Succession of Leadership Position in Non-governmental Organisations: Case studies

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Abstract

Purpose: The issue of succession in non-governmental organisations is very weakly represented in the scientific literature. There is also a lack of discussion on that topic in Polish literature. There exist studies on succession in large companies and family businesses, as well as organisations that allow to analyse easily the impact of succession on their performance (e.g. sport clubs). The aim of the paper is to fill the gap in literature and thus in knowledge and understanding of succession processes in non-governmental organisations.

Design/methodology/approach: The literature studies showed the need for qualitative research in this field mainly in the form of case studies with concrete succession stories from organisations. The applied method is a multiple case study with elements of the grounded theory approach. Qualitative case studies have been developed based on interviews with CEOs from Polish NGOs.

Findings: The results of the research presented in the paper are the beginnings of theorizing on succession in non-governmental organisations in Poland. The synthesis of the collected research material is presented and delineates further research directions.

Research and practical limitations/implications: Conducted case studies provide contextual knowledge about the course and environment of succession processes in NGOs. However, the collected material from case studies does not allow generalizations and references to the entire population of the examined type of organisations.

Originality/value: The study on succession in non-governmental organisations is quite unique in the scientific literature devoted to the succession (missing specially specific case studies from NGOs) and almost completely unique in Polish literature. A methodological novelty lies also in an attempt to combine the case study method with elements of the grounded theory approach.

Paper type: Research paper.

1. Introduction

Literature on succession in non-governmental organisations is very modest (see, for example, Allison, 2002, p. 342), and every substantive article enriches academic output in this area. Of course, in general the literature on succession in organisations is rich. There are numerous works on succession in business organisations (mainly in large US companies). However, the experience and succession planning systems of large corporations should not be implicitly imitated by other organisations, even as large but differently structured (see, for example, Herriot, 1992, p. 114). There is also literature on succession in family businesses. This can be relatively easy to link it to the subject of this paper, because family businesses, like non-governmental organisations, have to balance between the economic efficiency and their mission: family businesses seek a balance between their own family and business dimension – between the 'heart' and the 'pocket' (McKee and Driscoll, 2008, p. 352). "Family membership usually results in a deep commitment to the company" (Adamska, 2014, p. 62), which can be compared to the community of worldviews typical of non-governmental organisations. There are also studies on succession in sports organisations, mainly because of the possibility of simple linking the succession with the organisation's results (e.g. change of a coach and its influence on the results of a team).

Giambatista, Rowe and Riaz (2005) have made an interesting review of the literature, which results in at least two important conclusions: (1) there is a need for a triangulation of the research subject increasing the diversity of the examined organisations (Giambatista et al., 2005, pp. 984–986) and (2) it is very rare for researchers to rely on questionnaires and interviews in the succession studies. According to them, these methods go deeper into an understanding of a process of succession and are able to give us more interesting responses than just quantitative research examining the relationships between the most commonly selected variables (Giambatista et al., 2005, p. 984). For example, linking a fact that a succession occurs at a certain time from the foundation of the company with its financial results achieved before succession tells us little or nothing about the succession process itself and its dynamics. Similarly, Zhang and Rajagopalan suggest that succession studies in large enterprises should not rely solely on quantitative data, and they suggest to start using surveys more often, for example, to better understand the successors themselves and to distinguish better successors from the worse (Zhang and Rajagopalan, 2006, p. 102). This corresponds to the opinion that qualitative methods in general seem to be most appropriate for the study and understanding of processes (Konecki 2000, p. 11). An observation and an experimentation as well (although it would probably be difficult to construct it well) could also contribute to deeper knowledge (e.g. Kesner and Sebora suggested the use of experiments or quasi-experiments – cf. Kesner and Sebora, 1994, p. 366; see also Giambatista et al., 2005, p. 965). This paper meets some of the above postulates and examines non-governmental organisations using case studies based on interviews.

