USING VOLUNTEER CENTRES TO BUILD CIVIL SOCIETY

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Since the 1970s initiatives arise to promote and support volunteering in general. Literature on volunteering explodes since the 1990s. Volunteering receives attention because it stops to be self-evident and because new values are ascribed to volunteer or civic involvement. (Traditional) volunteer involving organizations are confronted with a decrease of volunteers they cannot stop on their own. At the same time ‘welfare states’ discover their limitations and acknowledge the meaning of a civil society. Volunteer effort is a crucial element of a civil society. The current literature on volunteering focuses on volunteering, volunteer management and volunteers, including the thorough study ‘Volunteers, a social profile’ (Musick and Wilson, 2008). By this a specific corner of the volunteering world is forgotten: the volunteering infrastructure (Bos et al, 2005). In this article we use the concept volunteering infrastructure for organizations that provide infrastructure to promote, stimulate, and develop volunteering in general by:

- **volunteer support**: contacting or matching individuals who want to volunteer with organizations that need volunteer effort.

- **management support**: consulting and supporting volunteer involving organizations, how to make their activities more attractive and inviting for prospective volunteers.

- **community support**: bringing about the conditions and supporting initiatives that enhance (new forms of) volunteer effort or citizen involvement within the community in a general sense. (see Osborne, 1999; Bos et al, 2005)

Since the 1970s volunteer involving organizations and governments discover a common interest to invest in a volunteering infrastructure. Goal is to develop, maintain, and strengthen volunteering. They both – and in many cases together - look for instruments and measures to support and initiate volunteer engagement. In many countries (see for the America: Brudney, 2003b; for England: Osborne, 1999; Howlett, 2008; for Italy: Palma and Paganin, 2002; for Finland: Hilger, 2006; for Norway: Lorentzen, 2005; Lorentzen and Dugstad, 2008; for Germany: Ebert et al. 2002; Kamlage, 2008; for the Netherlands: Bos et al., 2005; Bos, 2006; for Denmark: Henriksen, 2008) they expect results from local infrastructure providing agencies like volunteer bureaux, volunteer centres, voluntary service centres, or development agencies, henceforth defined as volunteering infrastructure (VI).

In the first paragraph we examine the motives that cause volunteer involving organizations and governments to invest in a VI and we present two shifts in the motivations to be involved in volunteering. On the individual level this is presented as a move from collective to individual styles of volunteering. At the society level it is presented as a change
in discourses on civil society. In the second paragraph we elaborate on the concept of VI and describe the functions the VI performs to comply with the expectations of volunteers, volunteer involving organizations, and governments. These functions, and the levels on which they have to be performed, are presented in a matrix, which serves as a template for an ideal local volunteering infrastructure. In the third paragraph we describe and explain differences between this ideal template and the actual functions and performances of the local volunteering infrastructure in America, Denmark, England, Finland, Germany, Italy, Norway and the Netherlands. This comparison shows that in no country the existing volunteering infrastructure fully covers the functions and levels of support, as described in the template matrix. To explain the differences between the ideal and real local VI, at the end four causes are elaborated. Data for this examination was gathered by interviewing key informers in the concerned countries and by organizing an invitational conference with participants from most of these countries.

1.1 Individual motives: from collective to reflexive styles of volunteering

A number of social developments that take place after World War II influence the nature of and participation in volunteering. Olk (1989) describes a change in the structure of volunteering, expressed by a decline of volunteers in traditional organizations on the one hand and a rise of a new type of volunteers with new motives, against the background of modernization and individualisation on the other hand. The influence of social environments (family, neighbourhood, church, work) on the individual course of life decreases. On the other hand an increase of individual freedom, self destination, but also an urge to design ones own biography (Jakob, 1993) is recognisable. Belonging to a social cultural environment - a collective - weakens as impetus for engagement. Instead of that people look for themes or projects that offer opportunities for involvement and participation, and fit with ones personal commitment. Volunteer involvement is qualified as a biographically embedded reality (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003).

