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# **Ethnography – a re-search journey in practice, academia and beyond**

**Malin Gawell, Södertörn University**



- To me, research is a constantly ongoing journey
- It is a journey with mixed modes
- I am fully aware that research in general is done also in many other ways, and thereby research contributes with diverse types of knowledge

# First phase: Engagement and action in the field

- A journey can start from different destinations and take different tracks
  - In my case, in practice – through a voluntary engagement in a NPO
  - which led me to personal meetings with e.g. refugees - and what they told me about their journeys
  - it also lead to a journey across continents – and new personal meetings ‘in the field’ and stories from people in and from fields I could only image
- Processing phase - based on approximately five years action-based-observations



# Next phase: Academia I (partly overlapping)

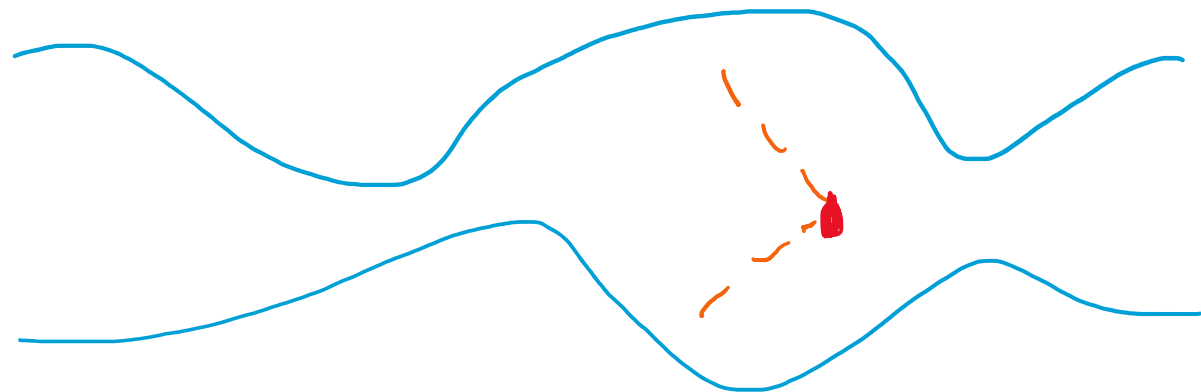
- Search for more knowledge and a platform for further engagement
- Based on 'how to start, develop and run' ventures => business administration
- A new 'field' with specific language, practice and a discourse growing in strength
  - my nonprofit experience provided me with an alternative perspective
- Bachelor thesis: Enterprises' response to changes in Lithuania (1992/93)
  - a way to 're-connect' business/management to a non-mainstream context
- Transformed conclusions => Entrepreneurship, organisations and (regional) development as a framework

# Next phase: Policy development

- Infrastructure and policies ‘in the field’ in focus
  - Through policy practices and policy development-in-action
  - Different factors and different levels of analyses
  - Increased complexity - but also increased sense of lack of ‘depth’
  - What I found to be the most interesting issues was not considered to ‘measurable’
- A wish to ‘go deeper’

# Next phase: Academia II

- Research education
  - to study entrepreneurship, but not necessary mainstream entrepreneurship
  - reconnected to 'prior' field(s) partly through teenaged niece and nephew
- Entrepreneurship in the nonprofit sector and an academic search for understanding
- A framework based on theories on social movements, entrepreneurship as becoming and organizing





## Activist Entrepreneurship

Attac'ing Norms and Articulating Disclosive Stories

Malin Gawell



Doctoral Thesis in Business Administration at Stockholm University, Sweden 2006

# Activist Entrepreneurship

Attac'ing Norms and Articulating Disclosive Stories

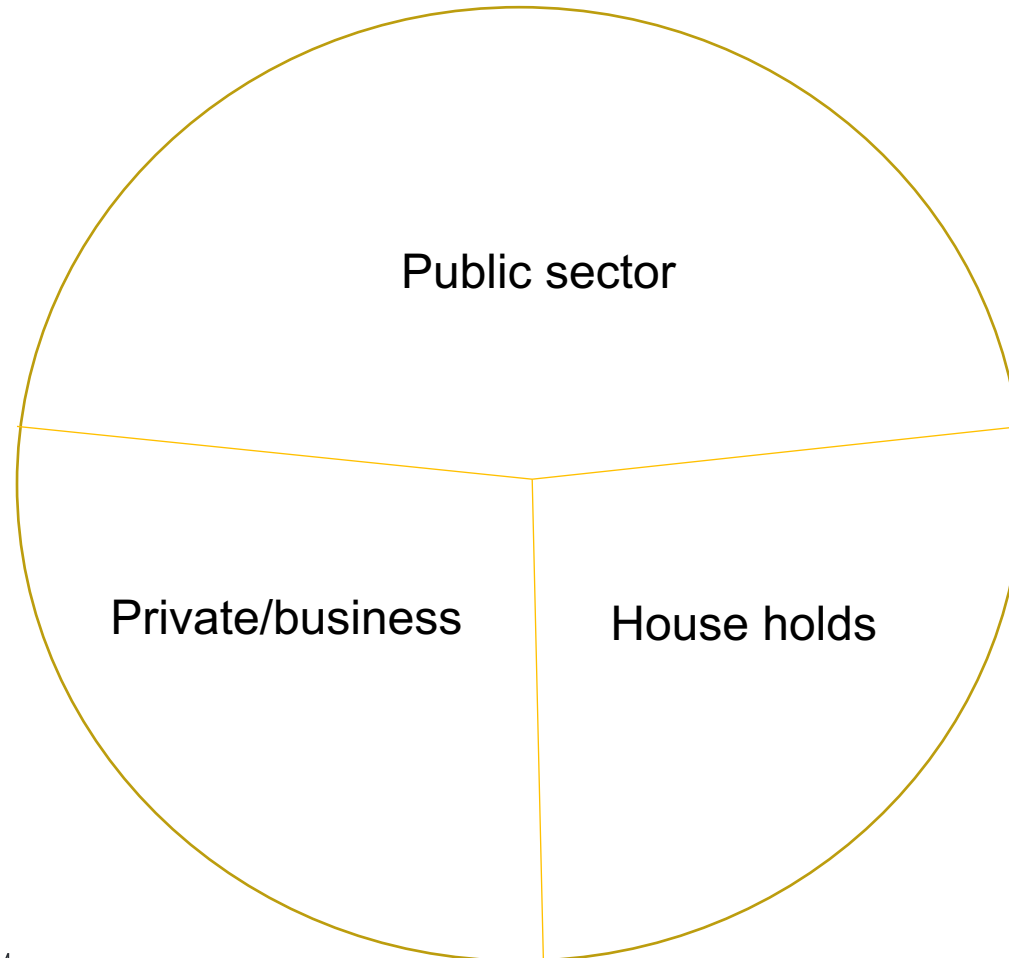
Fil.dr. Malin Gawell (2006)



