak disaster preparedness system, their relief capacity to help victims was seriously undermined. Unfortunately, the mountainous terrain and the destroyed transportation system further compromised relief efforts by the provincial and central governments. Even after the entry of the armies and government-assigned relief institutions into affected regions, earthquake victims' diversified needs, such as the special needs of vulnerable groups (including the wounded and elderly, children, pregnant women, and ethnic minorities), mental health care, and community security could not be met merely by the government relief system. Therefore, the assistance from victims' self-help groups, volunteers, and NGOs were needed to make up for the discrepancy.

The Longmen Town where the NHP was based was an example. Only 30 kilometers away from the epicenter, the town was fully destroyed by the earthquake. In addition to 14 deaths, more than 95% of the houses and all of the government office buildings were ruined, and the drinking water system severely damaged. Losing all of their possessions during the earthquake, residents lived in crowded tents and received limited food, clothes, and other everyday provisions from governmental allotments. The high need of victims became the primary reason for NHP's entry.

Second, the patriotism aroused by the huge disaster provided strong social legitimacy and resources for NGOs' participation in the form of interorganizational collaboration. This huge disaster, second only to the 1976 Tangshan Earthquake in terms

⁷ See the State Overall Planning for the Post-Wenchuan Earthquake Restoration and Reconstruction (汶川地震灾后恢复重建总体规划) released by the State Council on August 8, 2008. Refer to <http://www.china-un.org/eng/zt/earthquake20080512/t485868.htm>

of death toll, regarded by the public as “a national calamity,” led to the striking rise of nationalism among the Chinese both at home and overseas. All individuals and organizations were encouraged to contribute to the emergency relief efforts. Volunteers and volunteer groups for the first time entered the public sphere in such an unprecedented scale that some researchers call the year of 2008 “the First Year of Chinese Volunteers.”⁸ As an important part of the voluntary sector, NGOs were granted social legitimacy for their engagement in this strong social ethos. Such legitimacy was critical for NGOs to build collective actions, especially considering that many NGOs were unregistered and therefore ineligible to participate in important public events as legal entities, not to mention build interorganizational partnerships.⁹ In addition, the fashionable patriotism encouraged countless individuals to volunteer and donate money and relief materials, a small fraction of which were channeled into NGOs and made their relief efforts practical in terms of resource availability. In fact, 12 of the 13 alliances collected the majority of relief materials and funds from the public; the only one primarily relying on foundation grants, the NHP, focused on community recovery. But it also benefited greatly from the time contribution of more than 40 long-term volunteers.

Third, the previous experience of building cooperative relationships and the existing networks laid the organizational foundation for forming formal MOSs. The multiplication of informal partnerships since the 2000s taught NGOs the awareness and basics skills of developing interorganizational collaborations that were often organized both by region and by theme. Also, localized networks played a big part for alliance

⁸ See Jiangang Zhu, “The First Year of Chinese Volunteers and Citizens,” *South Cities*, July 13rd 2008.

⁹ NGOs’ increased social legitimacy, the emergent nature of disaster relief, and the need of local governments for NGOs’ service promoted the state to temporarily loosen its regulation upon NGOs. Such a situation created “political opportunities” (Meyer & Minkoff 2004; Tarrow 1994) for the formation of NGO alliances.

formation after the earthquake. Among the 13 alliances, 8 were based on or connected with the existing NGO networks. Such networks provided participating organizations with personal relations and trust, which were indispensable for building formal partnerships in the uncertain environment. For example, the GVDRN's major members were also active in the Guizhou Development Forum; the formation of the SVUR benefited from a local network of organizational learning.

Fourth, information technology provided strong support for long-distance communication and resource mobilization. All NGO alliances utilized the Internet as an important tool to share information, facilitate communication and decision-making within the alliances, recruit volunteers, and raise relief materials. Most popular Internet-based instruments include websites, email groups, bulletin board systems (BBSs), blogs, and QQ (an online instant message program) groups. For example, the nonprofit web portal www.ngocn.org opened a special BBS "5/12 Earthquake Relief" a few hours after the earthquake. Some messages posted there were viewed as many as seven million times. With the help of this site, the SUO raised relief materials of more than ¥10 million and mobilized thousands of volunteers.

Finally, the intention to improve the profile of the NGO sector as a whole also contributed to alliance establishment. Due to the state's restriction of voluntary societies in the past decades, the NGO sector has long been invisible in the public sphere and little supported by the public. Therefore, although encouraged by patriotism like the rest of the society, NGOs also regarded the earthquake relief as an opportunity to increase the public awareness about voluntary organizations and their nonprofit causes and even to increase the probability of winning government support in the future. In addition, the striking

growth of nonprofit sectors in Japan and Taiwan after huge earthquakes strengthened the optimistic mentality among voluntary organizations that Chinese NGOs would have a similar growth after the Sichuan Earthquake. Just as an NGO leader said, “this disaster gave Chinese NGOs an opportunity to make a collective exhibition and demonstrate the significance of the voluntary sector.” The SVUR clearly expressed a similar purpose in its formation announcement:

Facing the great disaster, we hope the collective action of voluntary societies will contribute what we can to assist the government in helping victims go through hard times and rebuild their homes. At the same time, we want to show to the entire society that NGOs are not only determined to assist the government in solving problems and taking social responsibilities. They also have the ability to take immediate and effective actions.

Victims’ unmet needs, available political and economic resources brought about by patriotism, existent networks, Internet technology, and the expectation for future development all constituted the preconditions for NGOs to respond to the Earthquake. However, it is the weakness of individual NGOs that made building interorganizational collaborations such an important and even unavoidable choice. For example, among the seven member organizations in the GURG, only three had regular programs and thus full-time staff members, and the rest were non-staffed volunteer organizations. Financial problems even confronted international NGOs participating in the CVDR. Though they had rich funding sources, using them in disaster management required special approval from the headquarters located overseas, usually a process too time-consuming to give quick response in emergency. Therefore, building interorganizational collaboration became a common choice for different types of NGOs.

By pooling their limited resources, NGOs pursued the economics of scale and the effect of supplementary resources supposed in MOSs. Political legitimacy, legal legitimacy, access to relief materials and funds, and connections with local institutions in the affected regions were usually the critical resources that bound NGO partners. For example, in the SUO, one registered environmental NGO with government background was chosen to represent the alliance in government communication and finance management; a volunteer group having disaster management experience was sent to collect disaster information and investigate victim needs; a nonprofit website was in charge of relief material collecting and communication between the frontline teams and the base. The other benefit of alliances, economics of scale, was reached by bringing together as many organizations as possible. In fact, the SUO and ZVC's striking achievements in emergency relief were mainly attributed to their large sizes.

Termination Patterns of NGO Alliances

However, the conditions making alliances possible are not necessarily the same as those maintaining alliances, though both sets of conditions may have overlaps. Also, the original conditions change during alliance operation. As a result, while all 13 alliances were established within the first three months after the earthquake, only two of them were still in operation in early 2012, with the others terminated in the first or second year as shown in Table 1.

Das and Teng (2012) propose a life cycle model to explain the dynamics of strategic alliances. An alliance usually experiences three phases: formation, operation, and outcome. Termination can happen in each phase. Kanter (1994) notes the influence of collaborative learning and transition during alliance operation. Based on their models,

the developmental processes of NGO alliances were analyzed and compared to find their similarities and differences. Four types of termination were identified: termination at birth, abrupt dissolution, failed transition, and evolution into independent NGOs. Their characteristics are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Four Patterns of Alliance Termination after the Sichuan Earthquake

Termination Pattern	Termination Time (after the disaster)	Alliance Characteristics	Approach	Alliances
Termination at birth	1-2 week	Outside earthquake-hit areas; composed of grassroots NGOs	Automatic dissolution in failed collective actions	KUR GCSMP CVRC
Abrupt termination	2-4 weeks	Majority of members outside earthquake-hit areas; composed of grassroots NGOs	Immediate dissolution after the end of emergency aid	SUO SNHP XERG GURG CVFDR
Failed transition	2-12 months	Based in or close to earthquake-hit areas; led by influential NGOs	Unexpected dissolution after the failure of institutionalizing partnerships for post-disaster recovery	GVDRN SVUR ZVC
Alliance evolution	3 years	Engaged by local NGOs; restructured after emergency relief; engaged in multiple networks	An independent NGO was established to replace the alliance	NHP CVDR

Termination at birth. This type of termination occurred when an alliance failed to take effective collective actions after formation and just disappeared within the first 1-2 weeks after the disaster. Three alliances, KUR, GCSMP, and CVRC, belonged to this category. They were established by NGOs outside the earthquake-affected region, most of which were grassroots organizations serving local communities. Though developing formal alliance structures, such partnerships proved to be infertile in collective response—they failed at the very beginning.