Volunteering is also seen as a prevailing expression of civic engagement and a creator of social capital (Dekker, 1999). Putnam (2000) names four factors that since the 1950s have contributed to the decline in civic engagement and social capital. First, pressures of time and money, including the special pressures on two-career families. Second: suburbanization, commuting, and sprawl. Third, the effect of electronic entertainment – above all, television – in privatising our leisure time. As fourth and most important factor Putnam (2000, 283) mentions generational change: “the slow, steady, and ineluctable replacement of the long civic generation by their less involved children and grandchildren.” This factor might account for perhaps half of the overall decline.
Wuthnow (1998) argues that involvement in communities – particularly expressed by volunteer effort - is changing, rather than simply declining. What alienates people who remain outside community organizations? He researches the ways in which many Americans reach out to one another and discovers that they are experimenting with looser, more sporadic, ad hoc connections in place of the long-term memberships in hierarchical organizations of the past. These permeable structures – “loose connections” – shape the ways in which individual Americans work, live, relate to one another and volunteer. These structures dictate flexibility and less commitment. Personal schedules become less certain and relationships shift more often. Nevertheless the need for people to seek intentional relationships with others increases and leads to innovative forms of civic participation such as special-interest groups, political action committees, single-issue organizations, often outside ‘the organizations of the past’. Putnam (2003) affirms Wuthnow’s observation in Better Together where he describes ‘civic undertakings’ all over America that all involve making connections among people, establishing bonds of trust and understanding, and building community.

Hustinx (2001), Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003, 167) affirm the growing conviction that the nature of volunteering is undergoing a radical change, from ‘classical, traditional, old to modern or new’. This new form of volunteering takes on a more episodic nature (McDuff, 1991; Cnaan and Handy, 2005; Handy et al, 2006). Against the background of broader (above mentioned) modernisation-driven social cultural transformations, Hustinx interprets (table 1) existing accounts of qualitative changes in motivational bases and patterns of volunteering.

Table 1. Styles of volunteering: a typology (Hustinx, 2001, 65)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture</th>
<th>Classic Volunteerism</th>
<th>New Volunteerism</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identifies with traditional cultural norms</td>
<td>Individualization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of organization</td>
<td>Based on traditional cultural identities</td>
<td>Personal interest</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Great loyalty</td>
<td>Weak ties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delegated leadership</td>
<td>Decentralised structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Solid structure</td>
<td>Loose networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of field of action</td>
<td>Based on: Traditional cultural identities</td>
<td>Perception of new biographical similarities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inclusion and exclusion</td>
<td>Taste for topical issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dialogue between global and local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of activity</td>
<td>Based on: Traditional cultural identities</td>
<td>Balance between personal preference and Organization’s needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Needs of the organization</td>
<td>Cost/benefit analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Idealism</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length and intensity</td>
<td>Long term (unlimited in time)</td>
<td>Short-term (clearly limited in time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of commitment</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Irregular or erratic</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unconditional</td>
<td>Conditional</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Merrill (2003) discovers eight corresponding patterns that affect volunteering worldwide (table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship with the beneficiary</th>
<th>Unilateral, altruistic, selfless</th>
<th>Reciprocal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 2. Global patterns that affect volunteering (Merrill, 2003, 63)

1. Concern for the impact of time on volunteering
2. Variations in the meaning of the word ‘volunteering’ from country to country
3. Demographic changes that have forced volunteer programmes to concentrate on the extremes of the age continuum
4. The importance for pluralistic approaches to recruitment, engagement, and management
5. Recognition that volunteering promotes reciprocity, community, solidarity, and citizenship
6. A demand for volunteer programme managers to demonstrate greater professionalism
7. The growing role of ICT in facilitating the exchange of information about volunteering
8. Differences of opinion about the appropriate role of government in the promotion and support of volunteering

A Dutch future trend report (Dekker et al. 2007) summarizes above-mentioned developments in 5 societal processes (table 3) which will affect the popularity and design of volunteer effort in the period up to 2015. Organizations that depend on volunteer effort need special strategies and capacities to recruit and retain their volunteers.

Table 3. Societal processes which influence volunteering up to 2015 (Dekker et al., 2007, 70)

- **Individualization:** the moving from collective to reflexive styles of volunteering. Volunteering as means to express personal involvement and choices
- **Informality:** societal ties becomes looser (“loose connections”), network organizations raise, authority relationships and manners equalize, participation is expressed more as democracy from below
- **Information technology:** automation and ICT change communication and interaction
- **Intensifying:** the perception component - as counterpart of rut, monotony, herd behaviour and predictability - becomes stronger and more personal on more and more areas, and refers to an increasing need for variety and change
- **Internationalisation:** due migration, global economy, European integration and spreading of an international culture, social and cultural institutions change and enter into greater, supra national connections

