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# Collaboration Between Businesses and Social Service Nonprofits as Organized Anarchy: The Insider Perspective

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## ABSTRACT

The literature on the collaboration between businesses and Social Service Nonprofits (SSNs) emphasizes the importance of strategic management, based on joint governance and rational decision-making. This article presents a multiple case study analysis of four cross-sector collaborations, between for-profit business organizations and SSNs. The study examined the dynamics of interorganizational collaborations and their management in different stages of the collaboration. Data were collected from 36 in-depth interviews with key players from both organization types. The findings revealed that collaborations were based mainly on non-systematic decision-making and sporadic oral communication, with high participant turnover. Strategic planning was mostly absent, as were attempts to institutionalize administrative processes and procedures, form a new type of governance, and conclude formal agreements. An “organized anarchy” model is proposed to analyze the relations between the organizations and their operations during the collaboration period. Implications for future business-SSN collaborations and for collaboration management are presented and discussed.

## KEYWORDS

Business-SSN collaboration; cross-sector collaboration; nonprofit organization (NPO); organized anarchy; social service nonprofits (SSNs)

## PRACTICE POINTS

- The study focuses on the inter-organizational dynamics of business-SSN collaboration, and sheds light on the patterns of inconsistency, ephemerality, and randomness that characterize them, using the “organized anarchy” theoretical model.
- The findings highlight the potential costs of these detected patterns, which might pose a threat to collaboration sustainability and hence to its outcomes, due to instability, participant turn over and lack of appropriate knowledge and training.
- Next to the potential costs, the findings also highlight the potential benefits of these patterns as they allow for agility, for making quick changes in response to challenges posed by changes in the environment, and for greater creativity and faster reaction to changing needs of the partner organizations, their service-users and staff.
- The study provides practical suggestions to enhance sustainability of business-SSN collaboration: Appropriate preparation, socialization, orientation and training of the parties to the collaboration, and strategic management of collaboration which includes joint governance mechanisms and frequent communication.

## Introduction

Recent decades have seen a significant expansion in collaborations between government, for-profit businesses, and nonprofit organizations, due to the rising scale of problems as well as socioeconomic

and political changes that have transformed the traditional interrelations and division of roles between the three sectors (Almog-Bar & Schmid, 2018; Bryson et al., 2006). Cross-sector collaboration is perceived as an essential strategy for dealing with wide-ranging social problems such as poverty, social disparities, and housing shortages, as well as improving environmental sustainability and dealing with natural disasters and climate change. The complex socioeconomic problems faced by societies worldwide exceed the capacities of any single organization or even sector (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a). Tightening collaboration between sectors enables the pooling of players and resources from different sectors, and may result in improving the quality of services provided to diverse target populations with varying needs (Almog-Bar & Schmid, 2018; Austin, 2000; Harris, 2012; Selsky & Parker, 2005). These cross-sector collaborations may be formal or informal, and include exchanges of resources such as funding, information, and expertise; they vary in extent, duration, and number of partners (Almog-Bar & Schmid, 2018; Bryson et al., 2006).

This article focuses on a specific type of cross-sector collaboration: business-SSN collaboration. Unlike business organizations operating to maximize financial profits, SSNs are driven primarily by their ideology, as expressed in their social mission. The social missions of SSNs have to do with promoting and strengthening civil society, developing and providing innovative social services, enhancing of social responsibility, and leading social change (Anheier, 2009; Mosley, 2020; Shier & Handy, 2016). Collaborations between businesses and SSNs thus bring together organizations that differ in their ideologies, structure, culture, strategies, and practices. Therefore, they pose a challenge to the collaborators, who need to bridge these gaps in order to work together successfully (Babiak & Thibault, 2009; Bryson et al., 2006; Rivera-Santos & Rufin, 2010).

Our paper examines four case studies of collaborations between for-profit business organizations and SSNs, based on in-depth interviews with key players at the organizations involved. The study is guided by the following research questions: What are the key processes and interorganizational dynamics that characterize businesses-SSN collaborations? How are these dynamics reflected through various stages of interorganizational relations?

