

## University of Groningen

### Between cause and control

Korff, Valeska Pailin

**IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.**

*Document Version*

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Publication date:*

2012

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Korff, V. P. (2012). *Between cause and control: management in a humanitarian organization*. s.n.

**Copyright**

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

**Take-down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

*Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In writing this dissertation and conducting the research leading up to it, I benefitted greatly from the support of various persons. To them I would like to express my sincere gratitude.

With Rafael Wittek, Melinda Mills and Liesbet Heyse, I had a diverse and extensively knowledgeable supervisory team. A combination that proved highly beneficial for the research conducted, allowing for experimentation with diverse methods and facilitating the most stimulating theoretical excursions. Working with these advisors was an invaluable experience and I deeply appreciate the support I received from every one of them. However, I feel that one deserves a special mention. Liesbet, your door was always open and the “emergency aid” you lent on several occasions helped me navigate the rougher patches of the research process. I also very much valued your enthusiasm and hands-on involvement in the project, particularly during the field work phase spent at MSF Holland’s headquarter. Thank you for being such a motivated, dependable and cordial first-time PhD supervisor!

Speaking of the field work phase, profound thanks obviously go to the many people at MSF Holland, who welcomed the research team into the organization, allowed extensive access to fascinating data, and remained admirably patient when asked time and again for ever more information. Listing names would compromise confidentiality, wherefore I extend my thanks to everyone at MSF Holland, who at any occasion interacted with the RuG researchers, be it a formal interview or a quick chat in the hallway.

Besides my advisors, other persons at the ICS, particularly in Groningen, provided important support throughout the research process. Most notably, the members of the Work and Organization Theory Research Group, whose enthusiasm for organization research proved truly infectious! The feedback received on various paper drafts was always insightful and reading other members’ work has been a great source of inspiration. I also benefitted from the opportunities during which I was able to present my work to colleagues in Groningen such as the ICS colloquia, as well as the broader ICS Graduate School, particularly during the Forumdays or the 2009 Masterclass. I have found these meetings to be characterized by a genuinely constructive and encouraging atmosphere and as such great training grounds for aspiring scientists.

However, writing a dissertation requires more than scientific support. In terms of logistical matters I was very lucky to be able to rely on the assistance of Saskia Simon. There are few who could match her organizing skills, efficiency and not the least, cheerfulness! Rie Bosman also helped me on several occasions to navigate the jungle of Dutch bureaucracy and generally has been a wonderfully kind and charming spirit.

I also had the great pleasure of working with many outstandingly smart, helpful and amiable colleagues, some of whom became true friends. Alona, my ever supportive – in words and action – office mate, you make the greyest day sparkle and I’m so glad to have had you at my side throughout these four years! Katya, thank you for bringing a healthy dose of sarcasm and wit into my life and making sure that I could find controversy whenever I needed a sparring partner! Sissi, you are the kindest and most generous person I know,

sharing not only your stunning statistical knowledge as my co-author for one of the chapters in this dissertation, but inviting me into your home for so many joyful occasions. Lauren, in many ways you make happen what others think impossible and your creativity never ceases to amaze me. A German proverb roughly translated says “Sharing a burden makes half a burden, sharing joy doubles the joy”. And in this spirit I can truly say that sharing the hardship and the pleasure of my time in Groningen with such wonderful friends really made all the difference.

There are a number of persons outside the realm of the ICS and the University of Groningen, who also deserve mentioning here. The collaboration with Tom Zwart and Mimi Zou on a chapter discussing “Rationality and Human Rights” introduced me to fascinating discourses and constituted an exciting distraction from my core dissertation research. Many thanks also to the members of the external reading committee. The comments received were much appreciated and certainly facilitated the improvement of this dissertation. I’m particularly indebted to Woody Powell, not only for reviewing my dissertation, but most importantly, for giving me the amazing opportunity to join his research team as a postdoctoral researcher at Stanford University.

The related move to California sadly once again took me far away from my family. But distance is less a matter of geography than of attitude and I have the invaluable fortune of having a family whose closeness transcends borders. I’m eternally grateful to my parents for having given me such a strong base and for remaining a perpetual source of motivation and inspiration. My decision to pursue a PhD was supported and encouraged by all of my family, but no one more so than my late grandfathers, Rudolf Skolnik and Heinrich Korff. To them I dedicate this book.

Convention has it to save the best (or most important) for last. This is definitely the case here, for the one person without whom I could not and would not have accomplished this feat remains to be mentioned. Jim, in you I found the greatest support I could have ever wished for, in so many ways. Thank you for keeping me sane, smart and smiling!

Finally, I would like to use this opportunity to draw attention to MSF’s work as a medical humanitarian organization. To use their own words, “medical, humanitarian action goes beyond the mere analysis and repair of physical disorders; it offers choices where there were none; it provides a human touch in an inhumane environment and it may ultimately help reestablish human dignity”. After four years of research, I cannot think of an organization better equipped – in material, staff and attitude – to conduct this admirable and indispensable work.