

Networking as a Cornerstone within the Practice of Social Entrepreneurship in Sport

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INTRODUCTION

- Social entrepreneurship has come about in a time characterized by societal change and challenges (Huybrechts & Nicholls, 2012).
- The ambiguity regarding the role of sport (e.g., Coalter, 2007).
- The fusion of sport and social entrepreneurship may represent a solution. Research is, however, limited (Bjärsholm, 2017).
- Social entrepreneurs within sport consist of organizations that prioritize social value ahead of both sporting result and financial profits (Peterson & Schenker, 2017).

THE RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

- Research into social entrepreneurship within sport is limited (Bjärsholm, 2017).
- Organizations engaged in social entrepreneurship have difficulties in creating sustainable social businesses (e.g., Hines, 2005; Austin, et al., 2006; Weeraardena & Sullivan Mort, 2006; Yitshaki, Lerner & Sharir, 2008).
- Networks and networking are highlighted as a contributing factor in the successful establishment and further development of social entrepreneurial organisations (e.g., Austin et al., 2006; Sharir & Lerner, 2006; Spear, 2006; Yitshaki et al., 2008; Lettice & Parekh, 2010; Weber & Kratzer, 2013).
- Research needs to be more empirical (qualitative) in terms of the roles which actors in a network can have (Hoang & Antoncic, 2003; Nicholls, 2006; Jack, 2010; Phillips et al., 2015).

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

- “...is to discuss and better understand how social entrepreneurship and networking can be manifested in a sports organization, thus contributing to the somewhat spartan body of research into social entrepreneurship in general (e.g., Phillips et al., 2015), and the field of sport in particular (Bjärsholm, 2017)”.

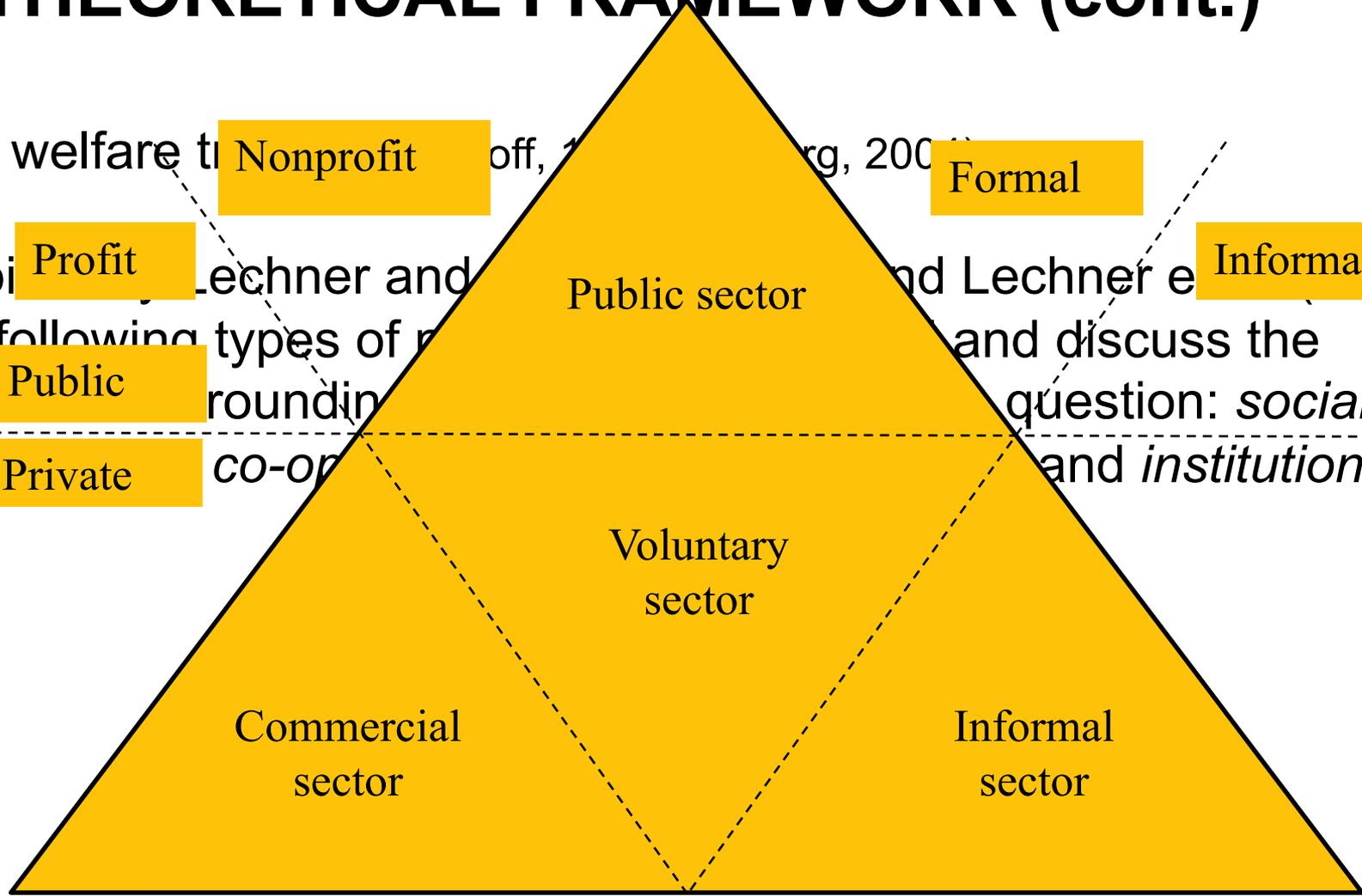
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Theoretical framework is based on:
 - a) Social entrepreneurs exist in an organisational realm between the state, the market and civil society (Dees and Anderson, 2003).
 - b) Interaction is both context-specific (Hoang and Antoncic, 2003), and of great importance since organisations are considered to be “constrained by their relational capability, i.e. the capability to establish, maintain and develop relationships” (Lechner and Leyronas, 2009, p. 658).
 - c) Cooperation can occur in various ways (Dees & Anderson, 2003), and studies have shown that this network pluralism is of importance (Lechner and Dowling 2003; Lechner et al., 2006).
- The theoretical framework consists of a synthesis of societal structure, based on the welfare triangle, and theories concerning networking.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK (cont.)

