The Organisation of Volunteering

Abstract: In the light of structural transformations in patterns of civic engagement the organisation of volunteering deserves increased attention. Theorising on volunteering centres as a specific type of organisations has been weak so far. The article investigates the potential of such centres to support the matching of engaged citizens and societal occasions for civic involvement. The paper proposes a model of volunteer placement that can be used to increase the knowledge about the practice of volunteer placement. By investigating processes of volunteer management and brokerage in Finnish municipal volunteering centres the article proposes to analyse the flow of volunteering and organisational culture as two important dimensions to explain the (incomplete) civic character of engagement.

1. Activation of engagement

Studies on volunteering and engagement usually focus on motivation, magnitude and social structure. While scholars agree that we witness a structural transformation of volunteering little is known about the actual organisation of volunteering under conditions where interests and opportunities are no longer allocated by itself. This study wants to contribute to this knowledge by analysing volunteering centres with regard to their practices of involving volunteers, here in the case of Finland. We will call organisations that function as clearing houses for volunteers volunteering centres. They are of central interest in this study because
they are seen as a principle answer to loosening connections of engaged citizens to organisations.

Engagement of citizens received attention the moment it stopped being self evident (Putnam, 1995). In crisis scenarios we see concern about shrinking involvement and loosening ties while an optimistic view stresses that the level of volunteering today is rather substantial. In many countries more than one third of the adult population are counted as active citizens who voluntarily act for the benefit of others and there is potential to activate even more citizens. Volunteering is commonly seen to contribute significantly to social integration (Putnam, 2000; Etzioni, 1993; Bellah et al., 1985), welfare production (Johnson, 1987), participation (Norris, 2002; Verba et al., 1995) and even to a redefinition of the meaning of work (Beck, 2000; Rifkin, 1996). The international nonprofit sector study co-ordinated by Lester Salamon and Helmut Anheier (Salamon et al., 1999) has demonstrated that the workload of nonprofit associations is a significant economic factor; and the human dimension in care work gets ever more important as professional care spreads. While the crisis scenario sees the threat of an egoistic society others might even speak of the rising of a "volunteer society".

Both views rightly point to a structural change in volunteering (Beher et al., 2000). By volunteering we refer to an unpaid activity that is carried out on the basis of a free decision to engage for ones social environment. Usually this implies that another person (or thing) benefits from the activity, but it does not foreclose that also the actor himself benefits. A larger perspective is captured by the new term civic engagement. It is used with reference to the following characteristics (Enquete-Kommission, 2002: 86-90). It is voluntary and not for profit, meaning that it is not done for return on investment (Evers and Laville, 2004: 13). Further, it embodies a contribution to the common good, is situated in the public sphere as it includes activities that take place among people outside the private sphere of the family and it is usually carried out with others. This concept is challenging because
it encompasses diverse forms such as, for example social, cultural, environmental and political engagement which either emerge from civil society or are directed towards civil society (Hilger, 2006).

Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003) have summarised recent empirical trends under the notion of reflexive volunteering. It is characterised by an increased acknowledgement of self-centred motives and closer relations to personal lifestyle and identity together with the importance of a biographical match in the life-course of volunteers. It is partly semi-professionalised, and more often project based than stable, resulting in weak organisational attachment.

Volunteers today speak openly about what they gain through their engagement, and they more easily switch from one organisational context to another. This affects the recruitment of volunteers in fundamental ways because the volunteer-organisation linkage does not function as it did before. People are less often socialised into particular organisations but have to actively select them. Although most engagement still takes place within associations a significant portion is not directly affiliated to particular organisations. For Finland it was estimated that one third takes more informal forms (Pyykkönen, 2002: 93). Citizens are looking for opportunities to volunteer and, vice versa, organisations are looking for volunteers who support them in accomplishing their missions. Matching these two types of demands is the goal of volunteering centres.

