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**Conference Paper**

## Gendered Social Capital - A Case Study of Sports and Music Associations in Leksand and Rättvik, Sweden

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## **Gendered Social Capital – A Case Study of Sports and Music Associations in Leksand and Rättvik, Sweden**

### **ABSTRACT**

Civic engagement, measured in terms of aggregated data on e.g. membership of voluntary associations, is commonly used as an indicator of social capital. By way of taking a gender perspective and applying a qualitative method, this paper argues for the importance of nuancing between different contents of voluntary engagement, as these can have impact on the quality of social capital built. Uneven gender relations within and between associations are furthermore seen to have consequences for the power of built up networks to influence the officially promoted line of local development.

Earlier research has been able to establish a connection on an aggregated level between a lively participation in voluntary organisations and a flourishing economy. Little knowledge exists about the connection on the *individual* level, though, i.e. about the relationship between a person's engagement in the voluntary sector and his or her position on the labour market / in local business. This paper is concerned with gender aspects of this relationship. It is argued to be more common for men than for women that the engagement in a voluntary organisation is "interwoven" with the paid work or own business, in that for example networks built through the association membership are used in the own business.

Traditional gender roles within voluntary associations are put forward as one possible obstacle for the rejuvenation and supply of members in the future.

The empirical findings originate from a qualitative study in Leksand and Rättvik in Dalarna, Sweden, carried out within an EU research project on the role of social capital in rural development.

**Key words:** social capital, gender, voluntary work, sports and music associations, labour market, local business, local development

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# 1 Introduction

Earlier research has been able to establish a connection on an aggregated level between a lively participation in voluntary organisations and a flourishing economy. This has been explained in terms of dense, informal networks of civic engagement fostering norms of reciprocity and trust – i.e. social capital – which in turn facilitate co-operation and successful economic development. Engagement in voluntary work is thus commonly considered to be positive; influencing community building and economic life in favourable ways. The connection on the *individual* level, that is the relationship between engagement in the voluntary sector and position on the labour market/in local business has been less studied, though.

In this article we will critically examine the gender aspects of voluntary work. Hereby, we concentrate on gender differences within and among voluntary associations and on the connections between men's and women's roles in voluntary associations and positions on the labour market. The theoretical framework is centred around the concept of social capital and especially the gender dimensions of social capital.

The empirical findings originate from a qualitative study in the two municipalities of Leksand and Rättvik in the region of Dalarna, Sweden. The research was conducted within an EU research project on the role of social capital in rural development.<sup>1</sup> Some findings from other case study areas in this project, mainly the Finnish and Scottish, will also be referred to. The area of Leksand-Rättvik is characterised by a high degree of civic engagement in voluntary organisations, especially in sports and cultural associations.

The first aim of this paper is to illuminate gender differences in the types of voluntary engagement performed within selected sports and music associations. The second aim is to explore the gender aspects of networks related to these associations, and the power of the networks to influence the officially promoted line of development. Thirdly, the study focuses the relation between an individual's participation on a certain level within an association and position on the labour market or in local business life from a gender perspective. What are the advantages and what are the drawbacks? Finally, crucial aspects of the potential for voluntary work in the future are explored.

We aim to take the point of departure at the individual level because we find it meaningful to get a grip on people's voluntary engagement and its consequences through the use of qualitative interviews – but it is possible to lift this information to the society level in identifying certain practices and attributes related to an association or an activity.

## 1.1 Methodology

The main empirical base for the study is semi-structured interviews with 15 women and 11 men, carried out in Leksand and Rättvik in 2002. In a few cases, results from a questionnaire (purposive/non-random sample; 29 female and 24 male respondents) will also

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<sup>1</sup> The name of the EU research project, lasting 2001-2003, is "Restructuring in Marginal Rural Areas – The role of social capital in rural development" (RESTRIM). Besides Sweden, also Scotland, Ireland, Italy, Norway and Finland are research partners. The project is co-ordinated by Professor Mark Shucksmith, University of Aberdeen.

be referred to, which was made earlier in 2002.<sup>2</sup> The people who were interviewed were selected so they would be able to:

- 1) tell about participation and voluntary work within the realms of sports and music
- 2) talk from different levels within the organisations: for example in the trotting association in Rättvik 5 persons were interviewed, including the managing director, the secretary, the marketing manager and voluntarily engaged women in the Ladies Trotting Club
- 3) tell about the view of the role of voluntary work in local development; as key persons in the local authorities

The associations to which the interviewees' voluntary engagement is related are:

*sports associations:* Rättvik Trotting Association, Leksand Ice-hockey Association and Leksand Golf Club

*music associations:* Leksand Fiddling Association, Leksand Folkdance Association, Dalhalla (an open-air opera stage outside Rättvik), Bingsjöstämman (an annual fiddlers' rally outside Rättvik), Rättvik Dance Festival

Some complementary information about for example amount of members and board compositions was gathered directly from the associations.

## **2 The gendered aspects of social capital – a theoretical background**

Putnam (1993, 2000) claims that there is a correlation on an aggregated level between a lively participation in voluntary organisations and a flourishing economy. He thus relates the concept of social capital to the community level rather than to individuals: dense, informal networks of civic engagement are seen to foster norms of reciprocity and trust, which in turn facilitate co-operation and successful economic development of a community.

In contrast to Putnam's focus on the community level, Bourdieu (1977, 1991) regards social capital as an individual's resource, as a benefit accruing to individuals through participation in a group. According to Bourdieu, individuals struggle over resources and rewards, and their struggles are structured around their possession of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital (Shucksmith 2000). Bourdieu's interpretation thus holds that social capital is built as a source of personal power and that no accumulation of social capital is disinterested. This seems quite contrary to the view of social capital as a by-product of social activities, as something that benefits also inhabitants who are not included in networks themselves, but live in a community with dense networks. That view implies that social capital can develop out of altruistic actions (Putnam 2000; Coleman 1990; Warren 1999). Putnam (2000) claims altruism and philanthropy to be central measures of social capital. At the same time, though, he points out that social

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<sup>2</sup> The objectives of the questionnaire were to gather information on development priorities of different groups in Leksand-Rättvik, identify key development actors and to conduct an initial exploration of the role of networks in development. It was directed not only to persons holding key positions in the municipal government and local business, but also to people engaged in sports, cultural activities and village communities as well as to women working in the public sector.

capital is about networks of social connectedness – doing *with*, not doing *good* for other people.

