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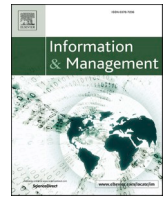
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Social media information governance in multi-level organizations: How humanitarian organizations accrue social capital

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ABSTRACT

Strategic social media use positively influences organizational goals such as the long-term accrual of social capital, and thus social media information governance has become an increasingly important organizational objective. It is particularly important for humanitarian nongovernmental organizations (HNGOs), whose work relies on accurate and timely information regarding socially altruistic behavior (donations, volunteerism, etc.). Despite the potential of social media for increasing social capital, tensions in governing social media information across an organization's different operational levels (regional, intermediate, and national) pose a difficult challenge. Prominent governance frameworks offer little guidance, as their focus on control and incremental policymaking is largely incompatible with the processes, roles, standards, and metrics needed for managing self-governing social media. This study offers a notion of *dynamic and co-evolutionary process management of multi-level organizations* as a means of conceptualizing social media information governance for the accrual of organizational social capital. Based on interviews with members of HNGOs, this study reveals tensions that emerge within eight focus areas of accruing social capital in multi-level organizations, explains how dynamic process management can ease those tensions, and proposes corresponding strategy recommendations.

1. Introduction

Nongovernmental organizations with a humanitarian focus (hereafter referred to as HNGOs), such as the Red Cross, rely heavily on access to human, material, informational, and monetary resources [1]. With the pervasiveness of web-based public social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, the HNGO sector has increasingly embraced its potential value for developing and managing humanitarian aid activities and relationship building [2]. Social media have opened the possibility for HNGOs to enhance communication and networking and mobilize individuals and groups, thus lowering transaction costs and increasing participation and impact [3]. Real-time access to social media profiles, for instance, enables ad hoc relationships between different unrelated stakeholders such as the general public and other organizations or governments [4]. In addition, HNGOs that develop networks as the result of frequent interaction with a community build high levels of

relational trust and positive expectations in support of their activities [1]. Hence, the strategic implementation of social media can foster the creation of social capital in HNGOs.

Overarching organizational goals with respect to social media can be achieved only by coordinating the activities of organizational social media experts who are embedded in management structures. In this context, we draw on the concept of *information governance*, which refers to an organization's ability to create, use, and access information in a manner that allows deriving value from it [5]. Even commercial organizations struggle to use public social media effectively when they lack effective information governance strategies and structures, such as unified processes to capture information generated through organizational social media profiles or concerted cross-platform campaigns [6].

There is added complexity for HNGOs, which have organizational units that often act at different levels (e.g., regional, intermediate, national) and thus involve different networks of collaborators with

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differing aims. These levels often are geographic, but they also reflect organizational structures such as hierarchy and specialization. While regional HNGO units act within certain geographical boundaries, creating regional identities, national headquarters often aim at reaching the broader network of civil society. Moreover, access to resources such as knowledge or funding for social media information governance and use may vary considerably between levels, even within the same organization [7].

While researchers agree that social media offer HNGOs a low-cost way to strengthen their networks and build social capital [8,9], scholarship has yet to provide information governance frameworks that account for the self-governing character of social media. Furthermore, we do not know much about how organizations address social media governance at multiple organizational levels and how these efforts translate into the creation and maintenance of social capital by each level and between levels. An improved understanding of these mechanisms is crucial, as HNGOs require clear directions with measurable outcomes and indicators if they are to improve their social media information governance practices [10].

In this study, we focus on the management of dynamic co-evolutionary processes in complex multi-level HNGOs that evolve from the “interplay of many unlike, particular processes” ([11], p. 23). This perspective problematizes other existing models of information governance that rely on control and incremental politics [12]. Control and incremental politics of policymaking are incompatible with the processes, roles, standards, and metrics that emerge from efforts to accrue social capital through social media. In contrast, a dynamic and co-evolutionary process management view allows us to analyze social media information governance in HNGOs through a governance framework that is, like the technology itself, open and adaptive. Hence, we aim to answer the following research questions:

- 1 *What tensions emerge for multi-level HNGOs from the dynamic and co-evolutionary processes they use to govern social media information?*
- 2 *How does the process management in multi-level HNGOs allow us to conceptualize social media information governance and the accrual of social capital for HNGOs at different organizational levels?*

To answer these questions, we conducted semi structured interviews with 18 social media experts at the regional, intermediate, and national offices of five HNGOs in Germany and analyzed the social media profiles of all five HNGOs. Based on our analysis, we explain how social media information governance is leveraged by HNGOs through dynamic and co-evolutionary process management at different organizational levels (regional, intermediate, national) and the tensions that emerge. This work contributes to theory by developing a notion of *dynamic and co-evolutionary process management of multi-level organizations* that explains how organizations govern social media across (geographically or hierarchically separated) units and organizational levels. Developing such a notion is important because it helps us understand how innovative, bottom-up developments such as the organizational use of self-governed information systems can be managed. By analyzing the practices HNGOs use to build social capital, we show how organizations can leverage trust, pool scarce resources, foster public awareness of their contributions, and streamline public relations processes. Based on this analysis, we highlight strategic, tactical, operational, and reflexive implications for practitioners engaged in managing dynamic and co-evolutionary socio-technical processes in the HNGO sector and beyond.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Social media use of and social capital accruing in HNGOs

NGOs compose a group of organizations referred to as a third sector or as civil society [13]. They have highly diverse structures and operations and engage in a variety of humanitarian, educational, health care,

environmental, political, and other activities. HNGOs play a crucial role in societies worldwide by addressing human needs that are not met through governmental or for-profit organizational activities, providing public goods and services and social value. HNGOs are funded primarily by donations, which entails nonprofit distributing; that is, if a financial surplus is generated, it is not distributed to owners. While they may also employ paid staff, their members are primarily volunteers [14], which increases the significance of accruing social capital [15,16]. In this case, social capital describes networks of strong, crosscutting personal relationships developed over time that provide the basis for trust, cooperation, and collective action [17].

Scholars have scrutinized the impact of social media on accruing social capital for organizations in general. Social media are typically open, dynamic platforms that serve a variety of purposes for organizations [18]. Following Kane et al. [19], we define social media as web-based platforms that allow users to build unique user profiles, create and access digital content, establish relationships with other users of these platforms, and view and traverse these connections. Smith et al. [3] argue that the use of four features of social media can help in accruing social capital in the organizational context: a digital user profile, network transparency, digital search, and digital relations.

To understand the accrual of social capital within the social media use of HNGOs, we focus on three main dimensions of social capital: structural, relational, and cognitive social capital.

Structural social capital refers to network ties, configuration, and the organization. It relates to properties and metrics of the entire network, such as the linkages between individuals or units. It comprises the relationships between actors in the network and their positions [20]. This can be an asset, as it determines who is able to reach whom and how. Moreover, structural ties in networks make it possible for actors in a network to perform transactions [21]. From a structural perspective, social media facilitate the manifestation of online networks and enable HNGOs to access resources not otherwise accessible. During disasters, for instance, social media facilitate connectedness with ad hoc digital volunteers or grassroots communities [22].

Relational social capital refers to trust, norms, obligations, and identity. This comprises the resources or assets that result from and are harnessed through relationships [23]. The relational dimension aims at the personalization of linkages, that is, consolidating a history through repeated interactions. Trust that develops through repeated interactions between individuals and/or organizations can facilitate cooperation and knowledge sharing [24]. From a relational perspective, social media enable two-way communication between relevant stakeholders. A purposeful dialogue with social media users or responding to their comments can foster trust and legitimacy to mobilize resources [25]. Potential supporters such as governments, private and public individuals, and institutions are typically asked for donations and support from multiple HNGOs, and of course, they want confirmation that these donations will be used for legitimate purposes. When users perceive a network as legitimate and trustworthy, they are more likely to commit resources to it, even in the absence of immediate returns [26].

The *cognitive* dimension of social capital deals with shared codes and languages, as well as mutual narratives. This includes mutual ways of representing, interpreting, and creating meaning between actors in a network, which lead to the acknowledgment of common values and have a positive impact on the level of trust actors ascribe to relationships [17]. From a cognitive perspective, social media enable HNGOs to maintain, edit, and share information, as well as to communicate their identities, values, and goals to the public and to engage with interested stakeholders. Social media also allow HNGOs to take part in societal discussions publicly, and they mitigate Buckland’s critique [27] of not being embedded in broader networks to gain social capital and tackle long-term societal issues.

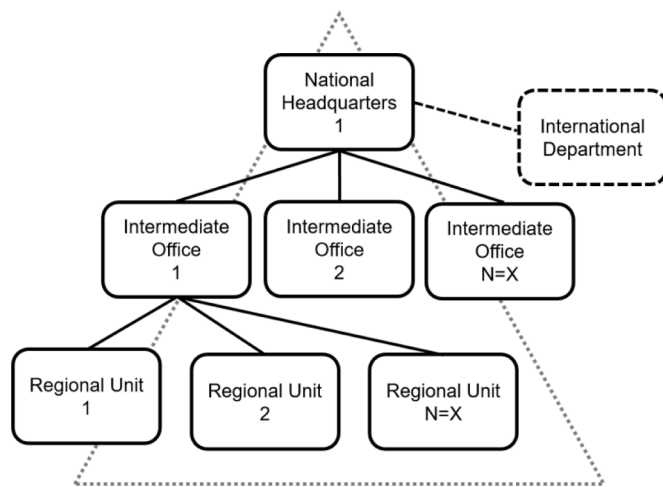


Fig. 1. HNGO organizational structure.

2.2. Social media information governance and dynamic and co-evolutionary processes

Mikalef et al. [5] define information governance as “a collection of competences or practices for the creation, capture, valuation, storage, usage, control, access, archival, and the deletion of information and related resources over its life cycle” (p. 3). Their work highlights and develops many critical aspects of information governance, such as its positive moderation of the relationship between big data analytics and an organization’s radical innovative capability. However, this does not directly address the dynamics of information governance between different stakeholders active on social media platforms.

In their research on platform ecosystems,¹ however, Lee et al. [28] state that it “is essential to understand how data should be managed in platform ecosystems where there are complicated relationships between multiple participating groups. However, this topic has been rarely addressed in industry and academia” (p. 6377). The authors then go on to explore data governance decisions and the practices needed to be implemented for these data governance decisions to meet some of the shortcomings of information governance approaches established to date.