Four principle ways to promote volunteering are legal, financial, symbolic and organisational measures. Tax exempt rules or grants for organisations as well as reimbursement or insurance regulation for individuals are common approaches to foster engagement. Symbolic means aim at public recognition and promotion. They include certificates, medals and awards for volunteers. Networking and volunteering centres are examples for organisational measures to support engagement. Organisational means receive attention as they put only little constraint on budgets. The article investigates structures of volunteering centres in a
Finnish context. It finds that it is useful to complement the view on internal structures and procedures with a cultural-procedural perspective. According to this approach it is decisive to take shared "basic assumptions and beliefs" within an organisation into consideration (Schein, 1986: 6). Not procedures as such but their combination with the language and rituals, the norms, values and rules as well as the climate embedded in the tangible experiences when acting out procedures are decisive for the potential to really enhance civic engagement. To complement the structural view fruitfully this perspective requires specific modifications.

The Finnish government currently has adopted citizen activity as a priority and devoted one out of four policy programmes to the issue next to information society, employment and entrepreneurship.² For the time being it focuses on the generation of knowledge about electoral behaviour and civic education. This study addresses this issue by analysing the central type of organisations to enhance civic engagement in the Finnish welfare state environment. In part 2 the article describes the challenge of organising volunteers with elements to support this process. Parts 3 and 4 introduce the methodology and the case study that constitutes the basis for the considerations later on. They are followed by two analytical chapters on the direction of volunteering (part 5) and the organisational culture of volunteering centres (part 6). Final comment on the civic character of volunteering centres and directions for further research conclude the article (part 7).

2. The Organisation of volunteering
Volunteering embodies a powerful potential for societal development. Governments today recognise this importance and try to enhance civic engagement by promoting activating infrastructures. The reference to civil society is an effort to give citizens better opportunities to shape their social environment but it also serves as a legitimising factor for politics. Empirical findings support that it is reasonable
to activate volunteers. Also for the individual it is crucial to realise interests and desires to engage oneself. There is a significant amount of citizens who would be ready engage themselves if only they were asked to do so (Yeung, 2004: 98; Abt & Braun, 2001: 219). The challenge is to activate volunteering or at least match those who are ready to engage themselves with opportunities to do so that exist in different fields.

2.1. Volunteering Centres

Volunteering centres belong to the most significant institutional innovations working with the "untapped resource" of the new reflexive type of volunteers. They are civic infrastructures that try to support and initiate civic engagement in a way that takes volunteers' interests into account and mediate as brokers between motivated citizens and institutional opportunities to volunteer.

It is common that volunteer agencies work with volunteers within their own organisation. Volunteering centres are a specific organisation that can be characterised as brokerage agencies with the goal to match engaged citizens with opportunities to volunteer that are external to their own organisation. Usually these centres are focuses on the engaged, on their wishes and needs. They do not necessarily have to be based on volunteers themselves, although in many cases they are. Volunteering centres have been established to facilitate the placement of those who are willing to engage at places of need. Sometimes their task extents beyond brokerage and also cover the advancement of engagement in general. There are different models, complex centres include information, brokerage, qualification, consulting, networking and lobbying in public (Ebert, 2003: 58).

Such centres have a long tradition for example in England (Penberthy and Forster, 2004: 34-38), Norway (Kloster et al., 2003: 48), or in the Netherlands but organisations that aim of supporting volunteers have recently been established all
over Europe, for example in Germany and in Finland. Volunteering centres have seen a strong phase of institutionalisation in the last decade. Matthies (1996: 22-23) mentions that in the mid 1990s in Finland very simple volunteering centres ("Mummon Kammari-tyypiset"; Gradma’s cottage-type) managed to recruit people from different age groups and both sexes. However, more detailed information on their functioning is not available. A study of volunteering in the city of Jyväskylä includes one volunteering centre. The centre VaPari (Vapaaehtoistoinnan keskus; Centre for voluntary activity) is a co-operation with the Red Cross, the Diaconia and the city as the main partners. In the year 2000 there were about 300 registered volunteers, almost 500 placements and slightly more that 600 participants in volunteer training (Pyykkönen, 2002: 96-97). Central issues are questions of functioning, resources, reach, ownership and role.

