

Membership and activity in the Finnish Scandinavian type civil society and the search for sociological explanations. A study based on comparative data from EVS 2008.

This paper aims to introduce a discussion about different types of commitment to voluntary organisations; first with regards to the function organisations play in society with regards to preservation of the culture and at the same time resolution of conflicts and, second, with regards to the relative activity of members in organisations through a measure which makes it possible to compare organisational vitality. The case is Finland and the material is from the European Values Study 2008. It gives little meaning to speak of “the” voluntary sector, or “the” third sector, as if all organisations have similar social conditions, purposes and functions. As a consequence of the differences there are large differences between voluntary organisations in terms of memberships and levels of active commitments to do voluntary work for the organisations. Many Nordic associations today seem to suffer from a lack of volunteers, while the organisations itself has acquired traits of bureaucratisation.

To understand the voluntary organisations that make up civil society the non-profit sector must be analysed in the context of their relations to the nation states, or structured societies, that they exist in. The argumentation is in debt to an article by DiMaggio and Anheier (1990) which argues that sociology should be brought in more into the study of non-profit organisations. This paper suggests that sociologists should return to some of Parsons’ ideas about modern society in order to be able to understand the functions of different kinds of voluntary engagement among individuals as well as in societies as a whole¹.

¹ This paper is part of a project studying present processes within the Finnish and the Estonian civil sectors. The central theoretical purpose is to present a sociological frame within which both state institutions and civil organisations can be compared in the two countries. In the paper the relatively large Scandinavian data on voluntary engagement is used to create an empirical platform against which the peculiarities of the Finnish civil sector can be exposed.

Introduction: Finland and the Nordic pattern

Independence from Russia in 1917 marked the birth of the Finnish state. A few years later the constitution was accepted allowing i.e. for the right to assemble and to have associations. This was the start of the establishment of a voluntary sector. But Finland had for many hundred years been part of Sweden and it was even during the “Russian” period 1809-1917 possible to preserve society with the legislation and largely with the organisations that Swedish connection had brought about (Helander & Sundback 1998, 3-4). It is therefore natural that the Finnish voluntary sector at the start of the modern period became similar to the Swedish, furthermore sharing many general Scandinavian traits. One such factor was that associations came to be part of the plea for democracy and that they generally belonged to some of the large popular movements which evolved into political movement and parties. This development was common to all Nordic countries and the popular movements were usually not against the state, but for it, and they wanted to be a democratic influence in the nation state, which they believed would bring peace, prosperity and happiness within their country. The birth of the Nordic voluntary sector must be understood as part of the popular mobilisation for nationalism, democracy and modernity that took place about a century ago (Svedberg 2005,55; Nordic Associations in a European Perspective 2010, Wijkström & Lundström 2002, Helander 1998, Selle & Öymyr 1995). Although society has undergone tremendous change when the Nordic states became relatively rich modern welfare states and in the 1990’s joined the European Union, the Nordic voluntary sector has mainly remained important for leisure and hobby activities rather than having social functions within production of welfare services to the citizens (Wijkström & Lundström 2002, 18). The Nordic voluntary model is connected with “voice” rather than with “service” although there is i.e.in Finland a somewhat stronger trend for voluntary organisations to be part of service production (Helander 1998, 30).

The Nordic pattern exists today in welfare states that are funded by taxes from all citizens in return for universal services to all, according to ideal that often are called social democratic. It has often been said to stand for idealistic and creative goals among individuals rather than working directly in society. Voluntary organisations have been able to get support from municipalities and state for limited projects with a public goal, but the main rule has been that associations must be non-profit and must not have business interests. Strictly limited economic resources are typical of the Nordic voluntary organisations and problematic today

when money is said to “make the world go around”. Few individuals will today, compared to the nation-building process a century ago, give their time and competence to a voluntary association without pay of some kind.

Sociologists Göran Ahrne & Apostolis Papakostas (2002) have commented the fact that many voluntary organisations, from the old popular movements to smaller one-issue associations for decades already seem to have increasing difficulties to engage volunteers. In other words: organised voluntarism for goals such as nation, development and democracy in state and society, do not appeal to the Swedes anymore. This trend is strong and parallel with the increase of one-issue associations, which attract small numbers, tend to be short lived and rarely have an impact outside a small group (Riikonen & Siisiäinen ed. 2002). In this paper the analysis of the two Swedish sociologists is accepted as a description also of the Finnish situation (Sundback 2010) and the Scandinavian pattern is defined as rich and varied in terms of civil organisations but low in terms of voluntary participation today or in other words: Many organisations but few volunteers.