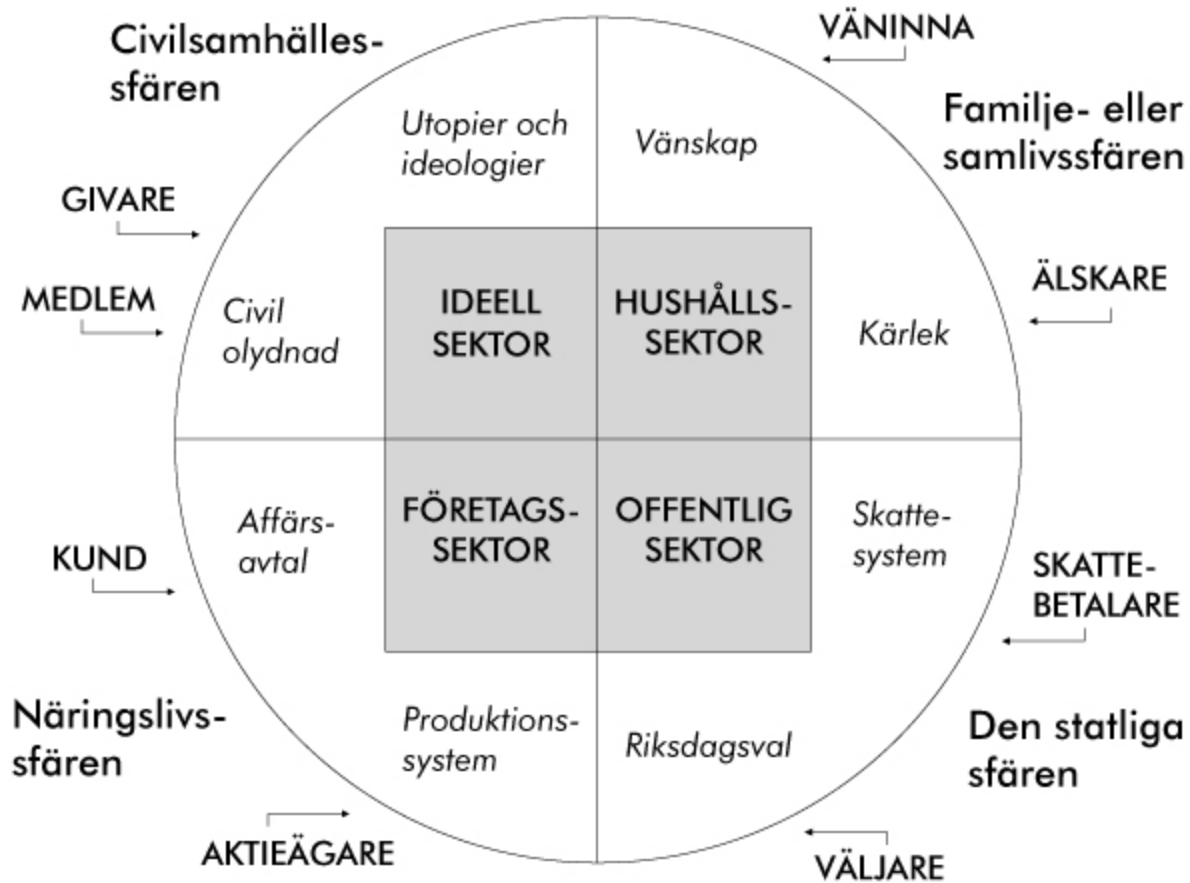
# Academia III, IV, V, VI...

- Social entrepreneurship, social enterprises and civil society
  - Portfolio of > 200 cases with different depth
- In relation to marginalized groups (working methods and role in society)
  - Försöken att finna de fungerande sätten [Attempts to find working ways]
- In relation to entrepreneurship and civil society policies and discourses
  - SE grounded in needs, opportunities and/or perceived necessities?
- In relation to (changing) welfare structures
  - Social entrepreneurship a construct of a liberal welfare regime?