In this article, we will consider both these views of social capital – as a source of personal power or as a by-product of social interactions which is beneficial for the whole community. We will do this by nuancing the civic engagement in terms of gender differences, differences between levels within an association and between associations.

There is a lack of research on social capital from a gender perspective. One of the few gender aspects which Putnam (2000) highlights is that informal social connectedness ('schmoozers') is more common among women, while formal community involvement ('machers') is more frequent among men. However, he argues, the entry of women into the paid labour force has shown that employment, not gender, is the primary key to formal community involvement (Putnam 2000:94). Still, informal social connections are much more frequent among women than men, regardless of their job and marital status. "*Women are more avid social capitalists than men*" (Putnam 2000:95).

Lowndes (2000) criticises Putnam and other social capital researchers of focusing disproportionately on male-dominated activities, like sports clubs, excluding associations where women are in majority, like health and social services. Furthermore, she claims that not only are female-dominated formal kinds of voluntary engagement disregarded in the social capital research; the social capital generated by women in the field of *informal* sociability is also left out in the academic debate. Her main example is the area of mothers' informal child-care networks (including baby-sitting, the 'school run', the fetching and watching of children in club activities) – networks that are certainly characterised by mutuality and reciprocity.

Here, we would like to argue that not only have female-dominated formal voluntary associations as well as informal networks been neglected in the social capital literature. The gender differences in *roles* within associations, as well as in personal benefit for the position on the labour market derived from the voluntary engagement and in power to influence the course of local development have also been disregarded.

### **3 The importance of place for voluntary commitment**

Generally in Sweden, people in small towns and especially rural areas are more voluntarily engaged than those in large cities (Jeppsson Grassman & Svedberg 1999).

In our interviews the regionally established tradition of participating in associations and other kinds of voluntary engagement is often put forward. Rättvik and Leksand, but also Dalarna as a county, "should" be known as places where there is a strong will to engage in local development work and association life. The reasons put forward have to do with the historical peasant society, land ownership patterns and old traditions of village democracy.

*MARTIN: The old peasant society has, silently, continued to exist and brought people up...yes, it lives on, its spirit of helping each other...  
(Martin, chairman of Leksand Fiddling Association)*

The municipal government commissioner of Rättvik relates the question of voluntary engagement to land ownership, claiming people's commitment to be larger in areas where the peasants traditionally owned their land, than in an area in the northern part of the municipality, where the land was bought from the peasants by an iron works in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Similarly, in the Finnish case study area of Sotkamo farmer-based networks, based on traditions of co-operation, are still important, even though the economic role of the agricultural sector has decreased. The sense of local identity, connected with the peasant relationship to place and the ownership of land-properties give continuity to the farmer-based networks (Lehto & Oksa 2003).

Several of the interviewees in Leksand and Rättvik relate the voluntary engagement to the old tradition of village associations, *byalag*. Still, in almost every village – in Leksand we can find 80 villages – there is a village association. Traditionally, the villages were rather independent, and the gathering of *byalag* functioned as a kind of direct democracy. Village issues were discussed, decisions made, and maintenance and building work was carried out on a voluntary, community basis. We have not been studying these organisations closely but earlier research shows that today it is possible to find a “scale” of modern activities (between and within the associations) ranging from arranging parties to trying to affect changes in the village concerning for example the local shop or day care, in particular and the municipal strategies concerning local development in general. Maybe it could be said that the old kind of voluntary engagement related to the village associations has been transformed into modern forms, like engaging in the son's ice-hockey association or the daughter's horse riding club.

*MARTIN: It is not unusual, even if I don't think it occurs to a high extent that children join and help rake together, for example; it is rather the adults. But the children know that the parents are there and they get “reared” into that you for example go to the village house and help bake*

*(Martin, chairman of Leksand Fiddling Association)*

There is a parallel between the tradition of village associations in Leksand-Rättvik, rooted in a peasant society, and the crofting tradition in the Scottish case study area of Skye and Lochalsh. Árnason & Lee (2003) argue that crofting has provided small communities there with “networking tools”: a need for co-operative labour, a strong meeting and committee structure and deeply embedded social relationships. The economic importance of crofting, as well as of farming in Leksand-Rättvik in Sweden and Sotkamo in Finland has decreased, and are yet of importance as *symbols* or representations of a valued style of communal or co-operative working. These symbols can then help mobilise or illustrate how rural development might work in the future (Árnason & Lee 2003).

Another kind of argument put forward for the voluntary engagement in Leksand and Rättvik relates to the size of place in general, rather than to specific assets in this area. In a small place, the openness between people is claimed to be larger than in large cities, where it is more anonymous. This means that people are more inclined to help each other without money having to be involved. People will also rather be asked to join an association in a small place. This could also mean that the “moral pressure” to join is larger than in a city. One interviewee puts forward that the municipal government commissioner does not write that “now this piece of land has to be cleared for to save the lake view of the village”; instead he just takes his saw and starts to cut the bushes himself, thus encouraging others to join voluntarily as well.

## 4 Gender differences in roles within and between voluntary associations

In this section we will, from a gender perspective, explore the hierarchical aspects within the studied associations and differences between the associations.

Even though the share of women in Sweden carrying out some kind of voluntary work (50% in 1998) hardly differs from the share of men (53%) (Grassman & Svedberg 1999), there are large gender differences concerning both the roles within the associations and the type of associations engaged in. Generally in Sweden, within voluntary associations men to a higher extent than women hold board positions and carry out leadership and education tasks than women, who more frequently work with information, opinion shaping, gathering money and direct help (Stark & Hamrén 2000). Also in Britain, men are more likely than women to occupy committee posts (Lowndes 2001).

In terms of active participation, sports associations dominate the voluntary sector in Sweden. Men are more engaged than women, though, who in turn are overrepresented in social organisations (Stark & Hamrén 2000). This gender difference exists in other countries as well; for example in Britain, twice as many men as women undertake voluntary work related to sports and recreation, while women are more active in the fields of health, education and social services (Gaskin & Smith 1995, in Lowndes 2001). Yet this does not mean that the female engagement in social services is as large in Sweden as in other countries. On the contrary: the main difference between the voluntary sector in Scandinavia and in other Western countries is that in Scandinavia, it is relatively weak in the areas of social services, health care and education of children, and strong in sports, leisure, culture, education of adults and the labour market (Rothstein 2000:39).

