Core competence – definition and dynamics in the not-for-profit sector

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Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Urban Ljungquist

Authors: Maria Andersson and Rachel Ramos – Reid
Abstract

Core competence as a concept has been implemented and studied within the for-profit sector for some decades. The concept is used to understand, develop and sustain competitive advantage and, in contrast to purely market oriented strategies, takeoff from the internal unique strengths within organizations. There exists almost no research on or use of the core competence concept within the non-profit sector. However leaders and decision-makers at non-profit organizations are also challenged to develop their organizations, either to be relevant for its target group or to compete for funding. Doing this without renouncing on the mission and core values requires appropriate strategies and a well-developed compass. The concept of core competence is anticipated to contribute to such processes.

This thesis sets out to study whether the concept of core competence can be identified within the sector, and if so, how it can be described and how it is linked to associated concepts, and particularly, how the model for this proposed by Ljungquist (2008, 2010) can be applied. The thesis also explores how the concept of core competence is linked to non-profit sector specific characteristics, more specifically in what way core competence is related to the mission of the organization and how resources unique to non-profit organizations like members, volunteers and supporters possibly contribute to core competence.

Finally, the notion of a special added value (Weerawardena and Mort, 2001; Wijkström and Malmborg, 2005) among NPOs will be discussed in relation to core competence as defined by the NPOs included in this paper.

The thesis is based on a multiple-case study that includes two national organizations in Sweden and two local organizations in Canada.

Findings indicate that core competence exists within the four organizations and that it is linked to each organization’s mission. Also, it is indicated that resources are linked not only by its utilization of, but also by its contribution, to core competence. In other aspects, core competence and its associated concepts identified concur with models developed for the for-profit sector. The characteristics of support mechanisms, like systems, routines, capacities and communication are similar as well as other competencies that have the characteristics of development and adaptation.

Keywords: Core competence, resource-based view (RBV), knowledge management, non-profit sector, non-profit organization, strategy formulation.
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1. Introduction

The authors of this proposed thesis have spent many years working within the not-for-profit sector, for NGOs and within public administration. We propose to look at how core competence as part of strategy is defined and operationalized within the not-for-profit sector that will include case samples in not-for-profit agencies in Sweden and Canada. Core competence is a concept widely applied and studied in the for-profit sector but little has been done to examine whether and how the concept can be used among not-for-profit organizations. Throughout the text, the term “not-for-profit sector” (NFP) will be used to describe the sector as well as non-profit organizations (NPO), which is an abbreviation also commonly used among practitioners and researchers.

1.1 Background

In Sweden alone, there are more than 100 000 people formally employed in the not-for-profit sector, and volunteers perform tasks that is equivalent to approximately 300 000 full time employees (Hemström, 2000). Statistics Canada provides estimates of the economic contribution of Canada's non-profit sector. In 2003, more than 160 000 non-profit and volunteer groups employed about two million people and during the seven-year period from 1997 to 2003, gross domestic product (GDP) for the non-profit sector grew at an annual average rate of 6.4%, faster than the average of 5.6% for the total economy (Statistics Canada, 2011). Globally, the sector delivers services like healthcare and education at a considerable degree, but it also gives voice to underserved groups, advocate for rights and holds stakeholders accountable to the public. In some cases, NPOs provide services that the private sector does not and will not provide thereby filling the gaps that both government and the private sector do not make available. The NPO sector is thus of major importance to society and strategies that improve their possibilities to deliver against their commitments or mission is of value to the organizations within the sector.

To continue to be relevant in the eyes of members, beneficiaries or other stakeholders and thereby gain continued trust is a challenge for many organizations. Also, like in any organization, whether business or not, there is the challenge to make the best use of scarce resources. Non-profit organizations engage in regular discussions to decide what new projects to embark on or what activities to bring to a close. In that process, different values have to be taken into consideration: the possibilities to raise resources or funding, to meet the needs of beneficiaries and /or the needs or will of members. Altogether, scarce resources are used to best fulfill the social mission of the organization, which implies having to choose from among a number of strategic decisions.

There is also a worldwide trend for governments to decentralize and open up social services to privatization, providing new challenges for not-for-profit groups to plan, build capacity, re-orient strategy and re-align priorities (see for example Hodgkinson, 1999; Dolnicar et al., 2008; Weerawardena, McDonald and Mort, 2010). Not-for-profit groups compete with other not-for-profit groups on limited donations and grants and sometimes also with for-profit organizations in bids. Researchers suggest that this is even an increasing competitive environment (Weerawardena and Mort, 2008) and that funding agents of the sector at the same time is increasing their demands for accountability (Shaw and Allen, 2009). In this perspective it is important for the not-for-profit sector to keep a “competitive edge” in order to remain in operation. Still the challenge for non-profit organizations is to manage competitive grant funding without sacrificing mission imperatives (Dolnicar et al., 2008). In an article in Harvard Business Review, Regina E Herzlinger puts the spotlight on some
scandals within the public and not-for-profit sector that according to her has undermined society’s most important institutions (Herzlinger, 1996). She calls for actions to improve accountability within the sector and points at another important reason for NPOs to be strategic, namely that of fundraising and being accountable to the public and donators.

There is a demand for useful tools or theories that can help organizations in strategy making towards raising funds, being accountable and not least achieve their social mission. Theory formulation and research on competitive strategy has mainly had its focus in the for-profit sector (Weerawardena and Mort 2001; Dolnicar et al., 2008) where external forces often are at heart of the research. The resource-based view (RBV) of competitive advantage takes however another approach and looks at internal resources and capabilities (see for example Barney, 1991; Grant, 1991). This view can be anticipated to be useful for the value-based NFP sector. Core competence, as part of RBV, has been widely discussed and used as a strategic competitive advantage in the for-profit sector in the last decades. This led us to look deeper into the theories of core competence and their applicability to the not-for-profit sector.

1.2 Problem discussion
Strategy has been defined as “the match an organization makes between its internal resources and skills […] and the opportunities and risks created by its external environment” (Hofer and Schendel 1978, p 12). Focus can thus be both on internal and/or on external forces.

In the beginning of competitive strategy in the late 70s, there was the economist Michael Porter who revolutionized the way a corporation viewed the factors that affect the viability of its business. His first academic article “How Competitive Forces Shape Strategy” introduced a theoretical framework unlike any other in the business world. In it he espoused that the shakers that affect any corporation are purely external: threat of new entrants, bargaining power of customers, bargaining power of suppliers, the presence of substitute products, and the existence of competitors within the industry where the business operates (Porter, 1979).

So popular was Porter in both the academic and business worlds that later on, his insights were dubbed as “Porter’s five forces” which virtually became a bible to strategy scholars and practitioners.

Other market-oriented scholars like Drucker (2001) have argued that there is only one valid definition of a business purpose: To create a customer. It is the customer who determines what a business is. To create that customer the business has two functions: marketing and innovation. The goal is the satisfaction of customer needs. Drucker underlines that marketing is not about finding a market for “our products”. It shall not start from inside but from outside and the market itself. As Drucker points out, business can only exist in an expanding economy and it is therefore necessary to grow better and find out more about tomorrows markets or the market of today that is still ignored. Managers must convert society’s needs into opportunities for profitable business. To do that the responsibility of top management is to answer the questions: What is our business, what will it be and what should it be? The idea is thus that if a business has an accurate (from customer perspective) mission with relevant objectives in certain areas it will create customers and survive. It will also make profit and keep surviving. Profit is necessary for sustainability but not a goal in itself according to Drucker.

However ten years later, Prahalad and Hamel (1990) challenged Porter’s view and effectively the market-oriented view in stating that it is not entirely external forces that decide a corporation’s viability. Prahalad and Hamel’s work established the concept of “core competence” which argues that the wellbeing of a corporation and its competitiveness depends heavily on internal factors like skills, resources and technologies that lie at the very
root of a corporation’s business. From hereon, a good number of articles, books and expanded theories on core competence as the true key to competitive advantage proliferated the world of corporate business. Following Prahalad and Hamel, the concept of core competence has been studied and developed further in different directions. It has, for example, been identified as strategically valuable capabilities to the organization (Hafeez, Zhang and Malak, 2002b) and as unique resources, capabilities and competences that are linked to core competence (Ljungquist, 2008).

The contributions of Prahalad and Hamel and other scholars proposing a resource-based view of competitive advantage have so far benefited theory and practice foremost on the for-profit sector. (See for example Grant, 1991; Javidan, 1998; Ljungquist, 2008, 2010). While there is a wealth of research done on core competence in the private sector, there is a dearth of knowledge on core competence in the not-for-profit sector despite the fact that the latter also competes with other organizations in order to remain in “business”.

Very few articles on core competence among NPOs have been found. An article of Eden and Ackermann (2000) about mapping distinctive competencies and developing them into business models or livelihood schemes include NPOs in the discussion. The article argues that core competencies drive the aspiration system within the organizations. Another article by Ackermann, Bryson and Eden (2007) addresses distinctive competencies among public sector organizations and argues for the importance of creating livelihood schemes for the same.

The International Journal of Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Marketing (2008, Vol. 13) had a special issue on non-profit competitive strategy where several articles shed light upon the limited but growing research area. One was an article by Kong and Prior who look at intellectual capital as a basis for core competence and suggested a model for this (Kong and Prior, 2008). Another article of interest to this paper, in the same issue, is that of Craig and Margee Hume who addressed the need to develop a knowledge management model for the NFP sector that takes into account the characteristics of the sector (Hume and Hume, 2008). The article describes the conditions for the small, medium or large organization.

All in all, research and studies on core competence have been focused on the for-profit sector, where profit, or to create a customer (Drucker, 2001) is the ultimate goal. Core competence is linked to competitive advantage, where competition takes place in a market among businesses to attract customers. There are, however, differences between not-for-profits and for-profits that are important to recognize when studying core competence in the NFP sector (Weerawardena et al., 2010). Models and theories for one sector cannot automatically be expected to work for the other. One difference is their reason to exist, while another is how funds are raised. These differences can affect strategy as well as available resources and have to be taken into account. Organizations in the not-for-profit sector generally have access to unique resources in the form of volunteers, supporters or members. Also, the sense of sharing a common value is a resource not unknown among NPOs. It is expected to exist as a consequence of a clearly communicated and established mission of the organization. The strong and fundamental role of the mission statement is in itself a reason to look at internal strengths when developing strategy. That is not to say that external factors are unimportant. A resource-based view and the concept of core competence would therefore be interesting to study, apply and maybe adjust to the sector.

Little focus has been made on testing how a strategic concept like core competence can be applied to the non-profit sector. As Hume and Hume points out (2008), there is a need to develop models that address the specific needs and take the conditions for the non-profit sector into account. This is the “knowledge gap” that we would like to focus on.
1.3 Problem formulation and purpose

Resource-based theories on competitive advantage and more specifically theories on core competencies have explained how internal resources can be identified, utilized and sustained to keep a competitive position. Existing research on core competence mainly however relate to for-profit organizations. Recognizing the essential differences between profit and non-profit sectors, the purpose of this thesis is to explore those differences and find out whether core competence also applies to NPOs and if existing models for its mechanisms in that case apply or need to be adjusted. In doing this, the paper will attempt to contribute to strategy understanding and development in the NFP sector.

The fact that NPOs are founded around a mission is one difference of anticipated importance. The mission for NPOs is a stable set of values that constitutes why they exist, thus strategy and decision-making can be expected to subordinate the mission statement. When studying core competence among NPOs, we propose that it is therefore important to compare existing models developed for the profit sector and see in what way core competence is related to the mission of the organization.

Another difference is the way funds are raised. To some extent, any organization stays alive by providing value to a stakeholder-base (Eden and Ackermann, 2000), but where for-profit organizations sell products or services demanded by customers, NFPs attract funding or resources by being relevant in a more value-based sense. Resources are not only funding but can also consist of volunteer time or activism. Thus, when studying core competence among NPOs, how these resources contribute to core competence can be of specific interest.

1.4 Scope of thesis and de-limitations

The thesis will cover how core competence is defined in four not-for-profit groups in Sweden and in Canada and thereby give an understanding of how the not-for-profit sector can adopt core competence as a strategy. The organizations are national (Sweden) and local (Canada) in levels. This study does not include international NPOs as cases and so it is therefore suggested that international non-profit groups be included in future research in the area of core competence.

This thesis, being a multiple-case study conducted under the time constraints that follow with a master thesis, has not been able to look deeper into how competencies have been developed or managed over time. Nor has it aimed at describing all resources, capabilities or even competencies residing within the organizations in detail.

1.5 Thesis structure

Theories on the concept of core competence and strategy in general and recent theory on core competence in detail followed by theories for understanding the non-profit sector are presented. Thereafter, a theoretical framework and research questions will be proposed followed by chapters on study design and methods. Findings from our research will be presented and the thesis will end with analysis and conclusions.
2. Theory

This chapter will present theories on core competence and the resource-based view on competitive advantage, thereafter theories for understanding the non-profit sector will be presented followed by a section on core competence and the NPO. The chapter ends with a discussion on presented theory and after that a theoretical framework and research questions that will be used in this study are presented.

2.1 Theories on core competence

The thesis is anchored on Prahalad and Hamel’s concept of core competence and ensuing theories that have been formulated based on this concept. Various authors’ theoretical frameworks and hypotheses will be used to guide the conduct of this study.

2.1.1 Criteria of core competence

Prahalad, C.K. and Hamel, G. (1990) was among the first to highlight the importance of an internal orientation for competitive advantage where firm resources were taken into account. According to them, strategic management is “about stretching the organization to gain leverage from its individuality – its distinctive competencies and the ability to change them to meet the strategic aspirations” (Prahalad and Hamel, 1993). When introducing the concept of core competence they concluded that it could be defined as something central to the organization’s scope of work. It should, according to them, fulfill the following criteria:

1) Be unique and difficult to imitate
2) Contribute significantly to end-product benefits
3) Provide access to a wide variety of markets

Core competence can also more loosely be defined as the "collective learning comprising tacit and explicit knowledge, skills and technologies, which an organization has that gives it a competitive advantage" (Horton, 2000). Core competence is what sets an organization apart from other organizations in the same field.

Another definition has been provided by Ackermann et al. (2007, p. 704) who state that “a core competency is one that is crucial to the success of the organization... It is core because of its location in the linkages of competencies to aspirations”. This concept will be further discussed below.

The concept of core competence led the way to a resource-based view of competitive advantage as opposed to the market-based view represented and promoted by Porter and his followers.

2.1.2 The resource-based view

In a resource-based view, internal assets are what make the difference between failure and success. RBV focuses on resources within the organization when strategizing for competitive advantage. Numerous scholars have contributed to theory and practice on the topic, below are some of them presented that are relevant to this paper.

In 1991, Jay Barney discussed the benefits of a resource-based view in an article called Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage (Barney, 1991) where he criticized external models for assuming that firms have access to the same relevant resources. He also criticized the models for assuming that heterogenic resources in an industry are short-lived because of
mobility of resources. Barney defines a sustained competitive advantage when a corporation implements a value-creating strategy not simultaneously being implemented by any current or potential competitors and when these other firms are unable to duplicate the benefits of this strategy (Barney, 1991, p. 102). He then defines attributes of resources to be of competitive advantage. They must be valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable and non-substitutable, also called the VRIN attributes. These criteria closely parallel those of Prahalad and Hamel’s criteria for core competence.

Robert Grant in another article (1991) suggested a framework for a resource-based approach to strategy formulation. The framework rests upon these major premises: resources and capabilities provide the basic direction for strategy and are the primary source of profit. He added that although a mission statement should be the starting point, mission statements are usually formulated around what markets to serve. Since markets are constantly changing, therefore an external approach is not a secure foundation for formulating a strategy. Instead, an approach that focuses on the business capabilities and resources are preferred. Grant referred to Prahalad and Hamel and the concept of core competence to describe central and strategic capabilities. A capability is defined as a routine or a number of interacting routines. Grant also identified six major categories of resources, inputs to the production process, where apart from technical, financial and physical resources, reputation, human and organizational resources are listed.