2.2. Volunteer Management

The role of volunteers in organisations differs. In some they form the heart of the organisations, in others they provide for general support as formal members. Associations are of many kinds. Thus, the need for an organised approach towards volunteers is not the same in all types of organisations. Nevertheless, managerial aspects are increasingly relevant in some form or another in various contexts. Management advice for associations, guides for fundraising and handbooks on non-profit marketing appear in significant numbers. Organising volunteers involves such issues as recruitment, training, co-ordination and placement, supervision, evaluation and appreciation (Sozanská et al., 2004).

Formerly, organisations used volunteers in an ad hoc way. They gave them a task when it appeared to be useful. Allocating persons and tasks rather spontaneously has the drawback that rarely anybody has thought about what interests and which requirements might exist to fulfil the task. In practice working
with volunteers is fairly complex. A holistic approach sees volunteer management, sometimes also called volunteer administration, as a process (Biedermann, 2002). We can distinguish a preparatory and an engagement phase and, often forgotten, an end phase. From the organisational point of view the following steps are involved (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Basic stages of the volunteer management process**

![Diagram](source: Own figure, in parts after Biedermann 2002)

Planning the service of volunteers includes identifying needs and opportunities where lay persons could be of use. One has to know which supporting structures and competencies are necessary. The result of this planning process will be activity profiles that describe tasks and requirements as well as persons...
responsible for accompanying the volunteer. To receive volunteers the organisation has to recruit persons from its external environment by advertising or directly contacting other groups. Once there are engaged citizens their interests and qualifications have to be matched with the organisation's expectations. Agreements will be made on the scope of the task, sometimes they materialise as quasi-contracts between the volunteer and the hosting organisation. Introduction to the task enables the volunteer to start his activity. Only at this point begins what before has been seen as simply volunteering. Eventually further support should be available and often training can be useful. At this point one might assume the process runs by itself, but responsible organisations will take care that they also recognise and appreciate the work done by their volunteers. Finally an analysis of the process of involvement will enable the organisation to improve co-operation. In particular it can reveal whether support and training has to be improved, whether the volunteer should be matched to a different task or even the whole task should be planned differently.

It is obvious that working with volunteers can be demanding for an organisation. The intention to do good is not always sufficient to really do good. At times individuals want to get involved for reasons that may cause more problems than advantage. Extreme compassion, curiosity or a desire to exercise own influence can degrade the client. An exaggerated feeling of obligation or desire to sacrifice oneself may harm both volunteer and client. Loneliness or feelings of irreplaceability can turn the client into an instrument for own needs (Sozanská et al., 2004: 324). Organisations have to be able to also criticise volunteers. That is not an easy thing to do because a volunteer gives while an organisation or its client benefit. According to common wisdom who receives for free is not entitled to complain.

With regard to such difficulties the demand side has gained attention. Openness of organisations for volunteers is not well developed. Experience with
placement of volunteers has revealed that many organisations are not ready to include volunteers in their activities although that could in principle be beneficial for both parties (Jakob and Janning, 2001-?). They either have never thought about working that way or eschew the initial effort that is needed to start such a process. Some volunteering centres see it as their mission to ease such fears. They not only lobby for volunteering and support placement but also apply elements of the management toolbox themselves.

3. Method and Material

The present study includes three municipal volunteering centres in the Helsinki districts Itäkeskus (East Helsinki), Kamppi and Malmi. At the heart of the report is the question on the organisational environment. It turns to elements of volunteer management such as recruitment, placement, training and appreciation and considers what expectations there are to improve the situation for volunteering.

The study uses register data, programmatic material and expert interviewing with members or employees of the volunteering centres. This type of interview does rather aim at information on internal processes, so called shop floor knowledge (Betriebswissen; Meuser and Nagel, 1991). The interviews have been designed as semi-structured focussed interviews with pre-defined guidelines and have been conducted between August and December 2005. They were recorded although complete transcription was not intended.

