Does Interpersonal Communication Carry Its Own Reward In Civil Society?

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“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) marketization increasingly influence NPOs, and this can be seen as a threat 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 mobilise collective action amongst volunteers.

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

Market value from the private and public sector are increasingly influencing the NPOs, this is considered as a threat of building social capital. I think this could be a threat to the social capital of the NPOs, because building strong local networks of trust (i.e. good relations between people) is traditionally needed to mobilise collective action amongst volunteers.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study is planned to be a case study (Miallme, 1994) 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 among others Conversation Analysis (Femø Nielsen & Beck Nielsen, 2005) and theories on Facework (Goffman, 1955).

4. INTENDED FINDINGS

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


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The micro level analysis of the communication will be combined with interviews (Alvesson, 2003; Kvale, 2007) where the volunteers own understanding of their choice to volunteer, or their understanding of the organisations they are part of and their understanding of their communication with other volunteers will be explored.

REFERENCES