The voluntary engagement in Leksand-Rättvik is directed mainly towards sports and cultural associations. Referring to the results from the interview study, we will begin by discussing the gender roles within some sports associations.

### 4.1 Voluntary sports associations in Rättvik and Leksand – “management by gender segregation or...?”

Erik, the chairman of the board of Leksand Ice-hockey Association says that around 1000 persons are voluntarily engaged; at the matches of the elite team (standing in the kiosks, on the parking etc) and around the boys' teams (taking care of equipment, helping at matches, selling lotteries etc). He estimates the share of women among these 1000 persons to be around 40%.

*ERIK: If you look at stewards, there are a lot of women; they have their children playing in the teams and they make coffee, they stand in the kiosks...*

*(Erik, chairman of the board of Leksand Ice-hockey Association)*

Since a few years, there is also a female junior ice-hockey team as part of the ice-hockey association, with female leaders involved. However, neither this nor the share of women engaged voluntarily is reflected in the gender distribution in the boards of the association. The main board consists only of men. Asked about the composition of the board, the chairman says he has been working on getting a good “mixture”, in which he has succeeded:



*ERIK: You know I have been working a bit on this. There is someone in the board from the tourism sector, some from large firms; there are entrepreneurs, banks, insurance companies, the information sector..., so we have a very good mix. A very good board (Erik, chairman of the board of Leksand Ice-hockey Association)*

To the chairman, a good “mixture” does thus not have to do with both genders being represented, only with a variety of businesses.

Among the tasks which the chairman associates with the women working voluntarily in the ice-hockey association, traditional, rather simple ones like coffee-making seem to dominate. However, as Stark & Hamrén (2000) point out, women in the voluntary sector often have positions with less power and yet larger responsibility than men. Lotta, the interviewed woman who organises the junior ice-hockey teams’ cups is an example of this. She says that the responsibility is large, and that there is a lot of work which no-one sees; “*they really don’t understand how much time I have to spend on this*”. She is member of a board further down in the hierarchical structure of the association, in the “youngsters’ committee”. There are totally 2 women and 11 men in this committee.

Also the main board of Leksand Golf Association consists mainly of men: 9 out of 11. Christina, the interviewed woman in the organisation works voluntarily mainly at the competitions. She is member of a board further down in the hierarchy, the “competition committee”. There are totally 2 women and 6 men in it. She says that female representation in the boards is very important, as women have other demands than men (not least for physiological reasons) on for example length of the golf track. If there are no women in the boards, there is a risk that these demands are disregarded.

*CHRISTINA: Often it can be rather so-so with the distribution (of men and women). The men think, well the “hags” should not have anything to say. But it is necessary for the sake of the ladies, well for the whole competitions, that both parts are represented (Christina, voluntarily engaged in Leksand Golf Association)*

The Trotting Association in Rättvik is a non-profit organisation with the character of a company with employees but it also contains some other “under-associations” and voluntary work. The “Ladies Trotting Club” was founded about twenty years ago. The fact that the Ladies Trotting Club is a pronounced sex segregated organisation should not be seen as a reaction towards the very male dominated trotting sport. The set up of the club was more a result of some women’s interest in horses and their will to “do something” for the sport. It is thus an example of a more altruistic way to engage for the best of a collective, but it is built upon a personal interest. They knew about another Ladies Club at a neighbouring trotting arena and thought it was possible to set up a similar association. The aim of the club, as it was pronounced in the beginning, is to “increase the cheerful atmosphere at the trotting track” and to “give something to the sport”.

*EVY: /.../ There were so many things we thought we could do and we were very optimistic; that we could stand by for the trotting. And they still think it is very good that they have us to get back to if they want some help (Evy, Ladies Trotting Club)*

This aim can be seen as a traditional female aim – to take care of what is public or collective - but there are also other points in being only women. When asked if it would be possible to let men into the club it is not considered as an alternative. If meetings and arrangements should be mixed, it would end up with “us serving them”:

*EVY: /.../ if there would be chaps in the club then we would fall back to this “we women shall fix things”. Chaps wouldn’t make the coffee or take the bread out or clear the table. Now we share those things*

*(Evy, Ladies Trotting Club)*

Regarding male-dominated boards of sports associations, it is likely that existing networks are reproducing existing structures which means that a board with a majority of men probably will think in certain terms, and even the women are culturally belonging to a discourse that favours some masculine attributes:

*MONIKA: /.../(about selecting persons for the main board of the trotting association:) It could be a capable and pushing person. Doesn't have to be a self-employed, but it should be someone who has done something where you think that, well he is a good guy. You look a bit at what they have done before and that they maybe are used to sit in a board  
(Monika, the Ladies Trotting Club)*

One of the tasks of the Ladies Trotting Club is to get sponsors to their own "day" at the Rättvik Trotting, but also to find sponsors that are more regular. This means that the trotting association has an income but also that the firms that advertise at the trotting track, are mentioned in the price ceremony etc. can have better business. When the role of the Ladies Trotting Club is discussed with the manager (m), the market responsible (m) and the head secretary (f) this aspect of the work of the Ladies Club is not discussed at all. What is stressed is the character of the organisation as women who "always are willing to help out" and are doing a good job.

*ROLF: "/.../ The Ladies Club is a very good association to co-operate with, very creative and often willing to help out, I would dare to claim always. There are other associations related to our activities which live in a much more anonymous climate and definitely dedicate themselves to wrong things  
(Rolf, manager of the trotting association)*

Even though women are directly involved in economic activities – like in this case getting sponsors for the trotting association – they are not reckoned as a part of the "higher levels" in the organisation, nor represented in the board of the trotting association, nor do they or the administrative people in the lead of the organisation connect them to economic contributions in their talk.

## **4.2 Differences in gender distribution in boards between large and small associations**

What about female representation in the boards of the studied cultural associations? In Leksand Fiddling Association, the board consists of 5 men and 2 women. However, there has been a recent period of female chairmanship of the board. In Leksand Folk Dance Association, there is a majority of women in the board: 5 out of 7.