The fundamental problem in the study of succession processes in non-governmental organisations is the fact that in the world literature there are not many studies devoted to this subject. Santora and Sarros note that despite the recent increase in interest in the topic of succession in NGOs, the questions they put in their article in 2008 still remain unanswered (Santora and Sarros, 2013, p. 6). A lack of papers about succession in Polish NGOs makes this paper a pioneering work on the one hand, and on the other hand, it creates a necessity to address first the very basic issues. It is necessary to recognise the context in which succession processes occur in such organisations: just the suspicion that the cyclical choice of the new authorities due to their terms of office can strongly influence the nature of the processes

in the organisation causes that cumulative knowledge about succession cannot be automatically transferred from other types of organisations. That is why it is a challenge for the researcher to conduct basic research first, to gather a number of succession examples, and to learn the most important research threads necessary to understand the specifics of succession processes in organisations. According to the research plan, it was decided to analyse first several case studies of succession in non-governmental organisations and on the basis of empirical material, begin to formulate the first conclusions – both about succession in such organisations as well as about the desired directions of next research. The author tried to preserve a certain distance to theoretical concepts. For this purpose the detailed review of literature – although in this paper is presented before the chapter on the results of research – was made after the interviews.

The interviews were conducted partly thanks to the support of the author's research project on the succession of managerial positions in non-governmental organisations under the research topic "Strategic Management in Organizations from Non-Profit Sector" (No 505/0351) at the Faculty of Management at the University of Łódź in 2009. The full results of the study were not presented before, as the research was included in a wider research project, which the author finalised in 2017 (the full results of these studies combined also with other results will be the subject of separate publications).

The study is a basic research. The purpose of the study is to understand the processes of succession in non-governmental organisations and their determinants, and therefore also in their emotional and political dimensions – this applies both to succession acts and processes that may have occurred in the investigated organisations as well as to activities that prepare such organisations for future successions.

2. Problem of succession in the scientific literature

In the historical sense, succession (Latin *successio*) was associated with an inheriting the throne and in this sense it has been used for centuries (Adamska, 2014, p. 11). The concept of succession can be defined in a very simple, way as a substitution of one person by another at a particular position (e.g. Fischer and Comini, 2008, p. 5). However, in the context of an organisation as a whole, succession is much more

important, and succession itself is crucial to sustainability of an organisation. In this light, the succession means ensuring the sustainability of an organisation by filling all its organisational units with the most efficient the employees (Santora et al., 2008, p. 5). Similar approaches are presented also by Fischer and Comini, as well as by Rothwell who describe the process of succession as the systematic effort of the organisation to ensure its continuity, maintenance and development of new competences and to provide organisational development based on a strategic thinking about the future (Fischer and Comini, 2008, p. 6; see also: Rothwell, 2010, p. 6). In this sense, succession and continuity (understood also as *sustainability*) seem almost synonymous. The issue of preserving the existence of an organisation becomes crucial and the vulnerability analysis is simply a good management practice (Meyer-Emerick and Momen, 2003, p. 71).

Succession of positions at the highest level of management is a special phenomenon in the life of an organisation. Kesner and Sebora (1994, p. 329 and next) list four factors that determine the uniqueness of the succession: the role of the CEO in the organisation, the relatively rare succession occurrence, its importance for the organisation and the role of the supervisory board (council) in deciding about succession (McKee and Driscoll, 2008, p. 342). Succession is an universal phenomenon in the world of the organisation and each organisation must manage it effectively (Rowe, Cannella, Rankin and Gorman, 2005, p. 199). The key to succession research is to understand the dynamics of the phenomenon, to document the various succession processes, to examine the forces and factors that drive them and find what consequences they cause (Friedman and Olk, 1995, p. 160). Giambatista, Rowe and Riaz draw attention to the fact that previous research very often showed a high degree of dependence of the process of succession on the context in which it occurs (Giambatista et al., 2005, p. 982).

Although succession is commonly associated with the dismissal or unexpected departure of the chief executive, identified with sudden situation that disturbs organisational life, Friedman and Olk (1995, p. 141) point out that the majority of succession occurs in a routine manner. Managers leave the organisation also in the announced way (e.g. retirement or change of career plans). Such events are usually known in advance and allow for a smooth planning of a transition process.

In the literature on succession in enterprises, especially in the last decades of the twentieth century, an attempt was made to grasp the difference between the situation in which the successor originates from the organisation or from outside. In various studies it was emphasised that external succession is most often associated with more radical changes in an organisation (Boyne and Dahya, 2002, pp. 186 and 187).