The interview material is analysed by qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 1995) with the objective to condense the verbatim of interviews (Kvale, 1996: 196) and identify critical passages of the interviews that contribute to an understanding of the practice of volunteer placement. Along the process of interviewing and writing down central statements memos were written to capture central ideas and develop hypotheses on how to account for the ability of volunteering centres to
match engaged citizens and serve civic criteria. As proposed by the grounded theory approach these were followed systematically when reviewing the material as a whole (Strauss, 1987). A hypothesis that generated in the context of one particular interview was taken up in the context of all interviews to analyse whether there was a systematic occurrence. The objective was to propose a model of volunteer placement through deconstructing what has been said, focussing on certain aspects and finally re-constructing and contextualising the phenomenon of organising volunteers (Denzin, 2002). This is done on the level of manifest content for most of the study.

4. The Helsinki Volunteering Centres

One can estimate that there are about two dozens of volunteering centres in the larger capital area around Helsinki and another dozen in the rest of country. Further, there is a network that serves as a means of information exchange. The citizens' arena network (kansalaisareena) lists ten volunteer brokerage centres alone in Helsinki. There is a remarkable density in the capital region, even though the spatial area is very large.

The origin of the municipal centres goes back to a project in the second half of the 1990s. The Red Cross and the church were each running volunteering services, until the idea emerged to put forces together by establishing "one common telephone number", as one interviewee put it. Out of this context a municipal volunteering service was established by the social and health department of the city of Helsinki around the turn of the millennium.

According to the documents (flyers, work flow charts, mission statements, annual reports) the general goals of voluntary effort are to strengthen the ability of people to help themselves, prevent loneliness and create community. Thus, it envisages independence, integration and the creation of social capital. The outline
for the centres includes support for individuals who care for their relatives as well as for professional health care, home care and child protection services. Volunteering is usually directed to persons, the person supported is called customer.

Modes of volunteer work are general support, accompanying, visits and friendship service. Friendship services include regular visits of persons in need of support, usually once or twice a month. They are directed for example at lonely elderly, disabled, mentally disordered, single parents or migrants. Customers are accompanied when visiting health care centres, doctors, hospitals as well as stores, physical therapy, pharmacies and hair dressers. Often helping to go out for a walk is an important occasion for support.

The Helsinki centres use a telephone service and are open to the public on workdays, in the smaller centres for some limited hours. The three centres each operate with one municipal employee as a manager but the placement of volunteers is usually organised by a group of three to eight volunteers that takes care of placement by answering the telephone, searches the database for suitable volunteers and calls them to answer the request of a customer.

The East Helsinki Centre has about 160 volunteers and more than 500 customers. The Malmi centre has about 50 volunteers, more than half of them accompany customers, about 20 are engaged in more steady friendship relationships. The Kamppi centre has about 100 registered volunteers and about 80 to 90 requests for volunteer services each month outside the summer season. On average the centre has to phone two volunteers to find one who is able to visit a customer. Customers who have a more steady friendship service relationship with a volunteer, occasionally phone the volunteer directly. The majority of volunteers is more than 50 years of age, almost all are women, described as "lively pensioners". Some have been active for more than ten years. In the largest centre. Volunteers have helped customers about 800 times in 2004.
From interviewing to appreciation the centres use different tools of volunteer management. Engagement starts with an interview that covers the background and interests of the volunteer. It also introduces the principle of volunteer work and the specific needs at the centre. It usually extends over one hour. At the heart of the volunteering centre is the telephone service. It takes incoming requests for support and browses the database to ask persons registered whether they could be able to come to help that person.

Principal ways to recruit volunteers are courses and informal contacts. Central motives are clearly the enjoyment of helping and getting contacts. Volunteers are particularly concerned about the situation and difficulties of old people who live alone. Home lodging is a central pillar of Finnish old age policy; 96 percent of retired people live outside institutions (Vaarama and Noro, 2005: 384; Heikkinen, 2005: 332). Formal training in courses is available almost everywhere, but the centres are far from covering all volunteers comprehensively. In particular men participate marginally in volunteering courses. The centres use regular meetings, coffee parties, short recreational trips, museum or theatre visits to acknowledge the work and express their gratefulness to the volunteers. Recognition often overlaps with other elements, in particular training can also be seen as a form of appreciation.