We argue that when it comes to social media information governance within organizations such as HNGOs, it is essential that information governance *processes, roles, standards, and metrics* must reflect and accommodate the overarching organizational and stakeholder goals, and objectives—in addition to decisions—since they constitute all communication and information by the organization and its relevant stakeholders on these platforms *at multi-organizational levels*. HNGOs operate primarily in regional, intermediate, and national organizational units, which all possess their own goals and objectives regarding the use of social media to connect and engage with their stakeholders and to gather and govern information relating to accruing social capital. For instance, at a regional level, where the HNGO operates within a bounded jurisdiction, social media profiles may be used to support activities, resource needs, and stakeholders within their geographical boundaries. In contrast, at the national level, often supported by a professional social media department, HNGOs may strive to engage *strategically* with a broader network of supporters, using social media for public relations and informing stakeholders on a broad set of activities within the HNGO

¹ An ecosystem in this context is defined as a “[...] platform which constitutes two or more sided networks transacting with each other [3]. It allows interactions between multiple groups by providing a meeting place [14]. It is regarded as the building blocks that act as a foundation upon which an array of firms can develop complementary products, technologies or services [15]” ([28], p. 6378).

[8]. In addition, organizational units are *tactically* deployed differently in terms of goals and objectives regarding resources, plans for sharing content and information, and control structures or needs, which can create tensions between units in terms of social media information governance strategies that may lead to inconsistencies in *operations* between units.

While HNGOs are formally organized, they do have semi-autonomous, self-organizing characteristics at each level, and they use social media in differing ways to accrue social capital. This reflects a certain complexity of HNGO-related social media information governance, as multiple organizational levels need to be orchestrated in terms of strategy, tactics, and operations to achieve goals such as accruing social capital effectively and sustainably [29]. Kemp et al. [11] emphasize the challenges of multi-player governance systems, highlighting that the most significant is to “embody capacity for sustainability-oriented coordination, direction and re-direction” (p. 18).

To conceptualize and understand social media information governance in multi-level organizations, as well as the *processes, roles, standards, and metrics* that must be managed, we argue that the management of dynamic co-evolutionary processes that evolve from the “interplay of many unlike, particular processes” ([11], p. 23) can best accommodate governance approaches of bottom-up innovative technologies such as social media [30]. These processes are “aimed and guided in an iterative, forward-looking, adaptive manner, using markets, institutions, and hierarchy (the three basic forms of coordination)” ([11], p. 23). There are four critical rules for managing dynamic and co-evolutionary processes according to Kemp et al. ([11], p. 24): 1) “be careful not to get locked into sub-optimal solutions”; 2) “embed transition policy into existing decision-making frameworks and legitimise transition management”; 3) “take the long view of a dynamic mechanism of change”; and 4) “engage in multi-level coordination”.

The nature and dynamics of multi-level HNGOs—that is, their self-producing/constructing physical systems—mean that dynamic and co-evolutionary processes directly influence social media information governance for social sustainability purposes such as accruing social capital [30–32]. These systems continually self-produce, require contingent maintenance (to avoid breakdowns), are structurally open but organizationally closed, are structurally determined, can be coupled to other systems structurally by mutual specification and/or co-evolution, and can embrace embodied cognition and self-reference/recursion to enable self-construction/production ([31], p. 280). Mingers develops the idea of *conceptual*, i.e., non-physical auto-poietic social systems that encompass “concepts or descriptions, or rules, or communications which interact or self-produce” ([31], p. 283). This type of conceptual self-producing/constructing information system could reflect the use of social media in an “organizationally closed but structurally open” way through self-reference to its own organizing principles. These organizing principles might then reflect information governance in a self-sustaining manner.

To highlight and explain dynamic and co-evolutionary processes management through the nature and dynamics of conceptual self-organizing systems, we have investigated how HNGOs use social media to grow and maintain social capital.

3. Research design

In our study, we explore how HNGOs use and govern social media to accrue, develop, and maintain social capital. We further aim to detect “patterns of use” that are absent in or similar to or different from those found in the existing literature. Our research approach is supported by the collection of qualitative semi-structured interview data gathered from social media experts at five HNGOs in Germany. These experts had varying levels of expertise and organizational roles within the sector [33]. We expected these interviews to produce rich data, grounded by constructs found in the social media literature and supported by additional expert insights, that would allow us to extend existing frameworks

Table 1
summarizes the theoretical basis of this study with an overview of the social capital concepts on which we build.

Concept	Definition	HNGO Focus	References
<i>Structural social capital</i>	“[T]he overall pattern of connections between actors—that is, who you reach and how you reach them” ([17], p. 243)	A strong focus of HNGOs on accruing <i>structural</i> social capital resulted in networks of short-term mutual benefit (pre-social media) [27].	[17]
<i>Relational social capital</i>	“[A]ssets created and leveraged through relationships” ([17], p. 244).	The establishment of stakeholder relationships on social media that facilitate accruing <i>relational</i> social capital may lead to a history of relationships that repeatedly yield mutual benefit.	[3,17,34]
<i>Cognitive social capital</i>	“[R]esources providing shared representations, interpretations, and systems of meaning among parties (Cicourel, 1973)” (as cited in [17], p. 244).	The nurturing of relationships via social media benefits from accruing <i>cognitive</i> social capital through narratives, language, or symbols shared by the HNGO and its stakeholders.	[17]

Table 1. Overview of social capital dimensions

and theories on social media information governance for accruing social capital by HNGOs, or develop new ones. We augmented our interview data with data collected from the social media pages of the HNGOs at which these social media experts worked (see Appendix 2).

3.1. HNGO organizational context and levels of operations

HNGOs in Germany typically have a three-level operational structure based on the German federal structure, with a national office, intermediate offices, and regional units (see Figure 1). The intermediate offices sit between the regional and national levels and may correspond to a German state or administrative region. This organizational set-up reflects Kemp et al.’s [12] differentiation of a (1) strategic level (e.g., developing a vision, formulating long-term goals), (2) tactical level (e.g., networking, agenda building), and (3) operational level (e.g., implementing, experimenting, building).

HNGO regional units establish the most direct connections to paid

Table 2
Interviewee profiles.

Unit Level	ID	Years of HNGO social media management experience	Gender	Age	Organizational relationship with HNGO	Interview Duration (mins)
Regional	R1	10	Female	50	Volunteer	104
	R2	7	Female	37	Staff	53
	R3	6	Male	59	Volunteer	33
	R4	3	Male	30	Volunteer	34
	R5	9	Male	58	Volunteer	30
	R6	6	Male	55	Volunteer	35
	R7	3	Male	21	Volunteer	31
	R8	7	Female	25	Volunteer	67
Intermediate	I1	1,5	Female	27	Staff	149
	I2	7	Male	55	Staff	73
	I3	1	Male	36	Staff	94
	I4	1	Male	35	Staff	65
	I5	4	Male	34	Staff	55
	I6	4,5	Male	36	Staff	50
	I7	3	Female	32	Staff	35
National	N1	2,5	Male	35	Staff	54
	N2	4	Male	40	Staff	52
	N3	3	Female	34	Staff	41

staff, volunteers, and people needing help. These offices do the field-work, such as providing medical and rescue services, patient care, and public education (e.g., first aid training). HNGOs have few paid staff; most individuals who work with HNGOs are trained volunteers. Each regional unit has a high degree of autonomy, maintaining its website and presence on social media through Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. In the national and intermediate offices, paid staff handle mostly administrative work and manage events and training programs for regional units. This may also include disseminating best practices, establishing guidelines, and designing templates for social media governance within the HNGO.

3.2. Participant sampling strategy

We chose to interview social media experts working in national and international HNGOs, headquartered in Germany, that focus on human wellbeing and the delivery of human and health services (e.g., Red Cross, Malteser, and Johanniter). Acknowledging that social media experts may have multiple, overlapping, and sometimes conflicting interpretations and perceptions of social media governance and use for accruing social capital, we reached out to several experts on different organizational levels via the Facebook profiles of the HNGOs, employing Facebook because it is a channel widely used by HNGOs and so was a good mechanism to identify participants for our study. We asked interviewees we obtained through this sampling technique for additional contacts (snowball sampling).

We conducted nine semi-structured interviews with experts at the regional level, six at the intermediate level, and three at the national office level; these experts came from five different HNGOs. Most of our interviewees working at regional units were volunteers, as this is where most volunteers engage with HNGOs; our paid staff interviewees were mostly active in intermediate and national units (headquarters), where HNGO permanent operations are situated. Hence, our sample reflects these organizational structures. The interviews were conducted in German via Skype or by telephone in 2019 and 2020. All interviews were between 30 minutes and 2 1/2 hours in length, depending on how detailed responses were; interviews conducted later in the study tended to be longer as we refined our interview guide and protocols. Table 2 is an overview of the interview sample.

3.3. Interview guide and protocols

We used a semi-structured interview guide to gain insights into the structural, relational, and cognitive dimensions of social media governance for accruing social capital; resources drawn from networks; and relationships, trust, cooperation, and collective action.

- The *structural* dimension included questions on social media governance focused on communications channels; stakeholders; functionality of social media use; workflow support; and use in emergencies.
- The *relational* dimension included questions on social media governance focused on the frequency of use; information origin; the intensity of use; feedback; use for sourcing of resources; and development of trust.
- The *cognitive* dimension included questions on social media governance focused on references to followers; vernacular; post design; use of coding; and symbology.

This approach allowed us to direct the interview according to our research focus while offering some flexibility to allow interviewees to lead us into other areas for exploration. [Appendix 1](#) is our final interview guide.

We also analyzed each organization's social media pages at each interviewee's unit level, looking at posts, follower numbers, and likes to augment the information supplied by the interviewee. [Table A2](#) (in [Appendix 2](#)) is an overview of the public social media profiles of these HNGOs on the platforms they typically use. We included only platforms that experts stated were actively used—that is, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. This analysis shows that most of the intermediate units have fewer followers and less social media activity than regional units, which can be attributed to some of the intermediate units corresponding to relatively small geographic areas and some regional units having been successful at engaging stakeholders and/or doing work in larger cities. Regional units are often more “hardwired” to their communities through local volunteers, which may account for more social media activity than in the more formally staffed intermediate and national units.

3.4. Data analysis

Through an abductive research approach, we applied established qualitative methods of data collection and analysis [35,36]. All interviews were recorded digitally and transcribed following protocols outlined by Hepburn and Bolden [37]. We then utilized thematic analysis techniques based on theories and constructs from the literature that underlie the definitions of information governance and social capital.