### ***Businesses-SSN collaboration***

Business-SSN collaborations have become increasingly complex in recent years. Many businesses have moved from a philanthropic model of transferring financial and material support to SSNs to forming collaborations with these organizations for mutual benefit (Austin, 2000; Harris, 2012). For business organizations operating for-profit, collaborations with SSNs represent an opportunity to carry out their corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy, alongside marketing and PR benefits (Harris, 2012; Haski Leventhal, 2018; Seitanidi & Crane, 2009). For SSNs, the motivation for collaboration stems mainly from the need to raise funds or mobilize resources due to their financial situation and economic instability. SSNs often struggle to survive due to cuts in government funding and private donations and competition with other organizations (Harrison & Irvin, 2018; Mosley, 2020; Schmid, 2013). These difficulties motivate organizations to seek new initiatives, including collaborations with businesses (Al Tabbaa et al., 2014; Foster & Meinhard, 2002; Shier & Handy, 2016). Through collaboration, SSNs gain access to economic resources, volunteer personnel, social networking opportunities and positive branding (Bouchard & Raufflet, 2019; Harris, 2012), as well as the possibility to develop social innovation to improve social services and enhance social outcomes (Shier & Handy, 2016).

Various studies have described and conceptualized the business-SSN relations, classifying different types of collaboration and distinguishing between relationships based mainly on giving grants to more complex ones that require greater commitment and interaction between the organizations (Austin, 2000; Galaskiewicz & Colman, 2006; Seitanidi & Ryan, 2007; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Wymer & Samu, 2003).

Other studies have focused on inter-organizational dynamics, such as partner selection processes, collaboration governance and decision-making mechanisms (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012b; Berger et al.,

2004; Seitanidi & Crane, 2009). Most of the literature on business-SSN collaborations is based on the premise that inter-organizational relations involve strategic planning, structuring, rational thinking, shared governance, institutionalization, and bureaucracy. Austin and Seitanidi (2012b), for example, argued that collaborative processes consisted of five stages: formation, partner selection, implementation, design and operation, and institutionalization. They emphasized the need to manage the collaboration strategically throughout these stages to create collaborative value. Seitanidi and Crane (2009) focused on partnership implementation and found that it consisted of three main phases: (1) selection, including choosing potential partner organization aligned with organizational strategy, examining potential partners and conducting an informal risk assessment; (2) design, including setting up partnership objectives and operationalizing them; and (3) institutionalization, referring to the embeddedness of partnership and its programs and activities in the organizations involved. They argued that this implementation process consisted of managerial challenges that should be managed properly in order to meet collaboration challenges, including determining effective partner selection criteria, designing appropriate risk assessment techniques, adapting mutual agreements and reporting mechanisms, managing crises, and building personal relationships required for organizational institutionalization.

The importance of partner selection for businesses-SSN collaboration was also reflected in a study by Berger et al. (2004). The study identified potential problems likely to arise during collaborations: misunderstandings between the parties, cost that exceeds the benefit, power disparities, mismatch between partners, inability to achieve renewal over time, and lack of trust. They argued that the severity of these problems could be reduced by an optimal fit between the partner organizations, obtained by matching the partnering organizations in tasks, resources, decision-making processes, and organizational structures. Remund and McKeever (2018) also found that organizational fit between the business organization and the SSN is imperative for collaboration outcomes, and emphasized the importance of fit in both organizational strategy and the collaboration's perceived target audience as major criteria.

In a study that focused on SSNs' perspective in business-SSN collaborations, Simpson et al. (2011) found that SSNs used both formal and informal governance mechanisms while collaborating with companies, enabling them to meet their obligations in the collaboration framework while maintaining their unique character. Formal mechanisms included clear structure and role assignment and a contract defining the relationship; informal mechanisms included interpersonal interactions, knowledge exchange, and flexibility. Al Tabbaa et al. (2019) found that during collaborations, SSNs were required to coordinate their activity with the business organization by effectively managing processes, distributing assignments, and communicating on a regular basis.

The studies reviewed above regarding business-SSN collaborations, emphasize the importance of strategic management, mainly in terms of suitable partner selection, compatibility between partnering organizations, structural adjustments and joint governance during the collaboration, and high commitment of the parties. These and additional factors are presented in the literature as promoting success in inter-organizational collaboration.

Accordingly, the present study explores the emergence, evolution, the relationship dynamics between the parties involved in business-SSN collaborations, including their formal administrative and procedural aspect.