GCSMP was a good example. Four days after the earthquake,¹⁰ 15 grassroots NGOs in Guangdong had a meeting and decided to establish GCSMP. Considering that millions of migrant workers from Sichuan lived in Guangdong, GCSMP planned to take three measures: (a) recruit and train volunteers to provide psychological support for migrant workers; (b) appeal to Guangdong citizens to donate prepaid telephone cards so that migrant workers could call their family members living in their Sichuan hometowns; and (c) collect base-line data about migrant workers and their families and investigate their earthquake loss and needs. However, most organization made few achievements in these areas. The coordinating committee worked little in coordinating interorganizational cooperation. Participating NGOs never met again to conduct and examine joint projects under the banner of GCSMP; thus, the alliance was naturally dissolved.

Abrupt termination. Alliances of this type dissolved themselves immediately after the end of emergency relief and include SUO, SNHP, XERG, GURG, and CVFDR. One of them was located in Sichuan, three in neighboring provinces, and one outside the earthquake-stricken region. Compared to those alliances that silently disappeared, terminations in this group seemed more planned and well-organized. They developed closure schedules, reported collective performance, and officially announced alliance dissolution.

An example was the SUO. It was established in Chengdu (Sichuan's capital) on the second day after the disaster by five grassroots NGO leaders, two of whom were based in Sichuan. Supported by the nonprofit web portal www.ngocn.org, this alliance quickly mobilized 24 NGOs to join its action network and made significant performance.

¹⁰ Compared to other emergency relief alliances, GCSMP's formation was relatively late. This indicated the limited willingness and capacity of participating organizations for collective actions, which may have contributed to their rapid failure.

Two weeks after its formation, however, the alliance management decided to terminate the partnership within next two weeks. This decision and a closure schedule were revealed on its website, telling contributors to stop sending relief materials. All income, collected materials, and office spending were unofficially audited and then released online to the donors, volunteers, and the public. When all this was done, a self-evaluation report of the alliance performance officially declared SUO's dissolution in early June 2008.

Failed transition. Some alliances planned to continue their involvement in post-disaster recovery but failed to adapt the partnership to the new situation. Of the three alliances that fit this pattern (GVDRN, SVUR, and ZVC), one was located in Sichuan and the other two in neighboring provinces. They were dissolved 2-6 months after the emergency relief, when most victims were displaced from stricken communities and resettled in temporary camps. Local governments stepped in to provide victims with everyday supplies while the armies were deployed in nearby camps to assist in public security and disaster preparedness. The publication in September 2008 of the master plan for post-earthquake reconstruction marked the beginning of community recovery, which required NGO alliances to be adaptable to the new environment. Faced with a series of challenges, some alliances came to an end. In addition to more comprehensive performance evaluations and finance disclosure, such terminations were also accompanied with official announcements.

For example, ZVC was one of the only two alliances based in an affected community. (The other is NHP). It was formed by several NGOs and company volunteer groups that entered the community, Zundao Town, in the first week to provide

emergency assistance. After its formation, two foundations and some individual volunteers also joined this initiative. ZVC was dedicated to direct victim services, such as investigating victims' loss and basic needs, delivering relief materials, taking care of school children and elders, and improving sanitation in victim camps and public places. After the end of emergency relief, ZVC had planned to set up a permanent office in the community and participate in reconstruction especially in the field of livelihood improvement, community culture, and volunteerism improvement. However, such a plan failed when ZVC tried to consolidate its management structure. The termination ensued in May 2009 as some NGOs decided to withdraw from the community, though others chose to stay longer with victims.

Alliance evolution. Few alliances survived the challenges of partnership institutionalization and continued their engagement in post-disaster recovery, among which were CVDR and NHP. NHP was formed the second month after the disaster and aimed to assist victims in community recovery. Based in a seriously stricken small town, NHP conducted programs regarding public sanitation, mental health, child education, community care for elders, and livelihood improvements. The termination came when a community-based independent NGO was registered with the local government and staffed by a localized work team three years later. CVDR, on the other hand, was originally established in response to emergency relief. It experienced a transition after the emergency relief phase by reorganizing the governing body and management mechanism. Its core programs were also shifted to support organization members in terms of capacity building, information sharing, and policy advocacy. Facing the increasing loss of memberships three years later, it finally chose to take another organizational restructuring.

In early 2012, CVDR recruited a new board of directors and registered as an independent NGO with the municipal government, though its core programs remained the same. In both alliances, participating organizations signed official contracts for their memberships. Therefore, the decision to terminate the partnerships was also made at official meetings that at least core member organizations attended.

Determinants of Alliance Termination

As shown in the literature review, researchers examine alliance termination from three perspectives: environmental factors, traits of participating organizations, and collaboration management. Following this approach, I identify four major factors as accountable for alliance termination in the case of the Sichuan Earthquake, including political pressure, resource shortage, short-term orientation, and leadership failure. Combined in varying forms, these factors determined the termination of all 13 NGO relief alliances, though in different developmental phases.

Political Pressure

Voluntary societies were banned or incorporated into state-run associations after the formation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Though they reappeared after Deng Xiaoping's "Reform and Opening up" policy in the early 1980s (Wang 2007), the 1989 Tiananmen Event and the Color Revolution in Eastern Europe in the early 1990s significantly undermined their growth. Fearing that NGOs would be used by "foreign hostile forces" as agents for "Western democratization," Chinese governments have implemented rigorous regulations to restrict the development of the NGO sector (Spires 2011; Yang 2005).

These regulations entail formal and informal aspects. Formal regulations include legislative restriction and registration control. First, China has not passed a special law about nonprofit organizations, which makes them vulnerable in terms of legal protection. An administrative regulation made by the State Council in 1998, *Regulation on Registration and Administration of Social Organizations* (《社会团体登记管理条例》), has taken the place of legislation to prescribe nonprofit organization's registration and operation. As a result, the applicability of this ordinance was practically in the hands of governments of all levels. Second, a dual management system was built based on the 1998 ordinance to restrict NGOs: they need the approval of both a competent authority (*yewu zhuguan danwei*) and the Bureau of Civil Affairs (BCA) to register as an NGO (*shehui zuzhi*). A series of restrictive principles such as only-one-NGO-in-one-administrative-district, non-competiveness, and restriction on developing branches are also applied to raise the threshold of registration.¹¹ In addition, NGOs are annually inspected by the BCA and their competent authorities to determine if they can continue operation. In practice, their registration is often cancelled in this process for seemingly irrelevant reasons.

Such regulations made many NGOs inaccessible to appropriate registration as social organizations or private non-enterprises; some stay unregistered at all. Among the 13 alliances, only the SNHP has all members registered. In some alliances like the GURG and CVRC, most members were unregistered.¹²

¹¹ Due to the high registration threshold, a high percentage of NGOs register as enterprise, affiliate themselves with registered organizations, or work as an unregistered group of individual volunteers. However, such measures make them further vulnerable in face of state oppression. See Zheng (2010) and Spires, Tao, and Chan (2012).

