“If marketization is changing the nature of NPOs and the volunteer work that takes place in them, then what happens to the relationships between people in the organisations?”

1. RATIONALE & BACKGROUND

The conditions non-profit organisations (NPOs) exist under are changing. According to Eikenberry & Kluver (2004) market values increasingly influence NPOs, and this can be seen as a threat to their contribution to building and maintaining a strong civil society. Building social capital is one way NPOs may contribute to civil society. Social capital is also important for the existence of the NPOs, because building strong local networks of trust (i.e. good relations between people) is traditionally needed to mobilize collective action amongst volunteers.

My aim is to take a closer look at these relations between people, through a study of their interpersonal communication and the context it takes place in. I hypothesize that one reason people choose to work voluntarily (i.e. unpaid in NPOs), is because this type of work offers different interpersonal communication and relations than their paid work.

Market value from the private and public sector are increasingly influencing the NPOs, which is why one could argue that the differences between paid work and volunteer work are becoming smaller in terms of social capital and interpersonal relations. One could ask if NPOs traditionally have built stronger social bonds than for-profits, but this is changing. As “bonds of trust and reciprocity” (Salamon 1997, para. 13 in Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004, p. 137) a micro level analysis of interpersonal communication shows in what way the volunteers in these organisations show trust and reciprocity.

Social capital is also important for understanding the role different types of organisations play as context for this. This focus is inspired by Koschmann (2012), who argues that communicative explanations, which can “complement, challenge, and extend existing theoretical frameworks” (Koschmann, 2012, p. 139) are missing in non-profit research. Social capital specifically, is according to Lewis (2005), a central example of a non-profit phenomenon, and I argue that an important understanding of social capital can be found through micro level analysis of interpersonal communication. When social capital is related to interactions, then one may form an understanding of the context and how this comes across micro level analysis of interpersonal communication between volunteers. This shows how the voluntarism in organisations change trust and reciprocity.

Combined with analysis of the organizational context and with interviewing volunteers, the study seeks to explain which specific context this communication takes place in, and importantly how this communication and this context is experienced by the volunteers.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This study’s overall purpose is to develop distinctly communicative explanations for non-profit phenomenon like social capital, and to understand the different types of organisations play at context for this.

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3. METHODOLOGY

The study is planned to be a case study (Malwal, 1996) where a small group of people will be followed in both their paid and volunteer work. Field notes, photos and video recording will be used to document the field work, and micro level analysis of the interpersonal communication will be conducted with interviews (Malwal, 1996). Interviews will be conducted in their paid and volunteer work respectively, and will be conducted micro level analysis of interactions taking place in the two contexts, along with analysis of the two contexts. My understanding of the interaction will look at both a content dimension (what are they talking about), and a relation dimension (what is the relationship between the people talking). Importantly I will also interview the person about their own understanding of the interaction and the context, and I will discuss the results from my analysis with the person.

I aim to find:
1) Distinctly communicative understandings and explanations of a group of peoples volunteer work
2) Differences between paid and volunteer work that make a difference. In a time where the lines between paid work and volunteer work are becoming blurry/aim to contribute with an insight into aspects, which are important to keep separate.

REFERENCES


DOES INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION CARRY ITS OWN REWARD IN CIVIL SOCIETY?

4. INTENDED FINDINGS

I will be following the same person in their paid and volunteer work respectively, and will be conducting micro level analysis of interactions taking place in the two contexts, along with analysis of the two contexts. My understanding of the interaction will look at both a content dimension (what are they talking about) and a relation dimension (what is the relationship between the people talking). Importantly I will also interview the person about their own understanding of the interaction and the context, and I will discuss the results from my analysis with the person.

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