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Partnerships between Public and Cooperative sector: The case of Sweden

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Abstract

Many countries nowadays face unemployment problems due to population increase in urban areas or migration from small cities. This research explores Private Public Partnerships (PPP) in Sweden. PPPs is a collaboration initiated for development by providing and combining supply of resources by the collaborated entities. The purpose of such collaborations is to legitimate partners, enhance the living conditions of people and initiate change in society. This study analyzes benefits of Public Private Partnerships, why and how they are organized and governed and challenges they meet. The empirical material of the study is based on semi structured interviews in three public and three cooperative organisations. The outcome of the study reveals that both parties to the partnership have own motives in the formulation of a PPP and strive to the fulfilment of their goals and objectives. We identify that the public sector is interested to reach social benefits. The cooperative aims for legitimacy and business growth opportunities. The research adds to the existing knowledge on PPP by offering understanding of the reasons for organizing partnerships which are the sustainable development of regions, new innovative business opportunities and social contributions.

Keywords: Governance, Development, Partnerships, Collaboration.



1. Introduction

A Public Private Partnership (PPP) is a cooperation between the public and the private sector where both contribute with and share resources (Rosenau, 1999; Huxham, 2003). It means building and maintaining of infrastructure in which the private sector plays a vital role in designing a project, creating, operationalizing, and sharing responsibilities and risks with the public sector (Grimsey & Lewis, 2004; Donahue & Zeckhauser, 2011). Partnerships like these are formulated in contracts (Little, 2011) and aim to betterment of economic and social conditions in the society.

A PPP project requires both governments and private sector partners to collaborate and cooperate on a joint effort to facilitate reduction of transaction costs (De Schepper, Haezendonck, & Dooms, 2015; Dudkin & Väililä, 2005). Questions have been posed about the actual achievement of value for money (Pollock, Prince, & Player, 2007; Siemiatycki & Farooqi, 2012) and public financing efforts.

In current competitive markets public governance is seen more effective in collaborative models of public and private sector (Andrews and Entwistle, 2010). High level of cooperation by public and private sector makes governance hybrid and complex (Ansell and Gash, 2008). Governance duties in public sector is performed by managers and policymakers to maximize public utility purposes, while private sector governance is dependent on market insights and feedbacks facilitated by managers, board of directors, shareholders and analysts as the motive can be profit driven and assumed as more effective (Daily, Dalton and Cannella 2003). The differences in working, expectations and motives of these institutes make the partnership between them challenging (Bryson, Crosby, and Stone 2006).

According to Teisman and Klijn (2002) and Hodge and Greve (2010, 2017) PPP projects have a long-term impact because of cost involved and size of project. The partnership is over a period, and requires high motivation, long term commitment and willingness backed by policy plan or model. PPP policy is not always clearly formulated, it is based on a long-term strategy aimed at delivering goods and services and better value for money. PPP projects are seen as a strategy adopted by governments who are cash -strapped and wish to use private liquidity for public projects. This approach is seen as “*buy now, pay later*”– delivery of infrastructure, to improve quality of services (Hodge & Greve, 2013).

Casady and Geddes (2016) mean PPPs used in social, or infrastructure project delivery, refer to long term contractual arrangements between public agencies and private partners to increase participation and risk sharing. In these arrangements, the public sector awards a long-term contract to a private actor in the form of a policy adjustment. The government acts as defender of the owners that is the public whereas private sector plays the role of a service provider who executes the plan with self-finance or public or private financing.

Considering these issues, PPP, if appropriately planned, executed, and enforced, provide benefits like project completion in time and within budgets, innovations, new types of financing, risk sharing and lowering of total cost in life of a project, which enhances the quality of output.



Individual goals of collaborating parties in a PPP face challenges in terms of setting guidelines, rules, or regulations to fulfill the expectations of both parties in a partnership. The expectations of social welfare of the public sector and business objectives of private sector create a gap in understanding in how the long-term objectives can be achieved. Long term objectives or impact motives can be on various grounds, and they are on micro, meso and macro level (Austin and Seitanidi, 2012, Stadler, 2016).

However, as more governments pursue PPPs to obtain socioeconomic gains of infrastructure development, public agencies must deepen their understanding of the governance challenges in terms of engineering, economic, political, sociological, and policy tools available to them (Girth 2017). These aspects lead to a gap between expectation and long-term impact, of how a PPP would be governed, factors affecting governance and challenges faced in the process of partnership establishment. To fill these gaps and increase understanding of the challenges collaborating parties meet we explore institutional goals for both parties in a partnership and their expectations from a partnership. We address the following research questions:

- 1: *What are the reasons for collaboration by both parties in a Public Private Partnership?*
- 2: *What are the management challenges of a Public Private Partnership development?*
- 3: *How can a public-private partnership be developed to benefit both parties?*

In this research, we analyze PPP of the region and the municipality of Uppsala, the region of Orebro lan, a regional cooperative development agency Coompanion in Uppsala and Orebro region, and Mikrofonden in Uppsala, Sweden. The city of Uppsala has been awarded most sustainable city and recognized for its collaboration efforts. Studies indicate (Betre, 2020) that Uppsala's municipal government has successfully developed sustainability policies with strong collaboration. The Uppsala municipality is chosen as one of the public sector organisations for its importance in handling community service that is available where you live, such as school and care. (Uppsala Municipality, 2020).

Coompanion and Mikrofonden were selected for study as cooperative economic associations that promote cooperative entrepreneurship where ownership and governance take place democratically and sustainability is safeguarded from both a social, and economic perspective. They are experts in cooperative enterprises development. Their work helps cooperative companies, but not only, to develop and take social responsibility to create positive social effects, regional development and relationships between the public sector and social economy sector. (Coompanion, 2020) Mikrofonden finances enterprises in social economy and networks with businesses. Coompanion and Mikrofonden as cooperative organisation have double aims both economic and social (Mikrofonden, 2022; Fregidou-Malama, 1994).