# Sectors according to National Accounts

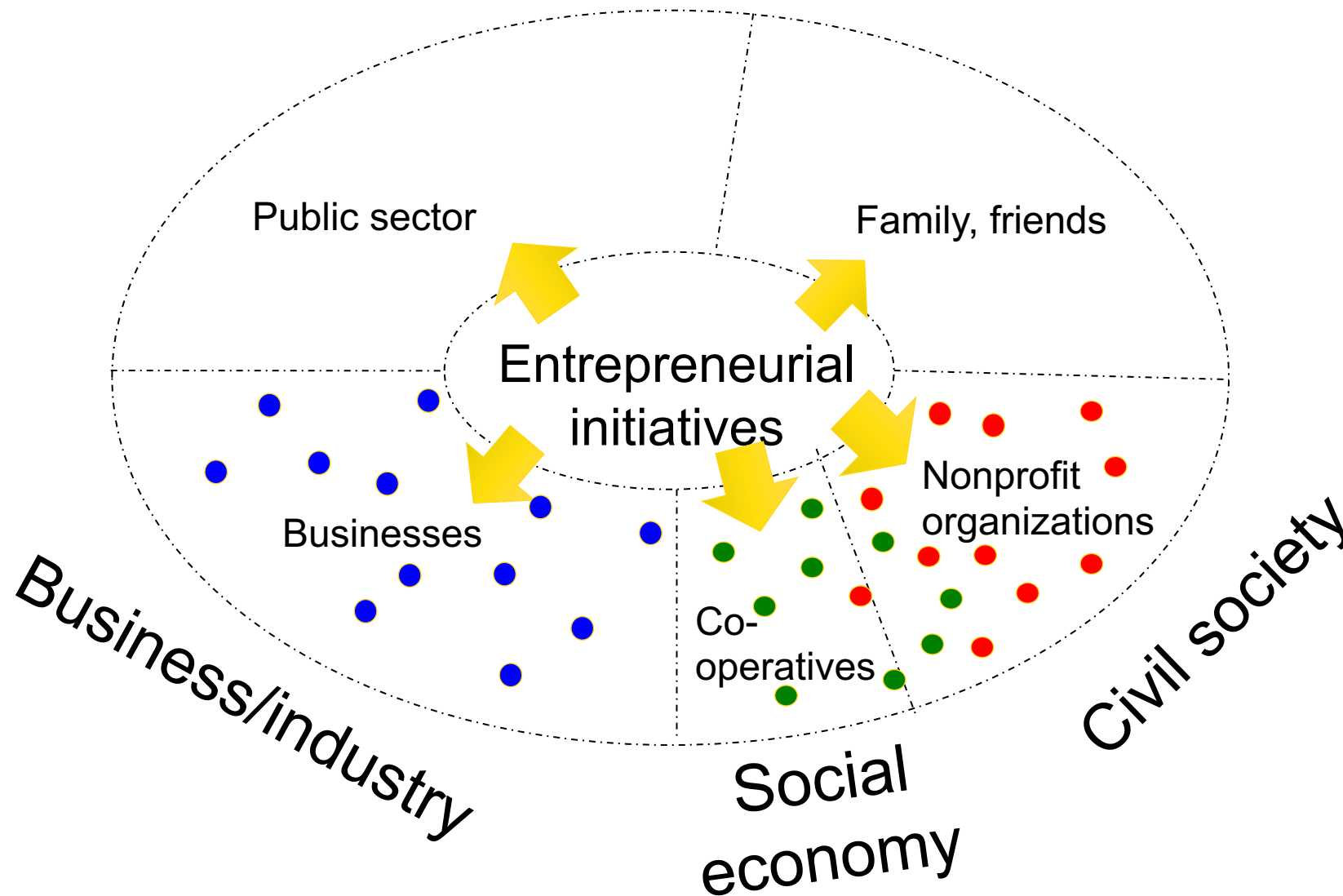


Reactions from nonprofit perspectives  
=> Satellite account for statistics  
on nonprofit organizations: UN



Figur: Wijkström och Lundström 2002 *Den Ideella Sektorn* Stockholm: Sober Förlag