## Method

### Design

The research was conducted using a qualitative case-study design, drawing from four cases of business-SSN collaboration in Israel. This research strategy was chosen as it provided the opportunity to compare several cases and present similarities and differences in their characteristics (Yin, 2014). The case studies were selected by purposeful sampling, to afford maximum learning potential about

the phenomenon in question (Cresswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). Selection criteria included a collaboration between a for-profit business and an SSN; the duration of collaboration – sustainable collaborations lasting for at least one year; scope – collaborations extending beyond basic philanthropic relations and include joint activities (Austin, 2000); diverse types of collaboration; diverse target populations of SSN service users; rich data potential; and access to the field.

The first case study was *The Community Garden* (2015–2016), created through collaboration between a for-profit real-estate company and a mental health rehabilitation SSN. The organizations collaborated to establish and maintain a community garden for the welfare of SSN services users, people with mental health disability. The second was *Rides for Patients* (2006–2018). In this collaboration, employees from a for-profit insurance company volunteered with a medical aid SSN to transport people with chronic illnesses to hospital treatments. The third case study was the *Café* (2003–2020) – collaboration between a for-profit coffee chain, a for-profit high-tech company, and community center. Located in the high-tech company facility, the coffeehouse employed youth at risk to promote their integration in normative society. Finally, the fourth case study was the *Farm* (2014–2020), which provided dropout at-risk youths an opportunity to work in a farm was established through a collaboration between a social-environmental SSN and a for-profit irrigation technology company.

### Participants and procedure

Data for the study were collected from 2016–2019 using semi-structured in-depth interviews with 36 key players from both sides of the collaboration. The interviews examined the interorganizational dynamics from the different perspectives of the players involved: executives of the business companies and SSNs, corporate volunteers, and SSNs service users. These key players were able to provide valuable information from their subjective points of view about their experiences with business-SSN collaboration (Yin, 2014). Table 1 presents the interviewees by case studies and roles.

The interviews lasted about an hour and took place in the interviewees' organizational environment: employees and managers at their workplace, and SSN service users at the SSN in which they received the service. The interviews were conducted using an open-ended semi-structured protocol designed to address collaboration respective to the interviewee's organizational role. Managers and employees in organizations were asked to describe the meaning of the collaboration for them, the stages in the development of the relationship with the other organization, the conduct of the collaboration throughout the relationship, the challenges raised in the course of the relationship, and their perception of the products of the collaboration. SSN service users were asked about their perception of collaboration outcomes and their interactions with corporate employees and volunteers. After obtaining informed consent, the interviews were audiotaped with the interviewees' approval and later transcribed. The study was approved by the ethics board of the School of Social Work and Social Welfare at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The names of participating organizations are not mentioned in the paper to secure their anonymity.

**Table 1.** Participants by case studies and role.

	1. <i>Community Garden:</i> Real estate company + mental health SSN	2. <i>Rides for patients:</i> Insurance company + medical aid SSN	3. <i>Café:</i> Café chain + high-tech company + community center	4. <i>Farm:</i> Irrigation technology company + social-environmental SSN	Total
SSN managers & employees	6	1	3	2	12
SSN target population	2		3	3	8
Company managers	2	2	2	2	8
Company volunteers	2	3		3	8
Total	12	6	8	10	36

## Data analysis

The data collected were analyzed thematically, in two stages: within-case analysis followed by cross-case analysis (Cresswell, 2013). Interviews were read and divided into units of meaning. In the first stage, this was done for each study case separately, identifying key categories and recurring themes until theoretical saturation was reached (Braun & Clarke, 2012). In the second stage, we reviewed data collected in the four cases, identifying the main categories and themes, including similarities and differences between the cases, deriving insights and drawing conclusions from the combined analysis (Cresswell, 2013). The analysis of the four case-studies produced three main themes which represent three stages of project development, as elaborated in the Results section.