The Region Uppsala and Orebro were chosen as their mission is to organize for regional competence development that is crucial for regional growth and competitiveness in the future. The organizations believe that most important drivers of change such as digitalization, robotization, globalization and the green shift place new demands on competence in both the private and public sectors. They cooperate with the civil society actors to reach sustainable



development and good health. The regions mean it is important to support the civil society actors as they can contribute to develop good conditions for societal development. The collaboration can be in form of agreements or long-term collaborations. Through long-term cooperation with different stakeholders, they can adapt to meet new public needs. (Region Uppsala, 2021; Region Örebro Län, 2022; MUCF, 2022)

In this study we analyze the partners' perceptions of the partnership. We identify goals and motivation of both parties for partnership formation, governance of a partnership and challenges involved in the organizing and the governance. We identify differences of motivation of both parties and formulate an understanding of objectives of development, legitimacy, economics, and growth. With the objective of the study in mind three public institutions and three cooperative organisations operated in two regions were included in the study which is both a limitation and delimitation.

2. Partnerships for change

2.1. Initiation and development of a partnership

PPP are seen as a partnership or collaboration between private and public organisations. They are understood as a collective decision making in a project which is based on common goals (Cohn, 2008; Roberts & Siemiatycki, 2015). According to Velotti *et al.* (2012) PPP is a process which enhances productivity and efficiency. This is because a PPP has an assumption, that it is not based purely on political decisions but is initiated for organisational development, to enhance organisational image which helps to achieve higher effectiveness and better performance (Kort *et al.*, 2011).

According to Zhang and Jia (2009) PPPs are models of cooperation which are unique since organisational structure of parties involved are not similar. According to Jupp (2000) partnership is not justified as a relationship, in the case where a government only gives to salesperson contracts or seek for a specific service that is limited to the job of a private firm, if not the contributing parties are involved in mutual decision making. Thereof, a PPP is seen difficult and elaborative form of arrangement for public sector entity (Corrigan *et al.*, 2005).

PPP is initiated on a basic understanding that neither public sector nor private sector has one-sided right or resources to help overcome social issues in easing daily lives of inhabitants (Googins & Rochlin, 2000). In the last two decades PPPs have been seen as a strategic approach of societal and infrastructure development (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006; Kolk *et al.*, 2008). Because of this, PPP literature is vast since it has relevance to projects in development and collaboration of various sectors for societal benefit (Goldstein & Mele, 2016; Stadler, 2016; Teisman & Klijn, 2002). PPP has not a specific model for establishing, governing and performance measurement (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2011). Most of the PPP literature is seen as lacking integration and lacks accuracy of concepts (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2011). Velotti *et al.* (2012) add that lack of measurement tools enhances uncertainty in measuring the performance of a PPP project and constitutes a problem. It is



believed that PPP projects have potential to benefit both parties due to collaboration and cooperation in the partnership (Huxham, 2003). There are challenges in a partnership and Goldstein & Mele (2016) discuss PPP on three aspects: conformity to public purpose or vision, leadership structure and governance model.

2.2. Organizing a Public-Private Partnership

According to Googins and Rochlin (2000) and Stadtler, (2016) partnerships are a must for community in securing long term development for change in local and global conditions. PPPs have gained importance in solving complicated societal problems due to their cross sectoral collaborative nature. Stadtler (2016) maintains that PPPs initiated for development on the bases of collaboration agreements or understanding between public and private sector and are provided with resources by existing entities to enhance living standard and initiate change in society (Rosenau, 1999). A PPP collaborative arrangement is different from traditional operations of a public sector entity, that gives contracts to organisations on the bases of tenders with a purpose of cost minimization (Grimsey & Lewis, 2004).

Increased number of PPP projects have been seen as a means for societal development (Kolk *et al.*, 2008) and shows the collaboration refers to strategic development projects. PPP has gained reputation since single party projects of private, public, or civil society have failed to achieve intended objectives (Crosby & Bryson, 2005; OECD, 2006). Furthermore, governments across the globe have started considering PPP as a tool of development but also as a solution for fulfilling the obligations of social development in changing market conditions (Cohn, 2008). It is considered that when one party works on an issue, the approach is biased by their own potential in dealing with the issue (Keast *et al.*, 2004). Hence, PPP has gained acceptance and support across government sector employees, private companies, societies, and their representatives as an alternative. (McQuaid, 2000).

According to OECD (2006) PPP is seen as catering to the problem of deficiency and the availability of required resources in goods and services in a development project. Further the problem is related to investment patterns of private and public sector which can result to underinvested projects (Kolk *et al.*, 2008; Stadtler, 2014). PPP can be a platform to complement investments of both parties by cooperation. This approach is identified as resource-based cooperation (Mellewigt, Madhok, & Weibel, 2007). The resources can be tangible as money or intangible creating value or trust between the partners (Seitanidi, 2007).

The collaboration on expertise level would help minimizing the risk in a project and create an appropriate environment by reducing uncertainty in scale of project, technical know-how or cost factors (Provan & Milward, 1991). It is considered that PPP is formed on an assumption that no single party can achieve development objectives alone, the identical factor for this is interdependence due to resource (Booher & Innes, 2002; Samii, Van Wassenhove, & Bhattacharya, 2002; Sharfman, Gray, & Yan, 1991). According to Huxham, (2003) the collaborative advantage of sharing resources forms the bases of a partnership creation in the form of a PPP.



There are challenges in PPP due to the nature of collaborating parties and their practices, goals and motivation and their organisational conditions (Huxham & Vangen, 2004). Other reasons for difference are their imbedded interest and expectation to benefit from a PPP project, or the intention of the parties as it determines positive or negative effect of the result of the partnership on the end consumer (Rein & Stott, 2009). It is assumed that a private party involved in a PPP project has an interest of making profits and will not cooperate in a project if there is no possibility of making profit (Cohn, 2008). Another important aspect is accountability of partners and their authority in a partnership project, since an inadequacy of one would mean conflicts (Thomson & Perry, 2006).

