Working in the face of war:
some lessons from humanitarian organizations

by
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Conflict</th>
<th>Peri-Conflict</th>
<th>Post-Conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relief</td>
<td>Relief</td>
<td>Reconstruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Community Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Should heritage professionals support the military in their effort to safeguard cultural heritage in times of conflict?
Introduction

• Red Cross Code of Conduct 1994
• Sphere project
• Red Cross Code under Pressure
  – Complex Emergency
  – Politicization of Aid
• Facing the Same Music
• Conclusions
Red Cross Code of Conduct

• 4 Humanitarian Principles
• 6 Development Principles
Humanitarian Principles

- humanity
- impartiality
- neutrality
- independence
Developmental principles

- respect of local culture
- local capacity
- participatory
- meeting basic needs and sustainability
- accountability
- dignity
The Sphere-project

Red Cross Code in practice

- Humanitarian Charter
- Minimum Standards
The Red Cross Code of Conduct under pressure

- Complex emergencies
- Politicization of Aid
- Criticism on the Four Principles
Complex Emergency

- humanitarian crisis late 1990s
- a stable situation of instability
- from natural disasters to politically induced disasters
- 1999 Slobodan Milosovic charged with cultural genocide
Politicization of humanitarian aid

• modern wars have no limits
• 3-D policy strategy
• foreign policy influence on relief assistance
• loss of humanitarian space
• since 2001 the lines between political, military and humanitarian actors have been blurred as never before
Criticism on the Four Principles

• **Humanity**
  moral responsibility to address human suffering

• **Impartiality**
  provide aid without discrimination

• **Neutrality**
  provide aid to all needed without taking sides

• **Independence**
  provide aid independent of governmental or any other organization
Can we learn from the experiences of relief workers with the Red Cross Code?
Facing the Same Music

• What we deliver is different
• The circumstances under which we deliver are the same
• Our aim is the same: to support the most vulnerable in times of conflict
• Like relief workers our role in cooperation with the military is blurring
Criticism on Humanity

- least controversial of all 4 principles
- moral obligation to do our utmost to preserve, save and protect all cultural heritage of all countries
- In absence of public administration and civil society the military forces have the duty to protect CH
- Since the looting of the Iraq Museum many more countries signed the relevant treaties
- states and agencies customary operate in only one territory
- Geneva Convention allows to deliver aid to one party
- aid is increasingly being used as a pretext for military or political reasons
Criticism on Impartiality

- one of the toughest obligations
- UNHCR prohibits the association with accused war criminals
- at odds with the concept of Solidarity
- almost unachievable to preserve humanitarian space
- many western NGOs are Christian based
Criticism on Neutrality

• neutrality can turn into complicity
• some belligerent parties reject IHL and attack civilians and their heritage
• NGOs contract Private Military Forces and lose their perceived neutrality
• Military are NOT neutral
• NGOs give up neutrality to include the local political environment
Criticism on Independence

• Many humanitarian agencies depend on government funding and thus directly or indirectly are part of foreign policy
• Some NGOs are degraded to contractors
Conclusions

• relief aid can be compared to heritage emergency actions
• we are not the only ones struggling with our relationship with the military
• heritage professionals have the moral obligation to preserve, save and protect all heritage from all countries
• the need to safeguard heritage is growing due to the deliberate targeting of civilians and their cultural heritage
Conclusions

- the problem with the military is less in WHAT they do but more WHO does it for what REASON
- the way the military protect CH or the absence of protection remains problematic
- the principles of Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality and Independence are constantly under discussion; they should not be taken as irrefutable concepts
Conclusions

- heritage institutions have to recognize that their emergency strategy should be contextual. They have to realize that
  - the military will not be able to fulfil the principle of neutrality
  - neutrality can lead to complicity
  - they have to do everything in their power to prevent blurring of roles
  - in a conflict zone not all the needed can be reached
  - in a conflict zone not all the professional standards can be maintained.
  - together with the military they have to tackle the problem People first – antiquities second
Conclusions

- Heritage and military organizations need to lay down rules as soon as possible for the conduct of heritage emergency staff working with the military in conflict zones.
- Clear guidelines endorsed both by the heritage institutions and the military will contribute greatly to the clarity of the roles the parties play in a conflict and will be for their mutual benefit.
- THE DUBLIN GUIDELINES
What I miss:
A Closer Look at the Military

• the military are not one single category
• civil(-military) experts have different positions in the various armed forces
• the military have a legal obligation to safeguard Cultural Heritage
• the military need assistance in what and how to safeguard Cultural Heritage
DUBLIN Guidelines

Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defense Assets to Support UNESCO Activities in Complex Emergencies
Questions

QUESTIONS