Using these theories and constructs as a basis, we employed MAXQDA 2018 to code our data. First, we categorized the interview data into the three main social capital dimensions (structural, relational, and cognitive) with the aim of identifying the facets, concepts, and themes of social media information governance underlying this phenomenon [36]. We then applied open coding techniques, using paragraphs and sentences from our transcriptions as coding units. One of the authors coded the interview textual expressions and simple descriptive phrases (excerpts) in first-order concepts, from which eight second-order themes emerged. These themes were classified under the dimensions taken from the social capital literature [34]. For the structural dimension, we found network maintenance, network growth, and resource pooling; for the relational dimension, we identified trust building, community management, and brokerage; and for the cognitive dimension, we found emotional empathy and common identity.

As we proceeded with our analysis, we also identified narrative examples of national, intermediate, and regional social media information governance activities (in line with Kemp et al.'s [12] strategic, tactical, and operational levels) as well as social media information governance tensions. Those level-specific issues were then mapped against the eight focus areas of social capital accrual explained earlier (network maintenance, network growth, resource pooling, trust building, community management, brokerage, emotional empathy, and common identity). As a consistency check, coding was replicated by a second member of the research team. Where there was a low level of coding agreement between research team members, we engaged in a discussion to develop a

“theme” consensus.

4. Findings

4.1. Eight focus areas of HNGO social capital accrual in social media and tensions between HNGO levels in doing so

The eight focus areas of social capital accrual are at the core of our interview analysis. [Table 3](#) shows these eight focus areas in the context of the three dimensions and provides definitions and examples. All three dimensions of social capital dimensions appear to be relevant to some degree at all organizational levels. While we found that features of social media allow HNGOs to accrue social capital structurally, relationally, and cognitively, these forms of social capital vary widely between the regional, intermediate, and national levels of an HNGO, as social media experts must consider the different stakeholder groups they can reach and the resources they need at each level.

The focus areas of accruing social capital can serve as mechanisms for social media information governance but can also create tensions within and between HNGO levels resulting from dynamic and co-evolutionary process management of self-organizing systems for information governance. With respect to our first research question (*What tensions emerge for multi-level HNGOs from the dynamic and co-evolutionary processes they use to govern social media information?*), we find the tensions indicated in [Table 3](#), which can arise in the social capital focus areas and occur within and between the lower and upper HNGO levels.

4.2. Social media information governance within HNGOs

Findings from our data support nine assertions that underpin social media information governance for HNGO stakeholder alignment. They also form the basis for the recommendations presented later in [Table 4](#). All nine assertions have been aligned with Kemp et al.'s [11] components for sustainable governance. These components are *policy integration*, which concerns the coordination of policies with other governance actors to ensure effective decision making and the acceptance of overall objectives; *common objectives, criteria, trade-off rules, and indicators*, which are tools that can be applied by organizations for planning, as a guide for action, and to make organizational behavior more transparent for all stakeholders of the governance process; *information and incentives for practical implementation*, which include policy instruments (e.g., regulations, education programs) that guide appropriate action and practical implementation; and *programs for system innovation*, which focus on identifying, nurturing, and implementing technological innovation.

Social media platforms and their features [3,19] adopted at each organizational level determine how social media information should be governed and used from a strategic perspective. Within the *structural dimension* of accruing organizational social capital (network maintenance, growth, and resource pooling), regional units benefit from maintaining and governing platforms that allow them to showcase rich stories and enable them to engage local HNGO members in the online sphere. They aim to engage people from their regional communities as volunteers for the HNGO—limiting the number of potential followers mainly to the specific region and thus to people who also meet offline. As a national unit member states: “Of course, there are many regional HNGO profiles on different social media platforms. That is something we cannot do from here. They report on what they experience on-site” (N1).

A well-maintained profile showcasing rich stories of local operations and events enables the HNGO to provide a high level of transparency, update its staff and volunteers, and create visibility. This contrasts with national levels that have a nationwide reach and aim to achieve long-term financial stability and acquire a national reputation among geographically dispersed stakeholders who may never meet physically. Here, organizations need to govern their activities by identifying

Table 3
HNGO social capital accrual focus areas on social media and their information governance tensions.

Social capital dimension	Focus area of social capital accrual	Definition	Examples	Information Governance Tensions
Structural	Network Maintenance	Maintenance of existing online structures and relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform the community through relevant and regular updates about the organization's operations and activities Engage the community through social media activities within the organizational profile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus only on staff and volunteers at regional levels vs. openness to interested people beyond the organization Coordinated and synchronized social media strategy across HNGO levels vs. multiple profiles on all levels
	Network Growth	Extension of network ties by establishing new relationships with other users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Test emergent social media platforms to engage with stakeholders Understand the community of a social media platform and, when relevant, create an active official organizational profile Connect with new followers on established platforms (e.g., new members of the organization, digital volunteers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network retention vs. network growth Limited resources at regional levels may allow a focus on only one social media channel Experimenting with new platforms vs. the risk of ghost profiles Strategic awareness vs. local needs/daily operations at regional levels
	Resource Pooling	Upward and downward allocation of resources within the organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share stories or videos created by an organizational unit with other organizational units Use periodic content (e.g., guidelines, templates from the central office) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A broad representation of operations at the national level vs. the feeling of underrepresentation of particular services at regional levels Assigning accountability throughout the process of channel pooling, i.e., channel management by several units or across organizational levels Anonymous and voluntary process of content provision by regional units for upper levels vs. the importance of close relationships with experts to foster content contribution The difficulty of covering all services in organization-wide channels
Relational	Trust Building	Development of trust and goodwill through social media content that shows the HNGO and its members as reliable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use social media as a direct communication channel to the public to build up trust with stories of how members and the organization work for the common good Use social media to provide transparency and show what activities and material public money is used for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic trust vs. operational trust at the regional level Professionally counter criticism and negativity (sensitivity) vs. ad hoc communication
	Community Management	Building up relationships based on loyalty to the organization and a passion for the common good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide social media content on local operations and events Show appreciation for volunteer work by thanking members Publish pictures of volunteers and members in action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External vs. internal communications Blurred lines between public and private communications Competence conflict between internal (e.g., social intranet) and public social media (e.g., Facebook)
	Brokerage	Openness and efforts to engage with relevant stakeholders from the same or other organizations, or with the general public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively link to relevant content from other organizations Coordinate social media content between all organizations involved in an emergency event Coordinate with ad hoc volunteers in an emergency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-planned day-to-day operations within HNGOs escalating to (partially) social media-coordinated crisis communication HNGO competition vs. collaboration and cooperation within and between HNGOs Help through digital volunteers during emergencies vs. missing strategies for incorporating them meaningfully
Cognitive	Emotional Empathy	Show empathy by providing content on pressing social topics, expressing sympathy, and other emotional content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide support to and show sympathy with individual or social situations Show sympathy for people in need Evoke emotions by posting appropriate (but not violent or otherwise harmful) pictures of HNGO members in their daily work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining political neutrality (e.g., during conflicts) while attracting attention in social media for abuses of power Showing sensitive material vs. whitewashing humanitarian grievances Conflicts between HNGO agenda (e.g., raise donations) and community preferences/expectations (e.g., information on new equipment or upcoming activities)
	Common Identity	Evoke feelings of camaraderie and share the HNGO's values when engaging in social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinforce feelings of camaraderie by using, for instance, slogans and emoticons Create a strong commitment to the organization by communicating its values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment of central identity vs. local identity

common objectives, criteria, trade-off rules, and indicators by acknowledging that different social media strategies are required at different levels. Hence

Assertion 1. *To advance strategies for the accrual of social capital through social media governance, it is necessary to acknowledge that different social media platforms and features are relevant at each organizational level.*

Social media generally provide HNGOs with the opportunity to embed their presence in broader networks, which was not possible

before social media [27]. Our results indicate that most regional units, due to limited resources, are better off pursuing a single-channel information governance and communications strategy that focuses on social media platforms that allow updating of local staff and volunteers; this affords a way to maintain reliable volunteers and service contractors based on long-term, local relationships. This strategy can avoid the creation of ghost or neglected channels that may negatively affect the accrual of social capital by losing interested followers: "We're careful with new channels because our maxim is to first implement the channels

Table 4
Recommended social media information governance approaches for organizational levels and potential for accruing social capital.

Focus area	Level	Social media information governance recommendations	Potential social capital outcomes
(1) Network Maintenance	Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use channels that respond to the needs of a local community by engaging and updating the community along the unit’s operations and activities If available resources allow, employ single-channel consistency to maintain the network 	Volunteer work resulting from long-term relationships with local volunteers, staff, and other regional stakeholders
	Intermediate and National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain different social media channels to reach a supra-regional and diverse network of stakeholders (e.g., journalists via Twitter, donors via Instagram) 	Long-term financial stability from a network of donors; better reputation among stakeholders
(2) Network Growth	Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on platforms that enable rich stories of regional activities and are used by regional stakeholders 	Engaging new local contacts and attracting them to be volunteers, supporters, or contractors for new service offerings
	Intermediate and National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on multi-channel diversity and agile use of emerging platforms to broaden the network 	Organizational growth and continuity by establishing a pool of new donors and alliances with partner organizations that tie them to the organization over the long term
(3) Resource Pooling	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in co-creation and reuse of content across organizational levels Use an organization-wide profile (e.g., YouTube) to which units of all levels have access Provide clear points of contact for content exchange between units 	Sharing organizational knowledge across levels; saving resources by sharing content creation; enabling regional units to present local activities to a larger network of stakeholders and profit from the structural capital of other levels
(4) Trust Building	Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Showcasing regional activities and projects both immediately and on an ad-hoc basis, explaining the values of the organization Highlight the regional impact of activities 	Creating multiple contact points for new relationships; establishment of trust from the local community; receiving funding for regional services and projects; establishing a reputation as a regional service provider
	Intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compile cross-regional activities retrospectively Collaborate with other intermediate levels of HNGOs, ministries, and companies 	Cross-regional legitimacy through reliability as a service provider and independent pillar of public life; trusted cooperation partners for projects
	National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Express values and visibility of social service projects worldwide Highlight societal impact Respond to criticism via (internal) crisis PR Collaborate with influencers 	Nationwide legitimacy, with an image that stands for and reinforces the social function of the HNGO and commits to a Disclosure of Sustainability
(5) Community Management	Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate content purposefully Publish content about the unit’s activities Communicate bi-directionally Show appreciation for volunteer work 	Improvement of services, staff, and, volunteer management through social media-based internal communication
	Intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coalesce best practices from regional unit exemplars Provide social media tutorials for regional units 	Aligned demeanor across regional units; Internal knowledge transfer
	National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal: adopt an HNGO enterprise social network to enable connections within the HNGO nationwide Internal: provide affiliation-based communities with a virtual space to connect External: respond to the interests of a broad range of stakeholders 	Internal: Streamlining of internal communication pathways and capturing organizational knowledge External: Reputation establishment; synergy effects from involvement in projects and collaborations
(6) Brokerage	Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build strategic alliances by providing contact points in the context of different organizational services 	Strategic alliances with other organizations or the local public at the regional level to receive relevant information, resource allocation, etc.
	Intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect regional, national, and other intermediate units by interlinking pillar content and profiles 	Strengthened relationships between units and across levels of the HNGO; consistent social media engagement within the HNGO
	National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define the roles of brokers who actively connect and identify relevant stakeholders Provide strategies for lower-level units to incorporate digital ad-hoc volunteers 	Strategic alliances with other organizations, politicians, or journalists at the national level to receive relevant information, resource allocation, etc.
(7) Emotional Empathy	Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight achievements and commitments Express gratitude and appreciation Provide public acknowledgment for organizational members 	High staff and volunteer retention; word-of-mouth recommendations; positive impression management
	Intermediate and National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase (online) presence around pressing social issues Show respect for societal issues Provide emotional support in crisis situations, e.g., pandemics 	Claiming high authority within the HNGO sector; ability to influence public debate
(8) Common Identity	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use consistent symbols and messaging throughout regional, intermediate, and national communications (both up and down the chain) 	Staff and volunteer retention and loyalty; public recognition value

you have in a good way before opening a new channel, and in doing so, have your capacities and resources in mind. We have a tendency in the HNGO that certain people open 10 channels but don’t use them in a targeted and meaningful way—and that is strategically wrong” (N2).