1.2. Changing discourses on volunteering in the civil society

Governments have formulated policies to promote and facilitate volunteering (see Hal et al., 2004; Brudney, 2004; Davis Smith, 2007; Davis Smith and Ellis, 2003). Leading policy makers in government and the nonprofit sector regularly advocate promotion of volunteering (Davis Smith and Ellis, 2003; Davis Smith, 2007; Brudney, 1999b) and more efficient recruitment through volunteer centers (see Bos et al., 2005; Hal et al., 2004). Najam (2000, 376) describes the influence non-profit organizations can have on and for
public policies and characterizes the 1990s as the decade of the nongovernmental organization. Hall (1987) defines three meanings non-profit organizations can have for:
1. performing public tasks that have been delegated to them by state
2. performing public tasks for which is a demand that neither the state nor for-profit organizations are willing to fulfil
3. influencing the direction of policy in the state, the profit sector or other non-profit organizations (Hall, 1987, 3).
Salamon (1994) points out a global trend towards a greater and more cooperative interaction between NGOs and governments. Civic engagement and volunteer involvement are features of nongovernmental and non-profit organizations. Thanks to volunteer involvement and civic engagement the costs of public services decrease.

Another explanation for the promotion of volunteering can be found in the increasing interest in the concept of a civil society. Changes in the pattern of volunteering since the 1970s especially are visible in modern societies like America, England, Germany, Italy, Norway, Denmark, Finland, and The Netherlands, that support a civil society or an activation state. “The activating state is the augmentation of the active state: not only the state moves but it makes others move and reinstalls reciprocity for those who are critical of a tendency in welfare that people are inactive through too generous support (welfare dependency)” (Hilger, 2005, 4; Fink, 1990). Activation suits well with the old and new social movements and fits to conservatives and liberals (Hilger, 2005). Within the activation state or civil society Hilger (table 4) discerns four discourses on civic engagement.

Table 4. Four discourses on civic engagement (Hilger, 2005, 7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse</th>
<th>Focus on...</th>
<th>Main fields</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Emphasis on...</th>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Central motive /mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td>Services</td>
<td>Social health</td>
<td>Food bank, care work</td>
<td>Provision</td>
<td>Support, well being</td>
<td>Altruism, doing-for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>Social movements, NGO’s</td>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Influence, expression</td>
<td>Shared interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>Economic impact</td>
<td>Economy, labour market</td>
<td>Social enterprise, citizens work</td>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Material benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Social integration</td>
<td>Neighbourhood help</td>
<td>Neighbourhood help</td>
<td>Value, guardian, trust</td>
<td>Creating ties</td>
<td>Proximity, doing-with</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The **welfare discourse** concerns the relation between state and citizen, discusses the role of volunteers in service provision, and probably occurs most in the field of social policy. Compared with the three other discourses, the welfare discourse has the longest history and is most in accordance with the common or traditional understanding of volunteering.

The **democracy discourse** stresses the role of civic engagement, volunteering, and associations, in shaping the political conduct of society. Volunteering is a way to provide input into the political system as well as to participate in the implementation of decisions (Hilger, 2005; Merrill, 2006). Out of the idea the more one contributes to shape the social order, the more one feels there at home, the Commission for Social Development of the United Nations Organization (UNO) proposes in 1968 in her ‘Declaration on Social Development’ citizens to oblige to contributions on social development. In this Declaration the concept of the ‘active society’ is included (Ewijk, 2006). The English *Strategy for Volunteering Infrastructure 2004-2014* (Penberthy and Forster, 2004, 41) recommends “*that volunteers should be able to be involved in their organization’s decision-making processes, and that volunteer-involving organizations should be looking at models of campaigning/activism/bottom-up community development as part of the spectrum of volunteering available*”.

The **economic discourse** is of a more recent date and has a strong focus on the impact of volunteer work and associations on economy and on work in particular. The John Hopkins Comparative Non-profit Sector Project focuses rather narrowly on the economic impact of non-profit organizations. Thanks to another feature of non-profit organizations, the involvement of volunteers, a second stream, more relevant in this context, considers the impact of the third sector on work relations. The ideal of full-employment appears no longer self-evident and infallible (Beck et al. 1994). To answer the problem of unemployment and disintegration Rifkin (1996) proposes to allocate due unemployment unused labour to productive work for the community. Beck (1996, 1999) enlarges on this theme and creates the concept of *Bürgerarbeit*. ¹ *Bürgerarbeit* refers to voluntary social work, conducted under the direction of a community orientated non-profit agency, with local authorities offering immaterial awards and ‘favour credits’.