One of the attempts to present a typology of succession (Friedman and Olk, 1995, pp. 141–164) is based on the separation of the two main elements of the succession process: (1) decision maker and (2) successor. The decision of the organisation may be influenced by the outgoing director and his/her coalition or his/her political opponents. Preference for a new director may be known or unknown (Friedman and Olk, 1995, pp. 142 and 149). When the above questions have just such dichotomous answers, the matrix of the four possibilities appears and is presented in the table below (Table 1).

Table 1. Four ways to choose a successor

Four ways to choose a successor	Who decides?	Are preferences about successor known in advance?
Crown heir	Departing director	Yes
Horse race	Departing director	No
Coup d'etat	Opponents	Yes
Comprehensive search	Opponents	No

Source: Based on Friedman and Olk (1995, p. 149).

Successor selection processes may in various ways influence the legitimacy of the succession process and may disrupt a functioning of an organisation (Friedman and Olk, 1995, p. 146). It seems that the slightest legitimacy has a *coup d'etat* and the biggest *horse race* if based on the objective criteria of the contest. Least distortion can be expected after the process of *crown heir* and in turn *comprehensive search* can be costly to organisations.

The analysis of a literature clearly shows that slowly diffused research efforts begin to lead to a better understanding of the processes of succession and their context, although the common theoretical perspective has not yet been crystallised. Still, knowledge in this area is

fragmentary and variable – there are research results that contradict one another. The problem of succession in non-governmental organisations is not a frequent object of interest both to scientists and practitioners. Fischer and Comini (2008, pp. 2–4) even wrote that the topic of succession and succession management is a forgotten one – at best with the simple expectation that the CEO's 'clone' will spontaneously appear and the whole process of replacing one another will be ran painlessly. Actually, there are a number of publications (though still not many) that deal with this issue.

In an interesting review of literature and research presented by the team of Santora, Sarros and Bauer (2008) covering the period from 1965 to 2008, one can find a number of remarks on the succession of managerial positions in non-profit organisations. Although the referred publication is almost exclusively focused on the mid-size human service organisations. The authors of this literature review see the need to plan succession because their research review shown that most of the organisations in the NGO sector did not use to plan succession. Specially that the results of the research show that a very high proportion of managers intend to leave the organisation in the next few years (referring to the time of the survey) (Santora et al., 2008, p. 5 and next). It would be interesting to see whether such a need exists also in the non-governmental sector in Poland and/or other post-communist countries, where the development of the sector is still at a relatively early stage.

Changing on a CEO position may also be a surprising event, especially for an unprepared organisation. Trzciński believes that for non-profit organisations: "It is particularly difficult if the CEO is a charismatic person and additionally one of the founders of the organisation" (Trzciński, 2016, p. 135).

In general, if organisations want to maintain their status quo they try to hire people from the organisation, and if they want to change, they tend to hire external candidates (Santora et al., 2008, p. 8). However, interestingly, their literature review shows that most NGOs recruit and select people from outside the organisation (although the author's observation among the Polish organisations seems to deny this conclusion). Even current deputy presidents do not have an automatically guaranteed succession after their boss leaving. Among the reasons for hiring outsiders as presidents are:

- usually the flat structure of NGOs, where there is usually no such thing as an internal career path (see, for example, Kwiat-kiewicz, 2009, p. 203 and next);
- most often NGOs have a limited pool of internal candidates;
- the belief of outgoing CEOs that organisations need outsiders who are more recognizable in the community and can therefore attract more financial resources for their organisation (outsiders as 'celebrities' with their strength and attractiveness);
- the inability of smaller organisations to provide their members with opportunities for leadership development e g. due to limit-ed resources (Santora et al., 2008, p. 9 and next).

The negative consequences of employing outsiders on the main executive positions include, among others, leaving the organisation by some of its members (not selected or not satisfied by changes), which means brain drain for the organisation, as well as the frustration and resistance of other internal stakeholders (Zhang and Rajagopalan, 2006, pp. 101–102).