To advance network growth in the interest of accruing social capital, advances in key network maintenance and additional capabilities are significant social media information governance prerequisites for HNGO units. Intermediate and national offices may use their workforces to acquire and distribute knowledge about secondary social media platforms and their features that are used by innovative organizational units

and develop an understanding of how they may contribute in the long term to multi-channel diversity within the organization. A member of the national office explains that the younger members “are allowed to test [new channels]. I think that is important, and we look at it with great interest. If we introduced it at the federal office, that would be easier, but then we automatically would have to think about what the rest of the HNGO does” (N2). This matches with Kemp et al.’s [11] governance component of *programs for system innovation* in that it requires the assessment of novel social media platforms useful for the HNGO. Hence

Assertion 2. *In terms of information governance, establishing relationships on social media requires weighing the costs and benefits of maintaining a new digital network using additional social media platforms and resources at all organizational levels.*

Due to the diversity of topics within an HNGO, a single point of social media information governance may not be appropriate to respond to diverse stakeholder expectations [6]. Rather, an HNGO should distribute its information governance activities among several experts and centralize management of channels that aim to publish a broad range of content on HNGO activities or require more effort to maintain. As a national unit member states: “It is utopian to think that [regional units] can actually produce a lot of video content. That’s why the idea was that the stronger units deliver for the weaker units and the weaker units profit from the stronger ones, and we all profit from there always being something happening on this channel.” Hence, to achieve a stronger overall network, we recommend establishing a joint profile representing all levels to which units can add content and take responsibility for some portion of the work. Of course, to make the joint profile valuable for all levels of an HNGO, consideration must be given to the platform features and the expectations of the respective stakeholders.

Regional units, in particular, profit from centralized channels, as they can contribute content but are not required to do so. In addition, they profit from these channels’ structural capital in that they enable showcasing of their regional activities to a broader network that is maintained and governed by upper-level units. But also, upper levels build on content from lower levels: “We are sitting here in the head office, but the real HNGO world and what people experience with us is happening out there somewhere. Half our content is about what good deeds our members do in our name and under our banner” (N1).

In addition, versions of similar content provided by upper-level units (e.g., educational campaigns on how to act in case of emergencies) save resources and streamline decision-making processes, as editorial content can be aligned across levels. For instance, recurring events such as flu season can be approached with a consistent strategy across regions and levels. In this respect, centrally managed social media platforms to which all units can contribute content enables regional units to save resources and profit from upper-level structural social capital by receiving attention for their content beyond their regions.

The absence of clear social media information governance contact points and responsibilities within an HNGO can hamper effective content and knowledge exchange among the different levels and types of organizational units. Upper levels should provide clear (digital) contact points to which regional units can submit their content and clarify how and what regional content should be published on profiles maintained by national units. For the practical implementation of content sharing, HNGOs need *incentives* for regional units to share their content with upper-level units, but must also distribute centrally managed content among the regional units for effective social media information governance. Hence

Assertion 3. *To develop effective social media information governance approaches, intermediate and national units need to coordinate social media content development on general topics and content contribution for specific centrally managed channels.*

While the community factor is important for a unit to maintain a successful network with its own members, some units interpret the use of social media as a technology that merely extends formal structures to the online space. Members engaged within successfully utilized social media platforms may also perceive value simply from being part of the community: “It is our task to represent the entire community. I don’t think it was ever a slogan, but it comes to me quite often: ‘As a [HNGO member], you are never alone.’ And that’s what the social media channels are supposed to suggest. Although we are active in so many different areas, we are all part of a community, all [HNGO name] and all connected to each other and all doing good works” (I1).

Hence, it is important to understand the role of social media information governance for each stakeholder group at each level and match content to their needs. At the regional level, this includes providing daily updates of regional activities, showing appreciation for volunteer work, and recruiting volunteers in their area of responsibility; at the national level, the focus is on showcasing a broad range of topics for which the HNGO is responsible, such as national and international projects, and showing how the HNGO’s activities serve society—building trust in the organization’s purpose and connecting to diverse set of stakeholders. Generally, at all levels, bidirectional communication—meaning the interactivity of social media users—has proven to be crucial to long-term stakeholder engagement [8]. This can be facilitated with polls, stories, quizzes, and other interactive elements that go beyond one-directional reporting. Hence

Assertion 4. *In focusing on the relational dimension of social media information governance for accruing social capital, establishing a community feeling, especially in regional units, is crucial; whereas at the national level, the focus is on nationwide legitimacy and trust building in organization-wide HNGO activities.*

Negative reputations (acquired for whatever reason) can persist over long periods, but inclusiveness and transparency of social media information governance helps overcome this by facilitating the development of trust on the part of an HNGO’s social media users. Being open to criticism and responding to it competently shows that an organization takes social media governance concerns seriously. Showcasing services and activities and leveraging their impact through meaningful multimedia representations (images, videos, live streams) can help build trust, as it shows what HNGOs do for the common good. Open communication and visibility of activities, mission, and objectives also legitimate an HNGO’s initiatives to the public. As one member of the intermediate levels states: “Social media are the most direct way between the people outside and us. We show we are active, what we do, and that we do it all in the interest of humanity, in line with our goals. And thus, we also directly build up trust between us and the people” (I4).

Thus, it is critical that HNGOs engage their external stakeholders with their social media information governance approaches by showcasing how the HNGOs meet social objectives. The more an HNGO ensures the transparency of its practices and goals, the more trustworthy and reliable will be the relationships developed with the public, donors, and other relevant stakeholders [38]. HNGOs need to define trust building as a *common objective* of the social media strategy. Hence

Assertion 5. *Trust building is a main long-term facilitator of successful HNGO social media information governance on all levels.*

In addition, we found that a few members of HNGOs who are not dedicated social media managers use social media to create profiles for members of the HNGO on topics of interests (e.g., “[HNGO name] peddlers market”; “[HNGO name] youth night”; “You are a [HNGOs name] member if you ...”; “[HNGO name] professional group on press and communication”; and “former [HNGO name] member”). These groups serve mostly to share knowledge among volunteers and staff of a specific HNGO from different regions, and are closed to others. The number of members of these groups ranges from three to more than 10,000. These groups do not follow formal social media information governance guidelines.

Some of the national- and intermediate-level experts we interviewed view these social media groups with skepticism, as they are not professionally managed. The establishment of these topic-based, self-governed, and unofficial groups shows, however, that members have a need for information exchange within the HNGO community that is limited to certain topics across organizational levels and units. Such groups, started by interested trained volunteers who identify a specific need for a topic-based approach to social media, are not officially governed by a dedicated social media expert. Evidence of large follower numbers illustrate that, for some topics, many members find value in these self-

governed groups. Therefore, when HNGOs do not have internal social media to exchange ideas on specific topics, allowing for self-governed, topic-based social media groups that contribute to the accrual of social capital through knowledge sharing may be an alternative. Hence

Assertion 6. *Self-governed, topic-based social media groups created by volunteers who are not organizationally dedicated social media managers and that aim to connect with staff and volunteers across units and levels foster the accrual of social capital.*

While these self-governed groups contribute to knowledge sharing, common identity, loyalty, and other things, they show that there is a need in HNGOs for nationwide, internal social media information governance and sharing. They also highlight that there are challenges or gaps in using internal information governance tools. Self-governed groups create a risk that important organizational knowledge might get lost in public social media information streams without managers ever knowing of its existence. In addition, regional HNGO units often use public social media mainly to update their local staff, creating blurred lines between internal and external public social media use: “When we train our members, we always point out that [public social media channels] are for external communication and should be used as such. I think this is somewhat historically justified, in our organization, because this social intranet did not exist until last year” (N2).

Hence, we suggest that HNGOs should identify, assess, and govern organizational internal social networks that enable internal and nationwide information exchange (*system innovation*). Hence

Assertion 7. *The adoption and information governance of organizational internal social media to which volunteers and staff have access and that enable the accrual of social capital is crucial to maintain knowledge long-term in the HNGO and reduce the focus on HNGO internal communication in public social media channels.*

While prior research found that social media can help integrate external resources, such as during emergencies [4], we identified that reservations persist regarding relationships and information governance activities conducted in conjunction with other HNGOs that are seen as competitors: “When I started, the department would have considered it a terrible thing—posting something from another HNGO. I don’t share that opinion at all ... In my experience, if I repost something, I receive positive feedback. Honestly, we all do the same work. And in many emergency situations, it’s not just our HNGO ... It’s always a cooperative effort” (N2).

Reluctance to establish information governance approaches with other HNGOs could, during emergencies, lead to uncoordinated publishing of information regarding operations.

Regarding spontaneous volunteers, the nature of formal structures within HNGOs can hinder including them in information governance approaches. One member of the regional level states, “I would only make calls for help very carefully via social media, because something like this can get out of hand very quickly. You have to know exactly what kind of help you need, where people should report, who takes care of them, who allocates them, and so on” (R1).”