It should be kept in mind that the difference between the studied sports and cultural associations in terms of total membership is large. While for example Leksand Ice-hockey Association has around 3200 members and Leksand Golf Association 1300, Leksand Fiddling Association has only around 100 members and Leksand Folkdance Association 80. In large associations the board often consists of persons not necessarily directly involved in the daily activities of the organisation; they rather have these positions as representatives of a certain business sector, for example. In these associations, it is usually on a hierarchically lower level that most of the voluntary work is done. This level contains rather traditional gender roles concerning the practical work, but could be seen as representing both men and women since both men and women are active here. The higher, board level includes mostly men.

In smaller associations, though, it is usually the members of the board who carry out most of the voluntary work. Martin, the interviewed present and Sofia, the former chairman of Leksand Fiddling Association bear witness to this. Sofia tells that when she asked the other fiddlers at a weekly training occasion whether the association should accept an offer to come and play at some event, everyone was usually positive. But then it was her tiring task to call everyone and try to convince them to actually come, because at that stage people were often not that interested any more.

Among the female respondents to the questionnaire, those who were members of some board turned out to be so mainly in non-commercial, rather small cultural but also sports associations. Among the male respondents, membership in boards of large associations was more common, including not only sports associations but also semi-commercial cultural events like annual dance and music festivals. The men were also engaged in several boards, while the women mostly only in one. Generally in Sweden, women hold hierarchically lower positions in associations than men, and in case they are members of committee boards, this is more typically in smaller associations (Stark & Hamrén 2000).

This would mean that in case women have formal power in an association, this usually does not entail power to delegate nor that the voluntary effort is restricted to the board meetings. Instead, in associations where women are typically board members, the position usually entails responsibility for many practical details in the associations' daily activities and a lot of personal contribution in terms of voluntary work.

Though often idealised, the voluntary sector is thus not free from uneven power relations, here manifested in gender differences in roles and influence within associations. As Stark & Hamrén (2000) put forward, it is difficult to get at these uneven relations through some kind of regulations from outside, as that would mean a *compulsion* put on the *voluntary* sector.

What implications do these gender differences in roles within the associations have for the range of networks that men and women are part of? Are there gender differences as to membership in networks which are "cross-sectional", i.e. stretching from the voluntary sector to other societal sectors like the business and municipal authority?

### **4.3 'Pluri-positionality' and cross-sectional networks – predominantly male phenomena?**

According to Johannisson (2002), the phenomenon of 'pluri-activity' is part of the new paradigm of rural economic development. It means that in entrepreneurial careers, periods as independent owner-managers are intertwined with for example employment in the public sector or involvement in a project in the voluntary sector. We would like to call the phenomenon 'pluri-positionality', meaning that different positions in the business, public and voluntary sector can be combined simultaneously, or follow after each other in time. Pluri-positionality seems to be a predominantly male phenomenon. Rolf, the manager of Rättvik Trotting Association, is one example. He was earlier the municipal Tourism Responsible. This helped him to get the job as head of the trotting association and it has also meant many advantages because of his earlier contacts and knowledge. The development of the trotting activities has been influenced by his way of

thinking in terms of tourism and development, and we can also find co-operation with other bodies affecting the work within the trotting activities.

Another example of pluri-positionality is a man who is self-employed in “building and tourism”, but has combined this work with chairmanship in an annual dance festival association and with employment at the municipality for to develop plans for a new business location area in Leksand. The chairman of the board of Leksand Ice-hockey Association also practices pluri-positionality. He has been the managing director of a large Swedish firm, and still has many board positions in the business sector. He says that he finds good use for his experience from the business world in the sports realm. Further, both his own network and the one of the managing director of the association, a former elite ice-hockey player, have expanded thanks to this “merging”:

*ERIK: He (the present managing director, former player) has provided me and I have provided him, so to say. We have interchanged our networks, simply. I have got his sports networks and he has got mine from the business world*

*(Erik, chairman of the board of Leksand Ice-hockey Association)*

There are female examples of pluri-positionality in our case study, but it is striking that it is limited to the voluntary and public sector, i.e. not including the business sector. One woman is employed at the Local Business Association in Leksand, and she is also politician and member of the board of the golf association and engaged in Rotary. However, in contrary to her male colleague, she has no positions in boards in firms. Similarly, the interviewed female business advisor, employed at the municipality of Leksand, is not engaged in any boards in the business sector. She says that “*the offers you get, they are not from banks or similar; those are the ‘uncles’ clubs’* “. She is engaged in some small voluntary associations, like the ladies’ football club, having no connection to her paid work.

Some of the interviewees point out that there is a quite small group of persons who appear in several official contexts in Leksand and Rättvik. One interviewee says that these same persons on different positions constitute a group of maybe 20, of which the majority is men.

#### **4.4 Cross-sectional networks influence the officially promoted line of development**

Lifting the question of individuals’ pluri-positionality up to the association level, we can see that more informal and formal networking occurs between large male-dominated sports associations, the municipal and business sector, than between smaller, cultural associations (with a stronger female element in the boards) and the other sectors. One form of semi-formal co-operation between the ice-hockey, the local business and the municipal authority in Leksand, with no similar examples for the case of cultural associations, is the “recruitment fairs”. When the elite ice-hockey team played in Stockholm, the business unit of the municipal authority in Leksand invited firms from Leksand to follow and take part in an exhibition outside the ice-rink.

Linda, the interviewed female member of the board of Leksand Folk Dance Association means that the municipality does not take enough advantage of her association’s marketing value. Dalarna and Leksand are famous for their folk dance traditions, and yet the municipality rather puts forward the ice-hockey in marketing contexts, she claims. When culture is used for marketing, it is rather seen as an accompanying element. For

example, a folk dance team has accompanied the ice hockey team and the local firms to the match in Stockholm, and danced the typical midsummer dances around an artificial may-pole raised on the ice-rink.

Similarly, more informal and formal networking occurs among different sports associations, than between sports and cultural associations. Rolf, who is the manager of the Trotting Association, underlines the importance of personal contacts and networks in creating new businesses and new forms of cooperation. He mentions some important names (all male) that have been crucial for new directions in developing the activities connected to trotting. The examples he mentions are connected to ice-hockey, skiing and “classic cars”. Golf is another sport that is closely connected to the trotting. When it comes to events within the music/cultural sector the contacts are not so frequent – the cultural attributes are used in the prize ceremonies (women in traditional folk costumes), but cultural associations are not seen as economic partners.

