

# Re-Searching Stewardship

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## Re-Searching Stewardship

Since the theory of stewardship was introduced, there have been various studies testing the constructs of stewards and stewardship. Stewardship research has largely been conducted in unrelated contexts and with a variety of approaches and perspectives. Due to this, there is no agreement as to what stewardship is about. These studies have mostly been conducted from an individualist ontological perspective and few are empirical in nature. In view of this, the purpose of this study is to explore the ontology of stewardship. The establishment of an ontology of stewardship is essential because it builds the foundation for epistemological queries. In addition, the ontology influences the methodologies used to study the construct.

Using the concept of site ontology, this study explores the ontology of stewardship within the practices of the bank Svenska Handelsbanken at Great Britain and Singapore. Based on a previous definition of stewardship, stewardship is theorized to involve virtues. Narratives of virtues and actions are coded from interview transcripts to arrive at how virtuous actions may be created and sustained.

The discovery is that stewardship involves the practice of virtuous actions. These actions are linked by understandings, rules and teleoaffectivity. Organizational actors select who they want as their principals. There can be more than one principal in a stewardship context. One finding refutes the model of man assumed in previous studies. Interest is discovered to have a multitude of meanings. These findings broaden the possibility of the vocabulary for future stewardship research.

This study offers a different ontological perspective of stewardship. Problems in stewardship research are identified and new insights are suggested. The study concludes by offering a new definition of stewardship.

**Keywords:** stewardship, virtues, ontology, site ontology, practice, actions, banking, Svenska Handelsbanken

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