¹² Registration difficulty persisted even two years later when the government took tentative measures to loosen registration regulation in major cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Chengdu, and Guangzhou.

On the other hand, various informal measures are used to oppress and interfere in NGOs' operation—especially for NGOs that are engaged in public policy advocacy and human rights. First, NGOs are kept invisible or blurred in public mass media so that they cannot build influential public image, or they are at most described as “New Lei Fengs” or social groups of good people and for good things. Second, NGOs are under the surveillance of the invisible networks of national and public securities. Programs or activities involved in supposedly politically sensitive issues (such as labor rights, democracy, and criticism of government) will be stopped or indirectly disrupted. Influential NGO leaders will be asked, usually in a polite manner, by policemen to report their activities and plans. Third, rigid strikes will be taken against uncooperative organizations. The owners of office buildings will be asked not to lease their real estate to some NGOs; slight faults in financial management will be picked out and punished heavily, though such faults are often caused by the absence of nonprofit law.

Furthermore, disaster management had been the forbidden area for NGOs until April 2008, one month before the earthquake. Wang and Tian (2006) describe the basic characteristics of China's current disaster management system:

In this system, the Party Central Committee and the State Council are in charge of the overall situation, with the local Party committees and governments taking united leadership, all the relevant functional departments sharing the responsibility, and the PLA, police, militia, and reserve forces being given full play to respond to emergency rescues.

In other words, disaster management and post-disaster reconstruction are dominated and performed by the state. In fact, voluntary societies had been excluded from disaster management since the PRC's birth due to the politicization of disaster relief.

For example, Spire, Tao, and Chan (2012) conducted a survey between 2009 and 2010 and found “in Yunnan improperly registered (including completely unregistered) NGOs accounted for 66.3% of the provincial total. The situation was similar in Guangdong (74.6%) and in Beijing (69.6%)” (p.12).

In 2001 the Ministry of Civil Affairs officially confirmed NGOs' eligibility by stating "Commissioned by the Department of Civil Affairs, social wellbeing organizations such as charitable organizations and/or private non-enterprises can be permitted to handle regular private donations and aid."¹³ However, such policy was mainly applied to a few government-controlled NGOs. Also, this ordinance blurred and restricted NGOs' functions and legitimacy in disaster relief as disaster management was regarded as a fragment of private aid in a broad sense. The latest statute was released by the ministry in April 2008, declaring that "NGOs with the mission of disaster relief" can be permitted to participate in relief efforts under certain conditions.¹⁴ However, this statute did not bring about improved eligibility for NGOs' engagement because they could not register as disaster management organizations before its enactment. As a consequence, NGOs must be aware of the risk when they were involved in disaster management: they might be punished during annual inspections with the charge of engaging in activities beyond their stated missions.

Political pressure upon NGOs has not been loosened even after the earthquake took place. Generally, the state took the following measures to restrict NGOs' participation in emergency relief and community recovery.

First, government agencies tried to control the participation of all volunteers and NGOs. The Communist Youth League (CYL) was assigned to register and supervise volunteers and volunteer groups. The civil affairs administrations managed donations

¹³ The Ministry of Civil Affairs, Aug. 31, 2001, An Instruction on Promoting Regular Private Donation Activities (《民政部关于进一步开展经常性社会捐助活动的意见》) (No.33).

¹⁴ For example, in "Administrative Measures for Disaster Relief Donations (《救灾捐赠管理办法》)," Article 11 reads that "If in need, donations received by the civil affairs administrations above the county level can be trusted to social welfare agencies and licensed charitable organizations to deal with". At the same time, Article 23 states that "the licensed charitable organizations should develop the donation distribution plan based on the governmental evaluation of relief needs and submit it to the local government as a record. The plan should be conducted under the government's supervision."

from government-associated enterprises and social groups and coordinated their relief efforts. NGOs were supposed to report to the civil affairs administrations but were actually excluded from the government-dominated relief system—the supervisory organizations were too busy managing government relief projects and tended to neglect NGOs.

Second, government-affiliated NGOs crowded out independent NGOs. The Red Cross Society of China, a nominally voluntary society but actually a ministry in the central government, and the China Charity Federation, another nominally voluntary society affiliated with the Ministry of Civil Affairs as a quasi-ministry agency, were designated to receive private donations and relief materials from overseas and domestic sources. Independent NGOs could participate in the earthquake relief but were required to work under the leadership of either organization.

The third measure was substitution and incorporation. Realizing the value of voluntary societies, some local governments built their own volunteer teams. For example, the MZ Volunteer Association, an affiliate to the local CYL, was a shell organization. During the earthquake relief, the association recruited local volunteers and established eight volunteer teams. Other governments incorporated cooperative volunteer groups and grassroots NGOs into their own systems. Zundao Town ZVC's base, was a small town with a population of 22,000. The earthquake caused 482 deaths in this town, including four township government officials. Seriously stricken during the disaster, the government enthusiastically welcomed and supported volunteers and NGOs' involvement in addressing emergency. They designated the township CYL to join the ZVC and serve as the government's liaison with ZVC. After the end of emergency relief, the government

planned to retain the ZVC but keep it under control by restructuring the governing body. A three-member committee composed of the mayor, associate mayor, and a representative of ZVC was created to supervise the restructured ZVC. However, the marginalization of NGOs in this new framework aroused strong discontent.

Finally, uncooperative NGOs were ostracized from the quake-hit regions. With the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games approaching and the start of post-disaster reconstruction, NGOs were seen as “social instability forces” and expelled from the stricken communities. For example, the CYL in MZ County stipulated in an official document:

When the first anniversary of the 512 Event is approaching, a number of volunteers will enter MZ. Some ill-intentioned people under the cloak of volunteers will perform activities to undermine social stability... Individual volunteers and volunteer groups in the following categories will be asked to leave MZ: (a) those who cannot verify their legal identities; (b) those without volunteer identity cards and recommendation letters (from government agencies); and (c) those who don't volunteer, or whose service doesn't match local needs.

Actually, this stipulation directly led to the breakdown of the ZVC. Retaliating against the unruly NGOs, the township government refused to give them recommendation letters. Their only choice was to declare withdrawal from ZD; the alliance came to an end shortly before the first anniversary of the earthquake.

Confronted with the comprehensively oppressive system, it is understandable that NGOs must be very alert to potential political risks. Many “experienced” organizations even developed a set of self-testing measures for their everyday practice to keep safe. Also, being clearly aware that voluntary associations have been a taboo for the post-communist state, NGO leaders assumed that multiple-organizational collaborations would bring about greater political risks than individual organizations. Therefore, two

strategies were used to alleviate political pressures upon relief alliances. (a) Using the rhetoric of volunteerism to reduce the linguistic sensitiveness of NGOs. Reading from government-controlled media that volunteers were encouraged to participate in emergency relief, NGOs joined the alliances as individual volunteers rather than as organization members or at least claimed they were volunteers while in face of government agencies or media. At the same time, they tried to avoid such words as “NGO” or “*lianmeng* (alliance)” in the alliance titles. Instead, “*minjian zuzhi* (civil society),” “*zhiyuanzhe* (volunteer),” and “*lianhe xingdong* (collective relief efforts)” became chosen words because of their politically friendly meanings. (b) Using a registered organization as the host of the alliance. Considering many member organizations were not registered, such a host could improve the legitimacy of the partnership by taking care of financial and administrative issues. (c) Focusing on raising relief materials rather than funds. Though raising materials was illegal for NGOs that had no permission in disaster management, raising funds without permission would bring much bigger troubles if charged by the police. The risk of heavy punishment against illegal fundraising led most alliances to accept grants from foundations only and refuse private donors. If the public wanted to donate money, they would be asked to purchase relief materials or help pay transportation fees. (d) Developing many “don’ts,” such as not getting involved in any rescue activities threatening personal safety, not releasing or spreading any negative comments about the government, and not releasing important disaster information before the authorities’ verification. (e) Self-dissolving before the arrival of punishment. To reduce the risk of government surveillance, some alliances dissolved themselves shortly after emergency relief.