In emergency situations, however, HNGOs must cooperate, coordinate, and compromise with others to run operations effectively, including in the use of social media. As for spontaneous volunteers, HNGOs should develop strategies to reach out and integrate these helpers in social media information governance in times of need. If done well, this may provide an opportunity to retain these volunteers over the long term. This is crucial in a sector built on altruistic behavior and that, in some regions, struggles to find new members and volunteers. In addition, clear and regular communication of social media governance approaches with internal units, external organizations, and the public helps strengthen ties and processes, building greater understanding of

the needs of relevant stakeholders and establishing new relationships that create social capital. Here, *organizational* training, including information on the value of relationships with external stakeholders in social media, and *incentives* for practical implementation of better stakeholder management and integration contribute to social media governance. Hence

Assertion 8. *Social media platforms can act as brokers between and within HNGOs and the public and foster short-term, real-time exchange of information as well as help build long-term relations between these stakeholders. However, social media information governance approaches that include ad hoc volunteers are often missing, and competition between HNGOs can hinder effective social media governance and use between HNGOs.*

Social media governance practices that showcase the organization’s ability to address pressing social topics, provide relief information, show sympathy, and reduce uncertainty in ambiguous situations can help build social capital. Interviewees mentioned that HNGOs deal with emotional topics that often lead to emotional reactions and how they try to establish connections to social media users: “As a rule, you don’t put the picture of the emergency backpack on Facebook, but you put the picture of the person who carries it. Or any picture, because you are publicizing a volunteer service. Even showing a helper kneeling down to help someone, has an effect. ... It’s important that you bring the connection to the people, the emotional side” (R6).

Establishing emotional connections and showing sympathy, such as during emergencies, can leverage organizational social capital and focus attention on HNGO requirements, such as donations, by reinforcing trust in HNGOs activities, retaining volunteers, and attracting new members. Defining *common objectives* in terms of transparency about the organization’s values, activities and aims can guide social media governance at multiple levels. Hence

Assertion 9. *Sensitivity toward the information governance and use of social media channels to raise awareness of societal and individual challenges and needs in times of crisis supports the cognitive dimension of accruing organizational social capital.*

Kemp et al. [11] stress that the main challenge in establishing governance regimes is to ensure that they have “reasonable coherence of vision and commitment, enjoy trust and are accountable, and have sufficient capacity for coordination, direction and redirection” (p. 19). Our study has found that through the management of dynamic and co-evolutionary processes associated with complex self-organizing systems—that is, self-producing/constructing physical systems—HNGOs can govern and use social media characteristics and functionality to accrue social capital. This is achieved by 1) managing tensions across the eight social capital focus areas and 2) governing social media information at organizational levels for the establishment of social capital as part of the organization’s IT strategy.

Table 4 presents specific recommendations for *reconciling tensions* at different HNGO levels, adapted from existing information governance approaches, through more effective *stakeholder alignment*—thus providing better social capital outcomes. These recommendations might be implemented by social media experts at different levels of HNGOs to accrue social capital.

The results of this study highlight the emergence of a self-producing/constructing information governance system reflected in an ‘organizationally closed but structurally open’ manner through self-reference to its own organizing principles. We see that social media information governance for accruing social capital has been managed in a self-sustaining manner by the HNGOs. Figure 2 summarizes this idea, as well as the focus areas of social media use and accruing social capital at the strategic, tactical, and operational levels.

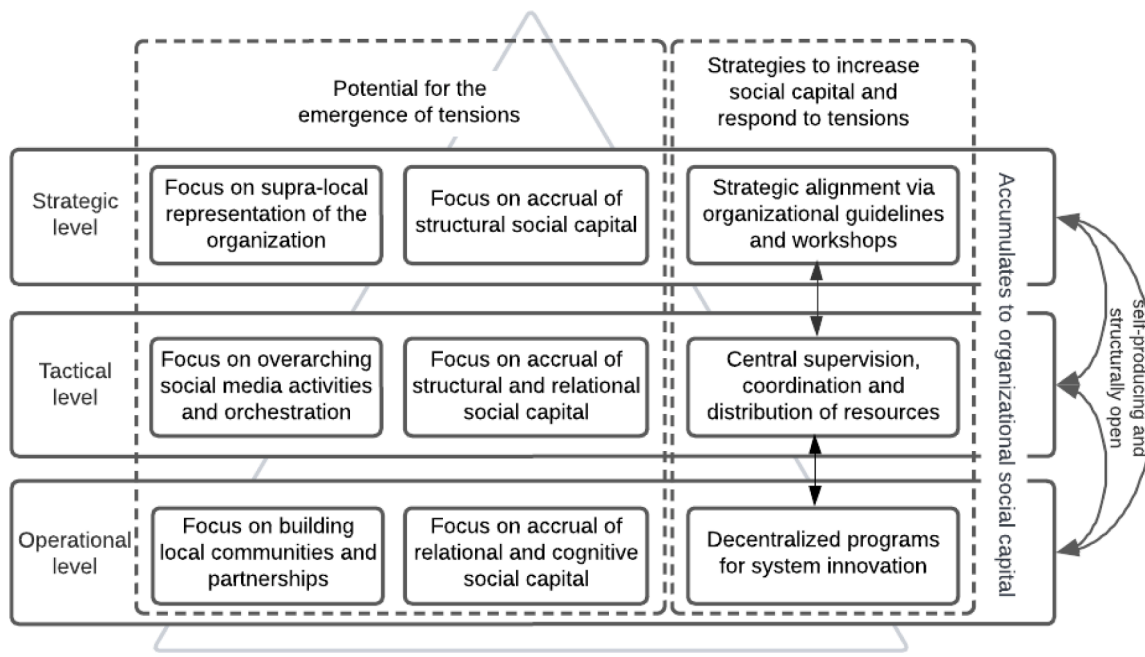


Fig. 2. Information governance, social capital accrual, and dynamic process management of multi-level HNGOs.

4.3. HNGO social media information governance systems and their implications

In answer to our second research question (How does the process management of multi-level HNGOs allow us to conceptualize social media information governance and the accrual of social capital for HNGOs at different organizational levels?), our study highlights that social media-generated information can be governed and used for accruing social capital through this process management approach. This study finds several characteristics of HNGO social media information governance systems.

- They *continually self-produce*—this is illustrated by the dynamic nature of the governance approaches HNGOs employ for social capital purposes, such as testing and experimenting with newer platforms to attract younger stakeholders, using localized content templates, and sensitivity to information communicated.
- They *require contingent maintenance (to avoid breakdowns)*—for instance, managers in these organizations highlighted the need for central supervision and monitoring of newer platform use while not stifling innovation at the intermediate and regional levels.
- They are *structurally open but organizationally closed*—this is reflected in the governance tension between communications, be they external and internal, operational, or during crises. There is a need to distinguish between and effectively govern social media for accruing social capital versus organizational operations.
- They are *structurally determined*—we see a number of tensions that emerged from our interviews that highlight the difficulties in navigating multi-level organizational structures for social media information governance purposes. How the organization is represented, who communicates what, and how sensitive and potentially damaging information is handled all rely on continual review and communication of organizational structures, roles, and responsibilities.
- They *can be coupled to other systems structurally by mutual specification and/or co-evolution*—this was highlighted in the interest shown by social media managers in using social media governance to focus on, connect to, and coordinate with other HNGOs for collaboration on building social capital and effective distribution of resources.

- They *can embrace embodied cognition and self-reference/recursion to enable self-construction/production*—respondents had varying levels of social media management experience, but through the richness of their responses we saw a pattern of learning and experimentation to improve social media information governance while retaining flexibility and innovation of social media use for accruing social capital ([31], p.280).

The following four critical rules for managing dynamic and co-evolutionary processes of Kemp [11] also seem to have been intuitively observed by the HNGO social media managers.

- 1 *Do not get locked into sub-optimal solutions*—by allowing each organizational level to adapt information governance approaches suitable to their local conditions.
- 2 *Embed dynamic and co-evolutionary process management policy into existing decision-making frameworks*—by integrating the organization’s objectives for accruing social capital with its social media governance approaches, although it would appear that there is no recognition or legitimization of *dynamic and co-evolutionary process management* as an official position per se.
- 3 *Take the long view of a dynamic mechanism of change*—long-term objectives were not the focus of this study, but the general feeling of respondents was that social media information governance and use for accruing social capital is an evolving issue.
- 4 *Engage in multi-level coordination*—interviewees were cognizant of, sensitive to, and receptive to multi-level social media information governance approaches to meet overall objectives for social capital accrual. In fact, many expressed the view that this was the strength of social media platforms in this instance.

5. Limitations and further research

We acknowledge that our sample may underrepresent experts at a national level and overrepresent social media knowledge at the HNGO regional level. The dearth of available social media experts at the national level made it difficult to recruit interviewees, and so we conducted only three such interviews. Moreover, we had to rely on the assessments of individuals who may have had some reluctance to

question the social media practices of their organizations.

Furthermore, given that our study involved only five German HNGOs, future research should examine whether organizations in other countries with the same three-level structure (national, intermediate, and regional) use social media in similar ways and what types of information governance practices might better suit their organizational and cultural contexts. Future research could also capture the opinion of HNGO staff and volunteers at different levels who tap into social media (but not officially manage it) to understand their views about successfully managing and governing social media.

In addition, future research could investigate and develop measures of social media information governance for the accrual of social capital identified using social media analytics, adjusted monitoring, and listening features. This could be achieved by developing a dashboard that incorporated information governance and social capital indices specified by an individual organization and that provides benchmarks against monitored social media data. A related open question concerns how the focus areas of information governance for social capital accrual analyzed in our study can be leveraged in times of uncertainty and contribute to the ability of HNGOs to convert their social capital into actual social action when most needed.

6. Conclusions

This study investigates HNGO social media information governance approaches to foster organizational social capital development. By conducting interviews with experts at the regional, intermediate, and national levels of five HNGOs, we have provided insights into how social media are governed and used at different organizational levels to build and maintain a network of collaborators and thus foster relationships with volunteers, cooperation within and among organizations, and collective action. We identified eight focus areas of social media information governance for organizational accrual of social capital. In the structural dimension, network retention, network expansion, and resource pooling facilitate organizational social capital. In the relational dimension, we identified the establishment of trust, community management, and brokerage. The cognitive dimension of social capital can be addressed by emotional empathy and building a common identity. For each focus area, we identified emerging tensions of social media information governance between and within organizational levels. By proposing strategic recommendations for the tensions, we arrived at a notion of *dynamic and co-evolutionary process management of multi-level organizations* that improves our understanding of how to reconcile these tensions.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Diana Fischer-Prefler: Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Conceptualization. **Julian Marx:** Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Visualization, Writing – review & editing, Conceptualization. **Deborah Bunker:** Funding acquisition, Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Conceptualization. **Stefan Stieglitz:** Funding acquisition, Supervision, Resources. **Kai Fischbach:** Funding acquisition, Supervision, Resources.