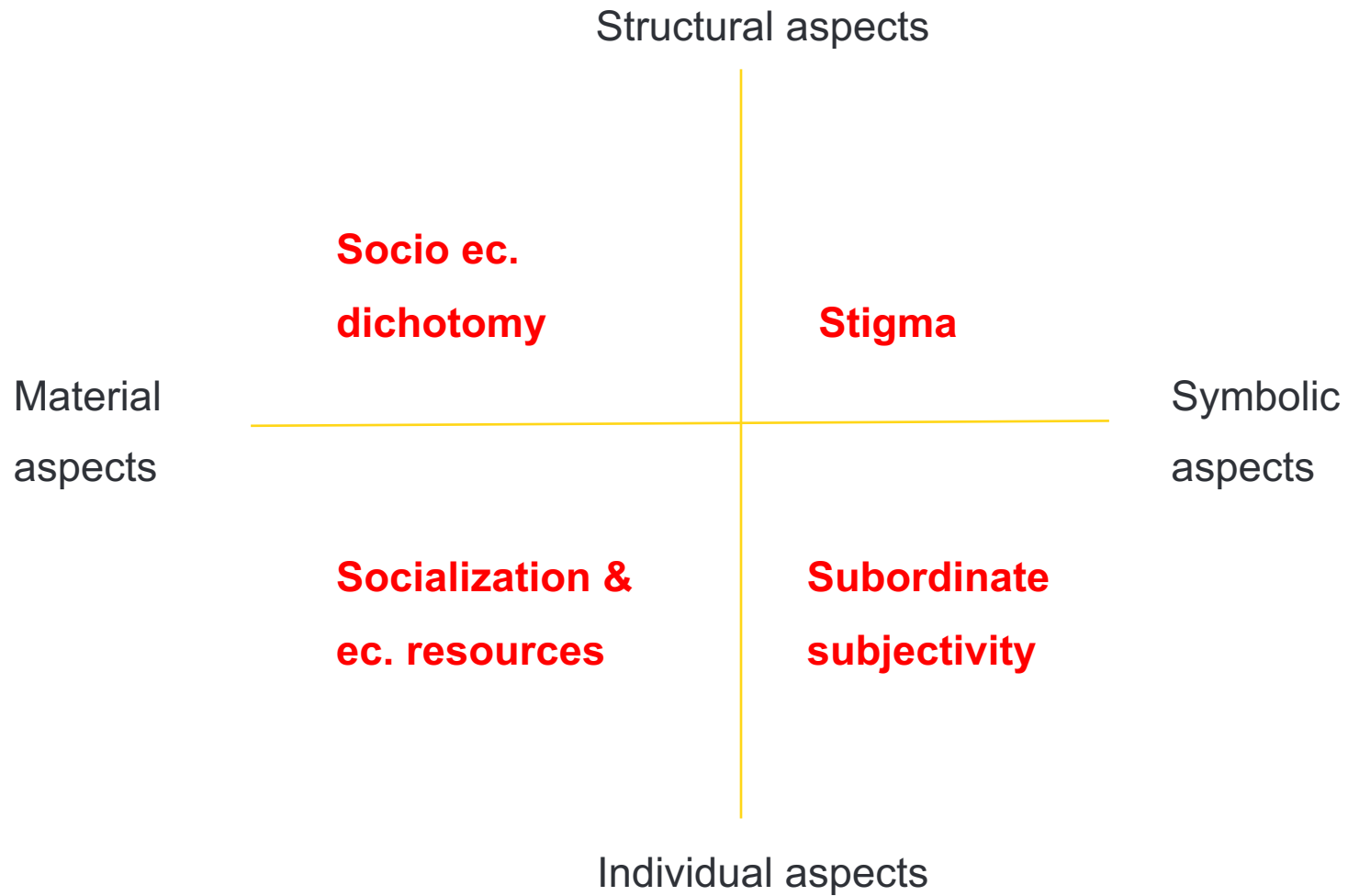


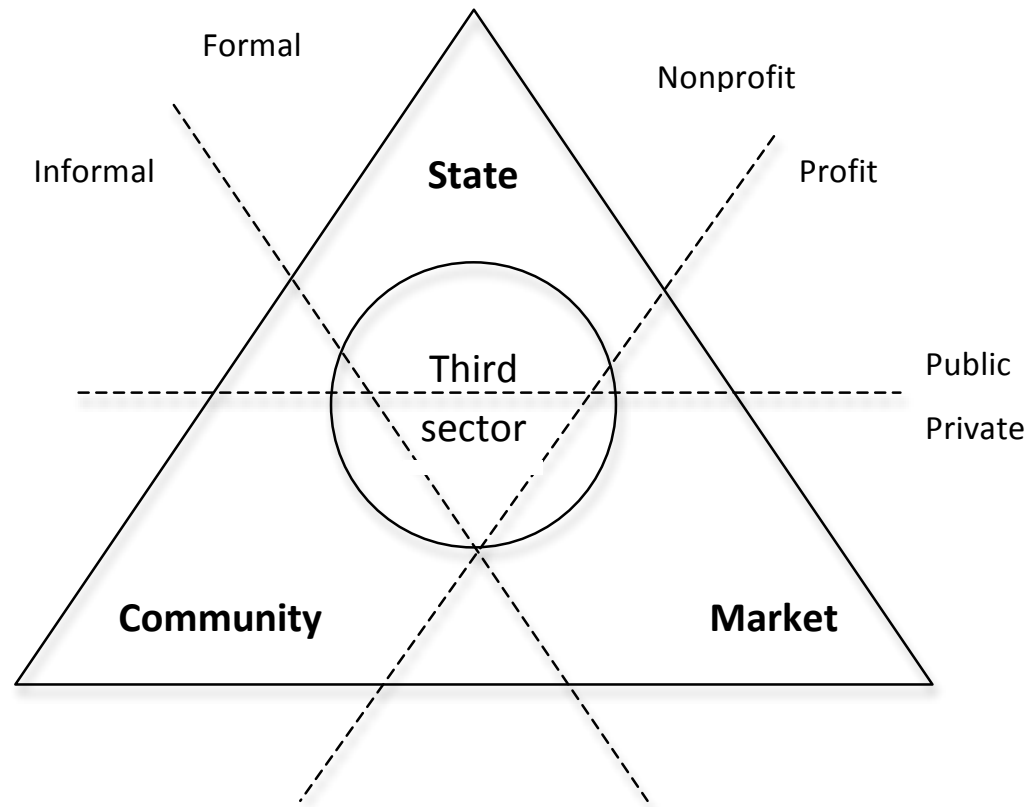


**Figure: Different forms of social entrepreneurship and social enterprises.**

Based on: Gawel, M. 2014. Soci(et)al entrepreneurship and different forms of social enterprises.