Despite these safeguard measures, the ubiquitous political pressure as a critical part of NGOs' environment obviously impacted all alliances and their members, though the extent might vary. Even the most successful alliances clearly felt this pressure, just as a leader of the CVDR said:

We invited Taiwanese NGO counterparts to introduce their successful experience in building NGO federations after the Chi-Chi Earthquake the first month after the Sichuan Earthquake. Their post-disaster recovery practice set a good example for us. However, we soon realized that the government would not tolerate NGOs to build such strong alliances in mainland China.

Another story happened to the SUO. Two weeks after SUO started, some policemen came to its office and accused the main coordinator of "illegally raising funds." Though the coordinator was released four days later without being formally charged, this incident prompted the SUO to close down soon.

Resource Shortage

Despite political risks, resource shortage has been another great challenge for the Chinese NGO sector since its revival in the 1980s. First, foundation grants have been scarce. Only public foundations are permitted to raise money from the public. However, NGOs can hardly benefit from their grants because almost all public foundations were affiliated with the government.¹⁵ On the other hand, despite their small population, most private foundations are operating foundations and do not make grants to NGOs.¹⁶ Second, grant sources from overseas were cut off by the government. Foreign grants had been the

¹⁵ Such a situation was slightly improved after the Sichuan Earthquake. One of the biggest public foundations, the Red Cross Foundation, launched a pilot program in 2008 to fund NGOs' engagement in community recovery. However, it suspended such a practice one year later. Another public foundation, the China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation, began its regular grant program since 2009. But they are exceptions for the total 1,029 public foundations (Note: the number in 2011).

¹⁶ A few pioneering private foundations did begin to play the role of ice breakers. For example, the Narada Foundation, an independent grant maker founded by a corporation, has aimed to support NGOs after its birth in 2007. It funded more than 80 NGOs in capacity building, victim service, and community research after the Sichuan Earthquake. See Kang (2009).

main source for Chinese NGOs, though 85% foreign aid was channeled into governments (Spires 2011). However, the limited resources were cut off in an ordinance released by the State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) in December 2009. According to this ordinance, the receiver of foreign grant must present the registration materials of the grant maker and get such materials verified by Chinese governments.¹⁷ It proved an impossible task for most NGOs to fulfill because of complicated time-consuming procedures and their limited linguistic skills. Third, NGOs have few, if any, accesses to government contracts. Though some cities took initiatives in subcontracting social organizations mainly with social welfare projects, only government-supported organizations could win in bidding.

Limited funding sources caused serious financial and staff inadequacy in NGOs¹⁸ and definitely restricted alliance capacity. But the high demands of victims after the earthquake did not help alleviate the rigid restriction in fundraising. A small improvement in fundraising restriction was only for public foundations: in addition to the two state-run organizations, the RCSC and the CCF, the other 16 national public foundations were also allowed to raise money from the public for earthquake relief. However, NGOs were still excluded. Moreover, seeing some individuals and organizations did collect private donations without government permission, the State Council Office released an ordinance one month later after the earthquake. In Article 3 it reads “Fund raised by other types of institutions or organizations should be transferred to

¹⁷ SAFE, 2009, “Notice on Foreign Exchange Management in Domestic Organizations”(《国家外汇管理局关于境内机构捐赠外汇管理有关问题的通知》)

¹⁸ Hu (2012) finds that the average annual spending of NGOs in the Pearl River Delta is between ¥30,000 and ¥100,000. In a sample of 263 NGOs in Beijing, Yunnan, and Guangdong, the three NGO host spots, Spires, Tao, and Chan (2012, p.13) find that “A full 28% had zero full-time paid staff members. Another 45% of groups had full-time staff sizes of between one and six, with the majority clustering in the range of 2-4 staff.”

the special bank accounts managed by the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the RCSC, or the CCF.”¹⁹ As a result, more than 80% of the total earthquake relief donation (including cash and relief materials) of ¥ 76 billion (\$11.2 billion) finally flowed into governments’ bank accounts (Deng 2009).

It is understandable that the donations received by NGOs were very slight, which was reflected by the outcomes of NGO alliances as shown in Table 1. While two large alliances, SUO and ZVC, raised materials of about ¥10 million and mobilized hundreds of volunteers, most alliances just received much smaller quantities. They consequently were confronted with three challenges due to limited resources.

First, alliances had no funding to support full-time staff. As shown in Table 3, only two alliances finally developed employee teams, though in the community recovery phase. But during emergency relief, all alliances were staffed only by volunteers-- alliance leaders also served as volunteers. In fact, many NGOs temporarily suspended their regular programs and shifted to earthquake management. However, such organizational volunteering would never persist long since they could not get funding for disaster relief. To keep volunteers in their positions as a temporary substitute to staff members, some alliances provided them with limited amounts of stipend, ranging from ¥300 to ¥1,200 per month. However, even such small subsidies often became a big challenge for alliance leaders.

The second problem was the inadequacy of administrative budget. Among the 13 alliances, only seven obtained small amounts of administration grants from foundations, private donors, or corporation donors. Obviously, such amounts were far from adequate

¹⁹ The State Council Office, “Ordinance on Sichuan Earthquake Donation Management,” June 13, 2008. (关于汶川地震抗震救灾捐赠资金使用指导意见)

for long-term operation. In addition, the opportunity of receiving new grants significantly declined when the public's patriotic mentality for the earthquake relief faded away after the first three months.

The shortage of program funding was the same great, if not greater, challenge. This challenge was especially insurmountable for those with the attempt to participate in community recovery. Though they managed to collect large amounts of relief materials, raising materials for reconstruction was another question: private donors were usually interested in responding to victims' pressing needs rather than long-term needs. On the other hand, foundations preferred individual organizations to interorganizational collaborations for the unclarity of responsibility inevitably lied in the latter. A good example is the CVDR. Its leader was clearly told by a foundation representative during an inquisition: "We will like to give the CVDR a grant if you register as an independent organization."

Even those alliances having various funding sources felt the strong threat of resource shortage. Having two corporate giants, one foundation, and tens of NGOs as members, ZVC supposedly was the strongest alliance in terms of financial capacity. During emergency relief, ZVC collected relief materials of nearly ¥10 million from sources such as foundations, companies, private donors, social clubs, and even some government agencies. A private foundation provided a grant of ¥50,000 to support administration fees, adding to another grant of ¥10,000 donated by an entrepreneur. In addition, the ZVC launched a fundraising project by selling postage stamps within its network. Even so, ZVC was still faced with grant inadequacy, as it described in a self-evaluation report released in September 2008:

Funding shortage is seriously affecting volunteers' engagement. If we move forward to the long-term plan, we will need more financial and material support to pay project costs, administration fees, and volunteer subsidies.

Alliances took many measures to alleviate resource shortage. Some alliances simply put fundraising restriction aside and publicly raised money through Internet tools. For example, GVDRN received about ¥ 82,000 by publicizing an individual bank account in some Internet-based communities. Of course, protective means were also used: (a) donors could acquire access to donation information and thus track the use of collected money; (b) a finance statement was released to demonstrate accountability when the alliance was dissolved. Other relatively cautious alliances played "touch ball" by raising money through personal network such as friends, relatives, and volunteers. In this sense, they did not violate fundraising regulation because such donors differed from the public. In addition, they tried to find free service to reduce operating costs. For example, SUO, CVDR, and ZVC found free warehouses provided by business owners or governments to keep relief materials; some drivers transported materials for free; volunteers often donated money to pay administrative fees. When all these efforts became futile, closure became the only choice for alliance leaders.

Short-Term Orientation

Short-term orientation was the first internal factor leading to alliance termination. NGOs built interorganizational collaborations to go across the participation threshold for effective disaster management that was set high for individual organizations. However, aware of various limitations, some alliances developed a clear timeline for their participation. Among the five alliances that experienced abrupt termination, four were set as "task-oriented" (McLaughlin 2010). They were created to meet emergent needs in the

earthquake relief rather than to take part in the entire process of disaster management.