The articles above are some of those who clarified the concept of resources and capabilities and offered a framework for strategic planning. The resource-based view has however been developed further into competence-based view where individual resources or capabilities are not considered independently but rather considered as a set of capabilities for competencies that span over multiple markets. Another direction is the dynamic capabilities approach where the capacity to renew competencies is central to adapt to a dynamic and fast changing context. The capabilities here often reside within managerial and organizational processes in the firm. (Hafeez, Zhang and Malak, 2002b).

2.1.3 Identifying core competence

A study by Javidan (1998) provided a framework incorporating associated concepts into developing a process for strategic planning. In it he described a hands-on process for identifying a company’s competencies and their potential implications. Here, resources were seen as inputs to the value chain, and capabilities were defined as the corporations’ ability to exploit its resources. Competencies were defined as a cross-functional integration and coordination of capabilities. According to Javidan, core competence is a combination of skills and areas of knowledge that are shared across SBUs. They are also a result of integration of SBU competencies. Because of this, core competence can be used as a vehicle for identifying common interests, problems, capabilities or opportunities within an organization.

Hafeez, Zhang and Malak (2002b) provided a framework that identified a manufacturing company’s core competence using the firm’s capabilities. In it, they categorized resources into three sub-categories (physical, intellectual and cultural assets) that contributed to “firm capabilities” that eventually led to identifying the company’s core competence. A capability was defined as “the capacity for a team of resources to perform some tasks or activity”.

The theorists above have contributed in various ways to a deeper understanding of core competence in large for-profit corporations. Javidan by proposing a hands-on model for managers to identify core competence, however in that hierarchal process the associated concepts of resources and capabilities tends to be left out once the identification process is
done (Ljungquist, 2010). Hafeez et al. (2002a; 2002b) contributed by discussing how competencies can be isolated from capabilities.

2.1.4 Exploring the links to core competence

Though the research area of core competence is extensive there has still been a lack of clarity about the concept itself (see for example Ljungquist 2008; Hafeez, Zhang and Malak, 2002b). What does it consist of and how are associated concepts like resources or capabilities defined? Ljungquist (2007, 2008, 2010) has suggested an expanded model where links between the main concept of core competence and associated concepts of competencies, capabilities, and resources are explored and clarified. Instead of regarding core competence as residing at the top of a competence hierarchy, where resources are at the bottom, he shows in a case study how different conditions make the links between core competence and associated concepts stronger or weaker.

Ljungquists’ model is non-hierarchal and suggests and expanded understanding of the associated concepts. The model was explored in a case study at a manufacturing company and the following links were suggested:

- Resource as an input to the value process found in the basic activities and processes within the firm
- Capability as a supporting system or routine, and additionally Ljungquist suggests that a capacity along with a communication characteristic is necessary to describe their contribution to a core competence
- Competence as residing in individuals and teams with development as its general characteristic, and additionally an adaptation and a transfer characteristic is suggested as necessary for understanding their contribution to core competence

Ljungquist further suggests that two dimensions are important for understanding core competence: time continuum and links. He concludes that it is the need of a core competence for and the applicability of a particular associated concept that determines how strong the link will be. Also, if core competence and associated concepts share a future specific goal or share a history and sustain that link, the links between the two will be stronger. In this process, resources and capabilities are not just used for identifying the core competence but for understanding how core competence is sustained or erodes.
The expanded model of Ljungquist has apart from bringing clarity to the concept of core competence itself contributed to an understanding of how associated concepts acts together with core competence. This also provides a framework for exploring how core competence can erode or be sustained, which has implications for management of core competence. As time is included as a perspective it opens up for historical studies of how core competence has been developed and invested in. However how core competence relates to the mission and values of a company is not covered.

Linking core competence to mission, a 1998 article by Michael Raynor is important to note. Raynor suggested a framework that connects an organization’s mission with its core competencies (Raynor, 1998). In this framework, Raynor combines the elements of core competencies and organizational values into creating a mission. Below is Raynor’s version of the framework:

Raynor’s model was developed for the for-profit sector and illustrates the very difference between the two sectors. Here, mission is a result of values and core competencies and not the starting point as expected among NPOs.
As will be seen in section 2.3, links to aspirations and mission have also been discussed in the light of NPOs.

2.2 Theories for understanding the non-profit sector

The non-profit organizations are not only an empirical domain but also a sector with its own working mechanisms and theory. Therefore this chapter will present both theory and empirical descriptions of the NFP sector. First, we present definitions of organizations in the sector and of classification systems of the same. Also theories on mechanisms specific for the sector, like the role of the social mission and how funds are raised will be presented.

2.2.1 Definition of the sector

To do a study of core competence in NPOs, the first problem that arises is to define the sector itself. The notions of public versus private sector is accepted and defined since long. When it comes to the third or non-profit sector, the distinctions start to blur. Some refer to charities others to unions or cooperatives while still others refer to civil rights advocate organizations when they speak about the sector. The term “NGO” (non-governmental organization) is commonly used but has no legal definition and, basically means that it’s an organization independent of the government. By the World Bank definition, NGOs are defined in a functional way as "private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development" (Duke University Libraries, 2011). Another term is CSO (civil society organization), which more or less overlaps the concept NGO but can sometimes also include business corporations. All of these terms will collectively fall under the expression non-profit organization, which will be used throughout this paper.

To study and understand the sector, a definition is beneficial if not necessary. One problem is that the definition differs from country to country, depending on culture, history and legal framework for the NFP sector. One can divide the organizations looking at their function or whom they serve: members or the public. One can also look purely at the legal form, which tends to rule out what is commonly defined as organizations of the sector. For example, in Sweden, the only legal forms that are regulated are foundations and economic associations (Lundström and Wijkström, 1997), whereas the number of “ideell” (that is based on a fundamental set of ideas) organizations is considerable. In the United States on the other hand, the legal forms that can be taken would be trusts, corporations or unincorporated associations (Salamon, 1997). Finally, another way of looking at NPOs is from an economic perspective, that is to say how they are financed. All of these definitions contribute to an understanding of the sector but at the same time may exclude many dimensions of the same.

Trying to bring clarity to a definition of the sector comprehensive and comparative research in this area has been conducted at John Hopkins University where a special project on defining the non-profit sector has taken place (Salamon and Anheier, 1997). Thirteen countries (and studies) have been involved in the project with the purpose to suggest a definition of the sector that can be used for comparative purposes and also a framework for classifying NPOs. Studies from each country tested the suggested systems and gave an understanding of similarities and differences between countries. Other researchers for example at the Civil Society Research program at Stockholm School of Economics and articles presented in sector specific journals provide further understanding of sector specific conditions for knowledge management, how success is measured among not-for-profit organizations etc.
The comparative study from John Hopkins, which is unique in its kind, concludes that a structural-operational definition of the sector proved to be most economic, significant and explanatory (Salamon and Anheier 1997, p. 48). According to this definition the sector is a collection of entities that are organized, i.e., institutionalized to some extent, private, i.e., separate from the government, non-profit distributing, i.e., not returning any profits generated to their owners, self-governing, i.e., control their own activities, voluntary, i.e., involving some meaningful degree of voluntary participation. This does not mean that all or most of the income has to come from voluntary contributions or that most of its staff must be volunteers. (Salamon and Anheier 1997, pp. 33-34).

As definitions for our cross-national thesis are lacking, these criteria will be used to define the non-profit sector and assess the organizations included in the study. The different criteria also offer a starting point for comparing organizations included in the study. That is, how it is organized (for example, member-based or not) or where funding comes from. This will be useful for our understanding of available resources in the organization and their position vis-à-vis the NPO.

### 2.2.2 Classification of the organizations

The John Hopkins study also reviewed different classification systems for the sector around the world. It turned out that many systems are lacking either in economy, rigor or in organizing power. The researchers therefore suggested using a new classification system called The International Classification of Non-profit Organizations (ICNPO) (Salamon and Anheier 1997, pp. 69-74). According to Salamon and Anheier, this system may not be ideal for national studies but for cross-national comparison and that it is so while having a significant degree of organizing power. The system is constructed of twelve groups of major activities. Under these are subgroups to classify the organization further. For example:

**Group 2 Education and Research**

- Research
  - Medical research

The unit of classification is the establishment, a place of operation that may be smaller than the organization or enterprise. This means that an organization may be classified in more than one group. An example may be a foundation that provides both healthcare to elders and runs a college for nursing and medical training. Compared to for-profit corporations this would be equal to Strategic Business Units (SBU) in a multi-business company. In the ensuing discussions, core competence and its associated concepts can be used over SBU boundaries. Following that, core competence is suggested to be a vehicle to find common interests, problems, capabilities and opportunities (Javidan, 1998). For comparison of different scopes of work by the organizations in the study, we will use the classification system presented above.

### 2.2.3 Mission or money - conditions for the sector

What special conditions or mechanisms within the NFP sector does one need to understand in order to study a strategic concept like core competence? To put it simply, the differences between the sectors lie in their reason to exist. In the not-for-profit sector, profit is obviously not the goal or parameter for success. It has even been suggested that NPOs serve needs that the business sector does not serve because those needs are not profitable (Weerawardena, McDonald and Mort, 2010). In a recent article, Michael Porter observes that certain
enterprises that were traditionally categorized as “non-profit” ventures are now evolving into profitable ventures (Porter 2011). An example is the need to deliver clean potable water to underprivileged countries, which is now being provided by the for-profit group WaterHealth International to countries such as India, Ghana and the Philippines. Thus the lines begin to blur: which comes first – the mission or the money?

The mission or raison d’être

We believe along with scholars of the NFP sector (for example Weerawardena and Sullivan Mort, 2001; Dees et al., 2002) that for an NPO, the social mission is the very starting point or its reason to exist. An NPO needs to be sustainable so that it can continue to serve its constituency. Or as Weerawardena et al. put it (2010): The core issue is the need to build a sustainable organization that can continue to deliver social value via the pursuit of its social mission.

Research at Stockholm School of Economics, by Filip Wijkström and others, may be used for a better understanding of the not-for-profit sector. In short, a model for the not-for-profit organization looks like this:

Resources in this case can be donations, capital or human resources as in voluntary time and activism. The basic assumption is that the focus for the organization has to be on fulfilling the mission. This will generate the accurate sort of activities that will create or attract resources. The resources will enable the activities to take place and the activities will help in achieving the mission that is highlighted in this model. Should an NPO randomly engage in activities, the public perception of the NPO and its values and mission would start to dilute. This can cause uncertainty that leads to fewer resources mobilized.

Members or supporters can thus be seen as both resources and beneficiaries of the organizations. This is an interesting condition within the not-for-profit sector. It can be argued that the same applies within the for-profit sector, however there is a much more loose relationship or commitment between the organization and its customers even if many corporations work hard to establish loyal customers and even incorporate them as innovators (Thomke and von Hippel, 2002). The essential values that members or supporters of an organization embrace can be regarded as an organizational resource in the form of commitment and loyalty. Scholars like Kong and Prior (2008) touches upon this view when they suggest that relational capital between NPOs and its donators and recipients results in greater trust and commitment between the NPO and these groups.

It is also worth noting that while in the for-profit sector mission statements are often the result of a creation process, in the not-for-profit sector they are the very foundation or its raison d’être. Since the mission statement includes core values this is an important factor to consider.
when exploring how core competence is defined in the NFP sector. The theories of Drucker (2001) on the importance of deciding what the business shall be, and the task to create or attract customers have some resemblance with the status of the mission statements and how resources are raised among NPOs. It provides an interesting comparison since profit (or resources) is not described as the goal in such but rather as a means to sustain. However, Drucker referring to the profit sector explicitly underline that the answer to his question must be sought at the market and not within the organization, and thus what the business should be, is the result of an analytic process and not based on a founding statement.1

When discussing the links between mission, values and core competencies among NPOs, the notion of a special added value to the scope of work that NPOs perform as compared to that of governments or business is interesting (Wijkström and Malmberg 2005, p. 244). The added value is suggested to emanate from the NPOs distinctive character as an organization. Weerawardena and Mort (2001, p. 64) also touch upon this notion when they in a study of social entrepreneurship among NFPs suggest that the social mission of improvement that cannot be reduced to creating private benefits conceptualize the NFPs ability to gain a competitive advantage. When looking at how core competence is defined among NPOs, this concept will be discussed further.

**Raising funds and resources**

Another area of difference between the sectors is how money or resources are gained or raised. In the Wijkström diagram, the basic idea is that, even if mission is the foundation of an organization, resources of some sort are still necessary to enable activities and NPOs attract resources and support by being perceived as relevant and by doing the “right” things. The arena in which the NPO operates will decide what “right” things are. Basically an organization that has not been able to attract any resources at all is not being perceived as important. Eden and Ackermann have the same view, that if someone provides a mandate and finance an organization they legitimize the aspirations and this support will provide the right to sustain a continuing livelihood (2000). However the realities are that in that process, NPOs today compete for funding and have to adhere to donor requirements on accountability as well as rely on decisions on what to fund. This can suppress the humanitarian or social justice aims (Salamon, 1996) and cause tension or conflict between mission and money. In a study called “To be a business and to keep our humanity”, Shaw and Allen examines the dynamics of demands, flexibility and resistance between donor and NPO (Shaw and Allen, 2009). Dolincar et al. discusses in an article called “Mission or Money” (2008) what impact competitive grant funding has on public sector NFPs. They found that there is a risk that this leads to changes in organizational culture, structure and routines and that the mission is compromised upon. Dulincar et al. suggest what they call a mission filter between the competitive external environment and the organizations’ culture and structure to avoid a “mission creep”.

In another study, Weerawardena et al. examine how the dynamic environment between donor and NPO impact strategic orientation and how the need for sustainability impacts operational and value creating strategies at NPOs (Weerawardena, MC Donald and Mort 2010). The article looks into how “money” possibly affects the strategic and not only operational focus of an NPO. It is shown that NPOs also have to look at where the money is and develop strategies that not only incorporate ways of reaching the mission but also source out funding. Organizations must both assess whether a project fit the social mission and undertake highly

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1 For further reading by Drucker see also “Managing the Nonprofit Organization” (1990) where the first chapter is called “The mission comes first”.
competitive positions with regard to stakeholders and competitors (Weerawardena, McDonald and Mort, 2010). These positions can include both standard business concepts as well as innovative and unique strategies for the NPO sector, like investing in volunteers. Still this is a field of possible value and activity reorientation for NPOs.

Foster and Bradach likewise discuss this increasing pressure on NPOs to remain sustainable in an article based on a survey of NPO executives in the United States (Foster and Bradach, 2005). Although the respondents confirmed the increasing need for NPOs to be “self-reliant”, Foster and Bradach highlighted the danger that an NPO might get distracted from pursuing their core social missions if and when it decides to go to the uncharted territories of earned income. The study revealed that earned income only accounts for a small percentage of funding in most non-profit field and few “profit-seeking” ventures by NPOs actually make money. Foster and Bradach remind the non-profit sector to keep returning to its fundamental principles and its reason for being.