A job not only appears a means to provide in the need of goods or services, but also a means to participate in social life. A job gives opportunities for development, status,

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¹ Public work or citizens work
social contacts, and spending of time. Those opportunities apply both to paid and unpaid work (CRM, 1982). Because of these opportunities, in the late 1970s people who are unemployed, disabled for work or pre-pensioned, and women in search for a place on the labour market show increasing interest in volunteering. More recently asylum seekers and migrants seek in volunteering opportunities for naturalization and social participation. Because of the special attention this type of volunteers need, volunteer involving organizations are reserved in honouring their request. In the Netherlands local Social Services therefore offer volunteer involving organizations who involve unemployed citizens into volunteering, a modest compensation. To stimulate their involvement in volunteering, German and Dutch people who are dependent of a social benefit receive one Euro for each hour they volunteer (‘One Euro-job’), in Arnhem, the Netherlands, maximized to €800 a year.

The community discourse is about the enhancement of close neighbourhood relations and trust through volunteering and civic engagement, in short: about the enhancement of social capital (Merrill, 2006). Putnam (1995, 67) defines social capital as ‘features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit’. Unanimously social scientists conclude that social trust, faith in people and interpersonal trust enhance participation in voluntary organizations (Almond and Verba, 1989; Inglehart, 1990). Trust and engagement are two facets of the same underlying factor: social capital. Brehm and Rahn (1997) empirically confirm the mutual relation between trust and engagement. Dörner and Vogt (1999) state that, due to loosing attachments to communities, such as those through family and church, especially volunteer involvement contributes to the social integration of citizens and to the development of social capital. According to Penberthy and Forster (2004, 41) “volunteer-involving organizations need to make it easier for people to volunteer. They need to develop a greater range of quality opportunities for volunteers – not just the tasks that nobody wants to do – and that these opportunities need to reflect volunteers’ availability both in terms of time commitments and when they want to volunteer."

The interest of governments in VI can be summarized as bringing about the conditions and supporting initiatives that enhance (new forms of) volunteer effort or citizen involvement within the community in a general sense.

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2.1. How the VI responds to shifts in volunteer involvement

Both levels of transformations mentioned above have far-reaching consequences for volunteer involving organizations. Changes on the individual level in the habits of volunteering clearly influences volunteer involving organizations, but also changes on the societal level of volunteering has impact too. First of all it changes also the way that individuals volunteer. But foremost it changes the relation between government and the volunteer involving organizations, especially in countries were a government subsidizes these organizations. The first manifestation of this transformation - a shortfall of traditional volunteers with a lifelong and demanding commitment – is responded with recruiting measures (2.2). Some time later the insight that a new type of volunteers appears that offers their effort on a more sporadic, temporary and non-committal way is responded with volunteer policy and volunteer management (2.3.).

2.2. Recruiting Measures

The concept of VI is the result of a long and still ongoing process that first in 1932 in America is started by the National Committee on Volunteers (NCV). This Committee is concerned with fostering the relationship between volunteers and the growing profession of social work, particularly in response to the overwhelming demands of the Depression (Ellis, 1989). To encourage volunteering NCV sponsored the creation of volunteer bureaus (VBs) with the main purpose to refer potential volunteers to various social agencies in the community. VBs – which worldwide arise substantially from the 1970s - often are affiliated with local councils of social service agencies (America: Brudney, 2003), Councils for Voluntary Service (England: Osborne, 1999), Raden voor Overleg en Advies⁴ (The Netherlands: Bos, 2006) or Wohlfartsverbände⁵ (Germany: Ebert et al., 2002; Kamlage, 2008). Initially VBs incriminate themselves to refer volunteers only to their funders (Leat et al. 1981). To stand to this insinuation and to fulfil their tasks effectively VBs strive for the position to act independently of their funders (Osborne, 1999). Independent VBs can include other volunteer involving organizations in their services than only their funders. They for example can offer citizens interested in volunteering a wider range of opportunities and qualify as a VB for governmental financial support. Thanks to their independence VBs can advocate for the different interests volunteers, volunteer involving organizations and – implicitly - public policies have in volunteering, and acquire the quality to balance those interests against each other.

⁴ Councils for consultation and advice
⁵ Associations for welfare
The negative consequence of this independent position is confusion about ‘who is the VB’s client’, the prospective volunteer or the volunteer involving organization? To control this confusion Graff (1997, 32) defines the “Recruitment and Referral Continuum.” Conceptualized on a continuum, at the one end the recruitment and referral service is confined exclusively to information provision (fig. 1). In this model, a VB simply provides information to prospective volunteers about available placements in the community. That is where the service ends. The volunteer decides what (s)he does with the gained information. At the other end of the continuum, a VB provides much more than just information:

- it engages in some measure of selection assistance
- it calls ahead to the volunteer involving organization to pave the way for the volunteer
- it engages in follow-up procedures
- it confirms the referral and monitors the success of the placement.