In Lundström et al. (Eds.) *Social entrepreneurship: Levering Economic, Political and Social Dimensions*. Springer.

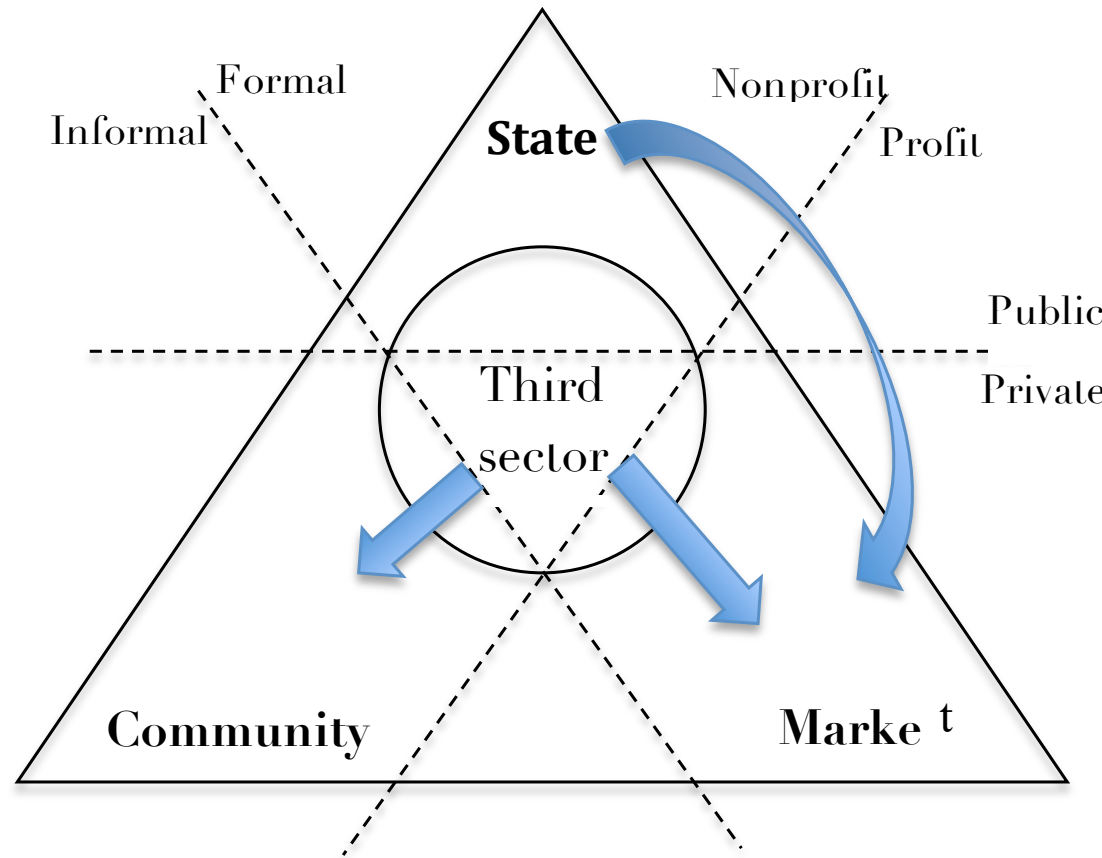




**Figure: The third sector and the welfare mix.**

Source: Pestoff, V. 1998. Beyond the Market and State.  
Social Enterprises and Civil Democracy in a Welfare Society.

Figure : The third sector and the welfare mix: Illustration of current paradoxes in Sweden



Based on Pestoff (1998). Modification: Arrows added to illustrate shifts in the early 2000s (Gawell 2015).