2.3. Goals and Motivations of stakeholders for Collaboration in projects

Commercial incentives to promote PPP in a collaboration is seen as an alliance to create more partnerships, to initiate development projects and helps to develop theory. It becomes imperative to identify theoretical aspects of PPP partnership for business and development. According to Holden (2009) services involve policy transfer and companies who are in a PPP find it easier to adjust in multi market settings, as they are supported with new policy implementation and connections.

It can be determined that an organisation aims to create value for investors and stakeholders irrespective of its sector of operation. The way an organisation creates value is dependent on its identity and role in the business sector and the society (Le Ber & Branzei, 2010). According to Saz-Carranza and Ospina, (2011) the role a business facilitates a cross sectoral collaboration which creates value and is affected by demands which can clash and require due attention. Private sector business is seen with a purpose of generating profits and the public sector is identified as having implementational and policy goals (Jessop, 1998; Samii *et al.*, 2002).

Organization's structure and framework help an organisation to create value (Le Ber & Branzei, 2010; Kaplan, 2008). The value frame concept details that organisation at individual level need managers who can identify the need for change and induce the understanding of strategic actions.

Collaboration plays a vital role for both parties in a PPP as it helps minimising individual differences (Goldstein & Mele, 2016). The success of a PPP is enhanced when the two parties realise the real objective to have the partnership and work with mutual values. In a PPP the collaboration environment of both parties can be affected by another's actions, and they need to fulfil the obligations of uncertainties of their own environment (Krishnan, Geyskens, & Steenkamp, 2016). In this scenario trust is identified as a crucial factor which helps in the success of a partnership. Trust is gained over time at three different levels - micro, meso and macro (Zhang & Jia, 2009, Fregidou-Malama and Hyder, 2021) and is defined as intention to be vulnerable to others if one expects positive outcomes of a relationship (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt and Camerer, 1998).



2.4. Benefits of Partnerships

In a PPP project the location of the operation is the main beneficiary, though for a partnership to be successful the project must have opportunities for both parties depending on their motivational aspects. The parties to a PPP are benefited in the process of implementation and in terms of their goal prospective (Stadtler, 2016). Benefits can be categorised as macro, meso and micro level (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012; Kolk, van Dolen, & Vock, 2010;), or investigated from three different timelines short, mid, and long term. Macro level benefits affect large part of the society in which a project is initiated irrespective of the type of partnership involved in a PPP. Macro level benefits are seen as contributing with positive result for wider groups, locations, and stakeholders (Clarke & Fuller, 2010; Kolk *et al.*, 2010).

A PPP not only helps in enhancing the economic conditions of an area but contributes to better living conditions. Stadtler (2016) means that the development work by PPP helps to systematic change and creation of new institutions that can help timely completion of projects and creating job opportunities for people. It is also stated that PPP project participation helps the partners to improve legitimacy, enhance reputation and the creation of social capital (Brinkerhoff, 2007) and enhance employee motivation by information sharing (Googins & Rochlin, 2000).

PPP participation facilitates new avenues for business opportunities due to developing networks, new processes, legitimacy, and strategy development skills (Stadtler, 2016; Samii *et al.*, 2002). This aspect shows that private entities involved in a PPP with the objective of profit, achieve their profit expectations. This reveals that meso level development gives a possibility of profit for private organisations which may be realised in short, mid, or long term. Normally profit-making objective is realised in mid to long term, but the immediate benefit to private companies is enhancement by relationships in their network, social competence, and reputation and visibility due to public sector involvement and undertaking of volume projects. Benefits are also achieved by the public sector as the private sector can increase credibility due to timely completion of projects through collaboration.

Micro-level benefits in PPPs facilitate the bottom level in the networking organisations and the society or the area of implementation of the project (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012). The micro-level benefits are subject to individual parties who are involved in the project and to the end consumer.

2.5. Structure and governance of Public-Private Partnerships

According to Huxham & Vangen (2005) and Bryson *et al.*, (2006) culture, time scale, power dynamics and hierarchy in an organisation play a crucial role for collaboration and operation of a PPP initiative but can cause conflicts. This is considered as a limitation and threats the unity and challenges a PPP project (Goldstein & Mele, 2016). Organisational structure comprises of authority parity, procedure, job allocation and goals (Bryson *et al.*, 2006; Mandell, 1994). Structure is seen as a system which regulates activities and impacts the management aspect of a partnership. Parties involved in a partnership can be associated to different networks, with overlapping purpose reducing the relevance of the structure or visibility.



Therefore, the networks that are formed within and outside a partnership are relevant for the partnership.

According, an organisational structure can be formal and include membership, hierarchy rules, monitoring and sanctions and allocates specific tasks to members (Arne and Brunsson, 2011) or informal from legally binding contracts to public agreements or general agreements to cooperate. According to Booher and Innes (2002) network can be seen as power structure that is preferred as it facilitates the flow of power. Further, power in network can be understood as an advantage to agents individually or collectively. This network power emerges from communication and collaboration among autonomous actors that are individuals, public and private agencies, or business entities.

Leadership can play an important role in bringing the various parties together and influence their behavior by motivating them for inter-organizational collaboration in the initial stage of a PPP (Bryson *et al.*, 2006; Crosby & Bryson, 2005). Leadership initiatives in early stage of a PPP are taken from both parties. Formal leadership is seen as a creation of a position to give strength and legitimacy to a leader (Alexander, Comfort, Weiner, & Bogue, 2001). Another form of leadership is informal, which requires informal authority and *soft skills* such as interpersonal and visionary capabilities which is important in a network.

Crosby & Bryson (2005) and Williams (2002) and Jupp (2000) argue that managers in a partnership project need to adjust to collaborative management model. This model requires negotiation skills, problem solving skills, conflict management and project management skills. Management in a PPP can be different due to difference in culture, structure, management style and participation efforts (Alexander *et al.*, 2001). Flexibility is identified as a relevant factor to create solutions for possible challenges in a PPP project (Huber, Miller, & Glick, 1990; Krishnan *et al.*, 2016). Good relationships facilitate solutions and create legitimacy for both parties (Crosby *et al.*, 2006; Bryson *et al.*, 2006). In case the relationship is not effective then a formal contract is required in the form of a memorandum of understanding.