Member organizations reached the agreement during alliance formation that the alliance would be terminated shortly after the end of emergency relief.

Such short-term orientation was reflected through mission expressions and work areas. Missions in alliances located outside earthquake-affected regions usually focused on providing material support. For example, the SNHP stated its mission:

SNHP is an alliance composed of four social welfare organizations and one nonprofit magazine. We mobilize social support, collect necessities for emergency relief work, and send them to the earthquake-hit areas through formal channels.

XERG's mission was depicted as "mobilizing citizen engagement and collecting materials that are greatly needed in front-line relief teams in Sichuan."

In contrast, alliances in earthquake-affected regions placed more emphasis on direct service. For example, though finally evolving into an independent NGO, CVDR's early mission shows some degree of short-term orientation with its emphasis on direct service:

CVDR assists NGOs and volunteers engaged in emergency relief with information service and provide technological support in terms of volunteer training and management.

Short-term orientation was also demonstrated in work areas. XERG clearly described its work areas in its poster:

Following the life-saving cycle in earthquake disasters, XERG will collect relief materials in about ten days. We only accept materials on our list of necessities. Donated money will be used to purchase medicine.

As the only alliance located in Sichuan but dissolved shortly after the disaster, SUO had four work areas: (a) collecting relief materials and money; (b) providing warehouse service for other NGOs outside Sichuan; (c) investigating victims' needs and

deploying aid materials; and (d) assisting nonmember organizations and volunteers in relief engagement.

Several factors contributed to the short-term orientation. The first factor was geological distance. Located outside disaster areas, NGOs would face unbearable operational costs if engaged in the long-term post-disaster recovery. Geological distance also created low commitment in disaster management among participating organizations, especially when the patriotism and nationalism that was aroused by the discourse of national calamity soon faded in unaffected areas. In contrast, alliances located in affected areas generally had higher commitment in post-disaster engagement. For example, a coordinator of the GCSMP made reflection on why the alliance was terminated with barren achievements:

I think geographic closeness mattered a lot. Our province is very far from Sichuan. Therefore, citizens, including NGO people, are not concerned about victims as much as Sichuan people, or people in Sichuan's neighboring provinces like Guizhou, Chongqing, and Shanxi. If such a disaster happened here, I am sure we will do much more. For example, NGOs achieved a lot through collective actions early this year when local people suffered in the freezing weather.

The conflict of work areas was another reason for short-term orientation. Due to eligibility restriction by the government, few NGOs included disaster management in their work areas before the earthquake. Therefore, joining relief alliances was just a temporary deviation from their regular programs. They had to go back to their original tracks immediately after emergency relief. In fact, among the 13 alliances, eight did not have any member organizations that had conducted disaster management projects before the earthquake. GURG explained the influence of work area difference in a self-evaluation report:

No one member of GURG focused on disaster management. But this huge disaster required NGOs to respond to with efficiency. Therefore, the difference between disaster relief and their original focus areas caused two problems: (a) they had no experience and capacity in emergency relief; (b) they tried to fuse their previous focus areas into disaster management but compromised victims' real needs.

In addition, unlike their counterparts in affected regions, organizations outside major affected areas had few opportunities to shift to the new field of disaster management because of supposedly scarce funding.

Therefore, when emergency relief was coming to an end in late May, alliances with short-term orientation naturally chose to close down. In an announcement released on its website, SUO clearly stated its reason for termination.

The significance of emergency relief efforts will decline. Government supplies can be effectively delivered into earthquake-hit areas (to meet victims' needs). The key of disaster management in a long time will be disease control, resettlement, and reconstruction. After cautious and in-depth discussions, the SUO decided to put an end to our current work before May 30. We will release our financial statement within one month.

Another alliance leader made a brief conclusion for the closure: "We established the alliance to collect relief materials. Now its mission has finished."

Leadership Failure

The second internal factor influencing alliance termination is leadership. According to Ospina and Sorenson (2007), there are basically two types of leadership: collaborative leadership and individual leadership. While the traditional model of leadership focuses on the role of individual leaders, the constructionist model suggests that as the property of the social system, collaborative leadership creates the conditions and mechanisms for all participants to address collective problems (Huxham & Vangen 2000). In this study, two types of leadership both influenced alliance stability.

First, partner misfit impacted alliance durability. Daz and Teng (1999) argue that partner misfit during partner selection will be conducive to relational risk and undermine success in strategic alliances. This argument also proved to be applicable to NGO alliances. Most relief alliances were established immediately after the earthquake and therefore had no time to select partners. Also, the small population of NGOs gave little space for organizers to choose partners. As a result, membership was open in most alliances. A typical process of partner recruitment went like this. Alliance organizers (usually leaders in the local NGO sector) first contacted other leaders and discussed developing an alliance in response to the disaster. Reaching an agreement on this plan in a small circle, organizers sent invitations to other NGO leaders to have a meeting in which the alliance would be officially declared as founded. All attending organizations would be recognized as founding members. A preliminary management structure would be determined to coordinate member organizations' relief work. Then, the management would release a public appeal to other NGOs and volunteer groups and ask them to join joint relief efforts. This resulted in unclear membership in most alliances. For example, the SUO was initiated by two small Internet-based NGOs but soon attracted another four organizations through the organizers' personal networks. Its open appeal on the Internet was answered by more than 100 NGOs and volunteer groups.

Unclear membership brought about a series of challenges for managing partner fit. The first challenge came from resource fit, the degree "to which partners possess compatible resources, that is, resources that can be effectively integrated into a value-creating strategy" (Das and Teng 1999, p.56). Good resource fit served as the foundation for any effective collaboration. Successful NGO alliances were well equipped with three

types of basic resources: legitimacy, access to economic resources (materials or funds), and volunteer labor. Legitimacy provided protection against political pressure, access to economic resources allowed alliances to raise relief materials and fund to support collective projects, and volunteers were critical in project management and service delivery. A good example was the ZVC. The local government's support in the initial phase provided strong legitimacy for NGOs' collaboration. The local CYL acted as the liaison between the government and ZVC. The mayor often attended ZVC's meetings and invited ZVC to give assistance in government relief projects. With respect to economic resources, ZVC's leadership was composed of NGO leaders, foundation officers, and senior business managers. Well connected with sponsor communities, the leadership managed to mobilize donations of ¥ 10 million. Finally, because of the network of NGOs and the power of Internet-based virtue communities, more than 400 volunteers were recruited locally and outside.

In contrast, futile alliances, especially those that failed at birth, apparently suffered from resource misfit. The KUR was founded by three NGOs (including the NGO gate website www.ngocn.org) and one volunteer network. Their work areas included NGO information and networking, gay rights, youth development, and basic education. Only one of them was registered, but it was still under close government surveillance. Mainly affected by the inadequate legitimacy, the alliance leaders decided to only use personal networks in collecting materials and funds. Therefore, the leaders' private networks became the major sources for economic resources. Third, the limited connections of founding organizations with the public affected volunteer recruitment.

Although a critical condition for a productive alliance, resource fit could not ensure its durability alone. Alliance stability also requires strategic fit, the degree “to which partners have compatible goals in the alliance” (Das & Teng 1999, p.56). Strategic misfit might not significantly affect alliances with short-term orientations because they conducted the relatively simple task of collective relief; however, it obviously threatened alliances that planned to participate in post-disaster reconstruction. For example, the founding organizations of SUO had expected to restructure the partnership for community recovery but soon found they diverged on future program directions. Some organizations wanted to develop a disaster preparedness center, while the others tried to build a community-based platform to assist victims in reconstruction and also facilitate more NGOs’ engagement. The unresolved controversy resulted in the abrupt dissolution of the entire alliance. On the other hand, high strategic fit obviously improved the durability in NHP. One month after the earthquake, three original members of the SUO and another outsider organization created the NHP with the purpose of assisting victims in community recovery. After several investigations and in-depth discussions among founding members, a fully shared strategy was developed: NHP would build a work station in the community and directly serve earthquake victims through a participatory approach. To ensure the fulfillment of this strategy, four partners signed a contract that clarified their roles in the partnership. A well-networked NGO was in charge of fundraising; a community development NGO provided volunteer training and field work supervision; the other two local organizations gave support in legal legitimacy and finance management. The management regularly met and evaluated the strategy’s applicability.