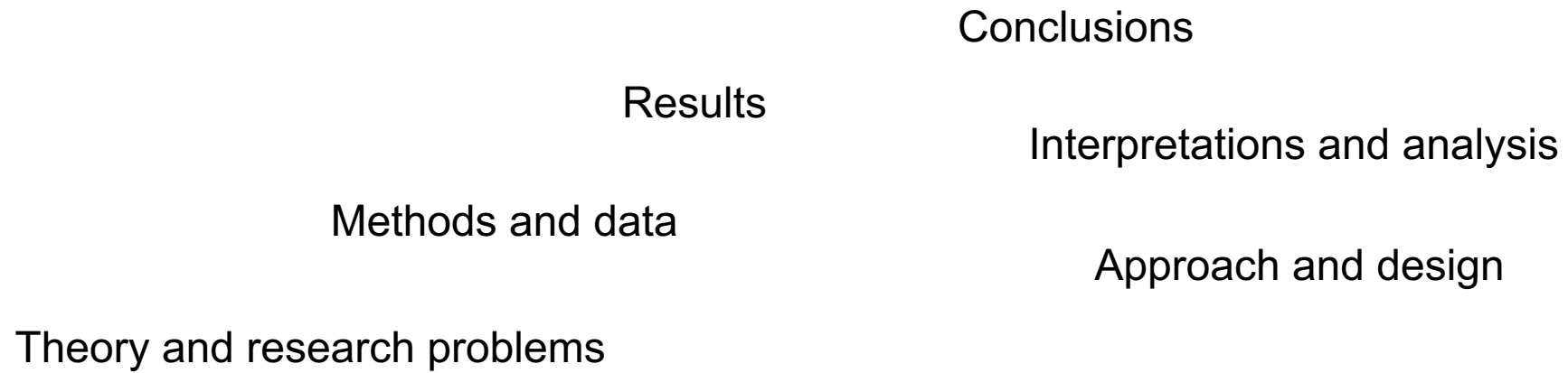
# A search, and a re-search journey

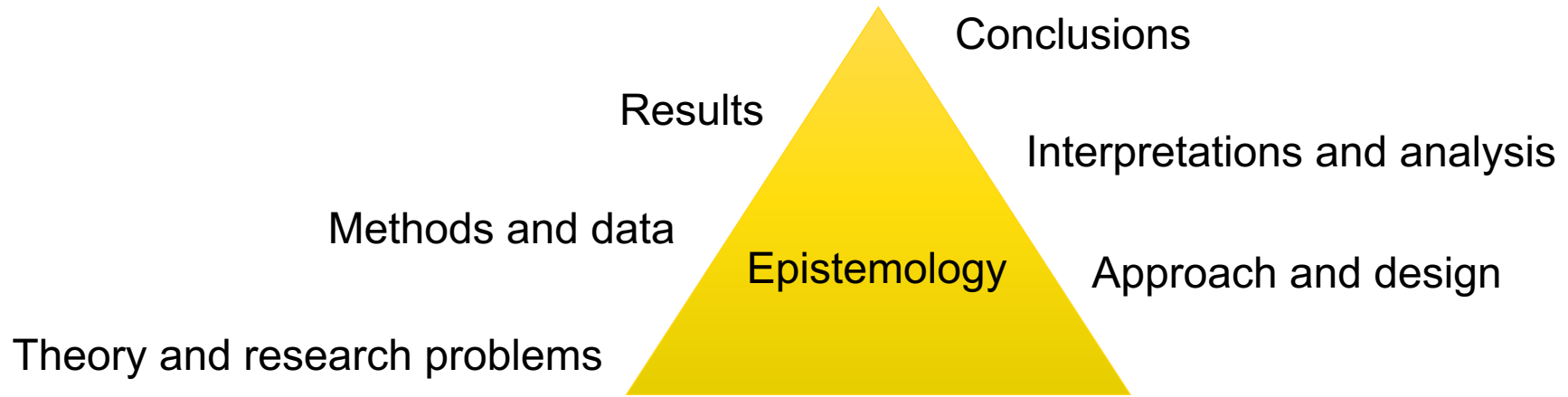
- In practice in the field and in the field of policy practices
- In academia; bachelor and research education
- Re-searched – again and again
- *Transdisciplinary research with a substantial foundation in ethnographic approach and language as a major vehicle*

# Prior journeys contributions to current journeys

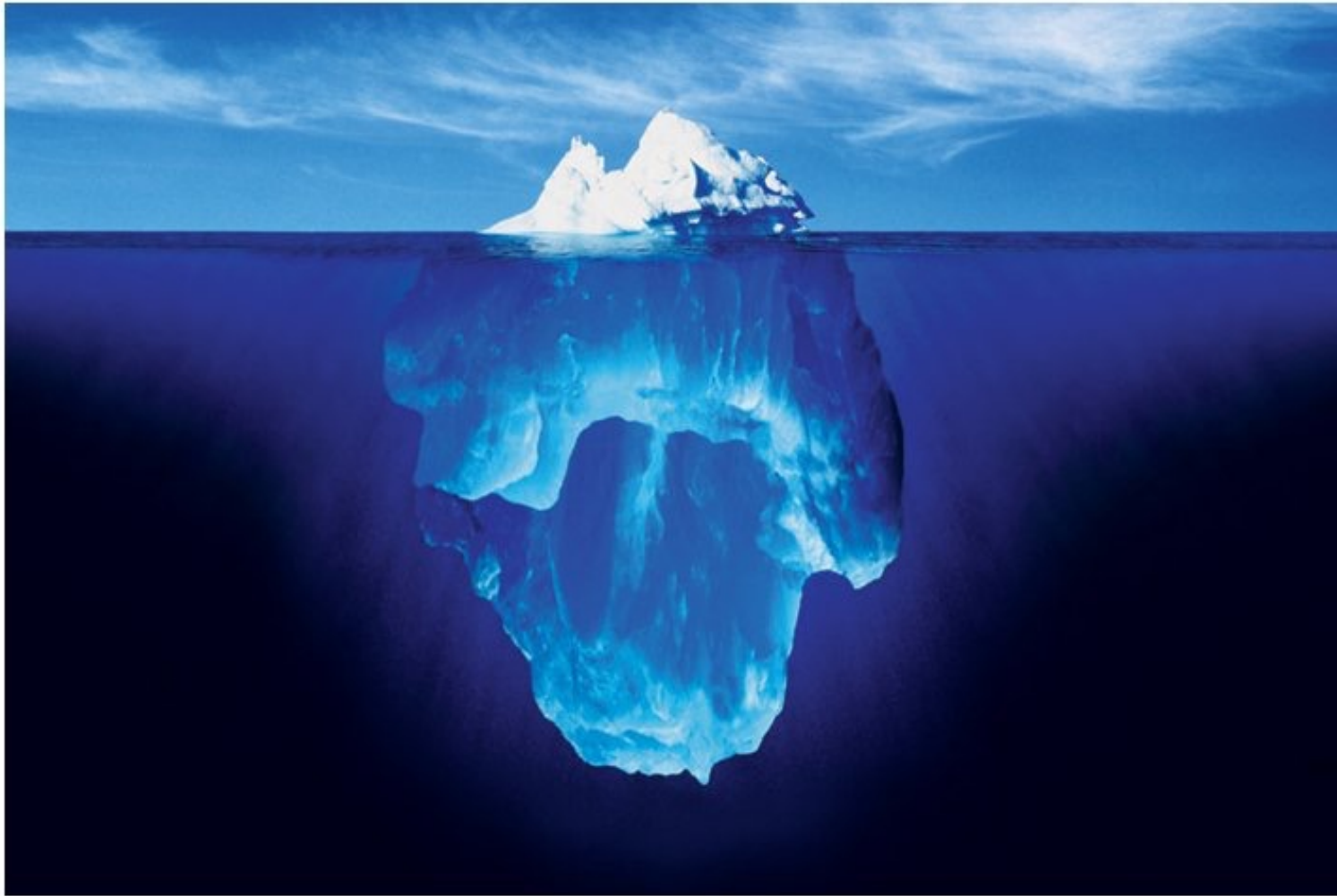
- Collaboration between University of Rwanda and Swedish universities through program supported by Swedish Development Agency (SIDA) 2018-2025
- Södertörn University responsible for a sub-program with focus on innovation
- Some funding for university staff led projects, in collaboration with actors in surrounding society (recently also some student led projects)
- Support workshop, support- and monitoring structures
- Projects, e.g.
  - 'Sumba' based on local music and dance movement
  - Nutrition rich flour based on local products
  - Support for sex-workers to develop alt. income activities
  - 'Care chains' (clients-clinics-specialized care) with focus on mental and/or physical health
  - Language learning 4-in-1