In the middle of the continuum is the referral: the VB provides information, takes extra steps to ensure that the volunteer actually contacts the organization, but remains outside of whatever relationship develops between the volunteer and the volunteer involving organization.

![Figure 1. Recruitment and referral continuum (Graff, 1997, 32)](image)

Actually in this system both the prospective volunteer as the volunteer involving organization are clients or customers, but VBs have discovered that sometimes the interests of volunteers and volunteer involving organizations are not compatible. For example, sometimes prospective volunteers look for opportunities (for instance working with animals, in a museum, on flexible times, in a wheelchair friendly surrounding, a leg up to a paid job) that volunteer involving organizations in their community do not offer. Also, volunteer involving organizations sometimes have specific demands (for instance managerial skills, long-term availability, and availability on specific hours) that the prospective volunteers do not have or want to offer. Promoting the idea of volunteering and recruiting volunteers to serve voluntary organizations, turn out to be different approaches. An UK VB-coordinator expresses this dilemma as follows:

“I have to keep asking myself, who is our client? If it is the voluntary organizations that we serve, then that cuts down a lot who we can recruit. They want ‘safe’ volunteers who always turn up and be reliable – that is, the traditional middle-class female volunteer. If it is the volunteers themselves, though, the agenda is different. They want personal development and that can mean making mistakes and doing more than just making the of-
fice coffee – so that rules out a lot of local organizations. Which way should I turn?” (Osborne, 1999, 73).

The reality for most VBs is that they want to serve both of these clients at the same time and try to balance the needs of the two. The fact that VBs typically have more face-to-face contact with prospective volunteers makes it natural and logical that they strongly tend to respond to the needs and wishes of those volunteers (Graff, 1997, 34). In this way the information gathered by and the experiences from the VBs contributed to revealing and understanding the process of changing motives for volunteering.

As a consequence of the shift from collective to reflexive styles of volunteering, citizens in volunteer involvement and civic engagement seek ways to realize very individual motives, to express individual freedom and self destination, to take the opportunity to design ones own biography (Jakob, 1993), to find an alternative for or a leg up to paid work, or a way to find intentional relationships with others (Wuthnow, 1998). Though the interests of individuals have not been a factor of importance in the establishment of VI, nowadays citizens call for the VI when they look for fitting volunteering opportunities or when they need facilities to develop new forms of volunteering.

At the same time political and economic changes influence the availability and motives of volunteers. For instance due to emancipation women’s participation in labour has increased changing their availability for volunteering. Tiehen (2000, 505) finds that 65% of the decrease in married women’s volunteer participation in America between 1965 and 1993 is caused by working more for pay. Then unemployment and pre-retirement in the late 1970s produce a new type of volunteers with special needs and capacities.

That leads to the conclusion that “involvement in communities is changing, rather than simply declining” (Whutnow, 1998, vii). VBs observe that not so much the willingness to volunteer decreases but that the demographic composition of the volunteering community changes (e.g. when the pyramid is turned upside down in communities that face and out flux of young people) and people look for volunteering opportunities that match with their personal interests and conditions. VBs start reacting to volunteer involving organizations that face lacking supplies of traditional volunteers, that there is not so much a decrease in the number of volunteers but a lack of appropriate opportunities for volunteering that fit contemporary prospective volunteers. From this point of view European VBs judge recruitment and matching not the most appropriate tasks for them in order to tackle the lack of volunteers within volunteer involving organizations. They start focusing on developing practices for volunteer involving organizations to cope with the
changed form of volunteering opportunities. VBs shift their attention from matching to the development of policies that makes volunteering more attractive, and to the promoting of these best practices (Bos et al., 2005, 21; Osborne, 1999; Meijs and Stubbe, 2001; Ebert et al., 2002).

2.3. Volunteer policy and volunteer management
As indicated before the willingness for volunteer and civic engagement is shifting (Hustinx and Lammertijn, 2003) and appears more dependent on personal interests and less on service ethic and a sense of obligation to the community. To keep volunteers involved activities have to be spectacular, relevant, and entertaining. Trendy problems or modern hot-items like HIV/Aids, refugees, homeless people or environmental policy become more popular than long-lasting volunteer effort for older or disabled people (Wuthnow, 1998; Daal, 1994). Besides recruiting instruments, volunteer involving organizations need new strategies and capacities to attract and retain volunteers. To develop and apply these strategies and to make specific capacities available, volunteer policy is needed. Volunteer policies are policies for volunteer involving organizations analogous to HRM policies for paid staff (van Hall et al. 2004, 22). Volunteer policy has to be distinguished from volunteering policy (van Hall et al. 2004). A volunteering policy is a deliberate strategy adapted by a government (or other ‘external’ body) to influence and stimulate volunteering and volunteerism. Volunteering policies encourage citizens to meet or to develop proper opportunities for civic participation – inside as well as outside existing organizations (Ebert and Hesse, 2002).