To enhance the credibility of the study, we documented the chain of evidence for each step taken during the study, from the interview protocol to the data analysis stage. The three authors read the data collected in the study and analyzed them and held consultations. Collecting data from four sources enabled triangulation of the information, which increased the study's trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## Results

The research provides a glimpse into the backstage of collaborations between for-profit businesses and SSNs. The findings reveal the day-to-day dynamics of inter-organizational relations and expose the complexity and challenges faced by key players. Analysis of the four study cases examined reveals that the collaborations in questions have largely been based on random decision-making, coincidences, sporadic communication, and participant turnover, together with limited institutionalization, governance, and formality. In what follows, the inter-organizational dynamics are presented according to three main stages of collaboration development: formation, operations, and termination.

### *"I had an epiphany:" randomness in the formation stage*

Collaborations were formed largely as the result of random decisions by key organizational players, coincidences, and interpersonal relations between the parties formed in the initial meetings. This state of affairs was exacerbated by lack of strategic planning and protocols. In the case of the Rides for Patients, for example, the collaboration between the insurance company and the medical aid SSN was formed at the initiative of a senior insurance company executive: he had heard about the SSN in the past and knew it had good reputation:

I was breaking my head over this, trying to decide about the best common ground that would get people [in the company] engaged in community involvement. And then I had an epiphany. . . and I realized that this common ground was a car. I thought, what could we do with a car? And then I remembered hearing about this nonprofit that was doing very important work, supporting people who are sick or in need. So I picked up the phone and called them, and asked to schedule an appointment (*Insurance company executive, Case 2*)

As can be seen in the quote, the business executive's decision to contact the SSN was based on personal impressions and associations, without any preliminary inspection, such as reviewing the SSN's annual reports, contacting several SSNs to compare them, or conducting a preliminary needs survey of company employees.

Similarly, the Café initiative involved a great degree of coincidence in the formation stage. The high-tech company received a request from an SSN for at-risk youth to establish a café on their property. It was to serve the employees in the facility and at the same time provide an occupational opportunity for the SSN service users. The request was initially rejected by the operational staff of the company. Later, by chance, the company CEO met the wife of one of the employees, who worked in that SSN. Following a conversation with her, the CEO decided to become personally involved in the project: "This whole project was created by chance. . . No one was aiming for it, it was just one thing leading to another, and personal ties were involved as well" (SSN social worker, Case 3). These findings



illustrate that a particular actor in the business organization who personally knows the SSN, or who has a personal connection with the areas of its activity may decide the fate of the entire collaboration. This is even more so when the CEO is or becomes involved.

The study also found that interpersonal relations formed between the parties at the first meeting also played a significant role in forging the collaboration. In Case 4: the Farm, the SSN management saw the irrigation company as a natural partner, and asked to arrange a meeting with them. At the preliminary meeting, the company's CSR Director was greatly impressed by the vision and personal charisma of the SSN's founder and his colleagues, which was one of the leading considerations in the decision to establish the partnership:

He came to visit our offices. We had a meeting; he presented the vision. We could see the spark in their eyes, of the founder of the farm and his friends. We said okay, it sounded good to us [...] and we went there and saw the place. (*Irrigation company CSR director, Case 4*).

### ***“Then the CEO was replaced:” lack of strategic management in the operational stage***

The ongoing operation stage of collaboration will be presented in terms of three subthemes: sporadic communication, inconsistency, and participant turnover.

#### ***Sporadic Communication***

In each organization, the day-to-day management of the relations and the communication between the parties was entrusted to a dedicated manager: the community relations officer in the business organization and the volunteer coordinator or other manager in the SSN. The managers on both sides were responsible for establishing and carrying out the collaboration, but the findings indicate that they, too, were involved only to a limited extent over the lifetime of the joint project. In most cases, there were no organized mechanisms of communication and joint governance, such as regular meetings. The communication was sporadic, prompted by needs that arose from the field. For example, the SSN director in the Farm collaboration described the informal manner in which he could call the CSR director of the business company on a need basis: “I let them know that I’ve run out of equipment and they send it to me” (social-environmental SSN director, Case 4).

Although this irregularity resulted in lack of structure, it also allowed for a flexible and informal relationship, tailored to the changing needs of the organizations, where both parties could make reciprocal requests on an ongoing basis, without the need for burdensome bureaucratic processes. As the medical aid SSN volunteer director stated, “Everything went so well, that we didn’t need to hold any meetings” (Case 2).