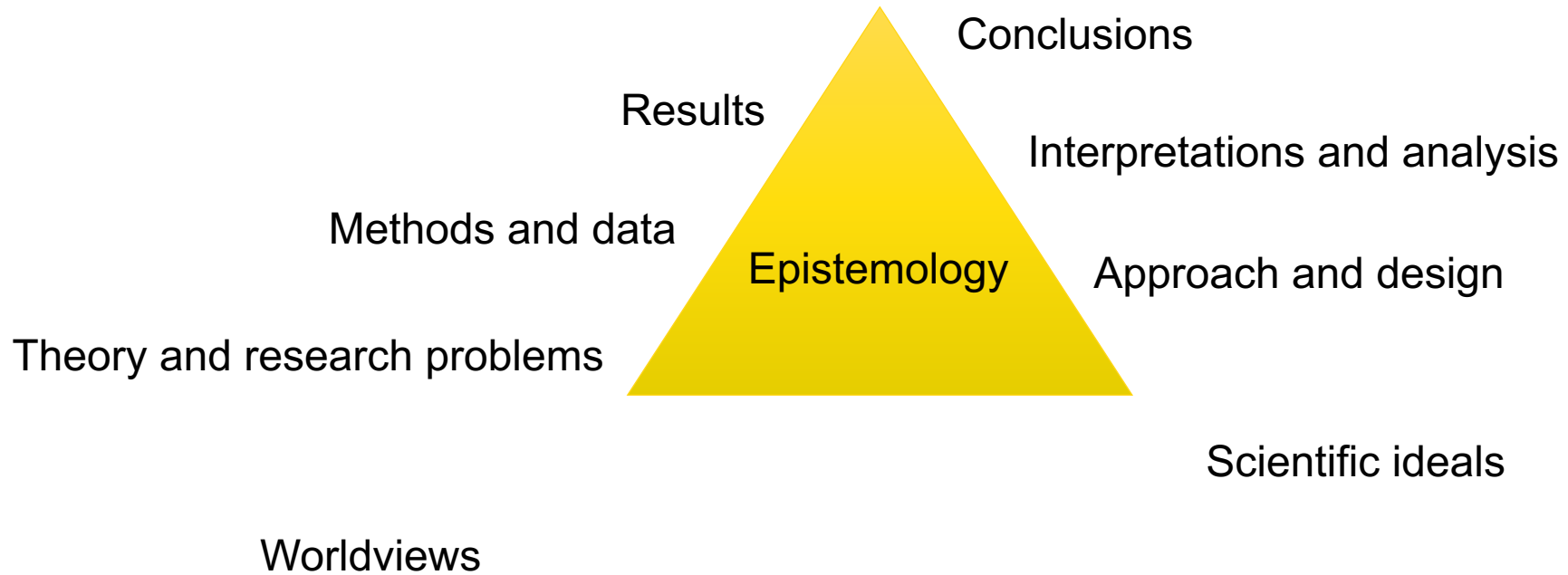


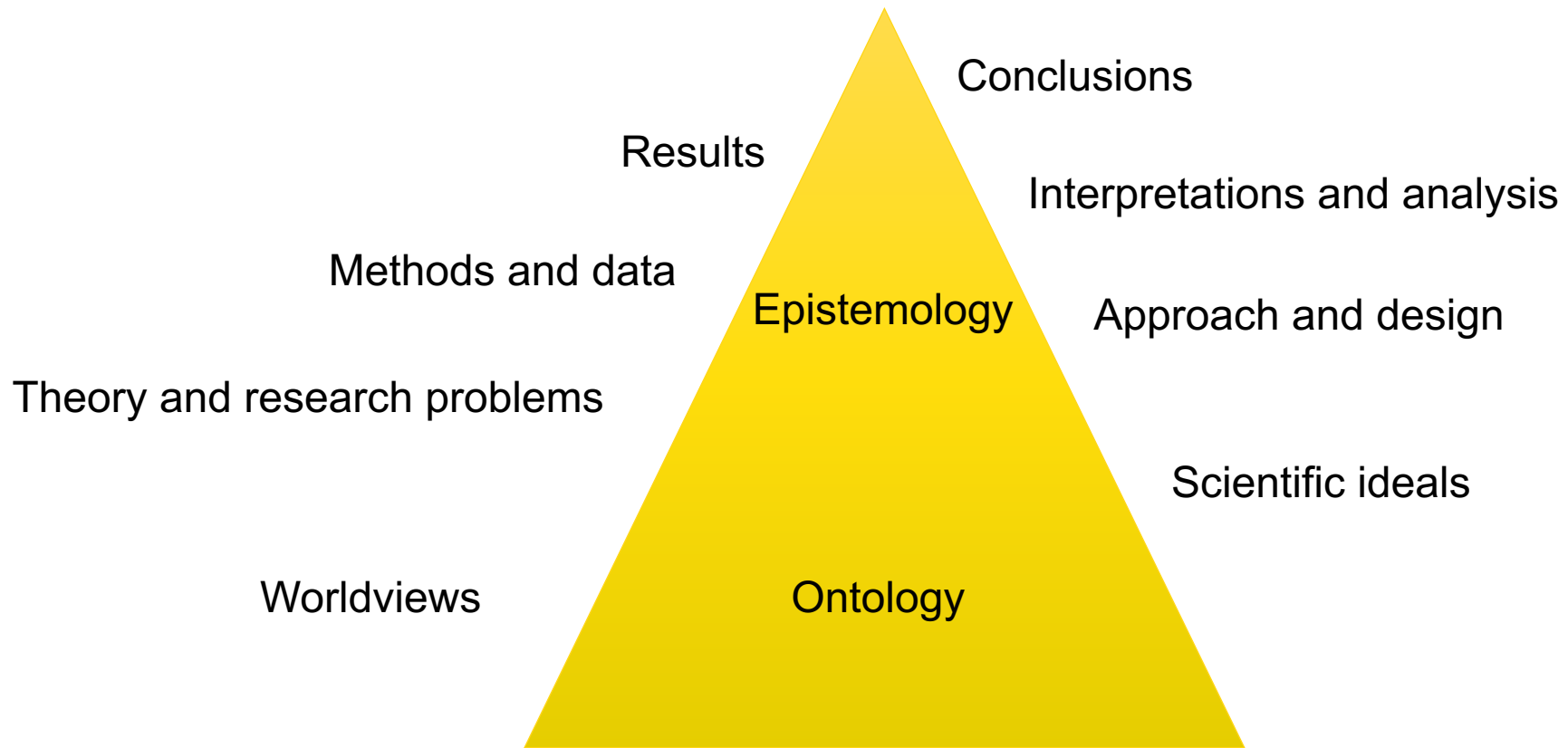








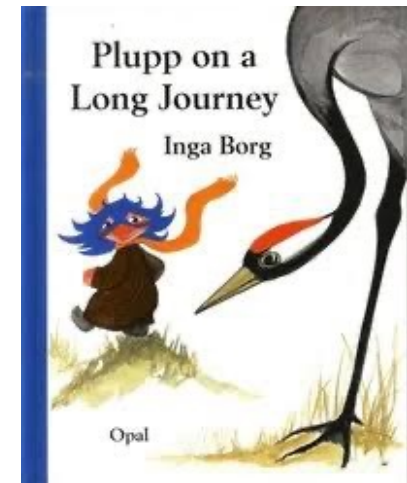






# Ethnography – a re-search journey in practice, academia and beyond

- This journey has been, and is:
  - Inspiring
  - At times challenging, tiring and frustrating
  - Fantastically rewarding!
- Fits to a large extent into academic life, but does not always fit into ‘academic structures’
  - Needs ‘packaging to fit’
- Useful for understanding nuances and complexity
- Useful for practice, academia and beyond



# More readings

Gawell, M. 2006, *Activist Entrepreneurship. Attac'ing Norms and Articulating Disclosive Stories*, Stockholm University (Dissertation).

Gawell, M. 2013, Social Entrepreneurship as Innovative Challengers or Adjustable Followers? *Social Enterprise Journal*. Vol 9 No 2, 203-220.

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# More readings

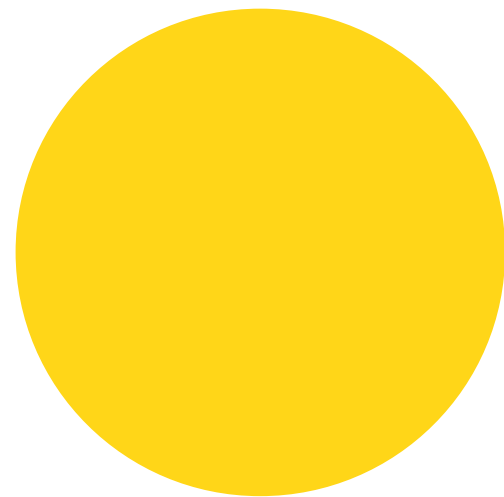
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Westlund, H. and Gawell, M, 2012, Building Social Capital for Social Entrepreneurship. Accepted for publication, in *Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics International Scientific Commission "Social & Cooperative Economy"*, Vol 83 No 1, 101-116.



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