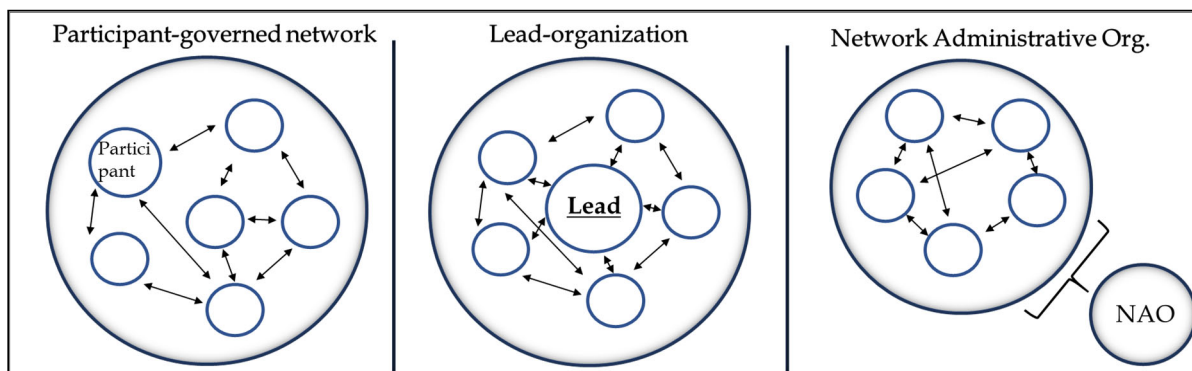
Governance is defined as the actions of directing, guiding, or regulating individuals, organizations, or nations in their undertakings (Lynn, 2010; Hughes, 2010) on how to organize, and set procedures for an organization to be run. PPP governance faces uncertainties and is discussed from different perspectives as networks and contractual governance.

Vahlne and Johanson (2013) define business networks as sets of connected business relationships. Håkansson and Snehota (2000, 2017) argue firms are dependent on resources provided by other firms, and this exchange of resources advances knowledge, helping businesses to develop trust and relationships and gain a position in the market. Provan and Kenis (2008) define a network as a group of three or more participants who are autonomous and collaborate to meet common goals. They mean that networks governance is based on trust between the partners, number of participants, network goal consensus and network competencies. They discuss 3 types of network governance: participant governed organisation, lead organisation and network administered organisation, and two dimensions:



brokered or not. In a participant driven network the power is decentralized to the participants and is horizontal distributed. In a lead organisation one of the participants who is large and powerful leads the network and its activities to meet goals. The power is centralised to this actor and asymmetrical distributed. Network governance organisations (NAO) can be understood as a governance of multidimensional and imprecise cooperation where power is centralized to an administrative body outside the network participants group or to a formal organisation (Klijn, Edelenbos, & Steijn, 2010; Provan *et al.*, 2004; Raab *et al.*, 2015). The conditions in a network are affected by the type of network adopted. Which form of network is formed depends on the objective of the network, on trust development, the number of participants and establishment time. The formal NAO can be run by governments in the developing face of the network to facilitate funding or sharing of information. Type of network and the development process goes from participant- to lead- to administered governance, as it is shown in figure 1.

Figure 1. Governance in Different Circumstances (adapted from Provan & Kenis, 2008:447)



Contractual governance of a network is suitable when uncertainty is involved in a PPP because of internal or external factors. According to Krishnan et al. (2016) and Provan & Milward (1991) organisations in a PPP should be identical in terms of size, nature, and environment to facilitate better collaboration objective. Contractual governance specifies mutual rights, obligations, and sanctions if contracts are not followed and relates to activities and the resources the partners share. The partners can secure themselves against uncertainties of behaviour or environmental uncertainties by designing contracts (Mayer & Argyres, 2004; Mellewigt et al., 2007; Williamson, 1996). How contracts are detailed depends on the kind of partnership, existing relationship, previous cooperation, and multilevel trust development (Gulati, 1995; Reuer & Ariño, 2007; Zollo et al., 2002; Fregidou-Malama and Hyder, 2021).

2.6. Collaboration for development

We assume that three constructs are decisive in a partnership between Public and Private sector: The goals of the partnership, the structure of the partnership and the governance. The goals and motivations of the partnership influence the structure of the partnership which influences the governance that benefits partners on macro, meso and microlevel (Rosenau, 1999; Provan & Milward, 1991). PPPs are initiated for development on the bases of



collaboration agreements of understanding, are provided with resources by existing entities to enhance living standard of citizens and initiate change in society (Rosenau, 1999). The collaboration depends on the expertise of the partners, helps to minimize risks in a project and creates an appropriate environment to avoid uncertainty (Provan & Milward, 1991). The success of a PPP is enhanced if the collaborating parties understand the objective of the partnership (Samii *et al.*, 2002).

Austin & Seitanidi, 2012 and Kolk, van Dolen, & Vock, 2010, categorize benefits of a PPP as macro, meso and microlevel. Macro level benefits are investigated on long-term and affect the society in which a project is initiated. Macro level benefits are seen as contributing with positive result for locations, the involved stakeholders on the mesolevel (Clarke & Fuller, 2010) to timely complete projects and create job opportunities for people (microlevel). The objective of a partnership affects how it is structured. We identify two structures: 1) networking structure 2) contractual structure.

The governance of a network is based on trust between the networking partners, the number of participants, consensus in network goals and the level of network competencies. Three network structures (Provan & Kenis, 2008) participants governed structure, lead organisation structure and network administered structure encourages participants to collaborate and share resources and affects the power structure in the network.

3. Methodology - The selected cases

We applied a qualitative study to analyse the relationship between humans and business activities undertaken by them (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The empirical study is based on 12 interviews conducted with open ended questions in the years 2020 and 2022. The corona pandemic under 2020 and 2021 has been a limitation in meeting people and the interviews were conducted on phone, on Zoom or face to face and recorded with permission of the interview person. E-mail digital answers have also been considered and the use of documents. One participant was interviewed twice and the language used English and Swedish. Data have been collected in three public and three cooperative organisations. The respondents were selected based on their knowledge and experience of partnerships.