Organisations and individuals in society: towards a sociological frame

In order for society to live and prosper it must, according to Parsons, respond effectively to factors in the environment while retaining its internal social and cultural integrity. Any modern state must engage itself in international relations and cooperation, while also preserving its culture and national identity. The two ambitions may clash and cause conflicts over collective ideals and resources. Parsons AGIL-scheme refers to the “sub-systems” or sectors in society (the social system) that have necessary “functions” (Allardt 1985) or “imperatives” (Cuff, Sharrock & Francis 1992) for society. In this paper “system” is interpreted as collective organisation, where human – not superhuman social artefacts – agents represent organisations and individual actors in society. In the tradition of Erik Allardt (1985, 149) the structural-functionalism that Parsons represented later in his career is replaced with a weaker functionalist view on society. It is not society but humans that sometimes issue “imperatives” and societies do undergo change because individuals and groups want it. “Society” is here an abstraction of a modern nation state, but the model leaves out important matters such as history, social, economic and political developments during modernisation and the effects of existing in a globalised world today. Later it will be argued that explanations about origins are possible to fit into the model. It is not argued that

“society” acts logically or “needs” certain organisations to survive, but it is seen as an acceptable argument that individuals, when engaged in voluntary activities, are under certain pressures by society as a whole which may direct, support or inhibit, their commitment to organised voluntary activities.

Figure 1. Parsons’ system-view of society according to Erik Allardt (1985, 150) and Cuff, Sharrock & Francis (1992, 42-45).

SOCIETY AS A SOCIAL SYSTEM	Functions aiming at the future	Functions which demand immediate action
External problems	A (adaption). Development of resources. I.e. economic institutions, foreign policy, natural sciences	G (goal-attainment). Decision making and attainment of concrete goals. I.e. political institutions.
Internal problems	L (latency). Preservation of continuity. I.e. Family, schools, leisure activities.	I (integration). Preservation of unity I.e. mass media, religious and political associations

In Parsons’ original view from the 1960’s voluntary organisations had a socially integrative function with reference to real or potential conflicts in society that prompted rapid solutions. On the other hand, voluntarism was also frequent in the square called “latency” or “pattern-maintenance” concerned with transference of established socio-cultural behaviours and norms to younger generations in families and local societies. L and I were both functions in relation to internal problems and issues in a society.

It is not controversial to say that voluntary organisations and civil society as such mainly are expressions of internal processes in the societies. The statement acknowledges in fact that every nation has a unique tradition for voluntary organising and organisations as part of a wider cultural, social and institutional history. Nordic countries tend to separate between public authorities and civil society to the extent that public institutions dominate when rapid solutions to social problems are at stake and voluntary associations are kept within leisure and individual self-expressions, thus mainly filling the latency function. It can be argued that especially political and welfare organisations have preserved a stronger foothold in the work for conflict resolution and integration in society, but the questions “how” and “how much” are empirical and intertwined with the work of public institutions.

Comparative surveys and methodological individualism, just as abstract system models of society, often hide historical and other social facts that are unique for each state. On the other hand, globalisation has, since Parsons, lowered the borders between national states and brought “the whole world” in to the homes of many through television, Internet and other media. It is today not unusual that Nordic people engage in actions or organisations whose aim is united with the “external” problems citizens may sense in any European country. Parsons’ separation between associational life and leisure activities according to their function for society must nevertheless be questioned within the Nordic context. It seems unreasonable to limit the functions of religion, mass media and associations to that of securing unity and integration and separate them from other “leisure activities” that would have long-term cultural and social goals. It is here seen as preferable to see the functions for societal continuity and unity, L and I, either as a continuum, or as intertwined.

