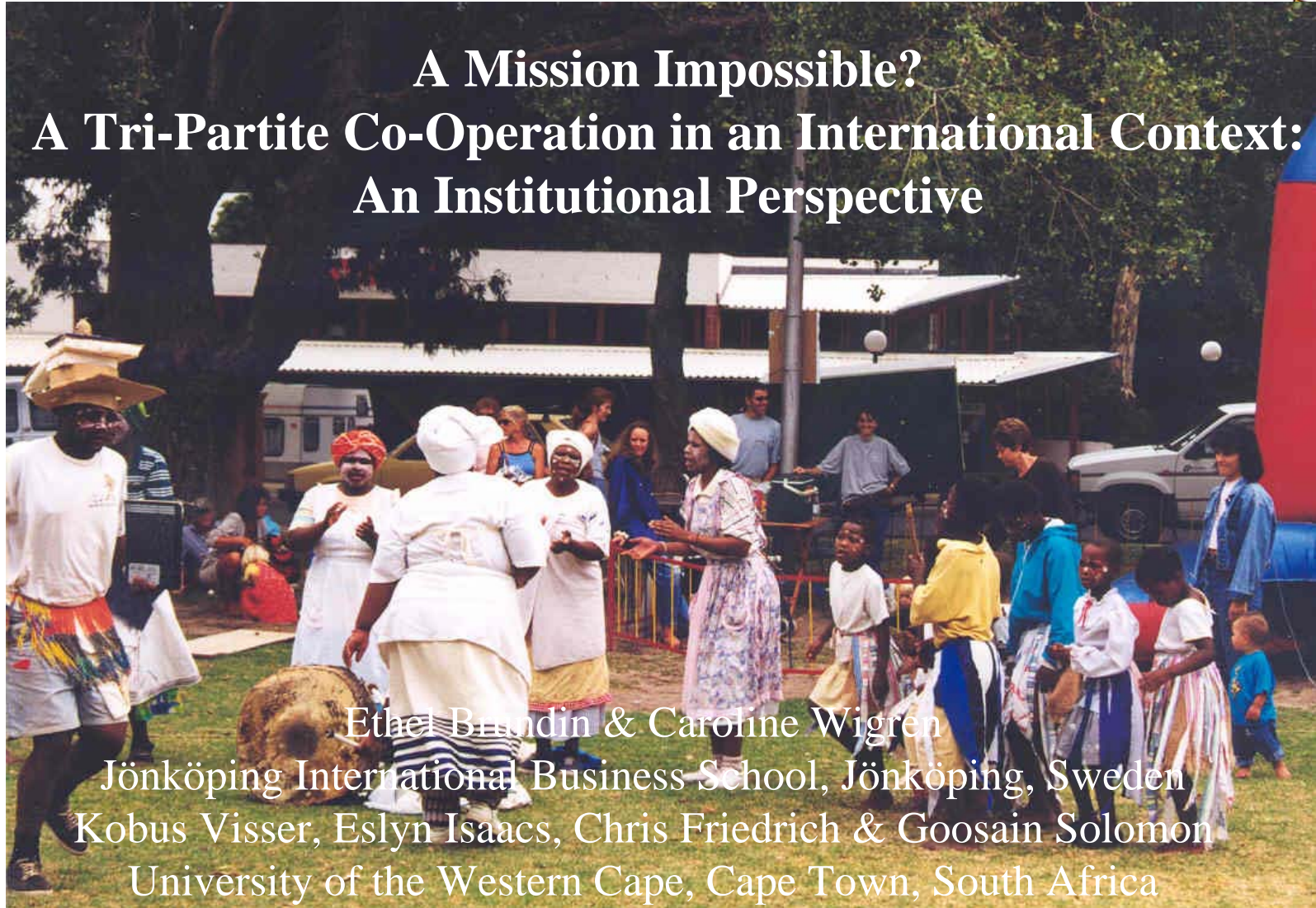




# A Mission Impossible? A Tri-Partite Co-Operation in an International Context: An Institutional Perspective



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# Background

- South Africa – 11 year old democracy
- Dualistic economic system
- Population – 44,8 million
- 11 official languages
- Unemployment – 30% of workforce (11,2 million)
- A National Strategy for the Development and Promotion of Small Business in South Africa:  
create an enabling environment for small enterprises; create long-term jobs; stimulate growth; strengthen the cohesion between small enterprises; facilitate greater equalization of income, wealth and economic opportunities