So even if mission comes first, how then are facts, paradigm and a changing context affecting strategy among NPOs? The theorists cited above explain the narrow road of forming strategies that match resource mobilization or funding opportunities with the social mission in a context of an increasing competitive environment. But even for NPOs that aren’t directly affected by that competitive environment, resources still have to be mobilized and external changes taken into consideration to keep the organization relevant. According to Wijkström (2010, p. 252), there is a risk that organizations get caught in clinging to available and existing resources and adjusting their activities to the same rather than creating new activities that actually will fulfill the mission and generate new resources. Doing this and losing connection with the mission will sooner or later lead to an organization empty of mission and whose activities are outdated and with no support from the arena/market. No organization exists in a vacuum. Clinging to activities that used to be popular is another pitfall, according to Wijkström, that could put the relevance of the organization at risk (2010, p. 252). This describes the important but difficult decisions that organizations have to make in order to keep relevant. To some extent, strategy has to be adjusted and even the mission has to be reinterpreted in light of facts and changing circumstances. If, for example, the mission of an organization founded a hundred years ago were to save the nature, the actual problems that need to be addressed would change over time. The theorists cited thus also describe the importance of strategy making that takes each unique mission into account when matching internal resources to external facts or opportunities. Kong and Prior develop the need to interact with both beneficiaries and donors in an article further described below.

Finally, the theorists also pinpoint an important condition within the sector: To be fundamentally mission driven and utilize the unique resources that are available.

2.3 Core competence and the NPO

In 2001, Weerawardena and Mort applied Barney’s resource-based theory of sustained competitive advantage in a non-profit environment. Weerawardena and Mort (2001) were able to translate strategic leadership in for-profit businesses into social entrepreneurship in non-profit organizations. Building on social entrepreneurship and its focus on core social mission, they were able to create a theoretical path from social entrepreneurship to building capabilities to developing innovations and finally achieving sustained competitive advantage. Weerawardena and Mort’s model implies that any of the organization’s value-creation activities can generate the much-needed innovation in order to remain sustainable.
In an article addressing the NFP sector, Eric Kong and Daniel Prior examine how intellectual capital contributes to competitive advantage in NPOs (2008). Kong and Prior also refer to Prahalad and Hamel when they break down intellectual capital (IC) into human capital (HC), relational capital (RC) and structural capital (SC) and show how these resources permeate an organization and thus can be considered the bases of an NPO’s core competence (Kong and Prior, 2008). The article confirms that the core competence can be a means of competitive advantage if it fulfills both organizational and client needs. A conceptual framework is presented that shows how the organization needs as well internal as external input to develop and fulfill those needs and objectives. Finally, Kong and Prior also suggest that relational capital between NPOs and its donators and recipients results in greater trust and commitment between the NPO and these groups. This is one unique factor of the NFP sector.

As already mentioned, Craig and Margee Hume addressed the need to develop a knowledge management model for the NFP sector that takes into account the characteristics of the sector (Hume and Hume, 2008). The article described the conditions for the small, medium or large organization and thereby points at the span of NPOs, from small, local volunteer-based to large global ones with much professionalism within them.

Finally, in an article by Eden and Ackermann (2000), the relationship between core or distinctive competencies and aspirations are explored. Along with Prahalad and Hamel (1993), they describe the distinctiveness of an organization as competitive advantage and suggest that these are visible within patterns of competencies. The authors suggest a cycle of coherence between distinctive competencies, livelihood scheme (for NPOs) or business model (for-profits) and values, goals and aspirations. They claim that core competencies are what primarily drive the aspiration system for both profit and non-profit organizations and explore the links between them further. According to them, a link between aspirations and core competencies must exist.
The conclusion is that strategy-making includes analyzing and determining how core competencies can be exploited as a livelihood scheme or a business model. The livelihood scheme is basically a resource-based strategy that summarizes how the organization is uniquely able to achieve its mission, meet its mandate, accomplish its goals and create public value. According to Eden and Ackermann, many voluntary groups have difficulties identifying their competencies, either because they don’t exist or because they haven’t considered their own uniqueness.

Ackermann et al. continued in another article (2007) to examine how distinctive competencies and distinctive core competencies can be exploited into livelihood schemes in the public sector. They continue to argue that instead of meeting external threats or opportunities, the organizations should focus on their aspirations. Aspirations can include stakeholder requirements, mission and goals. Ackermann et al. also discuss what they call critical success factors that represent necessary things for the organization to do in order to survive. They argue that these can look the same as the goals when managers and stakeholders agree, but they can also differ. Should that be the case, they argue, goals can support critical success factors when stakeholder views are dominant. Competencies help an organization to meet its goals or critical success factors. The article also included a mapping exercise to detect the distinctive core competencies.

The Eden and Ackermann article will be discussed below.

### 2.4 Discussion

Overall, we find the resource-based view on competitive advantage and the concept of core competence relevant to study from a NFP perspective. The resource-based view on internal resources as strength fits the NFP sector where the livelihood scheme and strategies somehow have to rest on internal values like the mission and where unique resources can be assumed to exist.

However as shown, the vast majority of research on core competencies have been conducted on the for-profit sector and in industries and manufacturing businesses characterized by multi-business units, large production and scale (see for example Ljungquist, 2008 and 2010; Hafeez et al., 2002a). This research and findings, even if valuable, is not directly transferable
to NPOs due to differences in working mechanisms between the sectors. Using the theories presented above thus calls for adaptation and an investigation into how sector specific conditions affect theory and models for core competence identification and links. Altogether, we find that theories presented above describe a complex world of forces, challenges and conditions seen from different perspectives. The theories can contribute in different ways to the research at hand: Some support our propositions while others contradict them or present rival theories to the conditions and links proposed.

Since we are interested in understanding if and how NPO unique resources contribute to core competence or associated concepts and many of the later scholars like Ljungquist only define resource as an input to the value chain, a more detailed definition from earlier scholars can be important as a guide. In that aspect, the VRIN attributes of some competitive resources from Barney can be useful also for understanding unique resources within the NFP sector.

Building on Grant who argues that mission statements (in the for-profit sector) usually are formulated on what market to serve will be interesting as a contradiction to our propositions for the NFP sector and can be viewed from a rival theory perspective. Our proposition is that in NPOs, the mission as a foundation is more stable.

Javidan’s hands-on process for identification of core competence has shed light on how questions can be asked to detect core competence. The suggestion that core competence has to be shared across SBUs may however constitute a problem at least for the small NPOs. We believe that the criteria of Ackermann et al. (2007, p. 704) would be more appropriate: that a core competence is one that is crucial to the success of the organization and that its core because of its location in the linkages of competencies to aspirations. Should that not hold in this thesis analysis, the Javidan definition can be used as a rival theory.

The model of Kong and Prior (2008) actually focuses on the NFP sector and shows the dynamics of both meeting the objectives of the organization’s mission and at the same time being in touch with external realities to mobilize resources. It addresses mission as well as money. This model however more explicitly talks about value creation for donors. As Kong and Prior put it: Service recipients and donators would essentially be the two stakeholder groups that would be most appropriate to target, since one is the recipient of non-profit services and the other is the resource providers of the services (Kong and Prior, 2008, p. 122). Although this citation focuses on NPOs that are service deliveries, the meaning can be translated to member-based or more advocacy oriented NPOs. Service recipients will then be equivalent to beneficiaries or members. In a member-based organization, it is, however, not unlikely that the beneficiaries are also the resource providers if a major part of the organizations’ resources are provided by the members. Kong and Prior’s premise, in our opinion, have two deficiencies: it focuses on intellectual capital and puts client and donor demands at an equal standing. However, as with Raynor’s reasoning, this may hold true and thus the descriptions of Kong and Prior could still be used as a rival theory in the analysis process.

Ljungquist’s definitions of capabilities and competences are clear and useful for understanding how core competence interacts with associated concepts. For example, the characteristic of adaptation to customer needs or in the NFP case, the adaptation to beneficiaries, members or other stakeholder needs would be interesting to study. As previously seen, other models have been used to explore knowledge management within the profit and non-profit sector. We find, however, that the theories presented by Ljungquist (2008; 2010) center around the need of a core competence. Presumably those needs are influenced by market demand and strategy but how these links look or work is not explored. In the NFP sector, we propose that mission has to be a starting point for strategy; hence it is
not evident that the relations between core competence and associated concepts will look the same. How the links between core competence and associated concepts can be defined in the NFP sector will be explored.

Raynor’s complete framework for how market forces, core competence and values contribute to mission, and vision and strategy has some similarities with Wijkström’s model for NPOs already illustrated. However, as noted, this model was developed for the for-profit sector and actually illustrates the very difference between the two sectors. Here, mission is a result of values and core competences, while in the NFP sector, mission comes first and how core competence is connected has yet to be explored.

Eden and Ackermann address important linkages between organizations’ aspirations and its core competencies. With the basic idea that core competencies always must be connected to aspirations and livelihood schemes they contribute like Raynor to an understanding of how core competence relates to success factors. The definition of a core competence is its location in the linkages of competencies to aspirations. However, Eden and Ackermann (2000) and Ackermann et al. (2007) do not fully explain what comes first in the circle of coherence between values/goals/aspirations and core distinctive competencies and livelihood schemes or business models. Aspirations can include stakeholder requirements, mission and goals and thus gives no exact explanation as to whether a core competence can be linked foremost to social mission. Linkages to associated concepts are not explored in detail. As shown earlier, Ackermann et al. also argues that many NPOs don’t possess core competencies. These propositions will also be used as a rival theory.

Finally some comments on the criteria for core competence, as defined by Prahalad and Hamel. Because non-profit organizations don’t have customers in such, and because the word market relates to customers, we will when using the definition slightly adapt it to the non-profit sector:

1) Core competence should be unique and contribute to the provision of services or activities that few other institutions are able to provide with the same qualities.

2) Core competence should contribute to end-service benefits whether it be to internal (members) or external (beneficiaries, donors, grant-giving bodies).

3) Core competence should contribute to the development of a variety of services or activities offered by the organization.

The theory review of the sector and core competence has led us to the following theoretical framework.

2.5 Theoretical framework

To sum up, this thesis will rely on the following definitions and theories:

- The use of the definition of core competence suggested by Prahalad and Hamel, but slightly adapted as presented above. (1990).


- The use of the model describing the links between aspirations and core competence suggested by Eden and Ackermann (2000)
The use of the VRIN attributes for a detailed understanding of resources with potential to have competitive advantage (Barney 1991).

Following scholars on core competence (Javidan, 1998), the proposition that core competence can be used as a vehicle for defining strategic competitive advantage among NPOs.

Following scholars on core competence and the NFP sector (Dolnicar et al., 2008; Eden and Ackermann, 2000), the proposition that core competence besides a “mission filter” can be used as a counterweight in meeting donor demands and as a compass in strategy formulation.

The use of a structural-operational definition to define the NFP sector suggested by Salamon and Anheier (1997). An NFP sector is a collection of entities that are organized, i.e., institutionalized to some extent, private, i.e., separate from the government, non-profit distributing, i.e., not returning any profits generated to their owners, self-governing, i.e., control their own activities, voluntary, i.e., involving some meaningful degree of voluntary participation.

The use of the ICNPO to classify organizations included in this study (Salamon and Anheier, 1997)

Following scholars on the NFP sector (see for example Wijkström, 2010; Hume and Hume, 2008, Weerawardena et al., 2010), the assumption that there are essential differences between profit and non-profit organizations and that an investigation of core competence in NPOs has to be taken into consideration and explore those differences.

Following scholars on the NFP sector (see for example Wijkström and Malmborg, 2005; Dolnicar, et al. 2008; Wijkström, 2010), the assumption that successful strategies among NPOs have to be directed towards reaching the mission and fund-raising initiatives should align to that strategy and goal.

### 2.6 Research questions

In order to achieve the goal of exploring the differences between profit and non-profit sectors and by doing so, discover whether core competence also applies to NPOs and if existing models for its mechanisms apply or need to be adjusted, the following research questions will be the basis of our data collection.

- Can the concept of core competence as part of a resource-based view be identified in the non-profit sector?
- If core competence is identified, what do those competencies consist of and how can the model for links to associated concepts as suggested by Ljungquist (2008, 2010) be applied?
- If core competence can be identified, how is the concept of core competence linked to the non-profit sector specific characteristics? More specifically:
  - Is there a link between mission and core competence that can be anticipated? In what way is core competence related to the mission of the organization?
  - NPOs possess unique resources like members, volunteers and supporters that can be expected to contribute to core competence or its associated concepts. Thus, when studying core competence among NPOs, how do these resources contribute to core competence?
This proposed research model would be used:

![Diagram of research model](image)

**Mission**

**Core Competence**

**Support**

**Improvement**

**Utilization**

**Capability**
- System/Routines
- Capacity
- Communication

**Competence**
- Development
- Adaptation
- Transfer

**Resource**
- Input to the value process

**Continuous link**

**Intermittent link**

**PROPOSED LINK**

**FIGURE 2.6: RESEARCH MODEL DEVELOPED FROM LJUNGQUIST (2008)**

Finally in our concluding remarks, it will be discussed if the notion of a special added value (Weerawardena and Mort, 2001; Wijkström and Malmborg, 2005) among NPOs can be related to core competence as defined by the NPOs included as cases in this paper.
3. Method

This chapter will first discuss selection of research method. After that the multi-case study design that was chosen for this research is presented along with data collection procedures and analysis method, and finally validity and reliability is discussed.

3.1 Research method

To find the most accurate and feasible research method and design, how other scholars have dealt with similar research, and both general books on research design as well as more focused books and articles on case studies as a research method were studied.

3.1.1 Selecting the research method

According to Creswell (2009), selecting quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods approach depends on factors like strategy and research problem. The table below describes in brief how different methods approach a research problem.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative Methods</th>
<th>Mixed Methods</th>
<th>Qualitative methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-determined</td>
<td>Both pre-determined and emerging methods</td>
<td>Emerging methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrument based questions</td>
<td>Both open- and closed-ended questions</td>
<td>Open-ended questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance data, attitude data, observational data, and census data</td>
<td>Multiple forms of data drawing on all possibilities</td>
<td>Interview data, observation data, document data, and audio-visual data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistical analysis</td>
<td>Statistical and text analysis</td>
<td>Text and image analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistical interpretation</td>
<td>Across databases interpretation</td>
<td>Themes, patterns interpretation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 3.1: QUANTITATIVE, MIXED AND QUALITATIVE METHODS (FROM CRESWELL, 2009, P. 15)

Approaches to research in the social sciences fall under the general term “qualitative research” (Flic, 2002). If the research problem consists of a concept or phenomenon that needs to be understood because little research has been done, the study merits a qualitative approach (Creswell, 2009). The study of how core competence applies to the NFP sector fits that description. As have been shown in previous chapters, not much research has been done on this even though core competence has been explored within the for-profit sector. Exploring if and how core competence is applicable also merits a qualitative and exploratory design as the case study method allows for an understanding of the empirical foundations of a theory through detail and depth of description (Hamel, Dufour and Fortin, 1993). Although description does not, in itself, provide explanation, the case study ensures that the empirical foundations that a proposition will be constructed on will be clearly defined.

Since quantitative strategies include survey research with a large sampling or experimental research (Creswell, 2009), those strategies didn’t seem to fit the research. On the contrary, qualitative methods like case studies where the researcher explores in depth for example a process seem to be more appropriate. Case studies also satisfy the three principles of the
qualitative method, which are description, comprehension and explanation (Tellis, 1997) as well as provide opportunities for theory building to form a new theory (Eisenhardt, 1989).

How the research question is presented can be another guiding instrument as to what method is most suitable. For example, if the question includes finding out who, what, how many etc., a quantitative survey or archival analysis is probably the most efficient method (Yin, 2009). If, on the other hand, the question includes finding out how or why or cause and effect, then experiment or case study is probably a better choice. Experiment, as a method, requires from the researcher to have control over behavioral events and be able to manipulate them. Since that cannot be utilized in the present research problem, this method was dropped.

We then came to the conclusion that, similar to other research done in this field, a qualitative method would be most advantageous. The manner of data collection through different sources and methods and using open-ended questions in an exploratory manner appeared relevant and feasible and was looked into more thoroughly. The case study was reviewed further since it seemed to meet the criteria of the present research. The case study also has distinct advantages when a “how” or “why” question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control (Yin, 2009, p.13).