#### ***Inconsistency***

The relations between the organizations were characterized by a near absence of formalization and structure. This could be seen in the way both parties addressed difficulties and problems that arose and required solutions on the move. For example, in Case 1, the real estate company was unable to recruit a sufficient number of company employees to volunteer in the Community Garden. Those who did mostly had difficulty interacting with the SSN service users (people coping with mental illness), and did not understand the meaning of their presence at the site. The company management tried to deal with the shortfall in the number of volunteers using practices common in the business sector, such as having the CEO issue a directive to the effect that the activity was mandatory. As it quickly turned out, however, this practice was unsuitable for volunteering activity. Indeed, within a short time, most of the volunteers who had arrived following the CEO’s directive dropped out, leaving the same hard core of volunteers who had enlisted for the activity in the first place.

Another difficulty arose in Case 2, Rides for Patients, when shortly after the start of the activity it became clear that the insurance company employees found it difficult to volunteer for transporting patients on short notice, and it was necessary to adjust their volunteering to meet their schedule

constraints. Accordingly, instead of transporting patients, corporate volunteers would transport a woman from the community, who volunteered on behalf of the SSN to go regularly to hospitals, deliver food, and help the patients admitted, as described by the insurance company CSR director:

It took some time to get the project running. . . it wasn't simple. . . At first, we started on a call basis: the SSN would call us a day or two in advance when a patient needed a ride, and we would find them a company volunteer. After a while, we realized that it was very difficult to recruit a volunteer on such short-term basis, so we decided to adjust the project to regular transportation support, providing transportation to their volunteers instead of to their patients. . .

Note that this ad-hoc solution that was less suitable to the needs of the SSN as delineated when the collaboration had been established.

Another manifestation of the lack of structure was that the degree of closeness and intensity of relations between the organizations was not uniform throughout the course of the collaboration, and was characterized by upheavals. There were high points, such as joint meetings on holidays or special events, and weaker periods owing primarily to the business organization being overloaded or experiencing some constraints. In times of crisis or stress at the business firm, business needs were always prioritized, which was reflected in a decrease in the volume of volunteering activity, and at times in a decrease in material investment.

For example, in the Farm (Case 4), because of the workload at the irrigation company, several planned volunteer events were canceled, and groups of volunteers the SSN had relied on for assistance with farming did not arrive. In the interview with her, the farm director expressed her disappointment, but also showed understanding for the situation:

In the end, they're a business company and they have to work, and there was a volunteer day. They canceled. OK. I understand that. . . because it's true, it's more important for the business activity to succeed, and then there can be social activity.

### **Participant turnover**

The instability in the relationship between the organizations was also reflected in the high turnover of participants in the collaboration, including both managers and volunteers. The stability of the relationship between the organizations was affected by changes in the business organizations' management, including CEOs. When CEOs were replaced during the collaboration, some of the new ones showed great involvement in the project and encouraged it, while others did not. Other managers showed little, if any involvement in the relationship between the organizations. The findings indicate that the attitude of the CEO played a decisive role, further attesting to the extent to which coincidence affected the inter-organizational relationship: The CEO's attitude could be influenced by a personal or incidental interest in a particular topic, or by a family member who had been recruited to the cause. In Case 2, the insurance company CSR director described the effect of the CEO's replacement on the relationship with the SSN:

It starts with that, with the CEO's approach. At the time, the CEO said that it was mandatory to volunteer for the SSN, there was no question about it. Everyone had to participate. Then the CEO was replaced. A new CEO arrived, and this issue is less on his mind. [. . .] We proceed hesitantly. . . I try to persuade people to come and volunteer, and it's not that easy anymore.

In addition to managers, there was also high turnover of employees who volunteered. The volunteers attended the joint activities sporadically, for example, once a month or once a quarter, so there was high turnover all along. In Case 1, the Community Garden, a significant number of employees quit the real estate company during the collaboration, and at one point even the community relations director left. In Case 2, Rides for Patients, the opposite occurred: the insurance company grew significantly, and the number of employees tripled; there were also significant changes in personnel during the collaboration at the SSNs as well. Both expansion and the reduction in the workforce in the organizations led to substantial turnover in the workforce involved in inter-organizational collaboration.