# Purpose & Method

- An adaptation of the triple helix model to a South African context (Western Cape)
- To identify impediments for the triple helix concept in the same context
- Experiences from a 2-year research project about the Triple Helix concept in South Africa (and Sweden)
- A pilot survey to 5 respondents each of Government, University and Industry



# The Triple Helix Model

- Co-operation and co-action between the three actors: academia, industry, and government
- A change from a linear perspective on innovations to a system approach
  - Innovations are non-linear; both codified and tacit knowledge are important; reduced uncertainty, thanks to institutions, benefits the innovation process (Tödtling, 1998)
- The concept has received little attention in developing countries, in this case RSA



## ... Proposition a:

- Overlapping institutional spheres of university, government, and industry increase co-operation and co-action



# Institutional theory

- The goal is to stand up to standards of "desirable, proper, or appropriate [behaviour] within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (Suchman, 1995:574) = to gain legitimacy
- Different pressures (institutional and technical) on university, government and industry lead to different ways to gain legitimacy.
- Adaptation to the pressure often follows i) mimetic behaviour, ii) objectification and iii) sedimentation and the three follow different rules-of-the game depending on the pressure
- All three subject to isomorphism but of different kinds
- The rules of gaining and keeping legitimacy thus differ between the university – government – industry ...



## ... Proposition b:

- Institutional barriers obstruct co-operation and co-action between university, government and industry and thereby innovation



# Conclusions

- 31% of businesspeople know of university training in entrepreneurship; 4.3% made use of it; 6% were satisfied with the service delivery
- Only 8% of businesspeople in former disadvantaged communities aware of it
- Co-operation exists between two of the three parties
- Co-operation is ad hoc and isolated islands
- Governmental resources but not required result



# Conclusions, cont.

- Academia mainly interested in research
- Government makes grand policies but is weak on implementation
- Industry focuses on profit-maximisation and take little interest in SME failures or successes



# Proposition a:

- *Overlapping institutional spheres of university, government, and industry increase co-operation and co-action* is confirmed but
  - not clear cut
  - overlaps
  - often on a short term basis
  - often characterized by urgency or opportunity scanning



# Proposition b:

- *Institutional barriers obstruct co-operation and co-action between academia, government and industry and thereby innovation confirmed:*
  - institutional barriers as vision, organisational structures and attitudes hinders co-operation
  - attributed to institutional incompetence?



# Missing links:

## the entrepreneur and donors

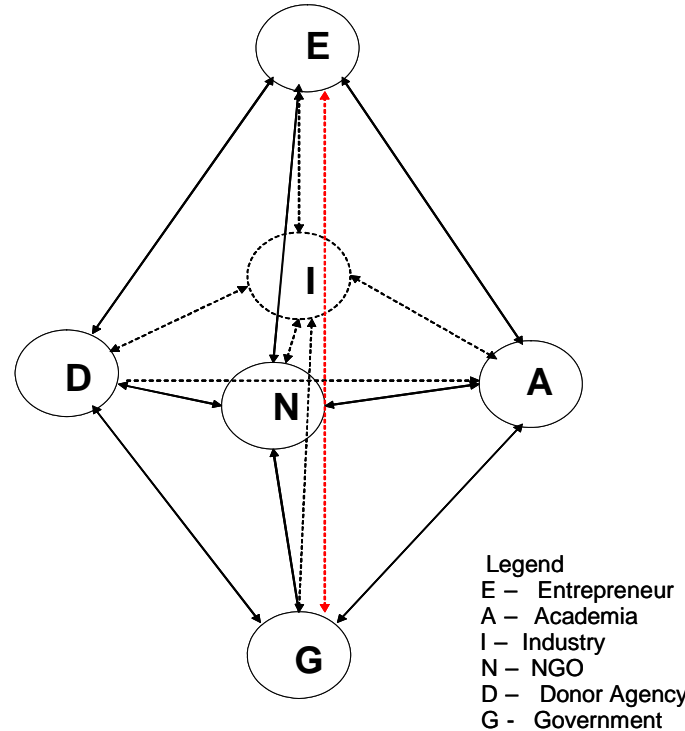


Diagram 1: A proposed model for co-operation between the stake-holders in a SA context.