More detailed information is available on VaTi, the volunteering service of East Helsinki. Its database has registered 168 volunteers, however, not all of them have been active in the year 2005. Register data supports findings from the interviews. Almost nine out of ten volunteers are women. The mean age of volunteers is 56,4 years and the largest group is between 56 and 65 years of age (34,5 %), the second largest between 66 and 75 years (22,8 %). Altogether almost two third are older than 55 years. The centre has also registered 522 customers in its database. Customers are on average 76,8 years old. Women are also the clear majority among them (82,2 %) but the over weight is not so strong as among
volunteers. Two third are older than 76 years, more than 80 per cent are over 65. The largest group is between 76 and 85 years (41,1 %).

For 482 customers there is information on who has enrolled them as a customer to the volunteering centre. In half of these cases the request for help has been presented by care services (48,8 %), usually municipal and private home care services. In 103 cases (21,4 %) the request has been presented by the customer herself, and in 42 cases (8,7 %) by relatives. Several types of register entries have been classified as others. The great majority of them were particular persons (85 cases) who presented the request to the volunteering centre. It is unclear whether this was a friend, a professional or some other person who had a contact to the individual.

**Table 1: Registration as a customer of volunteering centre**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiator</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service professional</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>48,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer herself</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>21,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>8,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>21,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sum</strong></td>
<td>482</td>
<td>100*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages rounded

*Source: VaTi Database, author's calculations.*

The findings of the study can be summarised in four points:

- Placement through the Helsinki volunteering centres is almost exclusively focussed on helping others. Co-determination is not high on the agenda for the volunteers, a "serving" attitude is more characteristic.
- The group of volunteers is dominated by elderly women who are engaged to help others and to find community for themselves; also the beneficiaries who are served are mainly women, thus elderly females support even older women.
The organisations apply a basic volunteer management scheme (initial interviewing, training, support, appreciation). Essential forms of appreciation are well established (coffee afternoons, meetings, excursions).

Voluntary services are to a large extent requested by professionals from care services; altogether, they are clearly situated in the context of welfare production.

The remainder of this article will take up two issue that are significant for the overall meaning of volunteering as it materialises in the centres investigated here. These are the flow of volunteer effort and the organisational culture of volunteering centres. The conclusion discusses their consequences in the light of the increased interest in civic engagement and the structural change of volunteering towards a more reflexive form.

5. The Flow of Volunteer Effort

The literature on volunteering centres usually presents these as the one interconnection between volunteers and opportunities. The investigation of the centres in this study suggests that at least in the welfare context this process is more complex and involves next to the volunteering centres a second party that represents the demands of customers.

Since the emphasis in the volunteering centres strongly lays on helping other people to cope with difficulties it is highly unlikely for engaged citizens to find types of voluntary work that are directed towards a plurality of target groups, be it in the environmental, cultural or political sphere. Volunteering in its present form closely co-operates with care services provided both by the public and the market sector. The main demand for volunteer effort comes from service professionals. In some cases customers directly contact the centres, but, as the interviews and the data of the East Helsinki centre reveal, this is a minor case. Mostly, one could speak
of a double brokerage model (Figure 2). Two mediating parties are involved before a volunteer gets into contact with a customer.

The volunteer is registered and represented by the volunteering centre while the customer is represented by service professionals. Service professionals either observe need for additional support, or are requested by their customer to provide for additional service, and then mediate this demand to the volunteering centre. The volunteering centre subsequently mediates this request to individual volunteers who, by registering in the database, have documented their wish to get involved with persons in need of support. Thus, communication is mediated twice, first by the care service and then by the volunteering centre. Direct contact occurs between the supplying volunteering centre and demanding service professionals.