3.1.2 Case study

Robert K Yin has in depth described how and when to conduct case studies in his book *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (2009). According to him, “a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). He also states that the case study inquiry

- Copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result
- Relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result
- Benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (Yin, 2009, p. 18)

Case study research is a meticulous methodological path that cannot be conducted without thoroughly developed research questions or objectives. Therefore, theory development as part of the design phase is essential. Proposed theories or concepts are however tentative and should be tested against data thoroughly. Building theory from case studies involves a recurrent overlap of data analysis with data collection (Eisenhardt, 1989). Equally important are formal and repeatable procedures during the conduct of the research. Like an experiment, a case study shall be repeatable and during similar circumstances, the result should then be the same. To assure quality of research, measures to build validity and reliability in case study research includes the use of multiple sources, draft reviewing by key informants, establishing chains of evidence, addressing rival explanations and the usage of case study protocols. The research design for this study will be described further down.

Theory building from case studies is most appropriate in the early stages of research on a topic or to provide freshness to an already existing research topic where existing theory appears inadequate. This criterion fits the goals of the present study.

Case studies can be conducted as a single case or as multiple cases. Multiple-case design where the study can be replicated in more than one case, or where the researcher wants to examine a phenomenon in two situations with anticipated differences, is preferred if resources are available. However, rationales for single case studies are when it represents critical,
unique, representative typical cases. A rationale could also be revelatory or longitudinal purposes (Yin, 2009).

We have, for two reasons, decided to utilize a multiple-case design. First of all, there are two authors: one is based in Canada while the other is based in Sweden. We both wanted to contribute with data collection from our respective countries. Though this study is not a comparative study between countries, it must still be taken into consideration that contextual and cultural differences in the NFP sector may possibly exist. The second reason was that we chose to explore the research question on a variety of organizations opening up for the research propositions to be tested and explored in different contexts. The selection of organizations will be further described below.

3.2 The multiple-case study

Here we will present how we did chose the cases included, how data was collected, how analysis were done and make comments on case specific validity and reliability.

3.2.1 Case study selections

Different perspectives guided us in choosing organizations to include in this study. First, the idea was to include organizations of likeminded classification; of about the same size and that were organized in the same manner. This would have increased the validity of the multiple-case design as multiple cases replicate response patterns thereby strengthening the validity of the study’s results (Yin, 2009). However it turned out to be very difficult to recruit such organizations within the limited time frame that the thesis calls for. Instead, another road was taken where the differences between the organizations actually contribute to a deeper understanding of how the research question and propositions are applicable to different types of organizations (Eisenhardt, 1989).

The case study was conducted in two local organizations and in two national organizations, thus size and scope of the organizations are different. Another difference is that the two Swedish organizations are member-based while the other two are not. The two Swedish organizations chosen are both advocacy groups under group 7 Law, Advocacy and Policy of the ICNPO while the Canadian groups are both service-oriented groups under group 4 Social Services of the ICNPO (Salamon and Anheier, 1997). The number of organizations was also discussed, but feasibility had a major role in the decision to go for a total of four organizations. According to Eisenhardt (1989), this would be sufficient since a number between four to ten cases usually works well. Hamel et al. (1993, p. 35) and Yin (2009) both strongly argue that in the case study approach, it is not the number of cases that is relevant, as this should not be confused with the sampling logic where selection from population is of utmost importance. Rather, they argue, what is important is that every case that is selected meets the goals of the study. Douglas (2008) confirms this view by suggesting that instead of using traditional research designs, methodologies need to fit the situation and provide responses to questions being examined by the study.

3.2.2 Data collection

A crucial strength of the case study method involves using multiple sources and techniques in the data gathering process (Soy, 1997). Therefore, website and hard copy documents, an initial questionnaire and interviews with representatives from selected organizations and stakeholders were gathered. Data collection started with a letter of introduction to the president, executive director or equivalent in the organizations where the purpose and
research questions were presented and collaboration was asked for. From organizations with positive responses, follow-ups were made where names and email addresses were requested of a selected group of 10-20 persons who have been with the organization for preferably more than five years or held positions in the board and/or management committee or in general, were considered likely to have good to expert knowledge about the organizations’ strengths and scope of work.

In the preparation phase, various documents were collected from the organizations: annual work plans, annual reports, strategic plans (if available) and organizational charts to give an initial understanding of the scope of work the organizations are doing and what their mission statements or livelihood plans look like.

Parallel to that, an initial questionnaire was distributed to persons chosen by the leadership of the organizations. The purpose of this questionnaire was to lay down the groundwork for the interviews since time restrictions among organizations were anticipated and thus the time for interviews was anticipated to be limited. The idea was to get a perception of what possibly could be candidates for core competence in the organizations as well as provide the interviewees with what questions to expect in the interviews.

Interviews were conducted with a smaller group of key informants from the organizations. The key informants are specified in the next section. The interviews were conducted both individually in person, by phone or by email correspondence and in a group session at one organization. The interviews took approximately one to one and a half hour each, notes were taken and the interviews were recorded. Before the interviews, all participants were informed of the purpose of the study and how results were going to be used. In cases of quoting directly from the interviews, the interviewee was consulted to agree on specific wordings. The respective analysis on each organization has been checked and approved by an appointed person at each organization. In Sweden, the interviews were held in Swedish and later translated by the interviewer. During the interviews, notes were taken and the questions described below under 1st level questions was used, see Annex A.

Finally, documents already described and/ or interviews with external stakeholders were used to triangulate findings.

To increase the reliability and to assure that the same procedures are followed between cases, a case study protocol was designed as suggested by Yin (2009).

### 3.2.3 Key informants

As described above, the leaders of respective organizations were requested to suggest persons to interview. They were asked to provide a list of employees, volunteers or members that they thought might be willing and interested in filling out the questionnaire. It was also stressed that it would be advantageous if the potential respondents had been with the organization for at least five years or possessed valuable knowledge on the organization’s strengths and operations. The key informants in our case study were: Executive directors, presidents, managers of human resources and other managers or elected activists/volunteers with a position in the organization. For detailed information, please see and Table C1-4. A minimum of four, but in some cases up to seven, persons from each organization were interviewed. The average number of years that respondents had been with the organization was 13 years.

The leaders as well as the interviewees were assured that the material and answers provided would be used for the master’s thesis only and not used for any other purpose. A copy of the master’s thesis for reference, once it has been submitted to the Institute’s archives, was
promised. Given the topic of the study, it is our belief that no ethical considerations apart from what has been described had to be taken into account.

3.2.4 Analysis method

In principle, an inductive analysis method was used based on data that include answers to open-ended questions (Creswell, 2009). However, constant comparison to existing theory, research questions and propositions were done all through the analysis process. A set of questions to find patterns across cases and to compare the material with the theory was developed and used for analysis, see Appendix A. We initially relied on the theoretical propositions formulated for this case study. By testing the data against those propositions and rivaling theories or practice as described in the case study protocol, we sought to aim for quality and validity. As Eisenhardt has pointed out (1989), particularly in theory-building case studies, it is extremely important to tie conclusions to existing literature since findings rest on a limited number of cases. Pattern-mapping and similar techniques for organizing data may be used since the topic includes exploring the links between different concepts.

Following the recommendations of Yin (2009), we aimed at establishing a chain of evidence from existing theory via evidence to conclusions. To establish this, sufficient citations from the data are necessary and the case study protocol was followed.

```
Case study report
  Case study database or equivalent
  Citations to specific evidentiary sources in the case study database
  Case study protocol (linking questions to protocol topics)
  Case study Questions
```

**FIGURE 3.1: CHAIN OF EVIDENCE (FROM YIN, 2009, P. 123)**

Juxtaposition of contradictory or paradoxical data is also important and contributes to generating conclusions or new theory (Eisenhardt, 1989). Eisenhardt also stresses the importance of constant iteration backward and forward between steps (1989).

Triangulation leading to converging evidence was used. As described above, data was collected from different sources. Any conclusion or finding in the thesis shall thus optimally have been supported by more than one source or at least not contradicted. The stronger the evidence from multiple sources, the more valid will the conclusions be. This topic will be reflected on under the next section “Validity, reliability and generalizability”.

The four quality principles described by Yin (2009) was used to guide this study: Attend to all evidences, all major rival interpretations, address the most significant aspect and to use our own prior expert knowledge in the area.
3.2.5 Operationalizing research questions into interview questions

In order to gather data to answer our research questions, we produced interview questions that could provide us with that data and still be understandable to the interviewees. We also aimed at using open-ended questions during the interviews to get as much information as possible without influencing the answers. The first question was asked to establish that the interviewee had the same view of the organization’s mission or aspirations as were described in the organization’s guiding documents, website etc. The second question was asked to find out how the interviewee described the main lines of business or operations within the organization. After these two initial questions, the third question on competencies was asked, with the intent of capturing exactly what the interviewee perceived as the most crucial competencies within the organization. Then questions on resources and systems, routines etc. were asked to find out what the interviewees spontaneously would mention and what they regarded as important to back-up the competencies. Finally, in the relation to the most important competence or competencies mentioned, check-up questions were asked to verify whether these could qualify as core competencies. The interview questions were:

1. How would you describe the mission and aspirations of your organization?
2. How does the organization try to meet these aspirations/mission?
3. Describe the most important competencies within your organization?
4. What are your most important resources?
5. How would you describe the most important systems, routines or capacities within your organization?
6. Do you think that the possible core competence mentioned by you meet the following criteria:
   a. Is unique and contribute to the provision of services or activities that few other institutions are able to provide with the same qualities as your organization
   b. Contributes to end-service benefits whether it be to internal (members) or external (beneficiaries, donors, grant-giving bodies)
   c. Contributes to the development of a variety of services or activities offered by the organization.
Existing research on core competence mainly relate to for-profit organizations. Recognizing the essential differences between profit and non-profit sectors the purpose of this thesis is to explore those differences and find out whether core competence also apply to NPOs and if existing models for its mechanisms in that case apply or needs to be adjusted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem Formulation</th>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Interview questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prahalad and Hamel (1990)</td>
<td>Can the concept of core competence as part of a resource-based view be identified in the non-profit sector?</td>
<td>Describe the most important competencies within your organization?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ljungquist (2008, 2010)</td>
<td>If core competence is identified, what do those competencies consist of and how can the model for links to associated concepts as suggested by Ljungquist be applied</td>
<td>What are your most important resources?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salamon and Anheier (1997)</td>
<td></td>
<td>How would you describe the most important systems, routines or capacities within your organization?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wijkström, (2010)</td>
<td></td>
<td>How would you say that the competence(ies), mentioned by you under Q3, meet the following criteria: […]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hume and Hume (2008)</td>
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<td>Weerawardena et al., (2010)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eden and Ackermann (2000)</td>
<td>If core competence can be identified, how is the concept of core competence linked to the non-profit sector specific characteristics? More specifically: Is there a link between mission and core competence that can be anticipated? In what way is core competence related to the mission of the organization?</td>
<td>How would you describe the mission and aspirations of your organization?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wijkstöm and Malmborg (2005)</td>
<td></td>
<td>How does the organization try to meet these aspirations/mission?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dolnicar, et al. (2008)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wijkström, 2010</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wijkstöm and Malmborg, (2005)</td>
<td>If core competence can be identified, how is the concept of core competence linked to the non-profit sector specific characteristics? More specifically: NPOs possess unique resources like members, volunteers and supporters that can be expected to contribute to core competence or its associated concepts. Thus, when studying core competence among NPOs, how do these resources contribute to core competence?</td>
<td>Describe the most important competencies within your organization?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dolnicar, et al. (2008)</td>
<td></td>
<td>What are your most important resources?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wijkström (2010)</td>
<td></td>
<td>How would you describe the most important systems, routines or capacities within your organization?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Barney (1991)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2 The relation between problem formulation, theory, research questions and interview questions.
3.2.6 Validity, reliability and analytic generalization

As far as the authors can judge, the “right” interviewees who could be anticipated to know the organizations have been interviewed. Through the questionnaire more respondents and views on the organizations were collected. Data and findings have been checked for verification and plausibility with the organizations. However, due to time constraints, it has not been possible to interview a larger number of representatives or to further follow up on details to track reasons and enhance the validity. Because interviews as a research method is largely subjective, a few sample interviews of stakeholders like donors or beneficiaries were included and/or feedback that are published in newspapers and organization newsletters in order to either enforce or debunk interview results from organization employees and managers. This procedure is also recommended by Prahalad and Hamel (1994). In some cases stakeholder views have already been assembled and analyzed in different assessments or evaluations of the organizations. In those cases these findings were used as data to triangulate findings. A review of website, organizational charts, annual reports and other documents were also done to triangulate the data.

To make research more reliable and valid, multiple sources of evidence thus have been used, as well as carefully kept data (Yin, 2009). We also aimed at constructing a chain of evidence, as described under section 3.2.3.

We had, to some extent, interacted or networked with some of the organizations before this study was done and thus some initial understanding of the organizations’ mission and scope of work existed. This has in many ways benefited the contacts with the organizations and the understanding of their work. In order not to draw preconceived conclusions, the research methods and case study protocol were followed as closely as possible.

Some words to reflect on though, is that Yin argues that case studies are some of the most difficult types of research to conduct and demands “a well-trained and experienced investigator” for high-quality results (Yin, 2009, p 68). Seen from that perspective, the reliability and validity of this case study can of course be questioned as we are not experienced or well trained in this method. This may have influence on the reliability of the findings. However, precautions have been taken to minimize biased behavior, data collection or conclusions.

As already noted the validity of findings in this study is affected by the fact that included organizations not are alike when it comes to size, member-based or not scope of work they engage in. Had they been that it would have increased the validity of the multiple-case design as multiple cases replicate response patterns thereby strengthening the validity of the study’s results (Yin, 2009).

On analytic generalization, it has to be emphasized that only a four organizations are included in this case study. The two member-based organizations, for example, work directly for the benefits of their members who are also the beneficiaries and this may have an impact on how resources or representativity are linked to core competence. Other member-based organizations that work for beneficiaries other than their members (like for example the Red Cross) may show other links to members and beneficiaries. It is also a fact that the majority of organizations included are large and established with plenty of resources and therefore it cannot automatically be expected that what goes for these organizations can be generalized to smaller organizations. More studies on core competence in the NFP sector would be necessary.
3.3 Presentation of organizations

The organizations included in this multiple-case design are:

A) RFSL - The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights

An advocacy organization (ICNPO 7100) that works for LGBTI rights in Sweden. RFSL is a non-profit member-based federation where members take part in strategy and policy decisions and have a vote at the yearly assembly. At the yearly assembly, the board and president are also elected. It is non-partisan and not affiliated with any religious organization. The organization was voted lobbyist of the year in 2001. The organization was founded 1950 and is one of the world’s oldest LGBT organizations. It currently has approximately 4,000 members. The organization has 27 local branches around Sweden and a head-office in Stockholm.

RFSL’s vision and ultimate goal is a society that is characterized by respect for and acceptance of people’s differences on such a sweeping scale that organizations such as RFSL are no longer necessary. RFSL’s objective is that the same rights, opportunities and obligations will be applicable for LGBT people as they are for everyone else in society.

RFSL works along four major strategies to improve the quality of life for LGBT people: political lobbying, information dissemination including educational programs, organization of social and support activities, including counseling centers and legal assistance to asylum seekers etc and finally, they are engaged in international work. (RFSL, 2011)

RFSL is organized, as a federation with local and national levels. The organization is private, i.e., separate from the government and non-profit distributing, i.e., not returning any profits generated to their owners. RFSL is based on its individual members that are approximately 4000 in number. The members decide on the agenda and participate through different commissions of trust to the work of the organization. The organization is thus self-governing, i.e., control their own activities and voluntary, i.e., involving some meaningful degree of voluntary participation. Received grants account for 86% of the organization’s revenues and other major sources of funding are contracted consultancies and member fees (RFSL, 2010).