By scrutinizing the information collected we identified the following themes: 1) Goals in establishing PCP, 2) Motives for PCPs, 3) Challenges in PCPs, 4) Power balance in PCPs and 5) The future. We analyzed the results in two main themes: Goals and motivations in a PCP and structure and governance in PCPs considering individual explanations and we compared the results with literature.



4. Empirical results

4.1. Goals in establishing a Public Cooperative Partnership

According to Coompanion Public Private Partnership is a national initiative which has been initiated to scale up new businesses. In the partnership the governmental sector plays a supporting role with financing to connect partners and develop businesses. The respondent said:

In a Public Private Partnership, the public sector aims to build up infrastructure that requires initiatives and inputs in terms of money, expertise, and management to build up infrastructure simultaneously in different sectors. To do that there are initiatives taken in collaboration between the public and the private sector.

According to the respondent the governmental sector or departments of governmental sector and individuals or private organisations or group of people cooperate to create value for the society. The respondent is of the view that sustainable development of regions is the motivation behind the process of PCP. The result can be a long-term visionary growth path for a company, the society, or the country. The respondent thinks the initiatives in a PCP are valued highly.

To collaborate with the public sector coompanion looks for special projects like commercial projects and pushes the public sector to support commercial projects. Respondent believe that different recommendations on work projects are needed, so the money can be utilised for the right cause. One respondent confessed:

We look for different projects in coompanion, we do things together with the public in pushing them as agents to do commercial drive, we really must find commercial projects.

According to public sector respondents everything rests upon that it is an endeavour that can capture the interest of private stakeholders and the public like civil society, sports, interest groups, voters, or political parties. According both stakeholders the cooperative and the public sector operate differently, but their interests need to align. The respondent explained:

... there are many movable parts that are necessary for a partnership to succeed. Many lessons have been learned because we probably were not sufficiently self-critical.

Respondents from the public sector mean that competitiveness in industry is facilitated by partnerships and the linkages between industry and academia. According to respondents the partnership with the industry would create competence centres, medium scale industry, the healthcare sector and would benefit the society. They also mean that in developed economies there is a need for partnership or collaborations for financial reasons or because of expert ties or maybe because of innovation aspects and in terms of manpower so this kind of partnership is relevant. One respondent stated:



When we talk in terms of today's scenario which is like a COVID-19 pandemic scenario, in the coming future partnerships will be important when societies try to restate their economies.

Therefore, after a crisis of economic terms there is need for partnerships to develop new ideas to really scale up the economy back. Respondents see partnerships to connect and diversify across sectors and industry to make different kind of services available for the public. This strategi, aiming for the benefit of people, is interesting and challenging as the public sector money is tax money which the sector has little control over on what it is used for and how much is used.

4.2. Motivation for Public Cooperative Partnerships

To establish a collaboration between public and cooperative parties, there needs to be motivation on both sides to engage in the partnership. Cooperative respondents argue that initiative of a partnership benefits as it supports the companies that are already ongoing and helps establishing new ones. They mean that partnerships have long-term impact on the society and help companies to develop. One of the respondents emphasized:

I think partnerships establish confidence, survival of companies, help investments in business and in personal by technology, learning or using customers' knowledge.

The respondents argue that collaborated parties in the public sector understand the importance of partnership and its benefits and mean that cooperative companies do not have money, but expertise in developing new businesses and the public sector needs new business for society. Respondents believe that business innovation and social innovation are relevant advantages and motivations to understand and identify the requirements for the formation of a partnership. The benefit of partnership is seen as result of collective working and achievement.

Informants from the cooperative sector believe the public sector is not so interested of social innovations and they do not listen to arguments from the cooperative sector on how to facilitate the civil society as they can see problems the public sector cannot see. Respondents from the public sector believe that different initiatives in life science, energy sector, or IT sector help an economy grow with social upliftment. A collaboration across sectors and industry can make services and innovations available for the public sector and constitutes a motivation for partnerships.

4.3. Challenges in Public Cooperative Partnership

Challenges can be found in how to structure and manage a partnership. Respondents mean those challenges can be solved with planning, effective decision making and cooperation by both parties. Informants are of the view that democratic way of making decisions is suitable as it gives time for decision making keeping in mind that the money involved is public money. Cooperative respondent argued:



Planning is for months and then the project is formed. Then you can see an imbalance between the time it takes to decision making and for us to do the work. You must wait to do good work. I think we use the public money so we should feel proud of what we have done. To feel that you are valuable, and we have really done our best and not rushed.

Respondents are of the view that transparency is important in the management of PPP and the collaborating partners. According to respondents, transparent structure, leadership, and management is well-suited in PCP initiatives. The management should be open to change and avoids risk. One respondent argues:

Organize the project well because then you can create value. We in coompanion we don't want to show that a project does not go well! We want to use the money well because it is tax money, so we want to make value for money. It is a risk that the money goes around and not create value by people and for people.

It is believed that continuity of efforts is important so that tasks are not left incomplete. Coompanion respondents complain that the public sector is not really interested to know what happens in with the projects in a cooperation. The public sector does not finance projects 100 percent and do not contribute with other resources. They lack expertise in business development issues and projects are on short run. They mean the public sector is not interested in planning, structure or consent of indent contracts or engagement or to take care of the results and the knowledge developed. This develops designation in the cooperative sector and leave them alone with the responsibilities.

The public sector respondents mean that a project needs to be well-structured, thoroughly long-term planned, financially sound, and properly managed. The public body should have a strategy for the whole region in terms of business development and innovation. Cooperation must be developed in line with this public strategy to achieve the partnership objectives. Another important aspect is that initiatives should be taken to bring people together from academia, the industry, and the public sector to plan for population benefits and it was stated:

We left that stage we have had over, the day-to-day management of the Corporation to another body, another partner and it sounds good.