Finally, mission fit proved to be most critical for the long-term collaboration among NGOs. I define mission fit as the degree to which partners have compatible missions in the alliance. Unlike for-profit organizations, NGOs are driven not by profit but by public good and exist in a community of values (Brody 1987; Payton & Moody 2008). Conflicting missions among organization partners contributed to termination even in alliances equipped with good resource fit and strategic fit. ZVR was a good example. After the first three months of collaborative efforts in emergency management, member organizations agreed that ZVC should focus on integrated community recovery and development, including livelihood improvement, cultural enhancement, and volunteer training. However, mission conflict gradually became significant and resulted in internal division among partners. One major controversy happened when the township government tried to reinforce its control upon ZVC by establishing a leadership committee in charge of ZVC. NGOs contended that ZVC should be independent from the government while volunteer groups with business backgrounds claimed that government's leadership would increase ZVC's legitimacy and enhance organizational performance. With the final formation of the committee, the conflict between the two groups was rooted. Several months later, another conflict regarding community recovery strategies deepened the division. NGOs emphasized the importance of small projects in recovering household economy, while enterprise volunteers supported the agricultural industrialization method to pursue economics of scale; NGOs stressed villagers' participation in decision-making, while enterprise volunteers preferred the efficiency of top-down mobilization. Eventually, these conflicts ended with NGOs' withdrawal from ZVC.

However, the impact of partner fit changes by alliance objective and over time. Complex objectives were more vulnerable to partner misfit than simple objectives. CVDR was composed of six international NGOs, eighteen local NGOs, four foundations, three volunteer groups, and three Internet enterprises. Reaching an agreement among such a diverse group of members was very challenging. But VCDR did realize good partner fit by setting very simple objectives for the collaboration: it focused on information sharing and volunteer training. On the other hand, partner fit within an alliance could change over time. For example, when reconstruction began at ZD and required large amounts of funding, NGOs' advantage in mobilizing volunteers became less important and thus resulted in the decline of partner fit in ZVC.

In addition to partnership misfit, failed governance also contributed to alliance termination. Provan and Kenis (2007) identify three types of governance in interorganizational partnerships: shared governance (type I), lead organization (type II), and network administrative organization (type III). In the shared governance mode, the alliance is governed directly by members without separate governance entity. For NGO alliances, shared governance means important decisions are made by a council of representatives from all parties. The lead organization mode occurs when one organization plays the role of alliance leader. Finally, members may set up a separate administrative entity to manage the alliance, as seen in the administrative organization mode. Among the 13 relief alliances, seven used single government modes and the other six applied a mix of two or more modes as shown in Table 3.

Eight alliances were governed directly by all members, which reflected the strong mentality of equal participation in the NGO sector. However, such equality risked

compromising efficiency in decision making, especially when the alliance had a large membership. Therefore, alliances with more than 10 organization members tended not to use this method alone, such as the CVDR, SVUR, and GVDRN. In some cases, shared government would fail in reaching any agreement without strong mutual trust among members. For example, eight small NGOs and volunteer organizations that had no previous collaborative relationships created the CVUDR after the earthquake. At the formation meeting, the participating organizations built a governing group composed of leaders from each member. However, the CVDR failed to convene a second meeting to move forward until its termination. Even combined with the lead organization mode in its governance structure, SVUR's leader complained the complexity of shared governance:

Because of our emphasis on equal participation, major decisions were made at the meeting when all members attended. However, we must also consider the expertise of each partner because they had different staff sizes and organizational merits. This process was much more challenging than when a single organization performed all the tasks...we finally decide to terminate the alliance when the complexity became unbearable for us.

To reduce the complexity of the shared governance, some alliances created a special administrative organization to make decisions on behalf of the member council. But this mode had a disadvantage: the durability and performance of the alliance would primarily depend on the administrative group. In fact, the only two alliances to use this mode, GCSMP and SUO, were both terminated before the start of post-disaster reconstruction. But four other alliances applying a mixed mode persisted.

When most members lacked experience and resources in relief management, the lead organization played an important role in managing the partnership. Four alliances applied this governance mode, including ZVC, NHP, XERG, and CVRC. Lead organizations were usually well-staffed, well-connected with grant makers and private

donors, and influential in the local NGO sectors. They contributed to alliance durability in terms of legitimacy, grants, management skills, and labor support. However, using this mode alone might undermine equality and lead to discontent among other members. A NGO leader explained why her organization withdrew from CVRC:

I was called by some NGO leaders to attend a meeting and discuss establishing an alliance. But after arriving at the meeting room, I found important decisions about alliance governance and strategies had been made by them alone. We soon quit the alliance because we disagreed with their strategies and working styles.

To offset the disadvantages of the single governance mode, some alliances used a mixed mode. Generally, using a mixed mode was more common than solitary modes, but alliance durability also depended on the size and goal of the alliance. For example, CVDR combined shared governance and an administrative committee; the committee was in charge of everyday management and minor decisions, while a plenary meeting, which was opened once a year, decided the election of the committee and made major decisions. SUVR mixed shared governance and lead organization to balance equality and efficiency. NHP even built a governing structure combining all three modes: a supervisory committee was composed of leaders from each of four partners, a special executive team was in charge of regular programs, and finally, the lead organization played the “firefighter” role in internal tensions.

With respect to individual leadership, alliance leaders were found to have significant impact on partnership durability. Though almost all people in the lead positions were local NGO leaders, they varied in terms of leadership skills, personal networks, and prestige. Generally, renowned leaders were more likely to make up for the disadvantages of the partnership (and hence, sustain an alliance) than junior leaders. For

example, CVDR's main coordinator was a senior nonprofit consultant in Sichuan. She developed strong personal relationships with grant makers and NGOs and was highly regarded among her peers for her high commitment to NGO development. Under her leadership, CVDR began with environmental scanning and developed collaboration rules. This strategy served three purposes: to reduce political risks, to improve members' sense of belonging, and to reduce the risk of internal tensions. When members' engagement in the partnership significantly declined after emergency relief, her prestige helped keep them connected in collective activities. In addition, she managed to raise grants to support the CVDR's programs and overhead costs because of her good private relations with foundations.

In contrast, the termination at birth in CVRC, GCSMP, and KUR could be tracked to their less capable leaders. Take GCSMP for an example. This alliance was initiated by several young NGO leaders. For some personal reasons, the most prestigious leaders in the local NGO sector were not engaged in this initiative. Without senior leaders' participation, volunteer groups and small NGOs became the majority of the alliance. This meant the alliance could not share the critical resources such as media, funding, and government support, which were usually connected with senior leaders. The limited prestige of young leaders also restricted their capacity to mobilize the NGO community for their engagement. Finally, their strategy of assisting migrant workers proved to be futile.