L and I of figure 1 are used as heuristic ideal types but not as blueprints for the empirical cases of voluntary organised activity which will be dealt with on the basis of survey data obtained from individuals as actors. From the actor perspective I(ntegrative) forms of collective activity tend to be seen as conscious and planned strategies to meet concrete problems of everyday life, while voluntarism with L(atency) strengthening functions is more or less conceptualised as conservative strivings relating to lifestyle, socialisation and culture. On the other hand, the L-pole speaks more than the I-pole about arenas where people can express themselves and engage in theoretical discussions of a deliberative Habermasian type (Moe 1994, 219-220). In this paper the separation between L and I in view of voluntary organisation is envisioned as a dimension between abstract-theoretical (L) and the concrete-practical (I) goals for individuals and groups. Such a dimension can also be divided into long and short term strategies.

Comparative EVS-data on voluntary activity and the relative vitality of civil organisations

The Nordic voluntary sectors Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway, will be analysed using material from the European Values Survey collected in 2008 (EVS round 2010). In this comparative survey some of the very first questions respondents were asked concerned

membership or rather a sense of “belonging”², to voluntary organisations, followed by a question about doing unpaid or voluntary work in them. It was asked about organisations in welfare, religion, culture, trade unions, politics, local community, third world/human interests, professionalism, youth work, sports/recreation, women’s groups, peace movement, voluntary health organisation and an undefined “other”. The list may be coincidental or the one that was found possible in a large international survey, where national traditions may differ much. The category “other” is important and may collect types of voluntary organised work that are characteristic of the societies of the respondents.

The relative vitality and social impact of the 15 types of organisations in terms of members and reported activity in these can be related to the L-I dimension. But a study which starts in questionnaire data based on subjective individual answers about commitments speaks only indirectly about specific organisations and more directly about actor attitudes to voluntarism in various sectors. It is not unlikely that a study that focuses more on data about organisations would depict the relevant parts of civil society as more vital than is done here. The kind of organisational “vitality” studied in this paper is in reality constructed for the wider purpose of comparing Finnish survey results with a larger Scandinavian sample of the EVS 2008 study.

A vital organisation is strong in terms of number of members, of the volume of voluntary work offered by members and by the level of institutionalisation in society. An organisation that is weak in any of these aspects – members, collective activities, organisational development – is usually seen as lacking vitality.

It is well known from previous research that membership and activity do not always correlate strongly. One can be loyal to an organisation in different ways; one may for instance be a church member without ever visiting the church as often is the case in the Nordic countries (Sundback 2000) and one may actively or passively support a voluntary organisation without being a member. Due to the fact that relatively few individuals in EVS 2008 report activity in organisations that they support, statistical restrictions due to small numbers will create some problems for the chi-square measure especially for Finland, which is treated separately. But since the segments of the voluntary sector where Scandinavians (Swedes, Danes and

² In EVS: “Do you belong to i.e. women’s groups”. The term membership was not used

Norwegians) report to be passive or active members are similar to that of the Finnish respondents, the results of the vitality-measures have in most cases been judged as reliable³.

The question about belonging to religious institutions is problematic in the Nordic countries which until recently had Lutheran state churches and where church membership still today to considerable extent rests on the civil religious functions of the church (Sundback 2000)⁴. But the role of religion for the preservation of societal unity is not likely to be important in the views of a random sample of respondents in any European country today, after processes of separation between church and state and wide spread “secularisation”⁵. The former power of the Church has largely been broken and it seems reasonable today to place the main Church in the lower left square in its role as provider of tradition, values and existential meaning⁶. Alternative religious bodies are still not likely to be able to occupy a similar central place in society as that of the main Lutheran church.

It is necessary to reflect on certain historical and biographical matters that will affect survey answers about the individual and his/her commitments to voluntary organisations. In the Nordic countries most associations, which individuals/respondents relate to when asked about their organised voluntary engagement, are shaped in the past, carry expectations concerning the future, but live in the present. Thus, at the moment of the survey, many individuals share positive i.e. family based experiences of certain organisations which create a kind of bonding social capital in their life, but they may also have experiences which create aversions or biases against the idea of organising or of certain organisations. And it is also a fact that

³ The phi-coefficients which slightly violate the chi-square demand that maximum 20% of expected values may be less than 5 are accepted in the analysis while marked in cursive style. In general the analysed cross tables with 25% expected counts fewer than 5 are accepted while in a few cases when the violation is larger (50%) the results are rejected

⁴ Through the historical unity between church and state, the church has preserved sacralising functions in relation to state and society.