B) Hyresgästföreningen - The Swedish National Union of Tenants

A consumer protection organization, (ICNPO 7200), this is a democratic member’s organization for Swedish tenants. The federation assembly is the highest executive body and attended by members elected at the regional assemblies. The federation is not affiliated with any specific political party. The basic objective is for everyone to be entitled to good housing at a reasonable cost. More than half a million households are members of the Swedish Union of Tenants and over 10 thousand people are engaged as elected representatives within the organization that was founded in 1923.

The Swedish National Union of Tenants as a federation works both locally to address living conditions in the neighborhood, on a municipal level, negotiating rent and addressing local tenant concerns as well as on a regional and national level where political lobbying and advocacy for tenancy rights and the building of more rented apartments is in focus. Member surveys have identified that services like “Negotiating rent”, “Legal counsel” and “Policy work” are ranked the most important. Member statistics show a stable level over the last ten years. The Swedish Union of Tenants is a member of the international organization, IUT (International Union of Tenants). (Hyresgästföreningen, 2011)
The union of tenants is organized, as a federation with local, regional and national levels. The organization is private, i.e., separate from the government and non-profit distributing, i.e., not returning any profits generated to their owners. However, just as cooperatives or some other organizations the union work for the economic interests of their members, in the sense of rent being kept at a reasonable cost. The tenants union is based on its individual members that are over 500,000 in numbers, and constitutes approximately 40% of all Swedish tenants. The members decide on the agenda and participate through different commissions of trust to the work of the organization. The organization is thus self-governing, i.e., control their own activities and voluntary, i.e., involving some meaningful degree of voluntary participation. Approximately two thirds of the organizations revenues comes from member fees, around one forth of the revenues constitutes fees charged for the negotiating of yearly rents. (Hyresgästföreningen, 2010b).

C) The John Howard Society of North Island

The John Howard Society of North Island (ICNPO 4100) is a charitable organization that promotes and fosters safer and healthier communities through the combined and diverse efforts of citizens, organizations and governments, providing appropriate programs of rehabilitation, education, prevention and healing for those who need an opportunity to achieve, maintain or regain a balance within their communities. The JHSNI staff and volunteers of around 80 runs a variety of programs for delinquent youths and adult offenders including alcohol and drug services, mentoring programs for at-risk children and youth, medical treatments for adult sex offenders and providing family care homes. It receives funding from the Provincial (state) government, private and corporate donations and also undertakes community fund-raising events. (The John Howard Society of North Island, 2011)

The JHSNI is organized as a local community group under the auspices of the umbrella organization the John Howard Society of Canada. It is private and non-profit distributing, collecting grants from both private and government agencies which are used to run programs and activities through its volunteers and paid contractors and some paid staff members. Almost 75% of its total grants come from the Ministry of Children and Family Development with the rest coming from various government agencies, gaming proceeds and donations. The JHSNI is governed at a policy level by a board of directors consisting of outstanding members of the community who volunteer their time to the Society. The board is tasked with hiring the executive director who, in turn, manages staff, volunteers and contractors.

The John Howard Society of Canada is a federation of provincial and local societies comprised of people whose goal is to understand and respond to problems of crime, to work with people who have come into conflict with the law, to review, evaluate and advocate for changes in the criminal justice process, and to engage in public education on matters involving criminal law and its application. The society is named after the British prison reformer, John Howard (1726-1790) and traces its roots from a group of church workers in 1867. All societies under the umbrella of the John Howard Society are guided by the following principles:

- People have the right to live in a safe and peaceful society as well as a responsibility implied by this right to respect the law.
- Every person has intrinsic worth and the right to be treated with dignity, equity, fairness and compassion without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability when involved with the criminal justice process.
- All people have the potential to become responsible citizens.
• Every person has the right and the responsibility to be informed about, and involved in, the criminal justice process.
• Justice is best served through measures that resolve conflicts, repair harm, and restore peaceful relations in society.
• Independent, autonomous non government voluntary organizations have a vital role in the criminal justice process.

D) Comox Valley Community Justice Centre
The Comox Valley Community Justice Centre (ICNPO 4100) is an organized community-based non-profit group established in 1998 that offers a variety of restorative justice and conflict resolution services on a confidential, no-cost basis for the Comox Valley community on North Vancouver Island. The CV-CJC is private (not government) and non-profit distributing, whose 2010 funding consisted of 32% funding from the local government to operate the restorative justice service and the rest coming from grants and individual donations. The group is self-governing, almost entirely voluntary and is guided by a board of directors that is composed of six elected and five appointed members with an operational staff of over a hundred volunteer administrative workers, case coordinators, professionally trained facilitators, peacemakers, cross-cultural trainers, short-term transformative dialogue facilitators and a critical incident response protocol working group. (The Comox Valley Community Justice Centre, 2011)

The Centre was established in the mid 90s when a group of delegates from the Comox Valley (population estimated at 65 000) attended the annual convention of Family Court and Youth Justices Committees of British Columbia where the idea of Restorative Justice had been featured. The group conducted wide-ranging research and organized meetings of professionals in the justice system and other community service agencies to review the resources available in the Comox Valley for persons in conflict with the law. These meetings resulted in a proposal to outline the steps needed to establish a forum for applying restorative justice principles in the community. A steering committee of volunteers was established which developed a process to enable those who had been hurt by others to meet face to face with those who had caused the hurt in a safe, neutral environment within the community. Thus in 1998, the Community Justice Centre of the Comox Valley Society was incorporated.

The CVCJC focuses on case referrals of youth and adults, for a variety of criminal matters from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, from major retailers’ loss prevention officers, municipal bylaw officers, schools and other community organizations. These volunteers are assigned various responsibilities such as office administration, case co-ordination, and resolution conferencing through to public education, presentations, and other forms of conflict resolution.

Through the principles of restorative justice, respondents are referred to the Centre as an alternative to being formally charged and processed through the criminal courts. Where the case is successful, the complainant has the opportunity to receive compensation for the damages sustained and the respondent learns to accept responsibility for their actions, to make amends, and avoid the life-long consequences of a criminal record.
4. Findings

Under this section, we present the findings and data from each organization. The data collected are organized into headings based on our interview questions, and then is followed by a table summarizing the findings from all cases.

4.1 The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans-gender Rights, RFSL

Documents received from this organization consisted of:

- Annual report 2009 (RFSL, 2010)
- Two external assessments of the organization: an exposition of the proprietary name or trademark (NMA, 2008) and an assessment of the organizations HIV-preventive work (FBA Holding AB, 2008)
- The website provided statutes and information on the scope of work the organization is involved in.

Interviews were conducted with the executive director (Sjödin), president (Westerlund), vice president (Möllerop) an ombudsman supporting the local branches and specifically on HIV and health concerns (Orre) and finally an advocacy and policy manager (Jonsson).

The interview was done as a group interview. 14 persons within the organization, both staff and volunteers answered the questionnaire, of which 13 completed the whole questionnaire. The average value of years that the respondents had been with the organization was 9.96 years.

4.1.1 The mission

According to the website and the organization principles “RFSL’s vision and ultimate goal is a society that is characterized by respect for and acceptance of people’s differences on such a sweeping scale that organizations such as RFSL are no longer necessary. RFSL’s objective is that the same rights, opportunities and obligations will be applicable for LGBT people as they are for everyone else in society.” (RFSL, 2011) The interviewees describe the mission of the organization in concordance with this.

“It’s about human rights for LGBT persons, against discrimination and to represent the members interests”. (Sjödin, May 12, 2011).

In essence, the mission has been the same since the organization was established, however in 2001 transgender persons were included as a target group.

4.1.2 Scope of work

The most important lines of business are described by all sources of data namely: Political lobbying, to educate, communicate and change public opinion, organization of social and support activities and finally counseling services both on health and personal matters as well as legal assistance like for example asylum or wills. The organization also involves in international work.

The NMA report on the trademark (2008) includes a survey that covers 1008 people recruited on chosen websites for the community, and here it was found that three major areas were appreciated by the respondents: RFSL offers togetherness, RFSL informs and supports and RFSL stands up for LGBT rights.
When asked about the historical development of activities and work the interviewees mention that in the fifties and sixties it was more difficult to engage in political and public lobbying due to the public opinion. At that time the organization of social and support activities were even more important than it is today. Still today it differs between the local branches what focus one has on the scope of work. This partly due to individual members interest and partly due to what other commercial options there are for social activities at the local setting. Of course in the 50s these commercial establishments that provided meeting places didn’t exist at all.

Another external factor that has influenced the organization is the HIV-epidemic. Especially during the nineties the organization focused on developing HIV-preventive messages and counseling adapted to their target groups. The organization was deeply involved in this work since it was about the lives, rights and health of their members, but as the executive director noted

“There was also funding available for this, so maybe we for some years came to focus too much on this in relation to other issues. Today it’s more leveled out”. (Sjödin, May 12, 2011)

4.1.3 Competencies

The website and information materials indicate some of the competencies within the organization. For example RFSL offers consultancy services through “RFSL Media & Info Inc.” where they provide trainings and give lectures on LGBT related issues. Since 2008 they also issue certificates to institutions that have gone through specific trainings and other processes as set up by RFSL. As mentioned above, RFSL was voted lobbyist of the year in 2001 and this points to excellent social, networking and advocating skills in political lobbying. Other competencies that were mentioned were on psychosocial and medical health counseling and legal advice, necessary to provide those services.

When discussing important competencies with the interviewees, the informants agreed however that the most important and unique competence is a LGBT-competence that is based on both theory and empiric experience that comes from the members themselves and is characterized by high levels of commitment and motivation. As one interviewee pointed out

“You can for example get counseling and advice at other places than RFSL, but it always involves some risk of being mistreated. One member, for example, described that she was seeking help because of a depression after her mother died unexpectedly. But instead of dealing with her depression the counselor focused on her homosexuality and her relation to her mother. She didn’t receive accurate help obviously”. (Möllerop, May 12, 2011)

The interviewees further discussed the motivation part, and suggested that for a group of people who are, and certainly looking back have been, from time to time under attack or need to defend and explain their claims, sticking together, taking joint responsibility and being highly motivated comes naturally.

The questionnaire also asked about competitors and in case of such, what important characteristic that sets the organization apart from the rest. The data revealed that RFSL has few competitors in the area of LGBT rights and health, but that to some extent the organization has to compete for funding with other organizations in particular areas of work. In these cases it is proposed that what sets the organization apart is its name recognition, its professional approach and reputation and its good foundation in the community.

The FBA Holding report (2008) on the HIV preventive work of the organization also lifts the combination of professionalism and nearness to the target group as strength. In a section about RFSL’s surplus value (this assessment is based on interviews with stakeholders) it is
concluded that RFSL provides services that few other institutions or organizations would be able to provide. To quote:

“The evaluation shows that RFSL possesses a surplus value constituted by a strong trademark, legitimacy, knowledge and commitment within the HIV preventive work.” (FBA Holding, 2008, p. 62. Author’s translation)

4.1.4 Resources and capabilities

On the question about important resources, systems, routines and capabilities, the interviewees mentioned the trademark and the activists, both members and staff as important resources. In this case, it is important to note that more respondents from RFSL reported that the reason for they being with the organization was personal; 60% at RFSL as compared to for example 11% at the tenants union. The discussions during the interview also reveal a culture of learning by doing that benefits both staff and activists. As seen in the discussion above having an empiric competence on LGBT, which basically means being a homosexual, bisexual or transgendered person, is crucial for legitimacy, understanding and commitment. But even if that is a very important condition other competencies and skills are of course also required considering the scope of work the organization engages in.

It was also discussed how these resources are sustained. According to Westerlund, the management of the trademark is done more or less intuitive, since well-developed communication plans etc are lacking. However RFSL appears very much aware of how they are seen and on the coverage in different media, and as seen above in external assessments their trademark is highly valued.

“We try to think of..., that we are seen in connection to reasonably right questions and in reasonably right forums so that we show the scope of questions that we work with”. (Westerlund, May 12, 2011).

The interviewees also raised the importance of activists and commissions of trust. Since the organization to a large extent is dependent on grants for specific parts of their work, the resources that activists provide in time and commitment is crucial for the organization to have its freedom and to be able to engage in other issues prioritized by the organization.

“That is why it is extremely important to have elected activists in central positions... Because we can do the work that the staff may not have time to due to other obligations (for example linked to grants, author’s comment). [...] We can run a more general political work”. (Möllerop, May 12, 2011)

Activists or members of course also contribute to activities and campaigns etc. For that purpose several trainings and activist handbooks are available for members. Not the least the outreach work that RFSL performs as part of HIV preventive campaigns is dependent on activists. The FBA Holding report reports that one important function of the central office is to support and provide expertise to the local branches that do outreach work. (FBA Holding, 2008).

Surveys conducted on new members reveal that there are three major reasons for joining the organization: To support, to get, or to be actively involved. (Sjödin, May 12, 2011). RFSL however has experienced a member drop during the last years and tries to find new ways of reaching new members. To recruit more members and work more actively both with the trademark, members and activists is highlighted in the organization’s annual work plan. Communication as part of this is also discussed and interviewees report an increased consciousness in this area.
Finally, or actually first of all in the interview on the question of important systems or routines, Westerlund brings up basic organizational skills and formal matters related to running a democratic organization. Recently she discussed personal success stories from the organization with a fellow member and she recalls

“His proudest moment was when he was able to help getting a local branch back on track, by making order in the accounts, protocols etc. And the reason for him being so proud of this is of course that if these things don’t work, nothing else works either. [...] Otherwise no one wants to engage with that branch.” (Westerlund, May 12, 2011).

4.1.5 Core competence
The interviewees at RFSL were not familiar with the concept of core competence in the way it is used in this thesis. However during the interview, the concept was explained and when asked how they would describe the (if any) competence within their organization that would fit the three criteria of Prahalad and Hamel, it was suggested that the integrated LGBT-competence needed to represent their members in health and rights matters would be that competence.

4.2 The Swedish National Union of Tenants
Documents received from this organization consisted of:

- A strategic plan, Agenda 2016 (Hyresgästföreningen 2010a) that included the trademark or proprietary name
- Annual report (Hyresgästföreningen, 2010b). The annual report also included a survey conducted among members on what they valued the most about the organization
- Regulations, and information materials.

Interviews were conducted with the executive director (Johnsson), a human resources specialist (Lundmark), an organization development manager (Åberg) and the president of the organization (Engman). 18 persons within the organization, both on central and regional level, answered the initial questionnaire. 15 completed the whole questionnaire. The average value of years that the respondents have been with the organization is 18.73 years.

4.2.1 The mission
The mission is described as good housing at a reasonable cost. Data from all sources is concordant; the interviewees know very well and describe what the mission and aspirations of the organization are. What good housing consist of is then elaborated on by the different data sources in pretty much the same words. It’s about rent, safety, environment and the possibility to influence.

On discussion on whether the mission has changed over the years it becomes evident that even though the mission has seldom changed, what to focus on has differed due to contextual changes. For example the ongoing transformation in society of tenant housings to condominiums has led the organization to focus even more on the public need of tenant housings. The president of the organization formulate the challenge for an organization to spot and address issues of vital importance in different times as:

“The art of moving over decades. [...] And to do that you need to make the whole organization conscious of ... to be observers of what they see change in approaches or messages around them [...] It’s also about making people understand what it means, working
for an organization, and that that is very much more than just following orders, what it says in different boxes in a plan”. (Engman, May 27, 2011)

4.2.2 Scope of work
Data from all sources lifts the same important business lines: Negotiating of rents, legal counseling, policy work and addressing local housing conditions. Above all negotiating of rents and the large member base is mentioned as strengths. The Swedish National Union of Tenants has negotiating agreements with all of the public and most of the private housing companies. The rent that they negotiate set the standard for the rent on respective year. This way of negotiating rent is regulated by the Swedish “Hyreslagen” or the Housing Act. Since the organization negotiates not only for members but also for all tenants a specific fee is charged to all tenants monthly. This constitutes approximately 22% of the yearly revenue for the organization. Membership fees constitute another 62%.