Table 3 Determinants for Alliance Termination

Alliance Abbr.	Political Pressure	Staff Status		Admin. Grant ^a	Short-Term Orientation	Partnership Fit			Governance Mode	Individual Leadership
		Full-time	Volunteers			Resources	Strategy	Mission		
SUO	High	0	200	23,000	Yes	High	Intermediate	Low	III	Intermediary
CVDR	Low	3 ^b	40	10,000+ 50,000 ^c	No	Low	High	Intermediate	I + III	High
ZVC	High	0	400	About 60,000	No	High	High	Low	II + III	Intermediate
NHP	Low	4 ^d	50	70,000	No	High	High	Intermediate	I+ II +III	High
KUR	High	0	15	0	N/A	Low	Intermediate	Low	I	Low
XERG	Intermediate	0	30	0	Yes	High	Intermediate	Low	II	Intermediate
SVUR	Low	0	40	50,000	No	High	High	Intermediate	I +II	High
SNHP	Intermediate	0	10	0	Yes	High	High	Low	I	Intermediate
GCSMP	Low	0	10	0	N/A	Low	Intermediate	Low	III	Low
GURG	Intermediate	0	15	About 3,000	Yes	Low	Intermediate	Low	I +II	Low
CVRC	High	0	15	0	N/A	Low	Low	Low	II	Intermediate
CVUDR	Intermediate	0	20	0	No	Intermediate	Intermediate	Low	I	Low
GVDRN	Intermediate	0	30	20,000	No	High	Intermediate	Intermediate	I +III	Intermediate

a. Here I only listed the numbers of the first year because most alliances were terminated in the first year.

b. CVDR recruited the first full-time staff member in late 2008.

c. CVDR received a total of ¥ 50,000 during emergency relief (May 15-June 14, 2008).

d. NHP began to recruit the first full-time employee in August, 2009, one year after its formation.

Determinants and Termination Patterns

In the previous text, I identified four factors accounting for the termination of 13 NGO alliances after the Sichuan Earthquake: political pressure, resource shortage, short-term orientation, and leadership failure. Further analysis found that the different patterns of alliance termination could be explained by certain combinations of these factors. The primary associations between termination patterns and determinants are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Patterns and Determinants of NGO Alliances' Termination

Pattern of Termination	Political Pressure	Resource Shortage	Short-Term Orientation	Leadership Failure
Failure at Birth		×		×
Abrupt Dissolution	×	×	×	
Failed Transition	×	×		×
Evolution into Independent NGOs		×		×

In particular, it was resource shortage and leadership failure that served as the major reasons for the termination at birth. Abrupt dissolution was mainly caused by political pressure, resource shortage, and short-term orientation. Generally exempt from short-term orientation, failed transition came out as the result of political pressure, resource shortage, and leadership failure. Finally, alliances that dissolved themselves in a relatively successful manner—evolving into independent organizations—still suffered from resource shortage and leadership failure as they overcame political pressure and short-term orientation in some extent.

In addition, all four factors actually contributed to alliance termination of each pattern, though whether they acted as primary or secondary factors varied. While

resource shortage and leadership failure primarily caused the termination at birth, political pressure and short-term orientation also played roles as the secondary determinants, as shown in the cases of KUR and GCSMP. Political pressure decreased NGOs' willingness to engagement in disaster relief during alliance formation; short-term orientation reinforced the low engagement willingness when the alliance was in difficulty and accelerated its final dissolution. Similarly, leadership failure served as a secondary determinant for abrupt termination while the alliances suffered more from political pressure, resource shortage, and short-term orientation; for alliances that failed in transition, short-term orientation was a secondary determinant; and finally, political pressure and short-term orientation acted as secondary contributors in the alliances that evolved into independent NGOs.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Through the case study of 13 NGO alliances formed after the Sichuan Earthquake in China, this article reveals that four termination patterns existed among these interorganizational partnerships: failure at birth, abrupt dissolution, failed transition, and evolution into independent organizations. Furthermore, four factors—political pressure, resource shortage, short-term orientation, and leadership failure—are identified as accountable for alliance termination, though through different combinations in each pattern. In this sense, environmental conditions and internal management challenges both caused alliance termination in the nonprofit sector.

Theoretically, an alliance can be terminated across both ends of the spectrum of interorganizational partnership: they can become individual organizations or informal networks as they are before alliance formation or evolve into a highly integrated structure such as a federation or merger (Mclaughlin 2010; Provan 1983). Some authors have indicated the possibility of building federations or mergers among nonprofit organizations (Selsky 1998; Singer 1991; Wernet & Jones 1992). However, alliances in this empirical study proceeded along just one end: all were dissolved into individual organizations or informal networks. Although two independent NGOs were established due to the previous alliances, they served merely as individual organizations rather than interorganizational structures. In other words, the formal cooperative relationships among participating organizations were weakened rather than strengthened after alliance operation in 13 all alliances. The study explores why these alliances went backwards from their previous statuses, including political pressure, resource shortage, short-term orientation, and leadership failure. However, such reasons are inadequate to explain why

they failed to evolve into collaboration of higher levels such as federations or mergers. The reason is simple: failure factors differ from success elements, though very often they are highly associated. On the other hand, some practical associations between alliance and federation/merger are still unclear: Must a more centralized structure be based upon a previous alliance? Will the structure begin directly from individual organizations and skip the alliance operation process?

Another area deserving further discussion is the associations among the four determinants of alliance termination. Though the study did not aim to learn if they impacted each other, the limited data indicates the existence of such associations. In addition to its direct influence upon alliances, political pressure indirectly contributed to resource shortage and short-term orientation. Government restriction deprived NGOs of fundraising eligibility; punishment risk even kept many NGOs from collecting relief materials. Moreover, registration failure in NGOs often made private foundations cautious of funding their proposals, as shown in CVDR's case. Political pressure also enhanced short-term orientation in the case of SUO, ZVC, and KUR. Fearful of government raking-up measures after emergency management, these alliances applied the "first come, first leave" strategy before they were actually faced with political challenges. Short-term orientation in turn might be responsible for leadership failure. When an alliance was intended to respond to disaster relief, inadequate emphasis was placed upon selecting partners and building governance structures, as shown in the case of SUO and CVRC, which contributed to partner misfit and inappropriate governance structures. However, such associations need further examination with more data.

The findings in this study contribute to nonprofit research due to its exploration in the field of nonprofit alliance, especially of alliance termination, a little examined topic. First, though environmental uncertainties are noted as a cause of collaboration failure, such literature is mainly about political coalitions (Lupia & Strom 1995; Leeds & Savun 2007; Wright & Golderberg 1985) and sometimes about international business partnerships (Serapio & Cascio 1996; Yan & Zeng 1999). This study shows that environmental factors, mainly political pressure and resource shortage, played critical roles in alliance termination in the NGO sector. Even if it is understandable for alliance termination to be caused by resource shortage because of the widespread funding scarcity in nonprofit organization (Salamon & Anheier 1996), this finding yet raises another question: Are NGOs political? For Clarke (1998), the answer is definitely yes. Although they are not political organizations existing for state power, NGOs do participate in politics more or less as long as they are engaged in empowering people for more equality, democracy, and social justice. In this sense, NGO alliances, especially those in developing countries, should be paid special concerns over their political influence since NGOs differ from nonprofit organizations usually defined in a broad sense.

Second, this study enriches the knowledge of voluntary termination. Though most alliances have to terminate themselves as a negative response to external and internal challenges, some others with short-term orientations do voluntarily put an end to the partnerships. Being task-oriented is definitely an important reason as suggested by McLaughlin (2010), but short-term orientation also acts as a proactive strategy to adapt to the environment. It increases the flexibility of interorganizational collaboration and promotes the capacity for future partnerships. In this sense, disassociating termination

with collaborative failure, self-dissolution challenges the tradition of measuring alliance success by partnership stability and length (Das & Teng 1997; Yan & Zeng 1999).

Finally, this research expands the understanding of internal tensions in interorganizational collaborations. Researchers in political science and business often find that internal rivalries among member organizations play the major role in alliance failure (Das & Teng 1999; Larsson 1998; Park & Ungson 2001). Some nonprofit researchers (for example, Dutte & Sugge 2010; Staggenborg 1986) similarly point out that partner conflicts lead to partnership dissolution. This study found the influence of internal tensions on one hand, but it also cast doubt on the assumed effect of strong partner rivalry on the other. NGO alliances created internal tensions mainly because of partner difference in terms of missions, focus areas, strategies, and even ideologies and personalities of leaders. But competition over resources or reputation rarely appeared as a significant element of collaborative relationships in the Sichuan Earthquake case.