### ***“Suddenly, it disappeared:” lack of procedure in the termination stage***

Of the four cases examined, two collaborations ended during the research: the Community Garden (Case 1) and Rides for Patients (Case 2). Analysis of the termination processes in these two cases reveals common patterns. In both, the end came after a lengthy process of gradual decline in activity and in the number of volunteers: the relationship between the organizations faded until it died out. In both, the final decision on termination was made at the initiative of the business organization, in a way that confirmed the power asymmetry between the parties. Finally and most importantly, in both cases, the process of separation was unmanaged and was carried out almost casually, without proper communication between the parties regarding the decision to terminate and even without a process of evaluating the outcomes of the collaboration.

In Case 1, the Community Garden, one of the executives of the mental health SSN learned about the real estate company’s decision to end the relationship from a partner SSN, in a casually made comment:

Suddenly it disappeared [. . .]. The ending was lame for me. When we realized the relationship was coming to an end we wanted to plan some event with them. But they were so deep in some kind of “down” crisis, and our contact person had left there too. . . and then suddenly it all fell apart for us. The whole issue of parting very much melted away. Then we just made a kind of farewell, let’s call it that, [. . .] with one representative who showed up, and we said thank you. And that’s it. . . I was sorry it ended not so well from my point of view. . . I would have liked to have closure. . .

Similarly, in Case 2, Rides for Patients, the insurance company did not make an explicit statement to the SSN regarding the termination. The volunteer coordinator at the SSN found out about it after the company had stopped sending her lists of volunteer placements, and called the company to verify the matter.

Despite the similarity between the two cases in the haphazard manner in which the separation was carried out, the analysis indicated that the factors that led to this conduct differed. In the case Rides for Patients, the insurance company ended its relationship with the medical aid SSN after twelve years of activity, feeling a sense of exhaustion, as described by an executive: “Time has taken its toll, and people have grown tired.” Indeed, no explicit decision was ever reached within the company to end the collaboration, but the relationship gradually faded because the volunteers “voted with their feet.” The ending was unmanaged and almost casual. The reason no formal announcement was made probably had to do with a sense of unease toward the SSN, feelings of guilt for ending this type of relationship after a long and significant period of collaboration.

In the case of the Community Garden, however, the real estate company ended its relationship with the mental health SSN after eighteen months because of an economic and organizational crisis in the company. The original plan had been for at least two years of collaboration, so the termination was premature owing to turnover in the personnel handling the relationship. The termination was not communicated to the SSN in an orderly manner, and there was no structured separation process. Unlike the preceding case, here the real estate firm appears to have been dealing with an internal crisis and was simply unavailable for the termination process, hence its almost accidental nature.

## **Discussion**

Most studies on collaborations between for-profit business and nonprofit organizations (SSNs) describe inter-organizational relations as an outcome of rational strategic planning and clear decision-making procedures, structuring, shared governance, and institutionalization and formalization of administrative processes (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012b; Seitanidi & Crane, 2009), as well as the importance of strategic partner selection (Berger et al., 2004; Remund & McKeever, 2018). Contrary to these assumptions, the findings of this study indicate that the collaborations between the organizations examined were driven mostly by random decisions, coincidences, sporadic communication between the parties, and inertia, alongside a modicum of institutionalization, governance, and formalization.

In light of these findings, we chose the “organized anarchy” theoretical model by Cohen et al. (1972) as an alternative model for analyzing Business-SSN collaboration. The organized anarchy model highlights patterns of chaos and randomness as characteristic of organizational processes in general, and in the cases examined in this study, found to be particularly applicable to business-SSN collaborations. The organized anarchy theory, also known as the “garbage can model,” describes decision-making processes in organizations. Unlike rational and linear models, according to this model decision making in organizations is carried out in a reality of goal ambiguity, chaos, constant change, and uncertainty. The Authors compare the organizational decision-making process to a garbage can, describing a basket into which are thrown at random problems, solutions, ideas, values, facts, theories, and more, all of which constitute organizational memory. Decisions are made chaotically, almost randomly, with limited connection between problems and solutions, loosely informed by previous organizational knowledge accumulated in the basket.