With the acknowledgement that volunteers play an important role in the third sector, policies to attract and retain volunteers gain importance. In the eighties several models to run volunteer programs are developed (Ellis, 1990; Brudney, 1990; Wilson, 1990; Fisher and Cole, 1993; Culp et al., 1998; McCurley and Lynch, 2005). Most of these management models are based largely on a workplace analogy (Gaskin, 2003). Organizing volunteers involves recruitment, matching, coaching, coordination, and appreciation (Sozanská et al. 2004). Later on critics disagree with the “one size fits all” models (Rochester, 2007; Gaskin, 2003; Meijs 1997) looking at other organizations and contexts in which volunteers are involved. This diversity of volunteer involvement models poses a challenge for the VI.

Currently in the Dutch context of volunteer administrator concepts as ‘volunteer manager’, ‘manager of motivation’ and ‘management of volunteer involving organizations’ are generally adopted. Hager and Brudney (2004) study volunteer management practices and measures for the retention of volunteers. In England a special program ‘Investing in
Volunteers’ subscribes and supports the importance of volunteer management. Penberthy and Forster (2004) suggest volunteer management to be the most frequently overlooked building block in a volunteer involving organization’s internal infrastructure. Building on Success, a ten years strategy 2004-2014 for volunteering infrastructure, identifies a number of key areas (fig. 2) to strengthen volunteer management (Penberthy and Forster, 2004, 41).

Figure 2. Key areas for volunteer management (Penberthy and Forster, 2004, 41).

“Volunteer involving organizations need to make it easier for people to volunteer. They need to develop a greater range of quality opportunities for volunteers – not just the task that nobody wants to do – and that these opportunities need to reflect volunteers’ availability both in terms of time commitment and in terms of when they want to volunteer. (...) There should be widely recognised accredited qualifications for Volunteer Managers.”

Even in Germany, where initiatives to promote and support volunteering in general arise not till the late 1990s, meanwhile the concepts of Freiwilligen-Management, Management von Freiwilligenarbeit and Management von Freiwilligen have been introduced (Rosenkranz and Weber, 2002; Akademie für Ehrenamlichkeit www.ehrenamt.de; Zimmer, 2005).

2.4. The core functions of the VI
DeGollier (2002) defines the mission of VI as “connecting people with opportunities to serve, building the capacity for effective local volunteering, promoting volunteering, and participating in strategic initiatives that mobilize volunteers to meet local needs”. “Brokerage or development agency?” This theme of the 12th National Conference of BAGFA, the German Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Freiwilligenagenturen⁶, from 17 till 19 October 2007 in Ingolstadt, Bavaria, actually expresses not so much a question but rather the conviction – shared by the VI in various countries (Ebert et al. 2002; Osborne, 1999; Graff, 1997; Meijs and Stubbe, 2001) – that nowadays the task to recruit volunteers and to promote volunteering is of a sheer complexity. Penberthy and Forster (2004, 4) define the task of the VI as “the VI exists to encourage people to volunteer, to make the process of engaging in voluntarism as easy as possible and to ensure that the quality of the volunteering experience is as good as it can be.”

As said before, in this article we use the concept VI for organizations that provide infrastructure to promote, stimulate, and develop volunteering generally and in many cases locally by:

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⁶ National cooperation of volunteer centres www.bagfa.de
- **volunteer support**: contacting or matching individuals who want to volunteer with organizations that need volunteer effort.

- **management support**: consulting and supporting volunteer involving organizations, how to make their activities more attractive and inviting for prospective volunteers.

- **community support**: bringing about the conditions and supporting initiatives that enhance (new forms of) volunteer effort or citizen involvement within the community in a general sense.

Participants of an international *Invitational Conference Volunteering Infrastructure & Civil Society* agreed that this support generally is characterized by the following six core functions, as specified by Penberthy and Forster (2004, 33-38):

- Brokerage
- Marketing volunteering
- Good practice development
- Developing volunteering opportunities
- Policy response and campaigning
- Strategic development of volunteering

Figure 3 proposes a template for the ideal volunteering infrastructure that performs all of those six functions at three levels of support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level / function</th>
<th>Brokerage</th>
<th>Marketing</th>
<th>Good practice development</th>
<th>Developing opportunities</th>
<th>Policy response and campaigning</th>
<th>Strategic development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
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<td>Community</td>
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</table>