However, unlike Das and Teng's argument about business alliances (Das & Teng 1999), this study finds that mission misfit, in addition to resource misfit and strategic misfit, seriously threatened nonprofit alliances. This finding echoes many nonprofit studies on the important role of ideology and value in the nonprofit community (Berger 2004; Daley, Netting, & Angulo 1996). Furthermore, this investigation suggests that while resource fit and strategic fit determined alliance durability in the short term, it is mission fit that shaped the long-term partnership. But how these fit patterns interplayed is still unclear.

This research also has practical implications for NGO professionals. First, the formation and development of 13 NGO alliances in China indicated that activists can

play an important role in creating space even in an adverse sociopolitical environment, especially when the environment becomes unclear with the shock of the critical event. Activists, embedded in their own social networks, have the opportunity to change the game and practically develop new game rules, just as Crozier and Friedberg (1980, pp.88-89) noted:

Clearly, the relation to the environment cannot be reduced to a mere unilateral adaption to an exterior influence. It is actually a permanent process of exchange through which an organization opens itself selectively, so to speak, to the broader system of power in which it participates.

Second, alliances are using a special strategy to bring NGOs together to address major social challenges. The timeframe of the partnership should be flexibly set by collective objectives. Therefore, whether an alliance is successful does not depend on its durability, but on its performance and impact.

Third, building sustainable alliances requires excellent leadership despite overcoming environmental challenges. High partner fit, equal yet efficient governing structures, and strong individual leaders are all critical factors. No simple criteria can be used to measure partner fit because it depends on the alliance objectives and varies over time. However, compatibility in terms of core resources, major strategies, and core missions/values should be considered during partner selection. Governing structure should also be adaptable to membership size and to the nature of tasks and thus balance efficiency in decision making and equality among members.

Finally, leaders who have good leading skills, large social networks, and high prestige will greatly increase the likelihood of alliance success and durability.

There are some limitations to this study which require improvement in future research. The first limitation is about the Chinese context. On one hand, China's neo-

authoritarian regime sets rigid legislative restrictions against voluntary associations in order to ensure the unchallenged authority of the party state. Even social service NGOs would be regarded as a potential threat against its legitimacy and are oppressed when the public thinks highly of NGOs' performance and accountability and compares them with the government. Meanwhile, the generally reform-oriented government has learned to cooperate with some "politically reliable" NGOs in social welfare programs in order to improve efficiency and meet the diversified social needs. The rigidity of law and the flexibility in practice create a lot of ambiguous space for NGOs' operation, though they operate without reliable legal protection. Such a status deeply impacted NGO alliances' specific environment characterized by political pressure, a trait that nonprofits may not share in democratic societies. On the other hand, the specific context also means a premature nonprofit sector which consists of few and young NGOs, scarce foundations, and minimally trained volunteers. Since few NGOs have a history of more than 10 years, the entire sector lacks the experience of interorganizational collaboration, which could make their collaborative behaviors different from their counterparts in societies where the nonprofit sector has been well developed. In order to examine the validity of the findings in this study, therefore, future studies should focus on samples in societies that accept NGOs with legislation and also have a relatively mature nonprofit sector.

Second, alliances in this study were event-based rather than theme-based. This might lead to sample bias because event-based alliances are more likely to set up a definite timeline according to the expected life cycle of the specific event. However, alliances established for certain themes such as disease control, environment, labor rights, and social justice may have quite different timeframes because it is almost impossible to

develop a certain time period to complete such causes. In addition, the nature of crisis management might reinforce uncertainty in event-based alliances. As Comfort (1994) argues, rather than following documented plans or stable expectations, mobilization in crisis response often involves an unpredictable set of actors that vary greatly in terms of prior disaster experience, organizational sector, and other characteristics. Future studies may help overcome this sample bias by investigating both event-based and theme-based alliances, comparing their termination patterns, and analyzing the differences and similarities of termination mechanisms.

Third, this study explores alliance termination only at the alliance level but does not examine the member organization level. The analysis at the alliance level has the merit of focusing on general characteristics and decision making mechanisms. But it also misses the influence of individual organizations upon the alliance. A mixed design in future studies can help combine the merits of both methods. In addition, future studies can also track the impact of alliance termination upon member organizations and answer the following questions: How did alliance termination influence participating organizations in terms of legitimacy, funding, networking, and performance? What did they learn from the alliance experience? Will they join cooperative partnerships again in the future?

APPENDIX: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please describe the profile of your alliance, including the formation and termination date, geographic focus, target beneficiaries, main projects, and major outcomes.
2. Please describe the basic process of establishing the alliance.
3. Why was your alliance established?
4. Please give a brief description of the membership structure, including location, work area, registration, spending size, staff size, and their roles in the alliance.
5. Please describe the organizational structure of the alliance.
6. Did you offer any incentives to encourage member organizations' engagement in the alliance? If yes, what were they?
7. Did you take measures to reduce member organizations' detachment? If yes, what were they?
8. What were your major work areas? Why did you determine those work areas?
9. What was the government's attitude toward your alliance? Did your alliance collaborate with the government?
10. Did any foundations give financial support for your alliance?
11. How was your alliance terminated? And why?
12. What did you learn from your collaboration experience?
13. Are there any comments you wish to make or concerns you wish to share?

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Yunnan NGO Forum, Kunming, China, 2007-2008

Main coordinator (voluntary): Led the coordinator team in project design, fund raising, project management, and team building.

Oxfam Hong Kong, Kunming, China, 2004 -2008

Assistant Program Officer: Managed projects concerning rural poverty alleviation, disaster management, and social assessment as conducted in 30 rural communities across four counties.

Publications

“Community Plural Governance: Reflections on Participatory Development” (With Jiangang Zhu). 2011. *Open Times*, 10, 5-25.

Obligation, Action and Collaboration: Case Studies of NGOs' Participation in the Sichuan Earthquake Relief (with Jiangang Zhu and Chao Wang). 2009. Beijing: Beijing University Press.

“Global Competition, Trade Association Governance and Development of SMEs Industrial Clusters: A Case Study on Wenzhou Lighter Cluster” (With Fengtian Zheng and Shufang Zhao). 2006. *Renmin University of China Journal*, 1, 78-85.

Non-published Papers and Presentations

“Community Reconstruction after the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake: A Reflection on Participatory Development Theories,” presentation at the Workshop in Multidisciplinary Philanthropic Studies, organized by the Center of Philanthropy of Indiana University, Indianapolis, September, 2012.

“Silent Social Movement: a Case of NGO Allies for the Wenchuan Earthquake Relief,” presentation at the Cross-strait Civil Society and Public Participation Symposium, organized by the Center for China Studies at the National Chengqi University, Taipei, June 2010.

“International NGOs and the Growth of China’s Civil Society: a Case of Oxfam Hong Kong,” guest lecture for the course “Civil Society and NGO Development” at the School of Sociology & Anthropology at Sun Yat-Sen University, Guangzhou, May 2010.

“The Underlying Practice of Citizenship: The Practices of Grass-roots NGOs in South China,” non-published paper for the Institute for Civil Society, January 2010.

“Deliberative Community Development: A Case of the New Hometown Plan,” presentation at the Symposium on Community Reconstruction and Disaster Management after the Sichuan Earthquake, organized by the China Charity & Donation Information Center, Chengdu, December 2009.

“China’ Third Sector: Its Rise and Challenges,” non-published paper for the China Charity & Donation Information Center of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, May 2009.

“Action Research for Building Local Civil Society: a Case of the Institute for Civil Society,” non-published paper for the Institute for Civil Society, August 2009.

“How Donors Facilitate the Growth of Grassroots NGOs: A Case of an Anti-AIDS NGO,” non-published paper for Oxfam Hong Kong in the evaluation report series “The Review of the Civil Society Mainstreaming Strategy in Oxfam Hong Kong,” 2008.