Since its publication, Cohen et al. (1972) garbage can model of organizational choice has been used to analyze decision-making and organizational processes in various types of organizations. Several studies have applied it to analyze policymaking processes and to examine organizational processes in public organizations and higher education (Bar & Gidron, 2010; Birnbaum, 1989; Kingdon, 1995; Lipson, 2012). Common to the various developments of the model is the attempt to explain policy- and decision-making processes and management decisions in organizations as non-linear and irrational but rather characterized by a significant degree of chaos, complexity, and inconsistency.

According to the model, an organization may be characterized by organized anarchy based on three characteristics: problematic preferences, unclear technology, and fluid participation (Cohen et al., 1972). Each of these characteristics is discussed below, showing how it is reflected in inter-organizational dynamics of collaboration between the business organizations and SSNs examined in the study.

The first characteristic of organized anarchy is *problematic preferences*. It describes situations in which the organization’s goals and priorities are not clear and well defined, but become clarified as the activity proceeds. The decision-making processes in the organization are inconsistent and are based on random ideas rather than on a coherent structure. The findings show that although each organization was characterized by a coherent structure and clear priorities, the collaboration between them involved goal ambiguity and random processes, without a structured or clear strategy. This randomness was manifested in the initial stage of the relationship, during the course of operation, and in the end. The decision to form the collaboration was taken based on associative thinking and coincidences, usually with little strategic planning. Similarly, the decision-making in the course of the collaborative activity was carried out without a consistent strategy, driven by the events in the field. Finally, the relationship was terminated informally, almost casually.

The second characteristic of organized anarchy is *unclear technology*, which stands for lack of clarity in the organization’s tasks and missions. This characteristic is manifested in the fact that organizational processes are based on trial and error, learning from previous experiences, and random ad-hoc initiatives. Moreover, there is ambiguity regarding problem definitions and the implications of proposed solutions (Cohen et al., 1972). Collaborations between businesses and SSNs require that each party leave their “comfort zone” for a less familiar area, due to the differences in their organizational cultures (Almog-Bar & Schmid, 2018). Managers in business organizations often do not know how to conduct themselves with SSN staff and service users. Similarly, SSN managers and employees do not necessarily know how to deal with managers and volunteers in the business sector (Roza et al., 2017). In the cases examined, attempts were made to deal with problems or dilemmas that came up in the course of the collaboration, based on knowledge gained from previous experience. This experience was often not relevant to the specific field of cross-sector collaboration, and therefore managers often relied on trial and error on the move. In addition, throughout the relationship, there were no structured processes of measurement and evaluation of collaboration outcomes, no mid-term evaluations, and no summative evaluations after the relationships had ended (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012b).

The third characteristic of organized anarchy according to Cohen et al. (1972) model is *fluid participation*. This is reflected in high turnover as well as inconsistency in involvement levels, given employees' time and availability constraints. As a result, the boundaries of the organization are uncertain and change frequently. The findings of the study indicate that this characteristic is also reflected in inter-organizational collaborations, and in the corporate volunteering projects which are an inherent part of it. The managers who have initiated the collaborations have been involved in them to a limited extent throughout their lifecycles. Communication between them has been infrequent, inconsistent, and sporadic. The CEOs and managements have been replaced during the collaboration, with some remaining highly supportive and involved in the relationship and others showed little or no involvement. The same patterns were also detected among the corporate volunteers- the sporadic volunteering projects, the frequent volunteer turnover and the lack of commitment among most of the volunteers. Our findings suggest that the voluntary nature of these projects may increase the tendency for organized anarchy, as it is a less formal and less structured setting which enables the fluid participation of volunteers.

Thus, all three characteristics of organized anarchy are applicable to the collaborations between business organizations and SSNs examined in the study, throughout different stages in the collaboration. These patterns have implications for collaboration management, which may include both costs and benefits. Organized anarchy may pose a threat to collaboration sustainability and hence to its outcomes, for several reasons. First, the ephemeral relationship between the parties and its lack of structure may cause key players to experience the relationships as unstable. The continuity of the joint activity is regularly threatened by the business organization as a result of changes in management and financial instability. This instability is particularly burdensome for SSNs, which rely on the material and personnel resources of the business organization. There is concern that the business organization would withdraw from the collaboration at any time, often without prior notice (Wymer & Samu, 2003).