*ROLF: Enormously important. Enormously important today. You build very much on relations, who it is that...whom you should talk to when it concerns hockey, or “Vasaloppet” (a historical ski competition), or “Classic Car”. Classic Car has a person called Roland Pettersson, who is very much connected to Classic Car. I think that my name is strongly connected to the trotting in Rättvik; Jonas Bergqvist to hockey, Mats Bud to “Vasaloppet”, or Rolf Hammar. It is enormously important*

*(Rolf, manager of Rättvik Trotting Association)*

Connections to certain key persons are not mentioned by the women from the Ladies Trotting Club. As they tell about the sponsors it is in the sense that finding a sponsor will give you “points”. Points are given for all kinds of voluntary achievements, and the more points you have gathered, the less you will have to pay yourself for to join the club’s journeys.

In the Finnish case study area of Sotkamo, we find similar dense networks between sports (in this case mainly baseball and skiing), the municipal and business sector (Lehto & Oksa 2003). Cultural, female-dominated associations do not have similar cross-sectional networking. The dense co-operation between the baseball company Super-Jymy Enterprise Ltd and the municipality in tourism marketing issues, even resulted in that the former took over the task to market the whole area of Sotkamo. The connections between Sotkamo tourist enterprises and the baseball is intensive. All the major enterprises in Sotkamo belong to the baseball VIP club. So in addition to having taken over the image-marketing of the municipality of Sotkamo, the baseball enterprise is networking various local and national enterprises together.

Networks which have a wide range, linking the business, municipal and voluntary sector can be assumed to have decisive influence on the officially promoted line of development. In Sotkamo in Finland as well as in Leksand in Sweden male-dominated, cross-sectional dense networks can be identified. These networks embrace the dominant development discourse, according to which sports (mainly baseball and skiing in the first case and ice-hockey in the second) play and should play an important role in local development. Even municipal representatives ascribe the ice-hockey a decisive role: their metaphor for Leksand is a millipede, where the head is the ice-hockey, the municipality the backbone and the local firms constitute the thousand feet (Tillberg Mattsson & Stenbacka 2003). An alternative, less powerful development discourse, according to which culture and services are important ingredients, appears embraced mainly by women in both Sotkamo and Leksand-Rättvik. In Sotkamo, investment in sport and

tourism have for a long time been highly prioritised in local development, something that the female-dominated cultural activists are critical against.

Even though the coalition in Sotkamo between sports and tourism could on one hand be seen as a cross-group solidarity, which is favourable for the building of social capital, there is thus also an element of polarised solidarity. The coalition seems to exclude non-elite, grass root sport clubs and cultural and village activists, among which are many women. In Leksand, it could be asked if there is a risk that the trust which is built between the ice-hockey, the business sector and the municipality becomes particularised, as an effect of the commercialisation and professionalisation of the sports. According to Uslaner (1999), only generalised trust can contribute to the building of social capital.

The uneven gender possibilities to influence the officially promoted line of development in Leksand-Rättvik are reflected in the questionnaire answers to the question of whether everyone has equal chances to influence development. While 12 out of 25 female respondents deny this, only 2 of 22 answering men do so.

## **5 The relation between voluntary engagement and paid work**

In this section, different qualities of relations between an individual's engagement in a voluntary association and labour market position are focused. One dimension of this relation could be the possibility to, with the help of the networks built through the voluntary engagement, find a (new) job. Another is the connection or lack of connection between the content of voluntary work engaged in and the present position on the labour market / in the local business life. Yet another aspect of this relationship has to do with questions of time and energy available for the individual to engage in both paid and voluntary work.

### **5.1 Voluntary engagement increasing paid job opportunities?**

Some of the female and male interviewees engaged on lower levels in the studied associations, for example the women in the Ladies Trotting Club and the male coach of a junior ice-hockey team, do not see any connections between their voluntary engagement and opportunities at the labour market. Others, however, engaged either on lower or higher levels, say that they think their engagement could lead to job offers. Lotta, who is in charge of junior ice-hockey cups in Leksand Ice-hockey Association says that because people there might see that "this is a good person; she gets things done", maybe she could be offered a job (she is studying at the moment). She meets so many different people in the association, working in such different contexts on the labour market. Anne, who runs a Taxi-business with her husband also means that it is possible that her engagement (in cultural associations and in politics) could be useful for her possibilities at the labour market. It has though not been tested yet.

*ANNE: I think so. When we have had a lack of work, then I have been thinking, I wonder what possibilities I would have on the labour market if I so to say would start knocking on and say that I am available. Yes, I think so, I think you establish those contacts. One realises; one wonders sometimes how some persons can sit on certain posts which one... It is a large safety net; no one falls out once you have come inside  
(Anne, leader of the music festival Bingsjöstämman)*

In some cases, the voluntary engagement in an association might lead to employment in that same organisation. One woman who earlier was self-employed and member of the board of the local business association is now employed there. The woman working voluntarily in a golf association was at the time of the interview probably going to be part-time employed at its office.

The other way around – the kind of paid work / own business engaged in and how it affects if and which positions in voluntary associations you are offered – has also been brought up in the interviews. To pick people for a board can be a very strategic choice. Some individual attributes are more attractive than others – and it will probably differ between different organisations. As we saw earlier, a mixture of persons holding high positions in different business sectors is aimed at in the case of the board of Leksand Ice-hockey Association. For the board of the trotting association, to have people from for example the building sector is highly valued because of the practical knowledge and contacts these can contribute with.

*MONIKA: Often it is maybe a self-employed or someone who has some skills, whom you pick for the board, because that is always good, /.../ it is horse owners... /.../but you have someone from the building sector, that is always good when we shall build something /.../ (Monika, the Ladies Trotting Club)*

## **5.2 Relation or non-relation between voluntary work and employment/own business**

Whether there is any direct connection between the kind of voluntary work engaged in and the present position on the labour market or in local business seems to be a question both of level within an association and of gender. Neither men nor women engaged on the lower levels in the studied associations have a direct connection between their engagement and their paid work/own business. On the board level, though, it is common that a person has been offered this position precisely because of his labour market position. The manager of the trotting association and the chairman of the board of the ice-hockey association are examples of this. On the other hand, a position on the board level and the networks built around it can be advantageous for a person's employment situation or own business. Gunnar, the interviewed chairman of the board of "Rättvik Dance Festival", an association that organises a yearly dance festival, is an example of a person having a more direct connection between his voluntary participation and his paid work. The contacts and knowledge about tourism issues he gets through his engagement in Rättvik Dance Festival he uses in his private business, a consultancy firm within "construction and tourism".