Figure 2: Two-step-mediator model of the placement process

Thus, the flow of volunteer placement has a surprising direction. The initiative for a concrete placement act usually comes from a hosting context to which the centres react by browsing their databases to look for persons to fulfil a specific requested task. Not citizens select volunteering opportunities but volunteers are allocated to support occasions. Unlike common programmatic claims of volunteering centres, volunteering is not part of a broader citizen's activity but remains limited to the framework of welfare production.
The narrow range is not due to shortcomings in organisational procedures. A wider concept of citizen voluntary engagement would not require much different internal organisation. With the same structure one could organise repairing a playground, environmental volunteering, oversight at a youth disco, organise coaching lessons, clearing a forest, a neighbourhood watch, play with children in hospitals etc. Surely, one reason for the limited range is the mission of the centre which originated from a care context and remained oriented towards social support. Besides its mission another factor should not be underestimated. It is related to the atmosphere and perception of the centre as a social space.

6. Organisational Culture in Volunteer Brokerage

Organisations not only function through rational structures and processes; their internal culture is an important factor. It seems that organisational culture with its values of caring for the elderly, rules of volunteer activity and climate of support and friendship as well as its rituals like coffee afternoons more than the organisational structure constricts (defines?) the scope of the centres. The common view distinguishes an organisation from its environment, for example other organisations, the market with customers or a polity that shapes the general terms of conduct. Organisational culture is "to be found only where there is a definable group with a significant history" (Schein, 1986: 7). Schein has grounded the concept of organisational culture in shared experiences that emerge through joint reactions to internal and external challenges. Patterns of particular ways to think about problems and behavioural reactions towards them result in the emergence of a distinct organisational culture.

Volunteering centres, however, are open systems in an emphatic sense. They do no consist of a well defined group. Its core staff is, at most, one or two employees on a part time commitment. Only together with a group of volunteer
brokers they constitute the volunteering centre. Further, they integrate citizens as volunteers into the centre. A linear view, if at all suitable, thus would distinguish three tiers with decreasing influence on prevailing views and rules: employees, the group of volunteers who serve as regular brokers and are embedded in a routine of brokerage, and the different kinds of volunteers who come in more or less frequently to go out on service.

To apply the concept of organisational culture in such a diffuse context we need to identify practices that can reproduce and transfer shared assumptions and beliefs, that "operate unconsciously, and (...) define in a basic 'taken-for-granted' fashion an organization's view of itself and its environment" (Schein, 1986: 6). Since most of the volunteers only sparsely spend time within the centre, there is limited time and space with shared experiences for such beliefs to emerge. On a cognitive level rules can be transferred to new volunteers when they are recruited, for example in courses that introduce goals and values of volunteering. Recruitment through friendship relations, however, works less conscious. Here we find self selection processes where active volunteers bring in acquaintances with whom they often share values, beliefs, as well as a desire for social exchange and interaction. The classical problem of how to socialise new members into an organisation takes quite a different form here. New members enter the organisation because they appreciate its organisational culture already before entering. Sometimes it is the very reasons to enter.

Listening to the descriptions of motives (and the criticism of society) presented in the interviews a well known assumption seems to re-emerge. The sphere of volunteering is imagined as a world with alternative values; a world were competition and timetables do not rule, where mutual support, kindness and regard for others are (still) in place. It is an anti-world to the sphere of paid labour. This is not a nostalgia in these organisations; it is real for the engaged, who practice these values in their engagement, but also because the volunteering centres have
established appreciation events like coffee afternoons, excursions and courses that provide internal community. Sociability and shared values are central to their organisational practice. The company of like-minded persons and social contact to customers is one of the most important reasons for engagement. We can interpret internal cohesion as a selective incentive for volunteers that establishes a secondary meaning besides the activity of engagement.

A cohesive organisational culture is a central achievement that contributes to the success in organising volunteers and consequently to the efficacy of volunteer brokerage. However, one should also consider the risk of establishing a socio-cultural border towards newcomers through an overt monolithic internal community. The traditional image of volunteers, that is mainly organised around care and company, limits reach into society.

Beyond that, for a neutral organisation it can be difficult to connect to images and emotional values that are important to create enthusiasm. In nonprofit organisations the generation and perpetuation of meaning is a central factor to safeguard stability and success (Wehner et al., 2002: 60). As engagement is always a concrete activity the motives to get involved usually originate from a particular context that interests a person. In volunteering centres the generation of meaning rests on unfavourable conditions because, as mentioned above, the engaged typically migrate through the organisation to external places for activity without staying within the organisation for a long time. Obviously this is compensated by the creation of social bonds among volunteers and between volunteers and customers.