The respondents are of the opinion that management can be outsourced to facilitate better results. They also mean the results can be better in terms of time required for completion of a project or timely completion of the projects in terms of cost management and cost effectiveness and social benefits. Collaboration is affected of external and internal factors which are important for some actors and not for others. A win-win situation can be created by supporting a specific part of the local industry so one needs to be active and convince the public sector. The role of the public sector in a partnership is important. Private companies can go bankrupt, but the public sector never can endorse that. What is needed is optimisation of initiatives in terms of structure of a partnership, management, and leadership of the project. One respondent remarked:



A business can try things out, try new ideas out. That sometimes works sometimes does not, but if the public sector is doing something wrong it is a bigger issue than in a company. A company can go bankrupt but public sector Should not.

Further they state that since the public sector takes into consideration the public opinion, they must be truthful, responsible and do not make errors and do not choose a partnership initiative that can be wrong. It is also important that the collaboration is formulated in contracts for stability in financial issues and business on long run. They ask for contracts so the public sector cannot make new demands but needs to organise arenas where the public and the cooperative sector can meet and discuss problems publicly as equal partners for the best of individuals, the civil society, and the public sector.

4.4. Power Balance in a Public Cooperative Partnership

Governance was identified as an important aspect in a PCP and the involvement of the partners. In the governance of a project multiple options should be available and the choice of network or contractual governance depends on the type of project the partners work on. One respondent meant:

If there are two or three other organisations that are better in an issue, they will get the money to invest in transparent activities and in competition. The rules, guidelines and processes followed need to be laid down and made public. If the process is transparent and the information is shared with the private sector people who try to build up business and invest in projects themselves and need guidance from the public organization and get the guidance, they can show what they need to do and how they will do it, what benefits they will get and what the government will support with.

If this process is followed it can facilitate role clarity but also the expectations of all the parties involved. Moreover, power balance plays a vital role in a partnership as it shifts the role and responsibility of the partners. Cooperative respondents complain that the power is in the hands of the public sector as they contribute with the financing. A respondent remarked how crucial power balance is and suggests more delegation of authority and sharing responsibilities as a solution.

Respondents of the public sector mean key to governance is awareness, transparency, and participation with realistic and viable timescale. The state of the economy is important factor, the interest of certain actors and key players are factors to take into consideration as well. There are services that can be outsourced if a partner has better expertise than the public sector. One respondent discusses cost as a challenge in governance that affects the decision of outsourcing or doing all activities in house and explained:

It can be more expensive than you had planned, and it looked first, I mean that can happen as well if you do the work in-house. When doing the work in house you have more power to twisting currency to new projects or make something cheaper.



As per respondents' responsibilities that cannot be moved from the public sector include costs; it is an important aspect of a PCP as contracts between partners depend on planning of expenses. Other challenges are seen in terms of conflict of ideas and motivation at the beginning of projects. Lack of contract in writing form has adverse effects on a PCP project as accountability cannot be determined.

Conflict at the beginning or a not well-developed contract is hard to change. I think this is considered as a bigger problem than when somebody else is better at doing a service.

A networking structure is believed helps to balance the power between the participants in the network and is preferred. Depending on the numbers of participants and the projects they run sometimes tensions can be developed. Small partners in a network think that they miss information and have the feeling they are not important. It is then significant to share information between the partners and find a way to do it. But if there are many partners in the network it is believed that the best way is to structure the network with the help of an administrative body that is given the responsibility to govern the network.

This is also important as people in networks may be change employment or public and cooperative officials go to other working fields and then the network becomes weak. Relationships are developed between people and if they are not in place, it is difficult to develop networks and collaboration. Networks start small but become bigger as time passes and new people are involved.

A public respondent told how they organise the collaboration. They organise 3-4 meetings per year with all participants in the network and an administrative body that meets each three weeks gives the partners the continuity that is necessary. They cooperate with different partners depending on the projects they run. Public respondents discuss how they work hard to help partners with financial issues, support them by open doors, and advice so they can contribute with social innovations and help disable people with employment.

Respondents see great future interest for partnerships and a need for coordination over the country and even the European Union for better performance and results.

4.5. Future challenges

The respondents confer that what is needed in a PCP to succeed in the future is measurements to understand what social economy is and what civil society means. They consider the formation of networks as an advantage of the partnership. In a network all participants have the possibility to present ideas, discuss them and learn from each other. For the network to function it is important with contracts. One respondent emphasised:

When the contracts will be formulated the public sector develops them and decides about them. The system is complicated and small partners do not understand how to do. A contract should be formulated of the public and cooperative partners together.



The cooperative respondents perceive legitimacy as an advantage for the cooperative sector through the partnership. They mean they can contribute with competence and therefore they ask for equality. The power dynamic of the public sector makes the partners unequal. The cooperatives are dependent on financing as they are financed only to 50% and the public sector has the money. One respondent said:

We must scratch many peoples' back and because of that we cannot be open and spontaneous in the discussions we have.

The Cooperative respondents suggest more arenas of collaboration. One where the big network partners meet and another one for small partners. Both arenas should be linked to a percentage of money they can use. Another requirement they express is the need for formal organisation. They mean a formal organisation can make communication between the partners easier and they ask for contracts on long run for the stability of the collaboration. They emphasize that the partnership must be more inclusive. Today many small companies are not participants as it is difficult to reach them with information and many small businesses are not active. They mention the following future challenges for a public-cooperative partnership:

- 1) Organisational challenges to activate all businesses
- 2) Absence of continuity in the partnership as people in both sectors change responsibilities and competence is lost when they leave.
- 3) Shortage of time in the networking as the networking is not the formal working responsibility of the participated individuals.
- 4) Developing a common language and approach to meet societal requirements.

5. Analysis of the results

5.1. Goals and Motivation of PCP

The literature reviewed shows, organizations in a partnership promote their own value frames (Le Ber & Branzei, 2010). Kaplan (2008) points out the importance of the individual level of organizations and how managers interpret change for strategic action. Huxham (2003) notes that differences in organizational agendas make it difficult to agree upon a goal by both parties. Our study points out that the public and cooperative parties would complement each other in developing regions by exchanging and complementing resources (Mellewig, Madhok, & Weibel, 2007). Further its stated that shared resources bring advantages for both sectors (Seitanidi, 2007).