⁵ The concept of secularisation is here used in the conventional meaning of social marginalisation of church and religion, which in other words have lost significance for many. The author is aware that in most sociological studies of the “secularisation process” the concept religious change would be more accurate allowing for increasing religious pluralism and new forms of religiosity.

⁶ It is not obvious in EVS 2008 how and why so many Scandinavians reported that they belonged to or were active in a religious organisation. They may have been thinking of the Lutheran majority church, which most indigenous people belong to, some may have meant another major religion or some organisation within the Lutheran church and some may have meant a rather newly established independent alternative religious organisation, which is not at all recognized by citizens in general or institutionalised as part of society to the extent that the Lutheran churches are in the Nordic countries. Most Nordic respondents are probably members of their national church, why the question about membership does not carry the same meaning as when asked about many other types of civil organisations. The question about active participation in i.e. church activities does on the other hand convey a measure of engagement among the respondents.

organisations, which live in a constantly changing social world, at certain moment, may have to avert outside and inside problems in ways that either bind or create conflicts between individuals and voluntary organisations. Doing research on comparative survey data it is not known to what extent some response patterns reflect temporary but passing conditions due to i.e. positive or negative public critique about a certain organisation at the time of a survey in a certain country.

Membership and activity in Nordic civil society

The list of organizational purposes and the percentage of members is presented in table 1. A much greater part of the respondents say they “belong” to voluntary organisations than they report doing “unpaid work” for them. The general picture tells about a stronger L(atency) or a value based “theoretical” support for voluntary organisation among the respondents and plays down the socially I(ntegrative) practical goods that could result from collective work. This proves that the two variables, belonging and activity are separated to the point that they in many sectors of civil society represent two different relationships between individual and organisation.

Belongings and memberships are symbols of the social identity of individuals. Formal membership is a public statement underlining that the individual respondent – as citizen-wants to promote the general purposes of certain voluntary organisations. According to table 1 belongings/memberships were in Scandinavia a few years ago frequent especially in trade unions and organisations within religion and sports/recreation. The formal or individually acknowledged memberships are on top, but there is a clear difference between on the one hand religious organisations and trade unions and on the other hand sports/recreation. Among the first two surprisingly few respondents report activity, while in the case of sports and recreation, the strivings for well-being seems to motivate many to active participation. Somewhat more than half of the Scandinavians belonged to at least one organisation. A majority belonged to one traditional membership organisation and a much smaller minority belonged to several organisations. The fact that Finns have less memberships can probably be given an historical explanation, but must largely remain outside this article due to space.

Most sectors of civil society cannot expect such level of identification with their goals among the majority of citizens to recruit a similar amount of members as do sports, religion and

trade unions. In spite of this, comparably many Scandinavians (10-17%) said that they “belonged” to organisations within culture, ”other”, welfare, professional and environment organisations. In most types of voluntarism membership was more common than activity, the only exception being youth work. Also thematically small parts of organised civil society focusing on human rights/third world, politics and health have more members than activists. In most of these organisations theoretical idealism and long term goals are important (L).⁷ The very small thematic groups consisting of women´s groups and the peace movement seem to divert with high correlation between membership and activity.

Finland is a Nordic country, but is often seen as outside of Scandinavia for geographical, linguistic and historical reasons. The latter may have to do with Finland´s 19th century history as part of the Russian empire and the wars with the Soviet Union in the 20th century. The Finnish sample counted totally 1 134 respondents. Table 1 shows that membership in voluntary organisations generally is lower in Finland than in Scandinavia, with the exception for political organisations and women´s groups. The latter are often linked to certain political parties in Finland and may as such be seen as political in purpose.

Subjective “belongings” (“memberships”) were least common among respondents in local community, youth work, women´s groups and the peace movement, areas of the civil society where practical work is the focus of interest and organisational growth is unimportant or even ideologically abhorred. These four types of organisations have specific, limited goals, which rest on local organisation of individual engagements. Spontaneous activity is preferred although the concrete and often short-term goals unite them with I(ntegration). These four areas seem to be little institutionalised and have few members. They represent loosely organised projects rather than traditional organisations and they may be parts of larger organisations, which the survey did not ask about.