The internal climate of sociability among the actors points to a dimension that is usually referred to as the creation of social capital. From the perspective of service provision volunteering centres may be seen as a means to enable citizens to help others. A more general perspective includes that instances of learning and meeting others are also an element of civic activity that is often called for. As such
the centres partially contribute to networking and the creation of social capital among individuals, particularly among the elderly. But ultimately their current culture inhibits a development to embrace the emerging reflexive type of volunteer who wants to co-decide in engagement and select among a variety of fields.

7. Conclusions

This article has presented central elements of the volunteer management process which, in practice, tend to overlap at certain stages. In particular appreciation can play a role in earlier stages such as training. Looking at these elements in the Helsinki volunteering centres we found that the established practices of volunteer management help to support, appreciate and protect the work of volunteers. The particular way of recruitment in this diffuse context allowed us to apply the perspective of organisational culture. It turns out that organisational culture helps to generate meaning and supply community for the volunteers; but at the same time it limits the very scope of the centres. The volunteering centres might find themselves faced with a dilemma: Increasing their effectiveness could be achieved by further strengthening their internal community. What is attractive and rewarding for the presently dominant group of volunteers might, however, further limit their capacity to enlarge their repertoire. Younger age groups and the incorporation of other tasks beside the narrow focus of helping are not necessarily compatible with an internal culture that is oriented towards persons at the end of their work life. What makes some feel at home can make others feel strange. ... 

(It also has to be taken into consideration that placement mostly is a double-mediation process. Recruitment of volunteers has to be complemented by recruitment of volunteering opportunities. So far these are almost completely limited to care occasions.)
The civic sector and its volunteer manpower are legitimate resources to utilise. However, individuals involved ought to be in the first place in a citizen's role instead of one of a worker. Whereas in the context of civic engagement the idea of volunteering centres is organised around engaged citizens to offer tasks on their request, in the volunteering centre covered here, the flow of placement works in the opposite direction. This has consequences for the way we generally perceive engagement. The double-mediation process ultimately functions through requests from instances in need of support that are directed to volunteers who are willing to serve. They are ready because they gain themselves, but ultimately they adapt to opportunities offered by society, or, to put it more accurately, to requests that arise in the professional social care system.

For the time being it is unclear whether this pattern is particularly pronounced in state dominant welfare systems only. The proposed double-mediation-model pays attention to the direction of the flow of volunteer effort. It can be a useful tool for micro-analytic studies on the shop-floor level of volunteering centres, which are after all seen as the flagships of the activation of civil society. Such studies should also address volunteer placement from the perspective of the application process. It is beyond the scope of this article to further elaborate on this issue, but interviewing in German volunteering centres with a broader profile indicates that a developed volunteer management processes tends to reproduce job-seeking procedures with the need for presenting oneself in favourable light to be eligible for attractive "volunteer jobs". Such a tendency could seriously diminish the potential of civic engagement to create meaning for those whom labour markets have noting to offer.

Volunteering as a form of civic engagement includes both work for the common good and self-determination. The analysed institutions for volunteering are very effective but an attempt to activate volunteering as a broader citizens' activity is weakly developed so far. It seems that even though the notion of civic engagement tries to pay attention to the civic element regardless of the field of
activity there is no real connection between a political concern for enhancing civic activity and already existing forms of tangible engagement.

**Literature**


Endnotes

1 In the Anglo-American context the notion of civic engagement is often used synonymously with political participation, in Europe the concept is broader.


3 This studies uses the term volunteering centre, sometimes the literature applies other English terms like volunteer centre, volunteer bureau or volunteering agency. However, we prefer to use volunteering centre because it expresses better the difference to an association that works with volunteers but does not place them externally.

4 Personal communication by Cees van den Boos (30.1.2006) , researcher and director of the Arnhem Volunteer Centre.

5 See for example Hudson 1999 or the reference in Biedermann 2002.


7 The author has conducted case studies of the volunteering centres in the cities of Hannover and Bremen.