Our study shows that the public and the cooperative sector point out the following goals and motivations for establishing a partnership; business development, desire to reach own goals and organisational and societal benefits. The respondents agree on the benefits of the collaboration as social development, infrastructure development for business development and long-term benefits for people. Both parties are interested in finishing projects in time for



the best of the society. They argue that the benefits are a result of collective working and the collaboration of the parties that contribute with special resources as expertise, finance, or innovative ideas (Mellewigt, Madhok, & Weibel, 2007). Those results can be related to Staedtler (2016) who discusses benefits of partnerships on macro/societal level, micro/individual level, and meso/organisational level. We understand this as a requirement to establish partnerships.

The results of the study reveal that partnerships must promote and benefit partners' organisational development, have long-term effects on societal development and facilitate individual people well-being. As we understand it our study notice benefits not only for the collaborated parties but also for the whole country and even the international society by the spread of developed innovative ideas that are communicated openly. We argue for benefits on a fourth level, the international society.

5.2. Empowering partners challenges a PCP

The literature review identifies the structuring of a partnership as challenging and means it formulates the bases of a collaboration (Williams, 2002). Network structures were discussed, horizontal power structure is found significant as sharing intangible capital (Bryson *et al.*, 2006; Huxham & Vangen, 2005).

Findings show that horizontal structuring prevails as collaboration and knowledge sharing seen more important than establishing vertical structures. The results indicate that partnerships start small and then expand so they can use the expertise and innovative ideas of the actors involved.

The literature identifies that public sector plays an important role in a PPP as it delegates power to private players in collaborative forms of management (Crosby & Bryson, 2005; Jupp, 2000). The study reveals that structural embeddedness facilitates mutual legitimacy of public and the cooperative sector in a partnership project (Crosby *et al.*, 2006). The findings show that communication, cross collaborations, and equal opportunity to all actors is most important in a PPP project. We argue that this opens possibilities for partners for knowledge sharing and facilitates small businesses.

The research identifies that governance forms the central part of a partnership as success or failure is dependent on the governance of a project in PPP format. The relevance of network organisation is shown effective in governance for the success of a PPP (Provan & Kenis, 2008). The Findings show that contractual governance is seen important in fixing and sharing responsibilities. Our research points out the importance of contracts to formulate responsibilities and roles, to delegate power and legitimate actors in the process of implementation of a project to boost the confidence of the actors. The approach to network governance changes with time and scale of partnership. Public sector due to scale and size has low risk in collaborations but the private sector requires stricter governance, contract fulfillment and common formulation of goals in the starting period of projects.



One important aspect identified in the research is how to manage and balance the power in the partnership. The results show that power balance is seen as a driving force in governance and the participation of various actors. Public sector is assumed to have money, knowledge and abilities and it is seen as in position of power. We argue the power balance is perceived to be tilted in favor of public sector and it depends upon the roles and responsibilities given to various actors in a PPP. We mean distribution of responsibilities can have a positive effect on the implementation of activities.

Our case reveals that the cooperative sector asks for power balance and empowerment and to be seriously seen as a knowledgeable actor that can contribute to development. We argue that power unbalance can create lost interest in the collaboration. It is important for the public sector to show interest in the results of performed projects and share authority and power with different parties. We reason for the importance of considering the knowledge developed in a partnership to formulate new goals for other partnerships and benefit individuals, organisations, Sweden, and the international society.

6. Conclusion

In this research we analyzed why the public sector collaborates with the private sector and explored goals, motives and challenges partnerships meet. Our study suggests that the objective of the public sector in a partnership is sustainable development of the society and to benefit people. Public sector motivation for going in a PPP is to gain expertise, cost reduction in a project and in time completion of projects. The private sector's objectives are commercial in nature which means to develop business opportunities and enhance income level of shareholders. The private sector seeks to enhance legitimacy too since a PPP improves the sectors' image in society and promotes social acceptance.

This study shows that a partnership project provides contacts to the public sector for firms who hold interest, expertise, and manpower regarding a particular project which otherwise would have been extended. A PPP project creates legitimacy for public sector too due to involvement of various parties and helps funding projects for which public may not have funding alone. A PPP is a means of starting projects by public sector in areas where small private firms cannot start due to cost factors or legal requirements. PPP services is a platform for economic reforming by infusing capital by public sector in various areas like infrastructure which not only generates employment but also increases income level in the society.

Challenges the management of a partnership meets are identified in how to structure, manage and govern a PPP project. The study suggests that vertical structure is not appropriate for a PPP project as emphasis is given to collaborations and knowledge sharing. Network structures in a PPP are critical specially when new product or learning, research, or innovations are developed. The study reveals it is important to share knowledge and information in the projects and communicate results openly.



Our study emphasizes that lack of trust challenges the participants in a PPP, as the partners are new and do not know each other from the beginning. Partnerships start small but grow big with positive experience of trust development over time. A PPP project requires the expertise of the parties involved due to scale of a project and the effects of it. It is difficult and decisive to select the right partners keeping in mind that the money involved is public money and government is responsible if a project fails. The public sector needs to delegate authority to private firms in a partnership due to their ability of being purposeful, goal oriented and commercially viable. One of the most important management challenges is to fulfill commitments and work on relationships to facilitate legitimacy of all parties involved in a partnership project. Another challenge identified is how to give equal opportunities to the partners, cross collaborations among parties and effective two-way communication. We identify the factor of communication impacts on the performance of a PPP as all actors need to work for mutual goal. To share power and show interest in the outcomes of finished projects influence a partnership positively.

