



Arnova Conference Proceedings

In the context of the “Roles of Foundations” group, Ekkehard Thümler presented a paper on “Foundations as Pragmatic Entrepreneurs: Patterns of Philanthropic Strategies for High Social Impact”. His contribution focused primarily on the capability of foundations to cope effectively with social problems despite their comparatively small resources. In brief words, the results generated by CSI’s “Strategies for Impact” project suggest that foundations solve problems effectively if, in a dynamic process, they succeed in creating a coherent fit between problems, programmes, players and resources. In this process, it is possible for foundations to compensate their disadvantage in terms of small resources by a ‘door-opener function’: they grant their target groups access to highly demanded resources of different kinds (e.g. information, legal status, access to labour market) which are, however, not their own.

Björn Schmitz contributed a paper on “Organizational Hybridity and Hybrid Organizations Typology” in the “Innovation in Hybrid Nonprofit / Forprofit Social Enterprises” group led by Prof. Gemma Donnelly-Cox. Based on the rather confusing use of the term “organizational hybridity”, which paraphrases the combination of socio-ecological and economic elements within organizations. His contribution proposed a cube model allowing it to distinguish three dimensions of organizations according to their width and depth of hybridity. These research activities are based on the assumption that no organization whatsoever can do without the inclusion of economic as well as social elements. In a further step, this approach develops an ideal type of hybridity by means of the descriptive cube model. All further research activities at the Centre for Social Investment concerning hybridity will be based on this model.

Finally, Prof. Dr. Andreas Schröer, senior fellow at the CSI, presented his paper on “The Role of Foundations in a Shared Power World: European case studies on Foundations” within the „International Philanthropy and Foundations” group. He discussed the activities of foundations as political players in the theoretical context of a policy-cycle model.

The conference contributions covered a remarkably wide range of contents, methods and geographical perspectives. Our overall impression is that a major part of the papers, especially those presented by our American colleagues, were of a rather empirical nature and that an interest in theory as well as theoretically informed concept formation and reflection played a comparatively small role – both with respect to the design of research plans and the development of theoretical concepts. Furthermore, the frequent application of genuinely economic terminology and the predominance of mostly application oriented issues stood out throughout the conference.

In this situation, an important additional contribution by the European third sector and non profit research might consist in providing a point of view based on social and or-

ganizational theory in order to take an ideologically critical, theoretically informed and interdisciplinary organized perspective on the field. This perspective, we believe, would be more adequate in describing the multi-dimensional character, endogenous functioning and often contradictory nature of our object of research. Moreover, we would like to encourage a reflection upon methods in terms of different research approaches complementing each other. This would make it possible to classify research results and their relative status within the third sector research field. Meanwhile, the dialogue between different research conceptions in places such as the international ARNOVA conference and its proceedings contribute enormously to such a development.