At local level the organization also involves in neighborhood or local initiatives that provide opportunities for tenants to improve their housing conditions. These initiatives are often run as projects with funding from landlords or municipalities and in these cases the activities are open for all people living in the area and can include also transportation and other services besides housing.

Legal advice and counseling, member activities including the democratic process, the magazine “hem & hyra”, benefits like reduced prices on travel, books, insurances, interior design etc is only available for members. Apart from the four main business lines described above, that all in themselves represent benefits for members, the Agenda 2016 specifically addresses the need to provide benefits to members. Interviews have clarified that this is partially due to the fact that the organization has to offer something extra to those who are members since some of the other benefits like the negotiating of rents and local projects accrue to all tenants whether member or not. The strategy document Agenda 2016 states:

“But the Swedish National Union of Tenants has a double mission. We are a member-based organization and have to assure that we live up to the expectations from our members” (Hyresgästföreningen 2010a, author’s translation)

The organization thus has a challenge to convince more tenants to become or stay as members. At the same time, one can assume that the fact that all tenants gain from some of their activities may contribute to goodwill connected with the organization.

Information material and the website also mention international work as a working area of importance, however that has not been raised as a main business line by either the interviewees or those who answered the questionnaire.

4.2.3 Competencies
The interviews highlight the need and existence of some crucial competencies. Competence in negotiating rents is the organizations most obvious competence, but social, networking and advocating skills needed in political lobbying is also brought up as is legal knowledge related to housing, both contractual and construction. But as the executive director puts it when he speaks about the organization:

“We integrate the competencies we have: Negotiators, legal advisers, and those who works directly with tenants at local level... and the common denominator here is good housing and that is not just figures. I want to give the negotiating operations a broader definition”. (Johnsson, May 13, 2011)
Or as Åberg puts it:

“We have discussed; what would be missing if the tenants union didn’t exist? And it is that basic thing of working for better living and housing conditions for tenants. To do that, you actually need all of these four competencies together: Housing politics, negotiating rents, legal counseling and local activism for better housing conditions. Then it gets unique.”

(Åberg, May 19, 2011)

Johnsson also describes cases that illustrate this, like collective errands where not only rent but also maintenance and other factors that influence housing conditions are addressed and several competencies are combined to achieve the best result.

The questionnaire also asked about competitors and in case of such, what important characteristic that sets the organization apart from the rest. At the union of tenants it was obvious that very few real competitors existed and that the organization was expected to have advantage because of the negotiating agreements and its membership base. According to Johnsson a few smaller organizations for tenants that have negotiating agreements in their neighborhood exist. However they seldom survive due to lack of competence and expertise and systems that are necessary to negotiate effectively. To develop those competencies and systems a large organization with substantial resources is required.

As for how the competencies have been managed and developed the interviews reveal that different eras have had different focuses. The interviewees describe that from the beginning there were local generalists represented by the ombudsman, but as time changed it was identified that more specialists were needed, for example as negotiators, legal advisors etc to meet the more professional negotiating counterparts. So the ombudsman contract was discarded, the organization changed and specialists were recruited. This Johnson calls the professional line epoch. Even if this was necessary and made the organization more effective in one sense, the challenge is now to get the professional organization with the specialists unite again with the members and activists at local level.

“ It’s about our soul. It’s like... are we an insurance company? No, we’re not! We are a modern organization and movement.” (Lundmark, May 9, 2011)

4.2.4 Resources and capabilities

The interviewees at the union of tenants mention both members, staff, and trademark as important resources.

“We are a non-profit organization and can’t compete primarily with high salaries. [...] So we must find other ways of keeping staff motivated. [...] We are dependant on having active and committed members and staff, otherwise we will be like any insurance company. If we are to be a movement we need people who are committed.” (Åberg, May 19, 2011)

Members are for example recruited as negotiating delegates, but also used to recruit new members and carry out local activities. Interviewees address the fact that the members of the tenants union are of two types: Those who mainly see their membership as insurance and those who actively wants to involve in the organization. Both the Agenda 2016 and interviews bring up the need to attract new active members, and new routines for this are at the moment tested. Åberg, in the interview, addresses several systems that help the organization coordinate different lines of work or routines for recruiting new members.

As for the trademark it is above all very well known and polls have shown that as many as 75% of Swedes are of the opinion that the union of tenants has an important mission. (Johnsson, May 13, 2011). However, there are also some concerns related to the trademark. As the concept of tenancy apartments as such have been depreciated on behalf condominiums
in Sweden there is a risk that the value of the organization also may be depreciated and perceived as outmoded. The organization tries to change this by arguing for the public need for and advantages of available tenant apartments in a modern society. Communication around this is important to influence policy makers and people’s mindset on tenant apartments and by that support good connotations to the tenants union. (Johnsson, May 13, 2011)

In discussions on how the organization develops or manages the resources, as shown above communication is mentioned as important by several interviewees. Lundmark also addresses the need for systems and routines connected to running an organization, like how to organize meetings and doing democracy. At this point it may be important to stress that the union of tenants is a large organization with 800 people employed and with almost 11 000 active members with different commissions of trust. The organization thus has considerable capacity and has many well developed routines and systems for member directories, administrative routines, accounting systems and skills and trainings or conferences on issues related to this or issues of concern for the organization etc. At the moment a large inventory of competence within the organization is initiated. (Lundmark, May 9, 2011)

Example of systems and skills important for a member-based organization that the interviewees bring up is the organizing capacity and processes that have helped the organization develop the new strategic plan Agenda 2016. This plan was developed by representatives from the organization in a participatory manner and is not a product of top management or consultants. (Lundmark, May 9, 2011)

Åberg, as well as other interviewees, also mention a new method called RIBB that is based on a consolidation of different professions for coordination of initiatives to improve conditions in living areas. Johnsson also raises the need for accurate planning systems. The organization has developed new goal-oriented processes for this, to make sure that focus is kept at results and that resources are utilized in the very best way. This is also highlighted in the Agenda 2016. As shown above the organization relies to a large extent on member-fees for its’ funding.

The union of tenants describes their strategy in a model that connects resource utilization, with being the best at good housing and member value and thus achieving its mission and attracting new members. (Agenda 2016) This has many similarities with models described previously in this thesis.

![Diagram](image.png)

**FIGURE 4.1: HOW TO BECOME AN OUTSTANDING ORGANIZATION (AGENDA 2016)**
4.2.5 Core competence
The interviewees at the Tenants union were not familiar with the concept of core competence in the way it is used in this thesis. However during the interview the concept was explained and when asked how they would describe the (if any) competence within their organization that would fit the three criteria of Prahalad and Hamel it was suggested that the integrated competence needed to represent tenants in good housing issues including negotiate rent would be that competence.

4.3 The John Howard Society of North Island
Information reviewed from the JHSNI were culled from its website including the 2010 annual report with financial statements, quarterly newsletters, program brochures for both the Comox Valley area (central island) and the Campbell River area (north island) as well cities where intensive support and supervision programs are being offered. The website also offers the Society’s charter of rights Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) youth and adults even though this is not integral to the Society’s main lines of business. A total of five respondents were interviewed including the board vice president, communications director, contractor/retired executive director, program manager and family group conference coordinator (John Howard Society of North Island, 2011.) The average years the respondents have been with the organization are 16 years.

4.3.1 The mission
The Society’s mandate is to promote and foster safer and healthier communities by providing appropriate programs of rehabilitation, education, prevention and healing for those who need an opportunity to achieve, maintain or regain a balance within their communities. Because of the Society’s long history and clear community presence, the programs being run are numerous and each fairly large-scale with some of the respondents only representing perhaps a few of those programs. Policies are created at the board level and operations are being run by the executive director and various staff, volunteers and paid contractors at two main business locations: City of Courtenay (central to north island) and City of Campbell River (north island).

4.3.2 Scope of work
Over 40 years ago, the JHSNI started with 1.5 employees focusing on assisting adult parolees return to normal community life. Now, core programs being implemented are largely youth services that the Society designs in such a way that the programs are the means to the desired end of a better community. Terry Moist (Moist, May 15, 2011), a board member and long-time volunteer of the Society for 33 years, states: “Every program we have is designed to make our community healthier and a better place to live.” The Society now has almost 90 staff and contractors who run youth and family programs under four major groups of services (Storr, May 30, 2011):
Prevention: mentoring program called KidStart Volunteer Mentoring Program for at-risk children;
Rehabilitation: Full Time Attendance Programs in family care homes; Intensive Support and Supervision Programs and Youth Forensic Psychiatric Services designed to meet the needs of youths;
Healing: Youth and Family Substance Use Services, 180 Degrees Detox and Stabilization and Youth Outreach Support with, workshops on assimilation of First Nations/aboriginal peoples, cultural responsiveness and; alcohol and drug assessment and counseling services;

Education: Full Time Attendance Programs, Youth-Parent Mediation

4.3.3 Competencies
The JHSNI has evolved over the years as an organization that has gone through transitions both organizationally and leadership succession. JHSNI’s director of communications and development emphasized teamwork and communication as general competencies that reside in the staff. However, she also identified client support skills/counseling, crisis intervention, and conflict management as important competencies that front line workers possess. She states:

“Front line staff’s competencies are essential in helping clients meet their individual goals and achieve, maintain or regain a balance within their communities. By communicating well and working as a team, staff members in general keep the agency’s programs running smoothly and contribute to building safer and healthier communities. Leadership is essential in keeping the agency aligned with the mission statement and strategic plan”. (Storr, May 30, 2011)

Programs are in place to ensure that staff are encouraged to seek higher level competencies. For example, funding is in place for successful applicants to obtain higher post-graduate degrees keeping in mind the eventuality of that applicant joining the leadership team. In fact, JHSNI’s executive director recently finished her master’s degree in business administration (MBA) under such funding program. Her thesis on A Culture of Leadership on the Front Lines confirmed that “JHSNI is already experiencing the benefits of leadership at all levels of the Society” (Richardson, May 31, 2011). Terry Moist adds: “The Board is committed to developing the skill set of all employees in order to better achieve our mission statement.” (Moist, May 15, 2011)

Leadership in the JHSNI does not only reside in the board nor in senior management. A program manager of the Society’s full time attendance program asserts that leadership is in the management team but because the team takes on a collaborative approach, “I believe staff is quite empowered.” (Bramhill, June 3, 2011) She also identified competencies around ‘personality or style’ and then actual skills; in this sector, you need both because one without the other can have negative consequences for clientele.”

The Society is so well-run that it recently earned an accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities or CARF, an independent, non-profit accreditor of health and human services. CARF’S accreditation process applies sets of standards to service areas and business practices during an on-site survey that is conducted regularly. An accreditation from CARF demonstrates JHSNI’s commitment to enhance its performance, manage its risks, and distinguish its service delivery. Wendy Richardson adds: “Staff worked hard reviewing our practices and policies to ensure they met CARF standards.”(JHSNI Annual Report, 2010) This review of policies and practices led to the implementation of JHSNI’s outcomes reporting done annually for each program to ensure that the existing programs continue to serve the Society’s clients.

4.3.4 Resources and Capabilities
As in most volunteer-based non-profit organizations, JHSNI relies heavily on human resources (volunteers, staff or contractors) and funding in order to run their programs. Again, because of the Society’s long history with the community, systems are already in place to
develop and maintain these two types of resources. Two-year financial plans and four-year strategic plans are developed and approved by the board. In order to ensure that the programs continue to meet the needs of the community, programs are evaluated regularly and information from the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) and Case Record Review (CRR) teams are compiled annually for each program. These teams report out to the public in general through the JHSNI’s annual reports regarding service reviews and service delivery outcomes, program-specific reviews to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of programs, information and communication access between committee members and frontline staff and staff satisfaction surveys.

Because it also relies on volunteers and at the same time requires prompt delivery of service, the Society has adopted regular office hours but has flexible hours and as much leeway the Society can provide when it comes to program and service delivery. For example, JHSNI’s programs are mostly offered near clients’ homes or schools especially since their clients come from the poor section of the community. Otherwise, JHSNI strives to provide transportation in order for individuals to be able to participate in the Society’s programs.

Vanessa Bramhill, a JHSNI program manager, happily points out that administration is so well-run that program managers can “stay on top and in control of our respective programs, some of which run during after-hours.” She also points out that planning the staff’s workloads keeps the work manageable and that staff and clients’ comments are taken very seriously – these are particularly important when an organization relies on volunteer time for which the volunteer practically receives no monetary remuneration.

Barnett and Meredith echo the same sentiment regarding the Society’s volunteers and staff. Barnett said: The most important resource that JHSNI has is its personnel – volunteers and staff. Through them, JHSNI has developed a strong, positive reputation with government and within the communities (Barnett, June 2, 2011). Meredith, on the other hand, enumerated staff, reputation and funds as JHSNI’s most important resources. She said:

Quality of staffing directly impacts the ability of the organization to deliver good service; it further impacts reputations and the role of the agency within the community and can impact funding from stakeholders. The reputation of the agency is important to clients and stakeholders – a good reputation increased the likelihood of referrals and willingness of clients to participate in our programs. Funding is integral to the running of programs – for example, adequate funding to provide outreach programs and specialized groups meet the needs of clients in creative ways (Meredith, June 6, 2011)

The JHSNI board is tasked with the selection and hiring of the key leadership position of executive director who, in turn, oversees hiring of all other staff to ensure that human resource and supervision policies are maintained. This system has led the JHSNI to be considered “an employer of choice” (Moist, May 15, 2011)

Because the Society has become synonymous with quality, one interviewee asserts that the organization’s reputation also is a very valuable resource:

“[…] allows us to do everything we do. We ‘get’ contracts because of it, we attract good employees because of it, and we are a leading society in the province because of it.” (Moist, May 16, 2011)

4.3.5 Core competency

Those respondents who have been with the JHSNI for over 20 years agree that attracting and recruiting the best people assures the prompt delivery of high quality services which the Society is known for.
“JHSNI has carved out a niche of delivering youth justice services. [...] If it continues to deliver quality programs and operates its other function to highest standards, it makes it extremely difficult for other organizations to compete for funds to deliver similar services,” said Barnett (June 2, 2011).

Another confirms that being able to provide a wide range of programs that benefit youth, families and adults, “volunteers, board members and funders benefit as they see the value of their time or dollar investment” in these programs (Storr, May 30, 2011). Family group conference coordinator and member of the Continuous Quality Improvement committee Natalie Meredith highlights JHSNI’s awareness of its community’s needs in a reciprocal manner:

Being aware of the needs of our clients and stakeholders is key to being able to provide better service than our competitors. Being able to run programs without waiting lists and with easy access is key for our clients (Meredith, June 6, 2011).

All respondents emphasized the fact that the Society has been in the community for over 45 years and has a long-standing relationship with the community of over 100,000 residents. One contractor affirms that JHSNI’s reputation and foundation in the community make it difficult for other non-profit groups to compete for funds thereby making it difficult to imitate while another adds that the Society easily attracts community support by way of funds through donations and grants and by way of manpower through partnerships and volunteers.

4.4. The Comox Valley Community Justice Centre

Documents collected from the Comox Valley Community Justice Centre (CV-CJC) include annual reports from fiscal years 1998-1999 to 2009-2010, anonymous letters of apologies from youth and adult offenders who have benefitted from the restorative justice process and newsletters. Interviewees from the Centre include the chair of the board, a board director, two case coordinators, a case facilitator and office manager. Average years of service among the respondents are seven and a half.