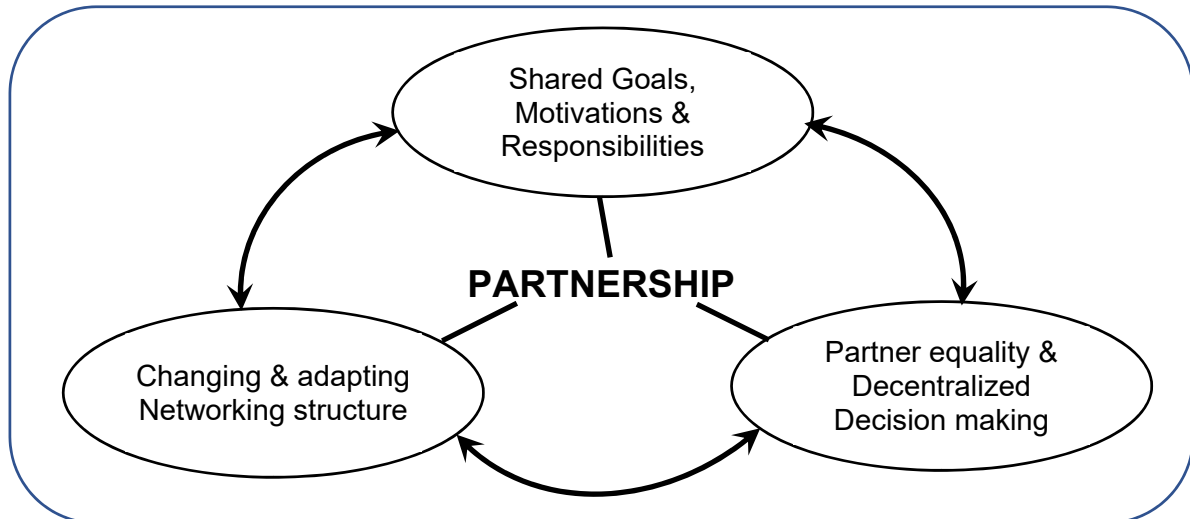
Mutual benefit and goal achievement of a PPP is related to the governance aspect of a PPP project. Signing of contract in a PPP is suggested in uncertain situations to establish roles, responsibilities, or rules for funding. The study shows that a participant governed network facilitates democracy, power sharing, knowledge development and transparency. It is found that the governance approach changes with change in scale of activity, large scale operations require more centralized decision making and a lead network organisation. In our case the public sector has been the Lead structure as for its financial and administrative strength. Summarizing, the study identifies that governance gains importance with scaling of network, so rules need to be updated or changed over time to keep them relevant. We argue for the need for and importance of administrative network organisation and networking over the country and the European Union to support participants and facilitate innovations in the society.

Our study suggests that three conditions, shown in Figure 2, are necessary for a partnership between the public sector and the cooperative to sustain and succeed:

- 1) Sharing goals, motivations, and responsibilities.
- 2) Decentralized decision making and equality between partners.
- 3) Changing and adapting networking structure over time.



Figure: 2. Conditions for sustainable and successful partnerships between sectors



The study reveals that PCP facilitates understanding between the collaborated parties. Governed democratically the partnership can develop relationships between the public and the cooperative sector and contribute to trust development and future collaborations.

6.1. Theoretical implications of the study

In this study we extend the theory of Public Private Partnerships by advancing understanding of the goals and motivations of public and cooperative sector partnership by presenting an empirically grounded empowerment model. Challenges and benefits in formation of a PPP are identified and a model of the process of developing a partnership is discussed. The aspects of structure and governance have been conferred to and how understanding of them can benefit partners in avoiding misunderstanding in a project.

According to the study governance of a PCP not only determines the success of a project but also its failure. The study shows that the type of governance can change with the number of partners in a network and time passing: It goes from participant driven governance to lead organisation governance and to network administrative organisation depending on the number of collaborating actors and the time of formation.

6.2. Practical implications

The results have practical implication for students, managers, researchers, and the society. Students can use the findings to understand the motivations and goals of a PPP for public and private sector. This understanding would enhance their views regarding opportunities created from education and the scope of individual and societal development through collaboration. Since governments are promoting partnerships in education sector in terms of collaborative school and Universities, the financing aspect, education quality, usefulness and effectiveness



can be better understood, and facilities can be availed in a better way. Further students can be aspired to become entrepreneurs in future, since these collaborations help new startups as in case of Coompanion in our study

Managers can use the results to understand the challenges and solutions in terms of structure, and governance aspects of a PPP. Managers who aim to work on long term projects of collaborative nature would be benefited from knowledge on partnerships, relevance of contracts and their effect, role of public sector in project management, benefits for private sector in a PPP and legitimacy or future growth. The study helps managers to understand how PPP approach can be a catalyst in driving their individual growth in terms of skill and expertise and how it can be an opportunity for facilitating organizational and societal growth.

Researchers can use the theories identified to establish future studies in the context of PPP like, partnerships, formal organizations, networks, regional development, industrial and economic growth. A PPP approach not only helps in building a society but also drives its sustainable growth. Society is benefitted from partnership projects through regional and national development. Infrastructure projects, health sector projects, new startups, and education projects can help increasing income level, employment rates, quality education and the living standard of people in a region, a society and in a country.

6.3. Suggestions to future studies and limitations

Future studies are recommended on Power balance in a PCP project which would help understand effects on public or private sector in case of imbalance. Further study is recommended on the importance of leadership and the organisational form of a PPP project. Also, sustainability issues can be studied in terms of a Public Private Partnership for regional or environmental and economic sustainability. It could be interesting to explore how digital technology can facilitate relationships and collaborations between the actors in social economy and the public sector.

This study is limited to: First, geographically since it was conducted only in two regions and the municipality of Uppsala in Sweden so the findings may not be accurately connected to other locations depending on external factors, norms, practices, and policies adopted. Second, the study was conducted with public sector organisations and the cooperative organisations coompanion and Mikrofonden (Microfinances) and its implications must not be relevant for other types of private companies. Third, the situation of corona pandemic has forced us for conducting few face-to-face interactions with the respondents and limited us to reach potential companies which could have been included to formulate a deeper study on the partnership between public and cooperative sector.



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