### 3.1. The real VI performances in eight countries

The development of the local VI is the subject of the doctoral research of van den Bos, one of the authors of this article. Based upon a review of the (academic and professional) literature (Bos et al. 2005) and interviews, for eight countries insight is gained in the functions the VI aspires to perform and in the levels on which these functions are provided. Figure 4 shows which of the six functions the VI in the concerned country considers its core business. Although based on scarce, global national surveys and the findings

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This invitational conference was organised in Aalsmeer, The Netherlands, April 24/25 2008 by the Rotterdam School of Management of the Erasmus University, and attended by researchers from America, Denmark, England, Finland, Germany, Norway and The Netherlands.
of the Invitational Conference on Volunteering Infrastructure & Civil Society 2008, the conclusion can be drawn that not all of the six functions are performed in all countries.

Figure 4. Core functions of the local VI in eight countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/function</th>
<th>Brokerage</th>
<th>Marketing</th>
<th>Good practice development</th>
<th>Developing opportunities</th>
<th>Policy response and campaigning</th>
<th>Strategic development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>America</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
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<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first explanation is that all of the six core functions are not wanted - in the same degree - for each level of support. Figure 5 shows it is not a matter-of-course that the VI in each country provides support on three levels. Later in the article we will return to this. Even in the case of England, Germany and the Netherlands, where the VI has the general conviction that it has to support all of these three levels, in just a few cases the VI has the size, professional quality and durable funding, necessary to deliver support both to volunteers, the management of voluntary organizations and the community (properly).

Figure 5. Levels of support the VI in each country considers as its core business

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/support</th>
<th>Volunteer support</th>
<th>Management support</th>
<th>Community support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>America</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second explanation that all of the six core functions are not present in the VI is related with the four discourses on civic engagement (Hilger, 2005). The conclusion of the Invitational Conference on Volunteering Infrastructure & Civil Society is that per country the dominating discourse can differ. This fact is one of the explanations for the differences between volunteer centres in the eight countries. Each of the six core functions is not wanted in the same degree for each discourse. For instance the welfare and economic discourse especially valuate the recruiting and brokerage function, with the anno-
tation that within the welfare discourse people can be excluded from brokerage if they do not comply with certain requirements, while in the economic discourse brokerage just includes people who cannot comply with certain requirements. Within the democracy and community discourse the function development of opportunities to express one’s civic engagement is emphasized (fig. 6). Volunteer centres that mainly operate in the community discourse (Norway, Denmark, and Italy) accentuate the providing of logistic services, organizational support and sometimes funds (Italy). In a recently launched white paper (St. meld nr. 39, 2006-2007, 204-205) the Norwegian government even describes volunteer centres as community centres “that support both new initiatives and existing activities and projects, stimulate participation and voluntary work in the local community”.

Figure 6. Main core functions per discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse/Function</th>
<th>brokerage</th>
<th>Marketing</th>
<th>Good practice development</th>
<th>Developing opportunities</th>
<th>Policy response / campaigning</th>
<th>Strategic development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

History also teaches (Bos, 2006) that in one country discourses can follow each other or even that at the same time different discourses can be under discussion. Furthermore government appears to be not one unity: different governmental departments can have different discourses and order, each for itself, the VI to provide certain services. Because each of the six core functions proves to have its special meaning within certain discourses, and each discourse has relevance for a special governmental department or for a part of the voluntary sector, as a consequence the VI has to serve various stakeholders, that are interested not so much in a coherent, durable and professional volunteering infrastructure, but particularly in the – sometimes temporarily - providing of some specific core functions at a specific level of support.

There is a third – trivial - explanation for the difference between the ideal and real VI. However the VI generally agrees about the coherence between the six core functions and about the importance to provide all these functions locally, due to scale and/or lack of financial and professional means often the preconditions to perform all these functions are absent. And because of these poor preconditions even a proper performance of the offered functions can not be guaranteed. According to the participants of Invitational Conference on Volunteering Infrastructure & Civil Society in their countries the local VI judges its organizational equipment insufficient to fulfil the core functions properly. Obvi-
ously no organization would ever claim to have sufficient means and resources. In the context of the Change Up programme delivered by the Volunteering Hub, Volunteering England drafted a proposal in 2006 to create a national network of Volunteer Centres (VC) that provides full coverage of the population of England, deliverance of all six core functions, greater productivity by increasing the range, scale and specificity of their operations, higher quality services, greater cost-effectiveness, and more adaptability/flexibility/responsiveness. The model based on these starting points assumes for the smallest unitary/county a VC with appropriate premises, information technology, and staff (3 FTEs). The funding required for this model is estimated £100,000 to £150,000 per VC. In England only VCs (8%) in inner city areas have such budgets to their disposal. The budget of VCs in urban, rural and small town areas (92%) amounts average £53,000 (= €72,000). In 2003 56% of the American VCs have budgets of $100,000 (= €73,500) or less per year (Brudney, 2005, 10). In 2001 just 21% of the German VCs have a budget of more than €100,000 (Ebert et al., 2002, 52). According to a recent survey (Stubbe and van Dijk, 2006, 6) 65% of the Dutch VCs have 1 or 2 paid (often part time) staff what characterizes them as 'small'.