Second, there are implications to the significant turnover of key players involved in the decision-making processes. The findings suggest that when the relationship between organizations depends entirely on the initiative and motivation of individuals, as opposed to becoming integral to the core culture of the organization, the ability to survive personnel turnover is lower. The constant turnover of managers and employees involved in the collaboration increases the fear that it can end at any time. Participants' fluid participation may lead to difficulty in forming substantial working relationships between the parties. For example, the constant turnover of employees who came to volunteer at the SSNs did not meet the need of the SSNs employees and the needs of their service users for a connection with stable figures (Roza et al., 2017).

Third, considering the relationship between organizations as organized anarchy stresses the lack of appropriate knowledge and training of the parties in their engagement with each other. This is a new field of action for officers in these organizations, which requires specialized professional knowledge. Such knowledge is needed, for example, in recruiting and training volunteers or in working with SSNs characterized by an organizational culture and by communication patterns different from those customary in the business sector, and vice versa.

To deal with these implications there are a few practical suggestions based on our findings, that could enhance collaboration sustainability. First, appropriate preparation prior to collaboration and training of the parties with a view to making contact with each other may streamline the joint processes between the parties. Another implication is the need for strategic management of the collaboration goals and outcomes; which includes joint governance mechanisms and frequent communication between the parties.

In addition to the obstacles that the organized anarchy might pose to business-SSN collaborations, the findings show that they may also bring benefits to the inter-organizational dynamics. Note that the organized anarchy or garbage can model, while different from the strategic, more structured models of management, can also serve cross-sector collaborations and lead to meaningful value creation. It allows for agility, for making quick changes in response to challenges

posed by changes in the environment, and for greater creativity and faster reaction to changing needs of the partner organizations, their service-users and staff. Furthermore, this flexibility allows each organization to sustain its core identity and mission during the collaboration (Simpson et al., 2011). Cross-sector collaborations are characterized by the involvement of partners differing in their identity, culture, management perspective and working methods (Almog-Bar & Schmid, 2018; Bryson et al., 2006). Viewing them as organized anarchies may help bridge these gaps through more open and less structured processes and allow the partners to view these differences as an asset that can enrich and strengthen the collaboration. The organized anarchy model may also be used in broader contexts and not limited just to the analysis of business-SSN collaboration. The model may be applied to understand other organizational processes such as the innovation of new social service programs, formation and dissolution of human service organizations and service policy advocacy efforts; all of which require the organization to fast decision making and rapid adaptation under circumstances of ambiguity, instability and constant change. The model contributes to a better understanding of human service organizations as complex and vital organisms, subjected to constant internal and external changes and pressures, and hence their management requires high levels of flexibility and on-going adaptation. High rigidity and formality in the management of the organization might result in lacking the ability to adapt to external and internal changes. Hence, the ability of human service organizations to be flexible and adapt to frequent changing demands, is vital for their sustainability and for reaching their goals.

In conclusion, this study offers a new approach for examining inter-organizational dynamics in business-SSN collaborations, through the lens of the organized anarchy model (Cohen et al., 1972). This analysis sheds light on the patterns of inconsistency, ephemerality, and randomness that characterize the collaboration, and on the costs and benefits of these factors for collaboration management. Our research shows that while these patterns may negatively affect collaboration sustainability and outcomes on one hand, they may also contribute to their agility and adaptation on the other.

The main limitation of the study has to do with the fact that it is based on a small sample of four case studies, with a relatively small number of interviewees. Therefore, the study could be replicated on a larger sample of organizations and using additional instruments such as large-scale surveys that will allow the collection of quantifiable data. A larger sample of organizations in further research would enable the application of the Organized Anarchy model for the analysis of specific components in SSN-business collaborations, such as communication and managerial styles throughout the collaboration and the analysis of corporate volunteering projects. We also recommend applying the Organized Anarchy theoretical model to analyze other organizational processes in human service organizations, for example organizational changes and decision-making mechanisms; adaptation of new programs and formation and dissolution of human service organizations.

Another recommendation we suggest for further research is to apply the model to other types of inter-organizational collaborations, such as business-business or nonprofit-public sector collaborations, as we believe that similar patterns may be found in other inter organizational settings. In addition, comparative research is recommended to further knowledge regarding business-SSN collaborations in different corporate cultures and national settings.

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