The vast majority of non-governmental organisations are small and therefore usually have very limited resources. In the economic sense, it is difficult to expect them to invest in the search for the best possible successors and then to pay for his work accordingly. "In this situation, the lack of a good candidate among the current employees of the organ-isation becomes a huge problem" (Trzciński 2016, p. 135). As stated by Kwiatkiewicz: "The distinguishing feature of non-governmental organisations from strictly commercial organisations is that in the third sector there are not so many willing to occupy managerial positions or be in the managerial board" (Kwiatkiewicz, 2009, p. 205).

Another important issue is the role of the council. Many CEOs argue that council members most often do not have the time, experi-ence, commitment and interest to do their job. What is more, council members do not see succession planning as an important organisa-tional issue. They often choose someone who is 'identical' to their predecessor or, on the contrary, has some other new qualities (Santora et al., 2008, p. 13). Often, this choice is made with a great deal of suggestions from the departing person (Santora et al., 2008, p. 15). Outgoing directors tend to choose a successor 'similar' to themselves, for example, those who will continue their policy (Friedman and Olk, 1995, p. 145). Herriot perceives the danger that such successors may

therefore be more suited to the past and present of the organisation rather than to its future (Herriot, 1992, p.116). The council often accept the choice of the successor made by the outgoing CEO when the organisation goes well, but when the results are poor council usually becomes the opposition to the departing boss (Friedman and Olk, 1995, p. 145).

Equality or participatory democracy often dominates the issues of the individualism and the role of an individual in management or leadership in the NGOs (Allison, 2002, p. 347). And this is despite the fact that they are often led by charismatic leaders. Council members usually perceive succession as an unwanted phenomenon, unnecessary trouble to deal with as soon as possible and sacrificing as little resources as possible.

Allison reports some doubts about the possibility of a proper course of succession in non-governmental organisations. According to his research (137 CEOs from the San Francisco Bay Area), being a CEO in a non-governmental organisation is a one-off event in the life of such a manager. For 2/3 of the respondents, this was the first position as a non-governmental organisation manager, and only 14% left to assume the same function again. The quoted author points out if this is the position that most people take once in their life, the probability of employing an experienced man is very limited (Allison, 2002, p. 342).

The issue of strong identification with organisational values seems to be particularly important in NGOs that are very much involved in carrying out their own mission. In this situation, the "values over qualifications" approach is very reasonable (see example presented in McKee and Driscoll, 2008, p. 349). People in a team that shares common values can help to ensure the sustainability of an organisation. Sustainability of organisational values can be further ensured by imprinting values into the quality management system including the system of measuring results, more generally: by formally linking the strategic plan with organisational values (McKee and Driscoll, 2008, p. 350 and 353).

It is worth remembering that during the succession, in addition to the objective processes, subjective processes also take place, with personal, social and/or political dimensions relevant to each individual story ("real story behind the scenes" – Santora et al., 2008, p. 13). The socio-political character of succession processes is still

unknown and worth to explore (see, for example, Santora et al., 2008, p. 16 and next).

The case studies presented in this paper fill in to a certain extent the aforementioned gap in research material and knowledge, seeking at least partial responses to some of the questions in the literature of the subject.

3. Adopted approach and elements of cross-case synthesis

In order to interview managers from NGOs the author contacted a few of them and asked for possibility to conduct an interview as well as to nominate further candidates for interviews (such a 'snowball' procedure can be found in qualitative research, for example in Gliński, 2006). As stated by Silverman (2008a, p. 186), when selecting specific case studies to study, "it is unlikely that these cases would be randomised". Six interviews have been completed, including cases from nine organisations. The respondents come from organisations that have their headquarters in largest cities in Poland. The interviews cover quite comprehensive illustrations of the succession processes themselves in selected organisations as well as the preparation of the organisation in case of succession. The transcript from interviews was a subject of qualitative content analysis.

Due to the purpose of the paper, qualitative approach was chosen, with elements of so-called grounded theory. As Sitek points out "there are such studies when quantitative methods are better, and those where quality methods are better" (Sitek, 2007, p. 136). Silverman (2008b, p. 45) notes that qualitative research can undoubtedly give a deeper picture than correlations of variables in quantitative studies. The choice of methods was determined by the demand reported in the world literature for case studies based on interviews and by the objective of the research. The objective was to understand the processes of succession that take place in the organisations, including their human dimension and their context. The case study was chosen as a method, or rather a research strategy.