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Appendix 1

Interview guide (translated to English)

[start recording here] Topic block 1:

Age: _____

You are:

- Full-time/permanent employee
- Trained volunteer
- None of these, but _____

What is your position in the organization?

How long have you been working for the social media department of your organization?

What is the ratio of time spent on social media communications to other activities in your area of responsibility? (Time expenditure)

Is there special training for social media communication?

- If not: Would you consider such training necessary? If so, what should be trained?
- If so, what content is being trained and what else should be trained?

How many people work in this area within the HNGO?

- Follow-up: If you dropped out, would there be another person to do the job?

PR work

- Does the HNGO have its own public relations department?
 - If yes: How is it integrated into the HNGO structure? Is there even a social media department?
 - If not: Which department are you assigned to?
 - Would it make sense to merge the social media department with the umbrella organization?
 - If so (or partly), for what tasks?

The HNGO

- In which sector is the HNGO active? (both factually and geographically)
- How is HNGO financed?
- What are the main tasks of the HNGO?

Topic block 2: Structural component of social capital

General use:

- 1 What social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube do you use in your organization?
 - Follow-up: Which are the most important channels?
 - Why do you use these channels?
 - For which tasks do you consider the respective social media channels to be particularly important for the organization?
 - Follow-up: Can you give examples where social media has provided advantages for the HNGO?

Relevant stakeholders: Public and internal

- 1 Who are the relevant stakeholders of your HNGO? (Politicians, potential new members, members, etc.)
- 2 Which of these stakeholder groups do you reach best via the respective channels you have previously mentioned?

Purpose of use:

- 1 What exactly do you use your social media presence for?
 - ...in Facebook? (if mentioned) ...on Twitter? (if mentioned) ...in Instagram? (if mentioned) ...on YouTube (if mentioned) ...what else was mentioned
- 2 What are the intentions of the social media content?
 - ...in Facebook? (if mentioned) ...on Twitter? (if mentioned) ...in Instagram? (if mentioned) ...on YouTube (if mentioned) ...what else was mentioned
- 3 Are you trying to expand the network in the social media channels?
 - If so, in which channels and how?
- 4 Are the different channels being used with different content?
 - If yes: why?
- 5 Social media offer various features and tools, such as Facebook groups, posts, fundraisers, reviews etc.
 - How do you use different features in Facebook? (if mentioned)
 - How do you use different features in Twitter? (if mentioned)
 - How do you use different features in YouTube? (if mentioned)
 - How do you use different features in Instagram? (if mentioned)
 - How do you use different features in Instant Messenger? (if mentioned)

Support workflows

- 1 Can you give examples where [use the respective channel here: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram?] support internal organizational tasks?
 - Does the use of social media facilitate work processes?
 - If so, how does [use the respective channel here: Facebook, Twitter YouTube, Instagram] help?
- 2 How were these tasks done before social media were established?
 - Follow-up: Does the use of social media facilitate work processes?
- 3 Do social media even replace internal tools?
 - If so, to what extent?
 - If not, does social media simply mean more work?
- 4 To what extent do your organization's staff volunteers use their own social media profiles in the work context?
- 5 Does the use of social media channels help to carry out organizational external tasks (e.g., coordination with other organizations, volunteers etc.)?
 - If so, can you give examples in which HO has successfully used social media?

Use in emergency situations:

- 1 How are social media channels used specifically in case of damage or catastrophes?
 - Do you use social media in emergencies to obtain information from outside (from other organizations, users, etc.)?
 - If so, do you have an example? If not, why not?
 - Do you use social media in emergencies to obtain information from members?

- To send information to the public (to warn, give updates on the situation, etc.)?
 - To send information to volunteers and staff?
- 2 How can followers and other social media users help in emergency situations?
 - 3 What recommendations for action would you give to optimize the social media use during emergencies?
 - 4 Do you believe that good social media communication with the public during major emergencies improves the image of the HNGOs in a sustainable way?
 - Do you have an example of such a commitment, which was positive (or less positive)?

Topic 3: Relational component of social capital

- 1 How often do you post posts (e.g., on average per week) and what do you do to ensure a certain standard of quality?
- 2 Where does the information you publish come from?
 - Is the information checked before publication?
 - What influence do the interests of the fans/followers have on the publication of content? (Relevance)
 - What do you pay attention to when posting something? (e.g. simple language or correct technical terms?)
- 3 How would you describe the intensity of the interaction relationship with your fans/followers? (active, reserved, ...)
 - What would you say: How often do you interact with your fans and do you get input from them? (Frequency of interaction)
 - What do you see as the benefits of the interactions with the fans/followers?
 - To what extent do you think that additional nonredundant and new information can be obtained from the fans/followers?

In interaction relations with fans and followers, mutual opinions can be exchanged. Through your posts, you pass on knowledge to your fans/followers, and through the comments that the fans/followers make, they in turn return individual suggestions.

Quality of feedback from followers/fans:

- 1 To what extent is feedback or comments from fans/followers useful for the organization?

Resources of the organization:

- 1 Which resources are most lacking in your organization?
 - To what extent, for example, are fundraising and social media use related?
 - To what extent does recruitment take place via social media? (How do you assess the potential to find full-time or volunteer staff?)

*Interaction relationships have the potential to **develop mutual trust**.*

- 1 What exactly were the initial motivations for engaging in social media? (compatible norms/values?)
- 2 How do you develop trust in social media?
 - Is the trust of your followers important to you?
 - To what extent do you try to generate trust between your organization and the fans or followers through your social media communication?
 - In what way can you imagine, for example, that trust can affect the behavior of a fan/follower? (Provision of support)

- 3 To what extent are the problems and interests or comments of the fans/followers addressed? (Consider interests/problems)
 - o Much attention paid to these suggestions or rather less? (Pay attention to user problems)
 - o Are there times when comments (e.g., major claims, vacation of the responsible employee) are answered very late?
- 4 How would you describe your reactions to comments from fans/followers? (e.g., how quickly do you respond to comments, how do you choose who to reply to, are there days/weeks when you respond faster/less quickly, or is there a fixed scheme that you work through? [constant behavior])
- 5 How would you describe the emotional attachment to your fans/followers? (emotional intensity)
- 6 To what extent does your HNGO maintain relations with other organizations (its own umbrella organization, other HNGOs, etc.) via social media?
- 7 What do the volunteers in particular receive from your organization in return for their support (generally and via social media)? (Reciprocal exchange)

Topic block 4: Cognitive component of social capital

Finally, I would be interested to know how they design their social media content and what effects different types of content have.

- 1 How do you address your fans/followers?
- 2 Are there certain words in social media communication that only your fans/followers know and understand?
- 3 Are there certain words/expressions/specialist language in social media communication that only employees and/or volunteers understand?
- 4 Which design content (pictures, videos, @, links, etc.) do you use most frequently in [use the respective channel here: Facebook, Twitter YouTube, Instagram?] and why?
- 5 Do you use a specific hash tag or other code word in [Social Media/ Instant Messenger] that stands for your community?
- 6 What symbols do you use to create a sense of community in social media?

[stop recording here]

Appendix 2

Table A2

Table A2
Social Media Profiles of HNGOs Interviewees—Extracted Data.

	Instagram Subscriber: 30.03.2020	∅ Instagram—Posts within last three months	Facebook Likes/ Subscriber: 30.03.2020	∅ Facebook—Posts within last three months	Twitter Subscriber: 30.03.2020	∅ Twitter—Posts within last three months
R3	669	5	2401/ 2546	105	541	32
R4	No profile	No profile	1330/1415	7	25	0
R5	No profile	No profile	2157/2255	25	240	19
R6	No profile	No profile	1902/1970	74	92	1
R7	No profile	No profile	486/513	18	69	10
I4	1,2k	5	4.190/4.515	10	No profile	No profile
I5	No profile	No profile	2.623/2.874	22	520	37
I1	862	8	2.732/2.843	39	417	16
R1	806	2	2.987/3.098	21	No profile	No profile
R2	807	0,33	3.273/3.366	22	No profile	No profile
I2	912	3	1.016/1.110	3	67	0
I3	949	7	1.654/1.721	13	No profile	No profile
N1	10,9k	18	64.507/64.844	37	2,8k	39
R8	4,2k	14	2.615/2.783	7	No profile	No profile
I6	4,4k	22	12.771/12.932	23	No profile	No profile
N2	11,3k	14	58.801/58.424	30	11,2k	17
N3	10,2k	109	36,199/37,014	116	150,7k	211
I7	No profile	No profile	721/743	19	No profile	No profile

Appendix 3

Structural Dimension of HNGOs' Social Media Governance and Use for Social Capital Accruing

Focus Area: Network Maintenance

comprises the maintenance of existing online structures and relationships. HNGOs have begun to use social media in parallel with their popularization. This comprises their national headquarters, intermediate offices, and regional units. National offices use a variety of channels and have dedicated social media experts who work within a larger department for social media information governance regarding communication. Intermediate offices—depending on their area of responsibility—have a larger budget for social media activities than regional units and work within a department for social media communication (one to a few experts). Regional units mostly have one dedicated volunteer social media expert often focusing on a single channel with mature structures and relationships. In this regional channel (often Facebook), followers are part of a committed community and regions claim that they can achieve the widest reach among all platforms.

Many of the trained volunteers who help with social media information governance at this level are familiar with features of Facebook and are confident about using it: “I use Facebook because I’m in the target group myself and I know the platform” (R1).

At the regional level, some social media platforms are seen as less relevant due to specific platform features “I don’t want to do Trump-like politics. I actually want to provide information about daily operations. So, I don’t see the value of Twitter” (R6). In fact, the overall picture is that most regional units have longstanding audiences on Facebook, which has enabled them to build sound relationships with their closest volunteers. Some of the platform’s features such as Facebook groups are particularly useful, for instance, in engaging and updating staff and volunteers by announcing events. On this platform, the activities primarily serve the cultivation of an existing social network: “I always suspected that a large proportion of followers were employees, which is certainly also the case in other units. But then I would really try to address other interested people even more strongly” (N2). While national headquarter criticizes this focus on volunteers and staff and stresses the importance of informing and attracting people outside the HNGO in social media at all levels, they do not overrule the autonomy of lower-level units: “Of course, there are many regional HNGO profiles on different social media platforms. That is something we cannot do from here. They report on what they experience on-site” (N1).

Generally, social media information governance and use in regional units depends on one local expert, who is intrinsically motivated to take responsibility for building and maintaining relationships for that unit. This strongly impedes continuous improvement in social media information governance training and execution. In particular, volunteers deal with social media information governance in their leisure time, do not always have social media training or background, and are often focused on social media network maintenance rather than network growth.