⁷. Politics is sometimes seen as aiming at concrete aims in short time perspectives (I) and, as in the Johns Hopkins Comparative Non-profit Project as part of the state machinery outside of the non-profit sector (Helander 1998, 57-58), but there is no doubt that for many citizens political commitment is primarily a question of principles and long term solidarity with organised goals.

Table 1. Membership in voluntary organizations in Scandinavia and Finland (EVS 2008, ranked according to relative Scandinavian memberships)

Purpose of voluntary organisations	Scandi- navia	Finland
	%	%
1. Trade unions	41,4	36,8
2. Religious	31,6	25,9
3. Sports/recreation	31,3	17,6
4. Cultural	16,7	10,6
5. Undefined "other"	16,2	12,9
6. Professional	11,1	8,4
7. Environmental	10,4	6,4
8. Welfare	9,9	7,0
9. Third world/human rights	9,5	7,4
10. Health	6,8	6,4
11. Political parties/groups	6,6	8,3
12. Youth work	4,8	4,8
13. Local community development	4,2	2,0
14. Women's groups	2,5	3,9
15. Peace	0,9	0,7
Total	N=3 784	N=1 134

The meaning of and number of 'belongings' mirror various degrees of formalised organisation (institutionalisation) and differences in the total societal impact that voluntary groups may have. Trade unions, religions, sports and cultural organisations are usually established in Nordic societies with a relative goodwill and open for individuals who fill certain formal criteria, while i.e. political parties, professional and women's groups typically are less institutionalised and want to attract those who share ideological or professional sub interests. Few Scandinavian respondents were members of a peace movement. The interpretation may be that peace is a theoretical and relative matter which mainly, in the eyes of the respondents, seemed to be a problem in non-European countries far away. There are hardly any personal benefits connected to organised membership in the peace movement.

Activity in any part of civil society is, in contrast to membership, part of the praxis side of social life where activity is essential to the collective will. It may be a question of democracy, personal commitment or social relations which can develop only with the assistance of individuals. Active members are typical within welfare & health, politics, local community and youth work, sports & recreation and culture. Organisations that are strong in

memberships are important to individuals as part of their world-view and a guide to their future ambitions when benefits of belonging are not expected to give instant rewards. The opposite holds for organisations or social movements which value practical activities and attract individuals to whom activity itself is important or results appear rapidly - although certainly in different ways in various sectors of civil society. Finland reports more activity than Scandinavia in the voluntary fields for religion, trade unions and politics, but on the whole less active participation in other areas.

Table 2. Reported unpaid work for voluntary organisations in Scandinavia and Finland (EVS 2008, ranked according to Scandinavian organisational activity).

Purpose of voluntary organisations	Scandi- navia	Finland
	%	%
1. Sports/recreation	18,1	11,6
2. Undefined "other"	11,6	8,9
3. Cultural activities	8,4	4,5
4. Welfare	8,0	6,3
5. Youth work	6,8	4,3
6. Religious	6,1	7,8
7. Health	3,9	2,4
8. Trade unions	3,7	4,6
9. Political	3,6	4,3
10. Third world/human rights	3,5	2,4
11. Local community	3,4	1,8
12. Environment	3,1	1,6
13. Professional	2,9	2,4
14. Women's groups	2,4	1,7
15. Peace movement	0,8	0,2
Total	N= 3 784	N=1 134

Third world & human rights movements, environmental groups and the peace movement tend to be weakly organised "alternative" one-issue organisations in civil society both in terms of memberships and active participation. According to the interpretation given above, the explanation is that they speak about a specific world-view that imply a radical and deep change in society, but tend to offer short time activity in terms of happening and campaigns, which many may seem superficial in view of the complicated and wide problems they touch on. In comparison with these, professional organisations rank a bit higher, probably due to a more limited focus on questions of current concern to individuals holding different professions. Membership is low, mainly due to the fact that few respondents in a representative sample belong to an exclusivist professional group.

The relative vitality of voluntary sectors

To what extent are the members of voluntary organisations also those who are active in the collective work? Because it is more common to be a member than to be active in voluntary organisations, the question should be stated the other way around: to what extent are the organisationally active respondents also members? The relationship between membership and activity is tested with chi-square, where the phi-values (varies between -1 0 and 1) are compared.