4.4.1 The Mission

The CV-CJC’s mission is to offer a variety of restorative justice and conflict resolution services on a confidential, no-cost basis for the Comox Valley community. The Centre began by accepting a limited range of cases involving young people (under 18) who were “first offenders”, and only accepted cases involving low level property crimes. As the procedures and the volunteers acquired greater experience, increasingly higher levels of crime were accepted, adults were accepted, and a greater diversity of conflicts was also accepted.

4.4.2 Scope of work

The Centre has but one line of business—to provide an alternative through conflict resolution to youth and first-time offenders in order to avoid having a criminal record by acknowledging that another person or group of persons has been hurt by their action. Through this process, the offender gets an opportunity to accept responsibility for his or her mistakes, and regain the respect of the community in a neutral, non-confrontational environment. However, in order to deliver this particular service, the Centre has over a hundred volunteers composed of coordinators, professionally trained facilitators, representatives from the community who allow CV-CJC participants to carry out community service work in their facilities, members of the Critical Incident Response Protocol working group tasked with organizing a
community-wide response to any incidents involving hate-crime, racism, or homophobia, peacemakers and cross-cultural trainers.

4.4.3 Competencies
All respondents cited the experience, knowledge, and listening and mediation skills of the volunteers as the most important competencies residing in its volunteers. Suzanne Murray, chair of the board of directors, emphasized that “without those skills, it would be very difficult to reach a resolution” for the clients that the Centre takes care of (Murray, May 19, 2011). Larry Winter, a case coordinator, notes that because of the diversity of the Centre’s volunteers, management is able to choose the most knowledgeable and suitable person to fit a particular circumstance (Winter, May 30, 2011). Another case coordinator reiterates that “each case is distinct and requires a different blend of competencies, personalities, and methods…we are always careful to put together the best possible team for each case.” (Coustaline, May 19, 2011)

One respondent though also pointed out the chief administrator, being the over-all organizational leader, possesses a wealth of experience in the field of restorative justice that he is able to recruit “a variety of educated and life experienced people who are well schooled to practice restorative justice” (Gillis, May 24, 2011). He adds that by being skilled and experienced “ensures that the clients believe in the alternatives and honestly intend on instituting change to stay on the right side of the law.”

4.4.4 Resources and Capabilities
In recent years, the Centre has received significant funding from the provincial (state) ministries of Labour, Citizens’ Services and Open Government and of Public Safety and Solicitor General and various private groups and individuals like the Comox District Teachers Association and British Columbia Teachers' Federation. The Centre has also effectively partnered with various government and non-governmental agencies like the Comox Valley School District, Comox Valley Multiculturalism Society, K’ómoks First Nation, Creative Employment Access Society, the City of Courtenay, and members of the Critical Incident Response Protocol Signatories Group (Comox Valley Community Justice Centre, 2011).

Aside from funding and partnerships, the Centre’s most important resources are its volunteers. Bruce Curtis, the Centre’s chief administrator, notes in his report:

*The CJC’s success and positive community outcomes are entirely the result of our team of almost 150 dedicated volunteers. And this number of volunteers also comes as a shock to other programmes as they are often trying to do their work with a handful of volunteers carrying the load.* (Comox Valley Community Justice Centre, 2011)

Coustaline echoes the above sentiment when she definitively said that their most important resource is their volunteers. She adds: Our physical costs are very low but the value of the work done by our volunteers is extremely valuable. (Coustaline, May 19, 2011) Of the systems in place to develop its volunteers, Winter cites “ongoing training, conferences and meetings keep us all updated” and that the Centre facilitates “never ending diverse training to the people who want it, keeping all at a knowledge level commensurate with the task.” (Winter, May 30, 2011)

4.4.5 Core competency
Year after year, the number of cases as well as the level of complexity has increased with referrals coming from more agencies. This is due to the fact that because of the successes of conflict resolution and restorative justice process that the Centre’s volunteers and staff, its
presence and recognition of its work is constantly growing in the community. Past president Ariel Datoo confirms: “The almost doubling of our average case load reflects the confidence of this community in our programme.” (Comox Valley Community Justice Centre, 2011).

One of the conditions of settlement under a conflict resolution process is that the client (in this case a first-time offender) writes a public letter of apology that gets published in the local newspaper. One letter writer who was apprehended by police during a drinking spree personally confirms how the Centre’s conflict resolution process has helped him:

_Not everybody is given the privilege to right their wrongs in the way that I am, and I am very appreciative for the opportunity. The Community Justice Centre has provided me not only with this opportunity but also a chance to see how the decisions I made affected the police force and my community… I feel remorse for what I did but I can’t imagine how I would feel if I was cause for police not being able to reach someone who truly needed their help._ (Comox Valley Record, 2011)

Describing an integrated competency, case coordinator Larry Winter notes that the individuals’ “diversity/strengths/professional knowledge from all walks of life is difficult to imitate; as the scope of our mandate is broad so must be our volunteers.” Another case coordinator noted that the Centre’s volunteer base “makes case loads easier to handle than those (agencies) with fewer volunteers.” (Cassivi, June 2, 2011)

Jim Gillis, a board member, confirms that “the quality and uniqueness of (our) volunteers help deliver quality service. Our volunteers reflect the face of the community.” (Gillis, May 24, 2011). Case facilitator Adrian Symonds asserts: “Comox Valley is one of the most successful restorative justice organizations in the Province.” (Symonds, May 18, 2011) As the chief administrator also said in the Centre’s 2009-2010 annual report: “The Centre is becoming one of the Valley’s “most desirable” volunteer placements.” (Comox Valley Community Justice Centre, 2011)
### 4.5 Summary of findings

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Scope of work</th>
<th>Competencies</th>
<th>Resources and capabilities</th>
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| Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights | Human rights and non-discrimination for LGBT persons, and to represent the members interests | Political lobbying, information dissemination including educational programs, organization of social and support activities and international cooperation | Doing politics  
Competence in developing and conducting training programs  
Competence in health matters concerning the target group incl. HIV-prevention  
Competence in law and rights issues of concern to target group | Resources: Members and elected activists, commitment, reputation.  
Capabilities: “Doing democracy” and organizational /administrative skills  
Training for and communication with members  
“Mentoring” programs for activists and staff  
Counseling skills |
| Swedish National Union of Tenants                  | Good housing at a reasonable cost for members and tenants                | Negotiating of rents, legal counseling, policy work and addressing local housing conditions | Housing politics  
Competence in regulations, acts, on counterparts and other relevant issues to negotiate rent  
Legal, engineering and construction competence related to housing  
Local activism for better housing conditions | Resources: The trademark, staff, members especially with a commission of trust.  
Capabilities: “Doing democracy” and organizational /administrative skills  
Training for and communication with members  
Systems like the RIBB for integration of competencies  
Counseling skills  
Negotiating skills |
| John Howard Society of North Island | Programs of rehabilitation, education, prevention and healing for those in need to promote and foster safer and healthier communities | Mentoring, rehabilitation, healing, education | Teamwork and communication, leadership in management, staff empowerment  
Client support skills/counseling, crisis intervention, and conflict management | Resources: Funding and staff including volunteers, administrative staff and contractors  
Capabilities: Financial and strategic plans, service reviews, service delivery outcomes, regular office hours and flexible program hours |
|---|---|---|---|
| Comox Valley Community Justice Centre | Restorative justice and conflict resolution services on a confidential, no-cost basis for the Comox Valley community | Restorative justice and conflict resolution process | Experience, knowledge, and listening and mediation skills  
Diversity of competencies, personalities, and methods to suit a variety of cases/circumstances | Resources: Funding, partnerships and volunteers  
Capabilities: Training, conferences and regular meetings |

**Table 4.2 Summary of Findings**
5. Analysis

Under this section, analysis is made of the findings in comparison to the theoretical framework and the proposed research model. We will start by discussing core competence as described by Prahalad and Hamel, and then we will continue by looking at links to mission as suggested by Eden and Ackermann. After that, we will use the suggested model of Ljungquist (2008) to analyze and discuss links to associated concepts and their character. Most especially, following scholars of the NFP sector, we will look into NPO specific characteristics.

5.1 Identification of core competence

The first research question was whether the concept of core competence as part of a resource-based view could be identified in the non-profit sector. Based on Prahalad’s and Hamel’s criteria for core competence, it is indicated that this concept applies also to the four non-profit organizations included in this case study.

The criteria for core competence is one that could:

a. Be unique and contribute to the provision of services or activities that few other institutions are able to provide with the same qualities as your organization and
b. Contribute to end-service benefits whether it be to internal (members) or external (beneficiaries, donors, grant-giving bodies) and
c. Contribute to the development of a variety of services or activities offered by the organization.

In the two member-based organizations whose mission is to work for the benefits of their members or presumptive members, it’s found that the core competence is highly linked to the ability to represent the members, which include knowing the needs and views of and the living conditions of members and having access to necessary competencies to actually represent them in the best way.

For the Swedish Union of Tenants the core competence can be described as the competence of being able to represent their members in the areas of economic interest of tenants and housing conditions of tenants. As for RFSL, the core competence can be described as being able to represent LGBT persons and more specifically their members in the areas of health and rights. It is the integrated competence of knowing the target group and specifically member’s needs and civic rights, the motivation to commit to these issues and the specific professional competencies needed to fulfill this mission that is the organizations unique competence.

Similarly, the other two volunteer-based organizations have core competencies that are highly linked to the organizations’ ability to deliver high quality youth, adult and family services that directly benefit external clients and reporting and service review systems of those services to partners, donors and grant-giving bodies while at the same time, benefit staff and volunteers indirectly by encouraging a culture of excellence internally within the organization. A case in point is the JHSNI where the ability to deliver high quality service to the underprivileged promote a sense of pride and ownership among staff and volunteers.

At the CVCJC, its core competence in conflict resolution and restorative justice has brought in an increasing number of cases from current and new referrals from large retailers, the local schools, government agencies’ bylaw enforcement officers and the police as well as a growing number of volunteers joining the Centre (Comox Valley Community Justice Centre, 2011).
The rival theory presented by Eden and Ackermann (2000) that many non-profit organizations don’t possess core competence is not valid for the organizations included in this multi-case study. Not only do core competencies exist in the four organizations studied here, but the interviewees strongly confirmed the uniqueness of their organizations. However, Eden and Ackermann were right in the fact that not all organizations had previously reflected on the concept of core competence.

5.1.1 Uniqueness and inimitability
The findings suggest that competencies described here are unique to these organizations. This statement is supported by the FBA Holding report (2008), that concludes that in the case of HIV-prevention to the LGBT group, few other organizations could provide that at the same quality as RFSL. The union of tenants provides services and activities that few others could provide with the same quality. As shown above, it does from time to time exist in other smaller unions of tenants. However due to lack of resources, associated competencies and capabilities, they have so far been few in numbers and had a difficult time surviving. As for the JHSNI and the CVCJC, accreditation, community recognition and growth in terms of size and influence in the community are measures of their uniqueness and inimitability. JHSNI is the only non-profit group in the central and north Vancouver Island that has been awarded the CARF accreditation for its programs (John Howard Society of North Island, 2011). CVCJC, on the other hand, is the only agency that provides restorative justice and conflict resolution services in the Comox Valley area. Between 1998 and 2002, a satisfaction survey of CVCJC clients was conducted where 92% of the total 118 complainants and respondents have found the resolution conferences and their outcomes very useful with 88% signifying their willingness to attend another conflict resolution conference (Restorative Justice Online, 2003).

5.1.2 Provision of end-service benefits
The competencies also contribute to end-service benefits. At the union of tenants, more than 60 000 members were helped through counseling last year and all tenants benefit from the negotiating of rents. As with the case of RFSL, the organization has contributed to important changes in laws and policies that benefit the members, counseling services is another example that directly contributes to member benefits. In 2010, the JHSNI provided various services to over 800 children, families, youths and adults through less than 80 volunteers, staff and contractors and partnerships with over 40 government and non-government agencies.

5.1.3 Development of new services or activities
The findings show that integrated competencies have been used to develop new services. The HIV-preventive line of work at RFSL is one example and piloting projects on new housing and living areas are examples of this at the tenants Union is another example. Just last year, the JHSNI created two new committees – the Cultural Responsiveness Committee in response to making the organization more culturally responsive in its programs and the Ethics Committee used as a valuable tool for determining the best course of action in an ethical dilemma (JHSNI Annual Report, 2010). The CVCJC, on the other hand, is experiencing a “significant increase in the level of complexity of the cases” that the Centre deals with (JHSNI Twelfth Annual Report, 2010).

5.2 Links to mission
The second research question relates to how associated concepts and specifically non-profit sector specific characteristics are linked to core competence. More specifically, in what way
core competence is related to the mission of the organization. It is evident that core competence found in the organizations is very closely linked to the mission of the organizations. Probably this also holds true for most profit companies, as suggested by Raynor (1998). Should the organizations’ core competence not have been linked to their mission, a possible explanation could have been a mission creep as described by Dolnicar et al. (2008), however as shown, this is not the case among the organizations included in this study. The suggestion by scholars of the NFP sector seems to hold true: (for example, Weerawardena and Sullivan Mort, 2001; Dees et al., 2002) that for an NPO, the social mission is the very starting point or its reason to exist and thus core competence is developed to serve that mission. The findings that links core competence to mission are also in line with Eden and Ackermann (2000) who claim that there must exist a link between aspirations and core competence. However Eden and Ackermann also claims that it is the core competencies that drive the aspiration system. For that suggestion we have not found any supporting data.

5.3 Linkages to associated concepts

The second research question also included how resources unique to non-profit organizations like members, volunteers and supporters possibly contribute to core competence. How the model suggested by Ljungquist (2008; 2010) for understanding the links to associated concepts would work in the cases of NPOs were also studied. In all of the organizations, the interviewees brought up important linkages to associated concepts. It is also supported by strategy documents or working plans. It is further indicated that it is the core competence need for a specific associated concept that drives the development of the same. However, how this process works has not been studied in detail in this multiple case study.

5.3.1 Competencies

The core competencies described above are all integrated competencies that rely heavily on different specific competencies: In the case of the union of tenants for example, the integrated competence are on law and legal matters related to housing, housing politics, negotiation of rents and local activism for better housing conditions. The links between the core competence and other competencies seems to be no different from those suggested by Ljungquist for the profit sector. As noted above, we have found indications that it is the need borne out of core competence that creates the other competencies. If one is to represent LGBT people in areas of health and rights and an HIV epidemic occurs, one would need to develop the competence of target-group adapted HIV-prevention, or if one is to represent tenants in a setting with more qualified counterparts, one would need to have a highly professional competence in negotiations and law. The historical development from generalists to specialists and now back to an organizational integration of specialists and the representation of members at the Union of tenants can illustrate this. The specialists alone could not make up the competence that the union needs, it must be integrated with other specialists and with the representation of members.

As indicated above, we did find that development, adaptation and transfer of competence characterized competencies. Leadership in the JHSNI is necessary to reside in both the management team and staff. Leadership in the management team allows staff to feel empowered, thereby allowing staff to practice leadership as well as independence in their own areas of expertise and work. This, in turn, provides important professional and practical input for management to consider when planning or developing strategy. In like manner, the diversity of competencies, personalities and methods of volunteers at the CVCJC prove effective when applied to fit every particular conflict resolution case. These diverse
competencies that reside in each volunteer contribute directly to the Centre’s delivery of a specialized service. Adaptation specifically to members and beneficiaries are crucial for these organizations credibility and survival.

5.3.2 Capabilities

In the member-based organization routines, systems and communication channels that enhance the democratic organization is particularly stressed. Evidently as these are large “professional” organizations, other systems like result-based management and planning, accounting skills and routines, etc. are also crucial. It is also evident that in order to deliver end-service benefits to members and other beneficiaries, other capabilities designed for their respective scope of work is crucial and has been developed.