The case-studies were based on interviews with rare support of own observation and study of organisational documents. This kind of approach to the non-profit sector of organisation is perceived as justified (see for example the article by McDonald and Warburton, 2003). As

Konecki notes, the qualitative approach and thus the qualitative methods seem "very well adapted to studies on processes" (Konecki, 2000, p. 11; about the rise of the popularity of case studies see also: Yin, 2014, p. 23 and next).

Yin (2014, p. 41) gives three conditions for choosing a research method: the type of questions asked, the range of the researcher's control over the behavioural facts, and the concentration of interest in contemporary phenomena in opposition to historical phenomena. Planned research attempted to answer questions such as 'how?' and 'why?', no control of behavioural facts was required, and the author was interested in the contemporary phenomenon, what together clearly indicated the case study as the appropriate research method (see analysis of choice of method presented in: Yin 2014, p. 41).

Due to the purpose of the research the author was interested in answers to the following research questions:

– How does/did the process of succession in an exemplary organisation look like?
– Is/was it a sudden or long-lasting event?
– What factors influenced this process?
– Who was chosen as a successor and why this person?
– What actions did lead to the succession and what did the succession cause?
– How did the succession affect the organisation and its participants?
– If the organisation has not yet experienced the transfer of power, does it prepare itself in any way for such an event in the future?
– What kind of activities did it implement (and why these activities)?
– If there is no action towards the succession, why is this happening?

The study is of exploratory kind, what justifies not to formulate too many theoretical assumptions ahead (see Yin, 2014, p. 62). The elements of the grounded theory approach was applied, what means: first searching for data and the description of practice, and then emerging the theory out of the gathered data and studying of existing theories that could help to prepare the description of researched phenomena. This is a rather unusual approach, for example, Yin distinguishes case study method from the grounded theory (see Yin, 2014, p. 69). According to the author, however, such a hybrid perspective was necessary because

most of the current theoretical syntheses on succession came from the study of organisations from other sectors, and the approach applied could prevent automated and perhaps unauthorised transposition of theories from other types of organisations into non-governmental organisations. This way the empirical material served to produce so called medium range theory (on medium range theory see for example: Nowak, 2008, pp. 404–406). According to the logic dictated by grounded theory, the author has made sure that existing theories of succession originating mainly from organisations in other sectors do not interfere with the process of gathering information and have not influenced, for example, the way of asking questions or directions of seeking information.

The interview was adopted as the main method for collecting qualitative data. The description took into account the terminology and phraseology used by the interviewees. Interviews were anthropological (non-standardised and unstructured). "In an anthropological interview, the contact with the interviewer is most important [...]. It is essential that if the interlocutor spontaneously talks about a topic, not planned by the researcher, the researcher should pick it up. Plans are prepared but not dogmatically. The most interesting topics may appear – and appear – outside the plans" (Kostera, 2005, p. 125).

The author decided that triangulation will not cover in this case the search for other points of view than that presented by the respondent (who was usually a present or former president of the studied organisation). But it has been also decided to study multiple cases and to interview several informants from different organisations in order to increase the value of the study and get a wider picture. The central starting point in each case is the empirical material, and then the theorizing or just generalization of observation appears (see, for example, Dudkiewicz, 2009, p. 97 and next).

The adopted research strategy confirmed its value: it helped to identify the issue of sense of ownership of the social organisation and to discover the meaning of 'formal – informal' opposition as important in describing the processes taking place in non-governmental organisations. Adopting the elements of existing theories would build the interview questionnaires in a way that most likely would not lead the researcher to discover these threads (they are not likely to be found in the literature on succession in non-governmental organisations till now).

Analytical coding of the information (see, for example, Babbie, 2008, p. 363) was used to analyse the interviews (based on the grounded theory). Coded and recoded empirical material was sought for broader categories by means of which the threads could be grouped together.