Membership and activity in voluntary organisation tend to correlate positively, but in many cases rather weakly. Although a respondent may be member of an organisation, a number of other variables may affect the probability for active membership. The traditional demographic variables may effect but also other less known variables. A survey like EVS which posits questions to individuals does not answer questions about the age, history or social context of specific organised voluntary groups. It does separate between large institutions and small groups i.e. between semi-official welfare organisations and groups that are allied to the larger peace movement. In this data we can only study what respondents have answered to the questions asked about their subjectively based definitions of membership and participation assuming that their answers can be treated as proof of objective information about the voluntary sector.

But why do the respondents not fill the expectation of combining voluntary belonging and voluntary activity? It is of course possible to join an organisation and postpone or avert decisions about activity, especially if the organisation refers to well-known traditions, structures or established values in society. It may be more common in organisations that are new or little established in society to first become active and later to decide about the level of belonging. And organisations may have various rules about membership and activity. It is also likely that the level of individual activity may vary according to phases in life, ageing and health conditions. These are explanations that could be studied at greater detail with the help of the EVS data, but they are not the main object of this paper.

The phi-correlations between organisational belonging and participation in on the one hand Denmark, Norway and Sweden and on the other hand for Finland is presented in the next table. We expect to find that the relationship (phi-value) between the two variables is higher

in sectors where memberships are less popular and low in sectors where the general level of memberships is high. In terms of vitality by active members, trade unions and religious organisations are placed at the lower end of the dimension; members tend to remain passive. These organisations represent central and established social institutions in Nordic societies, having in Parson's AGIL important functions both for short term integration (I) and pattern-maintenance (L) – theory and practices - in society. They can, according to our data, count on rather wide spread loyalty but generally not on enthusiastic commitment among individuals. Religion – especially the Christian church - and trade unions represent taken-for-granted structuring institutions in society.

The most vital Scandinavian organisations exist in the action and praxis-dominated spheres of civil society within youth, local community and “other” work. And women's organisations and political parties appear as more vital than organised sports/recreation in general. We do not however know why these organisations are more successful in mobilising the members or if the same explanation applies to all organisations. A hypothesis may be that contrary to many other organisations these are less interested in having a large membership to indicate their ideological support in the population, but offer concrete and realistic action to remedy a known social problem.⁸ The engagement for peace and environment separates as neither attractive for memberships nor for activity among members. The problems of these two are both that they are little recognized by respondents and that their invitation to practices creates little enthusiasm.

Table 3 confirms that membership and activity are different aspects of the civil engagement. But it is surprising that the level of organisational institutionalisation as such has little or no effect at all on the level of active participation. Most active members in voluntary organisations are found in local projects and in organisations that focus on the concerns of a specific minority. Vital members are often found in places where the collective aim concerns common everyday problems. But this does not imply that members of older organisations always are less active. And it is also common that little institutionalised collective efforts that have originated in the late modern society may - as many older organisations - are characterized by relatively high levels of membership and low levels of activity. These are concerned with the third world & human rights, environment, professional organisations and peace movement, also representing rather narrow interests if compared with those of religious

⁸ This relevance of this explanation for “other organisations” is not known

groups and trade unions. A somewhat surprising finding is that among Finns membership combined with activity is more common than among Scandinavians. The Finnish civil society seems to be smaller in scope and institutionalisation but at the same time somewhat more vital.

Table 3. The strength of the relationships between organisational voluntary activity and organisational membership * in Scandinavia and Finland (EVS 2008, $p=0,000$, phi-values, ranked according to Scandinavian data)⁹

Purpose of organisation	Scandi- navia	Finland
1. Youth work	0,67	0,77
2. Local community	0,52	0,60
3. Other	0,48	0,62
4. Welfare	0,48	0,85
5. Health	0,43	0,57
6. Women's groups	0,43	0,58
7. Political	0,42	0,66
8. Sports/recreation	0,42	0,61
9. Cultural	0,40	0,53
10. Religious	0,31	0,46
11. Professional	0,29	0,44
12. Third world/human rights	0,26	0,42
13. Environment	0,24	0,37
14. Trade unions	0,15	0,26
15. Peace movement	0,15	-----