Financial and strategic plans, the implementation of an annual service review program called the Continuous Quality Improvement, outcomes measurement workshops to review implemented programs, CARF accreditation as well as the regular annual report all provide a reporting system that allow the Society to demonstrate accountability towards its stakeholders in a geographic coverage that is comprised of over 100,000 residents. Because the CVCJC is a smaller and fairly new organization, training, conferences and regular meetings are identified as some of its capabilities.

Other capabilities that are mentioned are also related to utilizing or drawing knowledge and credibility of its members, for example communication with members, volunteers or supporters, training of members and volunteers in key areas. In the case of RFSL, this can be illustrated by how staff and activists are trained. By following someone more experienced and being mentored by other activists or staff, the system guarantees sustained competencies for an organization that may not have the financial resources to recruit experts to high positions and that are likewise dependent on the LGBT commitment and competence in each individual.

The characteristics of the capabilities described thus correspond very well to those described by Ljungquist in his suggested model. The suggested capacity characteristic of capabilities is also supported, exemplified by the Tenants Union need to develop new methods like the “RIBB” for cooperation between specialists and lines of business to achieve wanted results.

5.3.3 Resources

All the member-based and volunteer-based organizations brought up the important role the members or volunteers play for the organization; as activists or having different commissions of trust or volunteers and staff who deal with external beneficiaries on a regular basis. These human resources, as described by the interviewees, contribute directly to the core competence in the form of active members and commissions of trust like negotiating delegates. They provide legitimacy, improve competence and allow the organization to engage freely in those activities that they want without being dependent on funds.

In relation to the previous discussion on mission versus money, this pinpoints the crucial role that members and activists within an organization play. These are highly valued and important resources. And the necessity of remaining committed to the mission in order to sustain legitimacy is actually also raised by the FBA report on RFSL. If an organization is too dependent on grants, it may lose its independence and thereby its legitimacy (FBA Holding, 2008).

In many organizations commitment among members, volunteers and staff is suggested as a valuable resource. This would probably hold true for any organization but it is worth noting that interviewees mention it spontaneously. Given the fact that many organizations can’t
compete with high salaries, or even in the case of volunteers no salaries, commitment to the cause or mission can be anticipated to be particularly strong within these groups. Looking at RFSL again, 60% of staff employed mentions personal reasons (rather than career) as a reason for working with the organization.

The legitimacy of the organization rests on its member-base. That is what makes the organization unique as compared to any negotiator or legal counselor. Aside from the professional negotiators, the union of tenants, for example, uses delegates from its member-base to lift important negotiating subjects to the forefront and anchor decisions. The same holds true for the volunteer-based organizations of JHSNI and CVCJC whose respondents in this study were united in confirming that human resources within their organizations “mirror” the society that they operate in.

The members as resources live up to the VRIN attributes, as described by Barney (1991): valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable and non-substitutable. As another illustrative example, the competence on good housing at the union of tenants is dependent on interaction and anchorage with members.

By being “in the field” and at the forefront of activities, members of the RFSL and Union of Tenants as well as staff and volunteers of the CVCJC and JHSNI continuously develop skills in negotiating, mediation, lobbying, activism, client support, etc. thereby logically contributing to the improvement of their organizations’ competencies. This is likewise supplemented by trainings, conferences, meetings and interactions within themselves and among those with like-minded purpose through networking. In the course of time, these individuals, should they stay in the non-profit world, will eventually develop specialized skills and life experience that will prove to be intangible assets for the organizations that they work in. In the case of the CVCJC, one board member mentioned the fact that the chief administrator of the Centre himself brings with him a wealth of life experience and knowledge from having been in the field of restorative justice.

To summarize, there is a link between NPO specific resources and core competence. The nature of the link would be best described as both utilization of resources (activist and volunteer time) and contribution to core competence (setting the agenda, formulating the road ahead, strategic plans). Compared to Ljungquist’s model, an adjustment incorporating these criteria would therefore be needed to understand the links in the NPO, as shown below.
6. Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis was to find out whether core competence also applies to NPOs and if existing models for its mechanisms in that case apply or need to be adjusted. In the thesis the differences between the profit and non-profit sector has been explored through a multiple-case study conducted in Canada and Sweden. Further, in doing this, the paper attempted to contribute to strategy understanding and development in the NFP sector. Conclusions of our research follow below.

6.1 Core competence in the non-profit sector

Core competence is identified in the four organizations included in this case study. All of the interviewees responded with some notion of core competence, whether they consciously acknowledged that those characteristics are core competencies or not. The core competencies found are a combination of market-, or in this case member-, oriented competencies and more specific technical competencies like negotiating, prevention, counseling or construction competencies.

In the case of The John Howard Society of North Island whose members go through similar core competence identification processes (part and parcel of the Continuous Quality Improvement program), interviewees were able to identify a particular core competence related closely to the organization. On the other hand, the smaller group and fairly young organization Comox Valley Community Justice Centre has not gone through a similar workshop and yet possesses a core competence despite the fact that it is involved in only one specialized line of business. All respondents did identify an outstanding characteristic that met all three criteria of core competence as formulated by Prahalad and Hamel. This particular notion aligns with the findings of Ljungquist (2008, 2010). The findings, especially at the Union of Tenants, also support what has been found in previous research, namely that the cross-division cooperation needs management to function. The historical development at the Tenants Union of replacing generalists with specialists and now moving back to integration of competencies illustrates this very well.

6.2 Linkages to NPO specific characteristics

The findings indicate that among non-profit organizations, core competence is so directly linked to the mission of the organization that the mission, or the organization’s reason for being, “dictates” what core competence is developed. The proposition of Ljungquist (2010) that the linkages between a core competence and its associated concepts are stronger if they share a future goal is therefore supported by these findings.

As for resources, the findings indicate that members can contribute not only by being utilized by the core competence but also contribute by improving the core competence. Commitment is frequently mentioned as an important resource and it is indicated that this is especially important when one is working voluntarily at an organization or are a representative of the beneficiaries, for example a member. This is in line with the suggestion of Kong and Prior (2008) that the relational capital between NPOs and stakeholder groups results in greater trust, and that this is a unique factor among NPOs. Also, the respondents frequently mention reputation or name recognition, and this may also be of crucial importance to organizations whose most important way of attracting resources is by communicating how important their work is.
Among NPOs, systems and routines to manage volunteers or members and communication to keep them committed are of great importance. Still, the character of those systems and routines are of the same nature as within for-profit organizations. In member-based organizations administration, organization and “doing democracy” is also brought up as central systems and routines for the organization to function.

### 6.2.1 New proposed core competence model for NPOs

The findings in this multiple-case study on core competence among NGOs indicate that linkages exist between core competence and mission and we therefore propose an expansion of Ljungquist’s model (2008; 2010) illustrating this link. Further the findings indicate that resources in NPOs not only are being utilized in the value process but also contribute to core competence by representing members and beneficiaries. We therefore propose a second and third expansion of Ljungquist’s model acknowledging the role of representing members and beneficiaries and thereby contributing to core competence. However as noted these links have been indicated in four organization and we do recommend further research to confirm findings.

![Figure 6.1: Proposed core competence model for NPOs](image-url)
6.3 Implications

Here, implications for strategy formulation and further research are made. Also references are made to the theoretical framework not yet addressed.

6.3.1 Strategy formulation

We propose that the findings of this study confirm that core competence can exist among NPOs and therefore, along with Javidan (1998), that core competence can be used as a vehicle for defining strategic competitive advantage among NPOs.

We further propose that core competence, as it is so strongly linked to the organization’s mission, can also be used along with the mission filter, as suggested by Dolincar et al., (2008) as a compass in strategy making when embarking on new projects or seeking new funding opportunities. Developing new competencies, or embarking on new lines of business that needs new competencies, should thus always be linked to core competence or directly to the mission, not to erode the core competence or dilute the mission statement.

6.3.2 Management

For management at NPOs the identification of core competence and is associated concepts can help management to analyze crucial gaps in their organizations, for example lacking routines for sustaining resources or a core competence or lack of integration of competencies. Again, the Union of Tenants is a good example where the need of a core competence for associated concepts and for integration of these is actually reflected in the strategic plan and likely will contribute to sustained competence and success. The JHSNI, in its Continuous Quality Improvement program, also incorporates the identification of gaps in services to identify the need for a new service.

6.3.3 Special added value

Several scholars have in different ways touched upon the notion of a special added value (Weerawardena and Mort, 2001; Wijkström and Malmborg, 2005) or unique factors to the NFP sector (Kong and Prior, 2008). It is our suggestion that when the NPO specific resources are utilized in an optimal way and contribute to core competence and when the core competence is developed to fit the mission, these are probably three important explanations to that notion of a special added value or uniqueness.

6.4 Further research

During initial discussions as to the focus of this research, we had considered including public or government agencies among the case studies. However, we decided on pursuing homogeneity in the type of cases and chose not to include those agencies. Further research on core competence within the public sector is therefore recommended.

We also recommend further research to validate in what way resources in NPOs are linked to core competence since very little has been written on the concepts in the non-profit sector. Given the fact that only one organization included in this study had one line of business and given the suggestion of Javidan about core competences being shared across business units, it is therefore also recommended that more research be conducted on NPOs with only one line of business.

To lead to a better understanding of the relationship between core competence and the NPO sector, we suggest in-depth studies identifying exactly what capabilities and competencies
contribute to core competence and how resources are utilized and contribute to competence. Here one could look at historical development, time as well as links and specific challenges that the organization has met.

All in all, further research on core competence among NPOs could also shed more light on the notion of a special added value.
References


FBA Holding AB, 2008. RFSL och hivpreventionen, en utvärdering av RFSLs användning av statligt bidrag I det hivpreventiva arbetet. [unpublished report]


RFSL, 2010. Årsredovisning för Riksförbundet för homosexuellas, bisexualas och transpersoners rättigheter. [Unpublished report]


Annex A: Case study protocol

Case study questions
Following the recommendations of Yin (2009) the authors prepared questions on different levels to assure quality of data collection and analysis. A “how” approach was aimed for in asking the questions.

1st level questions to the interviewees
1. How would you describe the mission and aspirations of your organization?
2. How would you say that you try to meet these aspirations/mission?
3. How would you describe your most important competencies within your organization?
4. What are your most important resources?
5. How would you describe the most important systems, routines or capacities within your organization?
6. How would you say that the competence(ies), mentioned by you under Q3, meet the following criteria:
   a. Is unique and contribute to the provision of services or activities that few other institutions are able to provide with the same qualities as your organization and
   b. Contributes to end-service benefits whether it be to internal (members) or external (beneficiaries, donors, grant-giving bodies) and
   c. Contributes to the development of a variety of services or activities offered by the organization.

1st level questions to stakeholders
7. How would you describe the most important competencies within X organization?
8. Preliminary research at X organization suggests that A (and B) may be important competence(ies). What are your reflections on that?
9. Would you say that services or activities that is result of the competencies identified by preliminary research:
   a. Are important to you?
   b. Are adapted to your needs?
   c. Are cost-efficient? (If relevant; only if the interviewee pays for the services or activities)
   d. Are unique? That is few other institutions are able to provide this with the same quality.
   e. Are innovative? (Check relevancy for this question)
10. Do you think that the competencies (from preliminary research) could contribute to the development of a variety of services or activities offered by the organization?

2nd level questions to guide the interviewer
1. Do interviewees understand your questions?
2. Have you given enough background information and described the purpose of the study?
3. Do they know how the material will be used?
4. Can you do anything additional to make the interviewees trust in you and the study?
5. Do you know time available?
6. Remember to ask open-ended questions.
7. Be flexible and listen thoroughly to what is said in words and between the lines.
8. Take notes. If you want use a recording device.
9. Be flexible and let the interviews lead you along the way. The answers don’t have to come in the order described above.
10. When asking for answers on concepts included in this study, make sure you define what you mean by “…”.

3rd level questions to find patterns across cases
1. Were the circumstances during the interview comparable?
2. Were the interviewees comparable?
3. Does the organizational structure affect the answers and conclusions to be drawn?
4. Does the organization’s size affect the answers and conclusions to be drawn?
5. Does the organization’s scope of work influence the answers and conclusions to be drawn?

4th level questions to compare the whole material with theory and information beyond the study
1. Has core competence been identified? Eden and Ackermann suggested many NPOs don’t have core competencies. May this be true in our cases?
2. Can the links suggested by Ljungquist be identified? Have any other links been indicated? Have any other characteristics of associated concepts been indicated?
3. Given the competitive environment in the NFP sector described in the theory chapter, is core competence developed towards resource mobilization detached from the social mission? Compare results with Grant; Konga and Prior; and Raynor.
4. Can the links between the core values, mission and aspirations be found?
5. Can any links between resources and associated concepts or core competence be seen?
6. How, after data collection do we regard reliability and validity?
7. Do the findings lead to new questions that can’t be studied in this thesis?

5th level of questions about conclusions and policy recommendations
1. Do the findings from the case studies suggest a modified model for core competence in NFPs?
2. Do the findings call for further research?
Annex B: Questionnaire

**Core Competence in Not-for-Profit Organizations**

General information

Name

Name of organization

Position title

Email address

Contact phone number (indicate whether day or night time contact)

Number of years with the organization
Reason why you are a part of this organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mostly personal</th>
<th>Mostly work-related</th>
<th>Career choice</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

Any other reasons?


Do you consider the following as your organization's strengths?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Neutral Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good reputation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service delivery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(timeliness, accessibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name recognition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership networking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong advocate for the cause</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong membership base</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong volunteer base</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good foundation in the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
community

Others (please specify and elaborate as you please)

How does your organization raise funds to run programs?

Grants  Fundraising  Donations  Foundations (corporate or private)  Membership fees

☐  ☐  ☐  ☐  ☐

Others (please specify)

Are there other groups that your organization competes with? If yes, who are they?

What do you think is the most important characteristic of your organization that sets it apart from the rest of its competitors?

☐  Good reputation

☐  Service delivery (timeliness, accessibility etc.)
- Name recognition
- Membership networking
- Strong advocate for the cause
- Strong membership base
- Strong volunteer base
- Good foundation in the community

Other (please specify and elaborate as much as you want)

Thank you very much for your participation!
### Annex C: List of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Interview date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carolina Orre</td>
<td>Ombudsman</td>
<td>May 12, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulrika Westerlund</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>May 12, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lars Jonsson</td>
<td>Advocacy Manager</td>
<td>May 12, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Sjödin</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>May 12, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Antoni Möllerop</td>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>May 12, 2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table C.1 RFSL – Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Interview date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gun Lundmark</td>
<td>Human resources specialist</td>
<td>May 9, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan Johnsson</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>May 13, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna Åberg</td>
<td>Organization development manager</td>
<td>May 19, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbro Engman</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>May 27, 2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table C.2 Swedish National Union of Tenants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Interview date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terry Moist</td>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>May 15, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanya Storr</td>
<td>Director of Communications and Development</td>
<td>May 30, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Barnett</td>
<td>Contractor/Retired Executive Director</td>
<td>June 2, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanessa Bramhill</td>
<td>Program Manager</td>
<td>June 3, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natalie Meredith</td>
<td>Family Group Conference Coordinator</td>
<td>June 6, 2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table C.3 John Howard Society of North Island**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Interview date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suzanne Murray</td>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>May 19, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Gillis</td>
<td>Board Director</td>
<td>May 24, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne Coustaline</td>
<td>Case Coordinator</td>
<td>May 19, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adrian Symonds</td>
<td>Case Facilitator</td>
<td>May 18, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry Winter</td>
<td>Case Coordinator</td>
<td>May 30, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lou Cassivi</td>
<td>Case Coordinator/Office Manager</td>
<td>June 2, 2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table C.4 Comox Valley Community Justice Centre**