Based on the analysis of the transcript of the interviews, a cross-sectional synthesis of this multiple case study can be made in a manner partially illustrated below. The analysis was based on a three elements scheme of the theory: categories, properties of categories and hypotheses (Konecki, 2000, p. 29, see also Glaser and Strauss, 2009, p. 34 and next), what allowed to identify elements of description of succession processes in the investigated cases and their context. The empirical material was grouped according to the following categories: succession, candidates, organisation, leader, departure of CEO, wrongdoings, results (of succession, of organisation) and a collective category 'others' which included: 'formal – informal' opposition and 'sense of ownership' of social organisation. For the purpose of this paper only the 'succession 'category (principal for the study) is presented (Table 2).

Table 2. Elements of synthesis of the category 'succession' on the basis of multiple case studies

No.	Elements of synthesis
1.	Actions related to the succession and lack of succession activities
2.	'Natural' processes and actions
3.	Repeatability of succession (terms of office)
4.	Seeking successor – talks and consultations as well as involvement of the current CEO in the process
5.	Rebellion, *coup d'etat*, generational change

Source: own elaboration.

The presented overall image emerging from the case studies of the examined organisations is quite diverse. Still, it helps to pin down important elements that may be the foundation of succession theory in non-governmental organisations. It also indicates potential directions of further research. The summary of the description can be presented, for example, in the following way (as only the category 'succession' has been developed in the table above, the description refers only to this category).

There are organisations that do not undertake any succession activities and do not plan the succession at all. Only if there are cases of departure of the leader then actions are taken. If there has been no successions so far, there is no awareness that preparing for it can be important. Even in organisations where the same person has been in power for many years, there is no succession planning. Only actions that are intended to foster readiness for succession can be observed (such as staff education, starting knowledge management in the organisation, preparation of long-term strategies that will bind the successors). The actions taken do not therefore focus on succession planning itself but to reduce the potential threat that succession entails. Two organisations have formulated the strategy in this regard, and the respondents suggested that in this situation it is not important who will be a successor – he or she will just have to continue the existing strategy of the organisation.

From the perspective of succession processes that have already happened, the importance of the meaning 'natural' is emphasised: e.g. in the organisation there are *natural* successors, *natural* conversations and consultations take place, etc. 'Natural' in this sense means that they just happen and do it spontaneously. The spontaneous ('natural') activities usually appear if there is a need to change CEO and they are perceived as a proper/legitimate approach. It fits into the first stages of organisational development. If the organisation was poorly structured and formalised in the early years of its existence and was based on the impetus of founders' euphoria, spontaneous processes were considered to be most appropriate even with failures to comply with the statutory requirements. Formalization of the organisation's activities will happen later.

In organisations where there is a cyclic change of authorities because of the terms of office, the succession is a tamed phenomenon and repetitive activities are spontaneously developed. These behaviours include: conducting talks and consultations before the next election and sometimes agreeing on a candidate informally (in an informal group usually composed of those most involved in the organisational activities). Usually, the general assembly (in associations) only confirms the informal selection made earlier.

There are organisations experiencing a situation in which the same leader is elected again and again. Both the leadership characteristics and other constituent elements of the organisation can be the reason,

for example, an organisation does not grow to such an extent to allow factions/cliques or simply opposition to develop. When the results of the next election seem to be obvious, sometimes it may be a source of surprise for some parts of the organisation when factional battles actually occur and unexpected successor will be chosen (*a legitimate coup d'état*).

From the analysed case studies, the image of succession emerges as a (repetitive) consultative action on the election of the successor. Normally, despite the existence of 'natural' successors in the organisation, there is a deficit of people willing to assume the role of a president by themselves, without being persuaded to take this responsibility. In search of the successor, the current president is very often involved, feeling that this is his/her duty. This reminds a little bit described in the theory the *crown heir* approach. However, this is not the case, as the successor was chosen at the last moment before the CEO's departure and was not even prepared for succession (in one of the cases the successor came even from outside the organisation). Of the four types of succession presented in the review of literature (*crown heir, horse race, coup d'etat* and *comprehensive search*), only a *coup d'etat* appeared in the case studies presented. In two cases succession was also called generational change.