An American Volunteer Centre Survey shows the relation between expense budget and performance of VCs: “the average number of volunteer opportunities extended by VCs steadily increases with the size of the expense budget” (Brudney, 2003a, 31). “Centres with larger expense budgets are better able to keep their directors in place and to reap the resulting benefits” (Brudney, 2003a, 13). “Centres with greater expense budgets can offer their directors more attractive positions ...and retain the director over a longer period and realize the advantages that greater tenure and more stable leadership can bring” (Brudney, 2003a, 14) Dependence on local funding is the main reason for the limited VC-budgets and performances.

Within this context it is striking that in Denmark in 2007 a coincidence - a municipal reform which reduced the number of local municipalities from 275 to 99 - resulted in a concentration of resources in bigger VCs with average 2 paid staff and a more even distribution of VCs throughout the country (Henriksen, 2008). But even these Danish VCs do not meet the above mentioned “English standard.” These facts and figures, that reflect a situation that is recognisable for most of the eight researched countries - make it clear that on the one hand the average VC budget is not sufficient to fulfil core functions properly and on the other hand that increasing VCs in scale can lead to the desired budgets.

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3.2. Who owns the concept of VI?

As fourth and last explanation for the differences between the ideal and real VI the *Invitational Conference on Volunteering Infrastructure & Civil Society* found that before now the notion of a VI - with its coherent functions and levels of support and with its meaning for the performance of a civil society - never is described thoroughly. Although many workers in the VI are aware of a field of forces that influences their operations and the continuity of their organizations, a clear understanding of these forces lacks. With that they miss an important means to promote the interest of a coherent and durable VI.

Who might judge the idea of VI as a fixed idea of the VI-sector itself, is contradicted for instance by politicians like Blair and Schröder with their inspiring Speeches on ‘The Third Way’ (Salamon et al., 2003; Howlett and Locke, 1999), by special established commissions (e.g. the reports of the English Aves Committee 1966-1970 [Howlett, 2008, 3], the German Enquete-Kommission Bürgerschaftliches Engagement 2002 [Enquete-Kommission, 2002], by political measures (the English Compact on Volunteering 1998 [Plowden, 2003], the Dutch Law on Social Development 20079) or at special events (the International Year of Volunteers 2001 [Davis Smith, 2003]) have expressed visionary and well-founded the importance of volunteering for a civil society. In this context of ‘symbolic politics’ frequently the importance of a solid local VI is emphasized. In the concerned countries just these speeches, commissions, measures, and events have caused a visible impetus for the establishment and strengthening of the national and local VI. The temporally character of these impetuses also have been visible some years later in the decrease and even closure of volunteer centres. Perhaps to the volunteering infrastructure has fallen the same fate as to ‘soft issues’ like civil society and civic engagement.

“Politicians tend to turn to such issues in times of election campaigning. Once they are in government their commitment to engagement and civil society can be maintained as long as it remains connected to the general policy orientation. As soon as competition for resources emerges, prospects for civil society policy easily decrease. ‘Hard issues’ such as economic growth, employment, health care, crisis prevention and others draw most of the attention” (Hilger, 2008, 195). The VI has a lot of stakeholders who have a (temporally) interest in just a specific function or level of support, but lacks a party who owns and structurally invests in the ideal and complete concept of a VI.

3.3. Conclusion: divergent expectations

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9 http://www.minvws.nl/dossiers/wmo
Above the meaning of VI for volunteer involving organizations, governments and individual citizens is described and legitimated. Roughly spoken, volunteer involving organizations ask the VI (how) to recruit, select, train and retain the best volunteers for the organization at the lowest cost possible; governments expect the VI to involve as much citizens as possible – for at least four different goals - into volunteering; individual citizens look for the best volunteering experience at lowest cost possible. The expectations on volunteering these three parties have obvious don’t coincide. They even can oppose each other. To operate successfully in this field of forces, on the one hand independency and on the other hand enduring and sufficient funding are essential preconditions for the VI.

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