*GUNNAR: But this kind of voluntary engagement of course also creates contact surfaces for me and business opportunities..."*

The networks built and the knowledge of tourism gained thus increases his opportunities to get consultancy tasks. He has formal education in construction, not in tourism, but:

*GUNNAR: I have learnt very much about how tourism functions; without being educated, I know quite a lot.... All knowledge is perishables, and it is about having a circle of contacts, that is what I get, "social competence"*

*(Gunnar, chairman of the board of Rättvik Dance Festival)*

He says that he has "steered" his daily networks; "that is what you have to do to get things done." Before, he was member of a voluntary association which drew up plans for the construction of a "Lake Siljan Hall", a big event and conference hall in Tällberg.

At the time of the interview, he was employed as consultant by the municipality, making more detailed plans for that same hall.

Among the respondents to the questionnaire, a direct relationship between the paid work situation and the kind of voluntary work engaged in is more common among the men than the women. Men's participation on the labour market/business and voluntary sector seems more "woven together"; the engagement in a voluntary organisation and the paid work/own business becomes hard to separate. One example is the sponsors of the ice-hockey team, who are members of the so called "Gold Club" in Leksand Ice-hockey Association.

Is this phenomenon of fluid borders between paid and voluntary work only a question of level in the association and of how high the position on the labour market/business is? That is, do gender differences just reflect that men are overrepresented on higher positions on the labour market as well as in associations? What about women holding high labour market or business positions? From our data, we can just state that one of the few studied women who, as municipal business advisor, holds a high position on the labour market, is not engaged in boards in the voluntary nor business sector that are related to her paid job. She says that she has consciously tried not to engage in several boards related to the business sector, because if she gets very involved in them, she cannot any longer be a neutral, good business advisor. She is engaged in a ladies' football team, and says that she appreciates very much precisely that there is *no* connection to her paid job:

*\*Are there any persons in the football whom you also meet in your work?*

*THERESE: No, it is not, and that is wonderful. Then you are outside your job, so to say, and don't have to talk about job issues*

*(Therese, municipal business advisor)*

### **5.3 Voluntary engagement as arena for restoration from paid work**

Quite a different quality of relationship between the engagement in a voluntary activity and the paid job could be seen. It considers the stress restoration: the participation in voluntary work enabling individuals to "shut off" their paid work totally, helping them to restore and get new energy for to meet the demands of the labour market. Sofia, former chairwoman of Leksand Fiddling Association and full-time employed as social welfare secretary, says:

*SOFIA: No, my engagement in the fiddling association has nothing to do with my job. It is very different; it is another kind of communication. There you communicate through the music, through playing with others. At work, there you talk and solve problems and have a lot of writing work and a lot of social relations and so. The music gives me strength/.../ Though awake, you get an incredible rest.*

*(Sofia, former chairwoman of the board of Leksand Fiddling Association)*

Similarly, Therese, the business advisor, says that if one like her is engaged in an EU project, then "you are either burnt out or at least burnt". You have to have something else in life, which makes you shut off from work so that you can calm down:

*THERESE: My engagement in the ladies' football team, that is because I have to get another life, not just live in this (work) life. You have to interrupt the work with something totally different and to meet people who do not have similar thoughts as I have. Else you "get blinkers"*

*(Therese, municipal business advisor)*



From the restoration perspective, it is thus rather an advantage if there is no connection at all between the voluntary engagement and the paid work. That voluntary work could allow for network building which can be advantageous for the labour market position in terms of career or better business opportunities – that aspect becomes irrelevant. In the interviews, the restoration aspect was put forward mainly by women. As women in Sweden often have a larger total workload than men, being engaged in paid work and yet having the main responsibility for the domestic work, it might be assumed that the restoration aspect *is* even more important for women than men.

#### **5.4 Time restrictions on the combination of voluntary and paid work**

Yet another aspect of the relationship between voluntary and paid work is that they might be difficult to combine because of time restrictions. Little (1997:201) found that while women living in the British countryside are getting more involved in paid employment, they are still assumed to participate in voluntary work, which can be hard in terms of time-geographic conditions. In some cases, women's commitment to voluntary work left them no time to take a paid job. In our interviews, we found no examples of the latter. However, there are examples of women who have reduced their voluntary work because it becomes too hard to combine a large voluntary commitment with a demanding paid work. Sofia, Leksand Fiddling Association, says:

*SOFIA: It (the involvement in the fiddling association) has given so much; it has been great fun. Many great years. But now towards the end, it got to be more efforts than it gave me back. When it empties your own resources, you give and give a lot at your paid work too... Oh, many stones were unburdened when I quit this chairwomanship. It was a too heavy burden of responsibility lying on my shoulders. I have enough responsibility at my paid work...*

*(Sofia, former chairwoman of the board of Leksand Fiddling Association)*

Similarly, Therese, the business advisor, says that she had to quit the chairwomanship in a horse riding club because there isn't time to engage so much now that her paid work takes a lot of time.

### **6 The future of voluntary engagement**

Putnam (2000) is concerned about the diminishing voluntary engagement among Americans, leading to a declining social capital. What crucial aspects for the degree and direction of future voluntary work can be identified in our case study?

Several of the interviewees, both female and male and both in cultural and sports associations, express that it has become increasingly difficult to get people voluntarily engaged, and that they are worried about the future of activities relying on voluntary work. When you constantly have to "nag" at people about please helping out, then it becomes a compulsion, that is the contrary to "voluntariness". At the same time it is underlined, mainly by the interviewed municipal representatives, that more voluntary work is needed in the future. The municipalities will not be able to provide all the services they do today, facing an ageing population.