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The Market

The Civil Society

METHODS

- An explorative case study
- Visingsö AIS (VAIS) – a non-profit organisation situated on Visingsö, an island in one of Sweden's largest lakes.
- Data collection:
 - Interviews (7 semi-structured interviews from both VAIS and its various partner organizations).
 - Written sources (annual reports, grant applications and newspaper articles).
- Data analysis:
 - The empirical data was analysed from the perspective of the theoretical framework used in this study.

RESULTS

- VAIS has since its inception played a significant role for the majority of the islanders (ca. 730 inhabitants).
- VAIS can be categorised as a social entrepreneurial sporting organisation on the basis of three criteria:
 - Firstly, VAIS can be differentiated from a traditional sports organisation in the sense that its members do not regard sport as a goal in itself; rather it is seen as a means to achieve its self-proclaimed social goals and create a social meeting point for the islanders, including non-members (e.g., tourists).
 - Secondly, financial success is, due to its legal form (non-profit) secondary, to VAIS' social goals.
 - Thirdly, the manner in which VAIS operates in the realm between societal sectors and spheres, frequently crossing these sector boundaries together with its networking partners in search of financial support.

The State

RESULTS

VAIS and networks

Formal

Informal

Nonprofit

Profit

Public

Private

- Universities
- Municipality
- Youth detention centre
- Swedish Inheritance Fund
- County administrative board

- Neighbouring sports organization
- Swedish Sports Confederation
- Local heritage association
- Folk high school
- Road associations
- Lifebuoy society
- Island's council

- Hotel & Conference centre
- Sports entrepreneurs
- Sponsors

- "Spontaneous sport areas"

- The organization of society in its various spheres and development of business.
- An analysis of the various parts organization cooperates with, for example:
 - (co-opetition)
 - (institutional networks)

The Market

The Civil Society

CONCLUSION

- Networks and networking are of considerable importance to social entrepreneurial organizations (e.g., Austin et al., 2006; Yitshaki et al., 2008).
- Several of these networks are characterized by:
 - a common drive to find win-win situations
 - a mutual dependency, which is in contrast to the unilateral dependence that otherwise appears in research (e.g., Yitshaki et al., 2008).
- It is necessary to consider other network types than solely social ones (e.g., Sharir & Lerner, 2006; Yitshaki et al., 2008).
- VAIS is a non-profit organisation in the voluntary sector, which is decisive for its prospects (cf. Hines, 2005).

THANKS FOR LISTENING!