The analysis shows the following types of the succession processes:
  – *talks and consultations* – 'natural' processes that are based on negotiations (talks and consultations) and when necessary seeking successors by persuading a potential 'natural' candidate from the organisation to take responsibility and agree to be the candidate;
  – *coup d'etat* – in a classic version: the opposition takes over power through explicit rebellion (quarrels in the organisation) or silently during the next election when it holds the majority;
  – *creating climate for succession* – reducing the risk of succession through the overall preparation of the organisation for change through formalization of the strategy, the creation of an organisational knowledge bank, taking care of the well-trained and informed personnel, etc.

The above description is shortened and does not cover other categories emerged from narratives of the respondents.

4. Conclusions

The paper presents the pioneering in Polish literature research results on succession in non-governmental organisations what contributes also to some extent to the world scientific literature in the field. In the world literature, the following knowledge gap has been diagnosed: there is no broader study of succession in non-governmental organisations, and there is no greater insight into the context of succession processes. This results in a postulate to conduct more qualitative studies of the succession phenomenon based on case study analysis, interviews and surveys. For this reason, the author planned and then conducted a study of succession processes in non-governmental organisations based on case studies using mainly interviews as a method of gathering qualitative data. Hybrid approach was applied: multiple case studies supplemented by the grounded theory approach. As a result cross-case synthesis from multiple case studies was developed.

The result of the study is to create an overall picture of the succession processes in non-governmental organisations, and to highlight the issues that should be considered in exploring the world of NGOs in the context of their succession processes. Due to limitations of the size of the paper, only a slice of research and results is presented (full results will be the subject of a separate publication of the author).

A relatively frequent repetition of successions in associations and foundations makes it a 'natural' phenomenon, more familiar and tamed, often experienced and therefore with less risk to the organisation. In addition, the life cycle phase of an organisation is also important because these 'natural' succession processes are being shaped in the phase of small formalization of activities of an organisation when all processes are 'natural' rather than formal and bureaucratic.

Not all types of succession known from the literature can be found in the repertoire of NGOs activities discovered in the research. Very often there is a need to persuade a potential 'natural' candidate to assume the role of the president. The 'natural' processes of succession are usually *talks and consultations* about a person who should take over the power after the next election.

Both the issue of 'natural' processes mentioned before as well as the 'formal – informal' opposition seem to be important discoveries of this study in the context of succession processes. The sense of ownership of

the social organisation in this context is another discovery, which due to the main topic of the paper was not developed here.

Non-governmental organisations generally do not plan succession. When some activities are being undertaken, they do not focus usually on the planning of succession itself but more on preparing the right climate for it, e.g. through systematic education of staff or by ensuring the appropriate scope of formalization of the strategic plan of the organisation.

The presented research provides the basis for the preliminary attempts – presented here in part – of conceptualization and summaries, as well as the further research directions. It is essential to study a representative (or simply larger) sample of organisations and its leaders, boards and councils, as well as to analyse next case studies. They are, among others, the following potential research directions for succession in non-profit organisations (not only in the field of management sciences):

- the impact of the formal conditions of the functioning of non-governmental organisations on possible succession choices (legal regulations and statutory solutions);
- the impact of informal processes on succession;
- the importance of succession in organisations with the terms of office, attempt to answer the question whether in such cases we are dealing with 'tamed' succession;
- exploring the causes of succession in organisations without the terms of office;
- the specifics of the organisation with a long-standing charismatic leader who has been in power for years, the prospect of leaving such a leader;
- whether succession processes and results are different in organisations where succession planning was undertaken and organisations where there was no planning at all;
- impact of organisation's life cycle stages on succession processes;
- 'generational change' in NGOs: the takeover of power as a generational change,
- verification of the existence of the three succession models described in this study: *talks and consultations*, *coup d'etat* and *creating climate for succession*;

- criteria influencing the choice of successors, the characteristics of the successors, the case studies with the successors from outside the organisation;
- bad successions, bad choices and their consequences for the organisation;
- reason why there are not many willing to take the role of president of NGOs (more: motives of successors);
- the impact of succession on the results of the organisation, the attempt to define the concept of the results of NGOs and measure the impact of succession;
- the impact of succession on a community of people in non-governmental organisations;
- transfer of chosen strategies and tools for succession planning from the business sector to the non-governmental sector.

The further potential directions of the study of succession in non-governmental organisations presented in this section are the basis for further research plans of the author.

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