## 6.1 From fixed to fluent engagement?

There is a lack of young people in the examined associations. In the studied fiddling and folkdance associations, people in their 50s dominate. One woman says that “we have lost a generation” and the reason is that the engaged people in their 50s and 60s have been satisfied within their own age-segregated networks. Their children have usually grown up, so there is more time left to engage voluntarily. Retired persons seem not so common as expected. One interviewee says that his experience is that pensioners, though having a lot of time, never have time to join things – “they have learnt to say no”.

One claimed reason for the difficulties to get people engaged in traditional voluntary work, carried out on a regular basis, is that many kinds of *paid* work today are more and more project-orientated, demanding a lot of creative thinking and working long days. This makes less energy being left for voluntary work.

*ROLF: This is the problematics, for your and my generation. We don't have the scope to work voluntarily in these associations. Today, you are expected to be engaged in your children's associations, in school, you should be active here and there. I see today in association life – look at the old heritage association, 55+ isn't enough, it is 65+ or 70+. Who takes care of the old heritage association in ten years? Who arranges these activities? Who arranges the “culture walks” in Rättvik next year or in ten years? We don't have time to devote to these voluntary jobs. It has to be changed in society, but it is a big problem. Enormously much is handled on voluntary basis in the tourism sector, but those born in the 1960s and later do not have the time that those born in the 1940s and 1930s have. We should be aware of it, it will come. Will people call for the municipality then, or for the state? It will come, it's just that it is 10-15 years ahead.*

*(Rolf, manager of Rättvik Trotting Association)*

Rolf means that less time is available for younger generations to engage in traditional activities relying on voluntary efforts. Besides more modern forms of voluntary work, like helping out in ones children's organised leisure activities, engagement might have become more directed towards activities of personal hobby interest and towards the nearest surroundings – a shift from a collective to an individual focus?

Wijkström (1998a) uses the term “new” volunteers and means that there is a tendency among certain Swedish organisations to “recruit volunteers for more limited assignments and projects”. The consequence is that the relationship between an organisation and its volunteers could be characterised as a contract rather than a traditional membership. Maybe, he argues, such a relationship could be more suitable for the participation of the people of today: “*Without committing oneself to all the different activities or to the more administrative chores of the association, it is possible for a person to focus on the particular task or fields in which he or she is interested*” (Wijkström 1998a:65). This may explain why the engagement in Dalhalla at concert nights is so popular, and why it is said to be easy to get people work voluntarily at the elite ice-hockey matches. The tasks are specific and it is easy to take the role of a parking guard, a waitress or a concert hostess for one evening.

Such a trend towards more flexible engagement, related to a personal interest, seems difficult to combine with the expectations from the side of municipal authorities for parts of public services, performed on a regular basis, to be taken over by voluntary workers in the future.

## 6.2 Traditional gender roles preventing rejuvenation of voluntary associations?

The wish within an association for continuity and a not decreasing (hopefully increasing) member force is non-disputable. But what about critical self-examination within the organisations? In the Ladies Trotting Club the unwillingness to participate is explained by the young women's hectic life and problems with for example child care and full-time working. But another side of the coin is the character of the organisation. Are young women of today really interested in serving a male dominated organisation like the Trotting association – as the purpose of the Ladies Trotting Club is – as a parallel task besides their own personal well-being? Even though the activities within the club are highly appreciated:

*“We know that they [the men within the Trotting Organisation and the Board of the organisation] think we are doing a good job”*

*“The Ladies Club is always willing to help out”*

*“Their work is appreciated”*

But could it be so that younger women are not satisfied in being seen upon as a service club, even though it is really important? They are maybe looking for engagement in more gender equal forms?

The role of the Ladies Trotting club has to be self-reflecting, this is underlined both by the “outsider” and non-engaged manager of the trotting association and by the women engaged in it. Rolf, the manager of the trotting association, points out that the women in the Ladies Club get older and older, and that there are problems to recruit young ones.

But the role of the “mothering” (or in this case “fathering”) organisation may also be taken under consideration. The question of female influence can not only be about getting the women to the races in arranging “women's evenings” and to get them engaged in the Ladies Club, but could also be seen as important in the whole structure of the organisation.

A study in Skellefteå in Sweden showed large differences in what was expected from girls and boys in junior sports associations. The expectations on the girls' sports results were low, while the expectations on their voluntary contribution in the associations were high. The opposite was the case for the boys (Sveriges Ungdomsprojekt 2000, in Stark & Hamrén 2000).

Traditional, uneven gender relations which are built into the structure of voluntary associations might thus be hindering rejuvenation of members, and consequently challenges the conditions for traditional associations to function in the future.

## 6.3 Commercialisation – threatening the will to engage voluntarily?

Both the trotting and ice-hockey associations face the difficult balance between commercialisation and professionalisation on the one hand, and voluntary work on the other.

*ROLF: /.../ we are a branch today. Many are employed /.../ The balance between the necessary businesslike and the voluntary work - that is the difficulty for us today and in the future. Before, it was enormously much on a voluntary basis, but today there is so much money in the horse sports, so it is not possible to develop on a voluntary basis. And this is a difficulty; the Ladies Club as a voluntary organisation, strongly connected here;*

*then you have the necessary businesslike which we work with, companies, arrangements, sponsors, we take fees, entrance fees/.../ what it costs to enter here in contrast to the voluntary efforts. That is the difficulty. We are in the midst of it.*

*(Rolf, manager of Rättvik Trotting Association)*

In the Finnish case study area of Sotkamo, the increasing commercialisation and professionalisation of baseball has brought about tensions between the earlier voluntary work and the new orientation towards money-oriented entertainment. The tendency of seeing the voluntary activities of sports clubs as part of the local economic activity has been partly criticised by women. They mean that before sports became business, they participated eagerly in voluntary work (Lehto & Oksa 2003).

There might thus be a danger that the commercialisation of sports, which can have *direct* positive effects on the local economy, has long-term negative effects on the building of social capital (commonly seen as having *indirect* positive economic effects).

#### **6.4 The importance of place for future voluntary engagement**

Some of those interviewees who related the large voluntary engagement in Leksand-Rättvik to the old peasant society, whose spirit of mutual help is seen to still influence people's attitudes and behaviour, express fear that this same spirit is declining. Similarly, in the Scottish case study area the decrease in crofting agricultural activity may be undermining the symbolic power of crofting as characterised by sharing and co-operation. This decline can in turn be undermining the effectiveness of previously existing networks, like those of referrals amongst Bed&Beakfasts (Árnason & Lee 2003).