Focus Area: Network Growth

comprises the extension of network ties by establishing new relationships, which will consequently lead to increased social capital. Our interviewees were generally aware that each platform has different characteristics to address different stakeholder groups. “In terms of demographics, some platforms reach older users more effectively, whereas other services captivate users younger than 30 years” (I6).

In this respect, experts with limited resources need to weigh maintaining and growing an existing network against cultivating an additional network that promises more structural social capital. Whereas the experts generally agree that being present in newly emerging social media platforms is necessary for structural growth, they do not necessarily pursue these opportunities. Implementing new information governance structures requires time, personal interest, training, and resources. While network growth is important for establishing new social capital by diversifying stakeholder groups, it is important to respond to the governance needs of the existing groups, especially in regional units. N2 identified a gap between this aspiration and the actual strategy: “We have to try to explain ourselves more. Of course, this is always in contrast to those who already know us and would like to have an insider story. But our focus is that everyone understands what we do and that we can reach different target groups” (N2). Hence, the two objectives of information governance for network maintenance and network growth can sometimes conflict.

In regional units, in particular, social media enthusiasts sometimes open a new channel for the HNGO but then lack the resources to use it effectively, thus compromising governance: “We’re careful with new channels because our maxim is to first implement the channels you have in a good way before opening a new channel, and in doing so, have your capacities and resources in mind. We have a tendency in the HNGO that certain people open 10 channels but don’t use them in a targeted and a meaningful way and that is strategically wrong” (N2). Those channels may also become a ghost profile for the HNGO—with no content contribution and activity. Although such channels were launched with good intent, they are not well managed and governed and do not contribute to aggregate social capital of local units and the entire HNGO may sustain reputational damage as a result. However, a few regional social media experts have successfully pursued a multi-channel strategy. They see the rewards of reaching different target groups—e.g., younger users through Instagram—as outweighing possible deficiencies in network maintenance efforts. For instance, one regional expert focuses on reporting about the regional unit’s operations and activities and reflects upon what other units are doing to increase their follower numbers: “We have 4200 Instagram followers. That is pretty good. I’m afraid I can’t say we’re the best with the most followers, because there’s a regional unit with more than 12,000 followers. But I don’t know what their goal is, because they also report about the HNGO all over Germany and about the fire brigade and rescue service. We only report about our regional unit, and with 4200 followers we are actually at the top here” (R8).

National headquarters also show openness to innovative governance and use of social media channels. For instance, as N2 explains, its younger staff are increasingly motivated to use and test new channels such as TikTok. Together with upper-level experts and under close supervision, they are free to use the channel in the HNGO’s name: “They are allowed to test it. I think that is important, and we look at it with great interest. If we introduced it at the federal office, that would be

easier, but then we automatically would have to think about what the rest of the HNGO does” (N2). Sub-units such as the youth association or innovative regional units are places to “test the waters” on the governance and use of new digital platforms and technology.

Focus Area: Resource Pooling

refers to the upward and downward allocation of resources within the organization. Resource pooling may operate in both directions: regional units contribute using templates, guidelines, and ideas from central offices; the latter may learn from exceptional campaigns implemented by the regions. While larger intermediate offices focus on a consulting role for regional units, national headquarters provide social media information governance guidelines and rules for the intermediate and regional offices within the HNGO to some extent.

National headquarters are typically in charge of the overall social media information governance for the HNGO as a whole. They maintain central profiles, which have a wider reach than regional and intermediate profiles and aim at addressing a nationwide interest group reaching from the general interested public, donors, politicians, or public media. When it comes to managing these central HNGO profiles, some national headquarters build on the operations of subordinate units: “We are sitting here in the head office in [city], but the real HNGO world and what people experience with us is happening out there somewhere. We depend on it, and half our content is about what good deeds our members do in our name and under our banner” (N1). Another HNGO, in contrast, uses its national profile to showcase only one lighthouse project of regional units a week: “We share content from these units once a week. We have to decide on what I call a ‘lighthouse project,’ ... something so exciting that it is interesting nationally and not only for this particular region” (N2).

While close relations between the different levels and departments are crucial for receiving up-to-date information on local operations and events, interviewees note that national level cannot maintain contact with every single regional unit. There are just too many, and thus, intermediate units often bundle contacts. While national offices also directly enable the submission of content, not all units are content with the process of submitting their social media contributions. One regional social media manager criticizes this procedure: “They always do something on their own. They don’t share the content of the regional units. That’s too bad. But you can send something. Then it goes to the editors. It’s pretty anonymous” (R8).

The diversity of service areas for which HNGOs are responsible—day-care centers, worldwide disaster relief, civil protection, first aid courses, schools, blue light emergencies, medical service, hospices, grief work, psychological care, and delivery of hot meals, among others—actually can also hinder efforts to balance the content published on a national level, where the social media experts may find it difficult to decide what content to share. This makes it impossible to reach all stakeholders. Regional-level content creation depends on daily operations, whereas there is often an *editorial plan* at the intermediate and national levels to inform the general public about the HNGO’s activities in a broader sense: “If we publish ad hoc content, which is from a regional unit, or we get up-to-date information about a crisis and report on it, then it comes rather spontaneous. Or we have planned content, in which we, for example, introduce employees in social media. That’s content one can easily plan long term” (I5).

One HNGO decided to create two organization-wide channels on YouTube and Twitter to centralize communication and capture synergies from different units (CS3). They give regional and intermediate units access to these channels to upload content. This avoids having multiple channels within the organization that are seldom updated, enables regional units to reach of their content beyond their region, and ensures a common social media presence: “It is utopian to think that [regional units] can actually produce a lot of video content. That’s why the idea was that the stronger ones deliver for the weaker ones and the weaker ones profit from the stronger ones, and we all profit from there

always being something happening on this channel—and we don't have x number of YouTube channels where something happens only once a year or three times a year" (N2). This pooling of resources at a national level also frees lower-level units from work and concentrates efforts toward a unified strategy.

Relational Dimension of HNGO's Social Media Governance and Use for Social Capital Accruing

Focus Area: Trust Building

The development of trust and goodwill within social media relationships is the first focus area of the relational dimension of social capital. For an HNGO, being active on social media is an indispensable step in building trust between the organization and people outside the organization and positively influence accountability and reputation. Interviewees believe that a communications department that does not use social media misses the point. Social media experts at intermediate and national level agree that social media communication is superior to traditional channels—say, a press release—when it comes to building trust: “The most direct way between the people outside and us is social media. We show we are active, what we do, and that we do it all in the interest of humanity, in line with our goals. And thus, we also directly build up trust between us and the people” (I4).

Our interviewees at intermediate and national level deem it important in building trust to react to issues raised by users within and outside the organization or take seriously suggestions for improvement. Transparency and a sympathetic presentation of the social media content are also important. Being transparent applies not only to highlighting an HNGO's day-to-day activities, but also to address negative publicity and wrongdoing. For instance, there have been incidents in the press going back to the 1990s about financial and sexual misdeeds at NGOs that have negatively affected reputations and raised public indignation [39]—especially problematic for a sector based on high ethical and moral standards and that relies on public resources and donations. Some HNGOs are affiliated with religious institutions and receive negative comments resulting from those connections: “We also get attacked for our church affiliation ... ‘Fu***** [religious group], they are all child molesters,’ or something. It's rare, but it happens” (I2). Transparency in social media information governance is established as a guiding principle when the HNGO faces a precarious situation, even if it is self-inflicted: “We are not sugarcoating anything. No misrepresenting of things. If there was a mistake made by the HNGO, we don't try to cover it up, but deal with it very openly and take a very clear position. And we admit we made the mistake, that we have a solution, and that we are really honest with our followers” (I1).

Focus Area: Community Management

HNGOs are relationship-driven organizations based on loyalty to the organization and passion for the common good. Regional social media activities are largely focused on community management, which confirms the community-based nature of this work. We found that regional units draw on a strong participative culture among their staff and active members and try to bring together people with common interests. These relationships are crucial to building and maintaining an active network both online and offline. Content serves to foster a community feeling, which is often amplified after field operations that involve a large number of volunteers: “Especially after a field operation, we receive ‘thanks.’ It happens quite often that online content about the operation is shared. Our volunteers then post on their private profiles and express gratitude. I'd say that's appreciation, too” (R8).

In some cases, HNGO communities also communicate in closed, self-governed groups that were created by motivated affiliated volunteers to foster online relations and that have grown organically over the years. Upper levels of the HNGO do not see managing these groups as necessary: “Yes, there are Facebook groups created by members. That we could not and did not want to close” (N2). These groups are mostly about

sharing knowledge among volunteers and staff of a specific HNGO from different regions but are closed to others. They have group names related to their topics, such as “[HNGOs name] peddlers market,” “[HNGOs name] youth night,” “You are a [HNGOs name] member, if you ...,” “[HNGOs name professional group on press and communication]”, and “former [HNGOs name] member” (N2). The number of members of these groups ranges from three to more than 10,000.

Social media information governance and use by HNGOs has shifted its purpose over the years. At first, regional units in particular focused on building relationships by reaching out to their own staff and volunteers. But as time has passed, social media information governance use has become professionalized from the top level of the HNGO using social media to primarily inform external stakeholders such as politicians, donors, or other organizations as potential partners, and the lines between internal and external communication channels has become blurred, with implications for the adoption of new internal systems such as a social intranet: “When we train our members, we always point out that [public social media channels] are for external communication and should be used as such. I think this is somewhat historically justified, in our organization, because this social intranet did not exist until last year. And you could reach a lot of colleagues quite well via Facebook” (N2).

Focus Area: Brokerage

The third focus area within the relational dimension mirrors the organization's openness and efforts to engage with relevant stakeholders that may be from the same organization, other organizations, or the general public. We found that social media experts, seeking several types of benefits, incorporate outside information, resources, and contacts into an HNGO's social media information governance approach. Social media are seen as useful tools to establish relations between different units of the same HNGO or between HNGOs. This becomes especially important during and after major operations in which HNGOs often work together: “We link to each other or coordinate posts when we do joint field operations during major emergencies, when we operate with other relief organizations ... so that we all publish similar information online” (I2).