However, there are also more positive views on the future of voluntary work expressed by our interviewees. It is put forward that a probable development is that less services will be provided by Swedish municipalities in general in the future. Facing such a development, rural areas like Rättvik and Leksand are in advantage precisely because they have a tradition of large voluntary commitment – it is their strength. It is also so that small places, especially villages in rural areas, already get less public services. Thus, their inhabitants are used to arrange things on their own.

## **7 Concluding discussion**

A critique to earlier research is that civic engagement, as an indicator of social capital, is commonly treated on an aggregated level, which does not allow for to differentiate it according to content and roles. Putnam (2000) measures civic engagement with the help of, among other indicators, attendance to clubs and membership of associations. We would like to argue that when thus no distinction is made between for example monthly attendance to a Rotary board and the weekly gathering of clothes and money for the Red Cross, important differences as to the quality of social capital built are disregarded.

A platform for studying civic engagement in voluntary associations is the knowledge of the different roles which can be performed in connection to an association. We have found the following five forms of “using” the associations and their activities, and what makes it complicated is that one association can be used for all these practices but with differences among different persons. It is thus not meaningful to try to characterize an

organisation according to prevailing practices – more accurate would be to talk in terms of different practices within the “association life” as a whole.

***Association practices:***

- 1) *An arena where you perform a special activity (you play the fiddle on Tuesdays but you do not work selling lotteries or as parking guard)*

This practice is often wrongly denoted as voluntary work. Both men and women perform this association practice. The impression from the interviews is that this kind of practice, differently from the voluntary work, is not in the fear of decreasing. There are seldom direct connections between this practice and the labour market position; the prevailing relation might be the restoration aspect, i.e. the performed activity allows for to “shut off” the paid work and gain new energy.

- 2) *An arena where you work voluntarily; continuously or more 'ad hoc'*

This practice is in larger associations found mainly on the grass roots level, while in smaller associations it is common among the board members. Both women and men are found here. The practices are often characterised by traditional gender roles; especially in the case of lower levels in large associations. The networks which are built from this kind of practice are seldom beneficial for a person's labour market position or private business. On the contrary, there is usually no connection at all between the content of the voluntary work performed and the individual's paid work.

We would like to argue, though, that the kind of social capital derived from this practice is the one most corresponding to the view of social capital as developed out of altruistic actions, as a by-product of social interactions that benefits the whole community (a view embraced by for example Putnam 2000; Coleman 1990; Warren 1999). Anyone can join this kind of practice; in contrast to the board level of large, semi-commercial associations you do not have to have a large stock of individual social and cultural capital beforehand to be allowed to enter. This lack of “entering restrictions” means that the mixture of people's background will be larger. We find people with high and low education and labour market positions here. The trust built can therefore be assumed to be more generalised (embracing people who have different backgrounds and values) than the trust built within the networks on the board level in large associations. This practice, both the content of the voluntary work and the kind of social capital built from it, is assumed to have spill-over effects which benefit the community as a whole.

However, there is a trend towards more 'ad hoc' engagement, at the cost of regular commitment. For example, the post of the secretary in the studied fiddling association was recently vacant for some months; something that has not happened earlier. This shift might reflect an individualisation of society, a characteristic of modernity. It might change the prerequisites mainly for small, non-commercial associations to function in the future.

There is also the question about the future of voluntary work that is characterised by traditional gender roles. Generational shifts are needed within the organisations but a possible problem is that the traditional gender roles prevent rejuvenation of the member force.

3) *An arena where you have a high position (in a board etc.) without being employed*

In larger associations, this practice is dominated by men. A direct connection to the labour market position is most likely to be found in relation to this practice. It can be that a person got the position in the board precisely because of his labour market position. On the other hand, the board position can give advantages in terms of career opportunities on the labour market, and the network built can be used in the own business. This practice is often interwoven with the person's labour market practice, making the voluntary engagement and paid work difficult to separate.

We would like to argue that the kind of social capital related to this practice is more often built on particularised trust, than the one built on the grass root levels. The networks related to this practice are often excluding in terms of gender (commonly male-dominated), but also in terms of class and probably ethnic background. The individual, beforehand gained cultural and social capital is often decisive for the chance to get into this practice and its related networks. The kind of social capital built through this practice corresponds rather to the view of social capital as an individual's resource (Bourdieu 1977, 1991). Personal economic benefit and power can be gained through the networks built from this practice.

4) *As a place for employment. Can be a high or low position: the head of an organisation or a caretaker*

Many voluntary associations have also employed staff. There are examples in our interviews of persons who combine this employment with voluntary work in the same association, while others have a voluntary commitment only in other organisations. Persons practising 'pluri-positionality' can be seen to change between periods as employed on high levels in associations, for example as managing director or sales officer, and employment or own business in the private sector.

5) *As a platform for business contacts, you are a "visitor" and for example invite your business clients to an ice-hockey match*

Several of the interviewees tell about the ice-hockey matches, the trotting competitions and the golf as places where you bring people with whom you have business contacts. In the Finnish case study area, the Katinkulta Spa Hotel and its sports activities, like golf, have brought together the local elite and visitors to Sotkamo. It can thus be said that the associations' activities act as "platforms" for informal business contacts, for the sustaining and strengthening of business-related networks. A precondition for these platforms to function is the voluntary work performed on the grass roots level.

We would like to agree with Shucksmith (2000) in his critiques against the treatment of social capital as a collective good in theories of endogeneous development. This "*masks the way in which these assets are appropriated by those who individually already have social and cultural capital*" (Shucksmith 2000:6). The social capital in a community must be nuanced as to the kinds of trust, generalised or particularised, that it is characterised by. In our case study area, there are examples of cross-sectional networks linking the voluntary, business and public sector. These networks *do* play an important role and are certainly one of the keys to the understanding of the relatively successful economic development of Leksand-Rättvik.

And yet, the existence of dense, cross-sectional networks *per se* should not be seen as automatic key to successful development in a broad sense, i.e. including non-economic aspects. On the contrary, there is a danger that such cross-sectional networks are excluding in terms of for example gender and class, and that they have a disproportionately large influence on the officially promoted line of development, suppressing alternative development discourses.

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Poistettu: ¶