The rivalry among HNGOs can sometimes limit openness to the activities of other organizations and is reliant on individuals and their attitudes. Despite having shared goals and visions, some interviewees at the intermediate level emphasized organizational competitiveness: “We link and comment on the content of other HNGOs, but within reason. Of course, I wouldn't share content about their rescue dog team if we have our own. We check: Is the content a direct competition or not?” (I1). But another noted: “When I started, the department would have considered it a terrible thing—posting something from another HNGO. I don't share that opinion at all ... In my experience, if I repost something, I receive positive feedback. Honestly, we all do the same work. And in many emergency situations, it's not just our HNGO, but also the Red Cross, maybe the Malteser, and so on. It's always a cooperative effort” (N2). All HNGOs in our case study carefully select what to share from other HNGOs.

We observed a positive effect from bridging and bonding beyond the relationship between organizations. The relationship with the public, too, becomes a valuable resource in times of high uncertainty and when there is a need for spontaneous volunteers to support the HNGO. “We reported in social media that we're on site helping refugees, and a lot of volunteers showed up. Some have stayed connected to us. So, depending on the situation, we benefit from this quick and direct communication with people” (I1).

The fact that HNGOs follow a clear command-and-control structure similar to the military in these situations adds to the challenges of managing volunteers. Often, they are hesitant to use social media to reach out to potential volunteers as an interviewee at regional level states: “I would only make calls for help very carefully via social media, because something like this can get out of hand very quickly. You have to know exactly what kind of help you need, where people should report,

who takes care of them, who allocates them, and so on” (R1).

Cognitive Dimension of HNGO’s Social Media Information Governance and Use for Social Capital Accruing

Focus Area: Emotional Empathy

This focus area refers to mutual meanings, symbols, and language that define the cognitive dimension of social capital— or, more precisely, the organization’s ability to address pressing social topics, provide relief information, and reduce uncertainty in ambiguous situations. Interviewees mentioned that HNGOs deal with emotional topics that often lead to emotional reactions: “Especially in our projects or when we report on crises, it is always emotional, and you notice that the reactions are the same—both positive and negative. But that’s definitely something where people take an interest” (N3). However, the experts stress that they need to be careful about what they post regarding sensitive material and wouldn’t show inappropriate content of victims, blood etc.—most importantly, they emphasize political neutrality. Furthermore, reporting on emotional topics such as calls for stem cell donations for a specific patient or assistance of victims of emergency events encourages emotional responses, as one interviewee noted. He also mentioned some techniques he uses with his content to arouse emotions: “As a rule, you don’t put the picture of the emergency backpack on Facebook, but you put the picture of the person who carries it. Or any picture, because you are publicizing a volunteer service. Even showing a helper kneeling down to help someone, has an effect ... It’s important that you bring the connection to the people, the emotional side” (R6).

At a regional level, interviewees stated that fans and followers are

mostly staff and volunteers and thus they are more interested in updates about the unit’s activities such as arrival of new equipment, upcoming regional events, showing empathy for staff who have been impacted by a crisis, and so forth. At intermediate and national level, in contrast, the stakeholders are more anonymous and emotional topics reach a more diverse group of stakeholders.

Focus Area: Common Identity

This key driver encompasses feelings of camaraderie and the extent to which members of an HNGO share the same values when engaging in social media. It comprises the cognitive perception and interpretation of an HNGO’s social media information governance and activity. The community is built by establishing the required online structures and then maintaining them operationally through careful community management.

During the time when many refugees came to Germany and refugee shelters were built, one HNGO was subject to negative sentiments: “We actually experienced a lot of online racism and hate. But we have great followers, Facebook fans who intervene and say, ‘No, this is not right. We are members of [HNGO], we are people who stand up for this, and we do not tolerate that here’” (N2). In regional units, social media experts try to create a local and volunteer identity: “The appreciation, the camaraderie. It’s like being in a community. It’s like a soccer club. Only we cannot lose. We have the camaraderie, we’re friends. With 125 people, not everyone is friends with everyone, that is obvious. But you also push each other, because you pull each other” (R8).

In addition, by showcasing that everyone is part of the same HNGO regardless of role or task fosters both the feeling of community but also a

Table A3.1
Information Governance and Dynamic Process Management for Structural Social Capital Accruing—Emerging Tensions.

Information Governance Focus Area	Social Media Process Management at National Level	Social Media Process Management at Intermediate Level	Social Media Process Management at Regional Level	Emerging Tensions in Social Media Information Governance
(1) Network Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Multiple social media experts (staff) responsible for public and social media communication *Maintenance of multiple social media channels for organizational awareness raising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *One to multiple social media experts (staff)—depending on the size of the intermediate unit—responsible for public and social media communication *Maintenance of one to multiple social media channels for organizational awareness raising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *One local social media expert (volunteer), also responsible for other tasks *Often one focus social media channel that affords for relationship building with local community *Grown (local) online community over the years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Focus on staff and volunteers vs. openness to interested people beyond the organization *Coordinated and synchronized social media strategy across HNGO levels vs. many profiles on all levels
(2) Network Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Use of multiple channels to reach diverse stakeholders *Supervise and monitor the use of new emerging social media platforms by innovative units of the HNGO *Do not overrule lower-level units in their social media channels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Focus on a few channels but see potential of different platforms for different demographics *More resources for channel experimentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Use of established SM channels—build trust and loyalty to stakeholders *Extra channels sometimes become disused “ghost channels” *Testing of newer social media platforms to attract new or younger members *Limited resources for multi-platform development and use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Network retention vs. network growth *Limited resources may allow only one focus social media channel *Experimenting with new platforms vs. risk of ghost profiles *Strategic awareness vs. local needs/daily operations
(3) Resource Pooling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Provide guidelines and rules for social media use at intermediate and regional levels *Depend on and include content about regional operations *Highlight lighthouse projects from other levels *Maintain central profiles to represent HNGO as a whole (editorial focus); some profiles even all units who want can access *Try to allocate content from and cover all HNGO operations from different working areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Design templates for social media content creation for regional units *Often consult regional units *Connects regional and national units *Depend on content about regional operations and lighthouse projects *Social media content covers HNGO activities of a particular region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Use templates and follow guidelines *Locally generated content often not shared with upper levels *Social media content mostly refers to local and immediate operations (situation focus), projects and activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Broad representation of operations at national level vs. feeling of underrepresentation of particular services at lower levels *Assigning accountability throughout the process of channel pooling, i.e., channel management by several units or across organizational levels *Anonymous and voluntary process of content provision by regional units for upper levels vs. importance of close relationships to experts for fostering content contribution *Difficulty of covering all services in organization-wide channels

common identity conveyed in the organizational name or slogan: “It is our task to represent the entire community. I don’t think it was ever a slogan, but it comes to me quite often: ‘As a [HNGO member], you are never alone.’ And that’s what the social media channels are supposed to suggest. Although we are active in so many different areas, we are all part of a community, all [HNGO name] and all connected to each other and all doing good works” (I1). The emphasizing appreciation of the voluntary aspect of the work is common: “Especially since people don’t get paid for their work, they are certainly happy when they see themselves in a Facebook photo captioned with ‘look at the great work of our volunteers’ or ‘what a great job they are doing.’ I think this appreciation

is something very, very important. That their work gets noticed is meaningful, although they don’t get paid for it” (I1).

The interviews further revealed that giving a name to the social media-based groups—as in the name a Facebook group might be given—helps foster the common understanding and identity building. This community label is represented in a symbolic way which can also play an important role for communicating the common identity. “I think you can show the community spirit quite well with emojis or visual language or text. By talking about ‘we’ and ‘us.’ So, it’s not me the intermediate office but we the [HNGO]” (I4). [Table A31](#), [Table A32](#), [Table A33](#)

Table A3.2
Information Governance and Process Management for Relational Social Capital Accruing—Emerging Tensions.

Information Governance Focus Areas	Social Media Process Management at National Level	Social Media Process Management at Intermediate Level	Social Media Process Management at Regional Level	Emerging Tensions in Social Media Information Governance
(4) Trust Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Sensitive to communicating the right information *Transparency *Publicity focused *Foster organizational reputation and legitimacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Sensitive to communicating the “right information” *Transparency *Organizational reputation *Focus on activities and projects in a particular region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Ad hoc communication along the unit’s field activities *Local community events, promotional activities, social services and contributions showcased in social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Strategic trust vs. operational trust *Professionally counter criticism and negativity (sensitivity) vs. ad hoc communication
(5) Community Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Legitimacy from stakeholders—often external to the organization—in social media *Focus on external communication *Improvement of internal communication within and between levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Manage interests of diverse stakeholders reaching from members in this region to other organizations by showcasing projects and activities from regional area and material from national unit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Focus on local community management *Relationships based on loyalty, common deeds, participation, social interests *Closed groups *Operational external communications *Company newsletter communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *External communications vs. internal communications *Blurred lines between public and private communications *Competence conflict between internal (e.g., social intranet) and public social media (e.g., Facebook)
(6) Brokerage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Participation in cross-organizational initiatives and networks *Care with sharing information from other HNGOs *HNGO connectedness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Participation in cross-organizational online initiatives and networks *Care with sharing information from other HNGOs *Leverage relationships to other organizations and the public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Try to publish consistent information via social media between HNGOs, e.g., during local emergencies or common issues *Incorporation of spontaneous digital volunteers—an issue about who turns up, skill sets, management etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Well-planned day-to-day operations within HNGOs escalating to (partially) social media coordinated crisis communication *HNGO competition vs. collaboration and co-operation within and between HNGOs *Help through digital volunteers during emergencies vs. missing strategies of incorporating them meaningfully

Table A3.3
Information Governance and Process Management for Cognitive Social Capital Accruing—Emerging Tensions.

Information Governance Focus Areas	Social Media Process Management at National Level	Social Media Process Management at Intermediate Level	Social Media Process Management at Regional Level	Emerging Tensions in Social Media Information Governance
(7) Emotional Empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Communications more anonymous and rather informative—social control weaker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Communications less anonymous as on the national level but still diverse range of stakeholders—focus on both emotions and empathy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Communications less anonymous—social control stronger, less negative emotion and more empathy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Maintaining political neutrality (e.g., during conflicts) while attracting attention for abuses of power in social media *Showing sensitive material vs. whitewashing humanitarian grievances *Conflicts between HNGO agenda (e.g., raise donations) and community preferences/expectations (e.g., information on new equipment or upcoming activities)
(8) Common Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Symbology and slogans important *Establishment of an organization-wide HNGO identity *Countering anonymous negative comments *Promoting positive HNGO roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Symbology and slogans are important *Appreciation of voluntary work *Strategic positioning of the HNGO in social media as provider of dedicated services executed by regional units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Symbology and slogans are important *Appreciation of voluntary work *Creation of regional identity *Developing volunteer identity, camaraderie, community, ethical standards, community name, e.g., social media group name 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Alignment of central identity vs. local identity

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