It has proved to be fruitful to separate between civil society organisations with long-term goals bound to the theoretical world of culture and values (L) and practical, short term, goals (I). But our study has shown that membership and activity may point in different direction and create a schizophrenic situation for individuals since membership, especially in

⁹ Both variables are nominal and based on yes and no answers. The chi-square table created on two binary variables is sensitive to a small number of expected values for each square which in principle holds 25% of the expected values. In this case the problem is acute in the Finnish data due to a small N and the fact that few respondents report membership or activity. Especially in cases where few respondents report doing unpaid work in a specific voluntary sector the expected count for observations of voluntary work combined with non-belonging will be less than five. Since one cell stands for 25% of the expected count in a four-fold table, a central condition for chi-square tests is violated. Maximum 20% of the expected counts may be less than 5. Those Finnish coefficients that violate the rule about expected counts are in cursive and should not be seen as exact.

organisations that are firmly established in society usually – but not always - point at L(atency) functions while active commitment point at I(ntegration). The incongruence between membership and activity can from the actor point of view be seen as a choice between theory/values and praxis/social and political goals. In Scandinavia where there is a large public welfare system and organisations in civil society have had a democratic and interest guarding function, membership seems today as more important to respondents than action. In another type of society things may be different.

Summary of the comparison between Scandinavia and Finland

Having separated answers between the fifteen EVS 2008 questions about voluntary belonging into social institutions (trade unions, professional organisation and religious organisation) where voluntarism in the Scandinavian context is debatable, or the validity of the question is doubted (religion), welfare sector organisations (welfare and health) and membership organisations that in the Nordic context usually is connected with a strong element of voluntarism we can conclude:

- a) The population is divided according to their voluntary engagement in civil society organisations. Almost half of the Scandinavian respondents said that they belonged to no voluntary organisation, a majority belonged to at least one traditional membership organisation and there was a minority which say they are members in several organisations. In Finland belonging was somewhat lower.
- b) Scandinavians who said they had three or more memberships tended to be members particularly in sports & recreation, trade unions and cultural organisations, but many have also answered “other”, religious groups or welfare organisations. Organisations of this type are traditional, integrated into the main public institutions such as state and municipalities. They are in other words institutionalised and to varying degree serving the volunteers they want to enrol. Especially sports & recreation and “other” organisations ranked high on the vitality index, while i.e. cultural organisations and trade unions ranked relatively low.
- c) The open category “other” and new types of voluntary organisations which value active participation higher than formal memberships represent the less institutionalised part of civil society, but also the part where some of the most vital membership is found, as in youth work and groups working for local society. Somewhat less

organisational vitality was found among women's and political organisations and much lower vitality in third world & human rights, environmental and peace groups.

- d) Referring to Parsons model for voluntary organisations, memberships tend to be important especially for organisations near the L-function working for common long-term goals, while voluntary commitment to activity tends to characterize the respondents' relations to organisations with I-functions focusing social issues they think must be changed rapidly.

Scandinavians report more memberships and activity than Finns do. But the generally low level also of Scandinavian voluntary work brings Finland close to Scandinavia in terms of active participation in civil organisations. Sports/recreation attracts most activists both in Scandinavia and Finland. Finns appear even as more active than Scandinavians within religion, trade unions and politics. Small numbers of reported activism becomes obvious in voluntary organisations with certain purposes. In Finland only two respondents said they participated in the peace movement.

The relative vitality of the Finnish civil society

With regards to the vitality of voluntary organising measuring the relationship between activity in civil society organisations and membership in the same organisations some interesting results appear. Finland generally ranking lower than Scandinavia in terms of rates of memberships and participation in the voluntary sector tend to uphold a stronger relationship between formal membership and active participation in organised voluntary work. This is true especially in voluntarism for welfare (the highest phi-value!), undefined "other" purposes, sports/recreation, culture and religion. In fourteen out of the fifteen different types of voluntary organisations that EVS enumerates Scandinavia ranks lower than Finland.

The comparison of the total belonging and activity in civil society proved to give higher marks for Scandinavia (Denmark, Norway and Sweden) than for Finland. This was especially the case with belongings - memberships, which tend to relate individuals to history, culture, tradition and established social structures (L). On the other hand, differences were rather small concerning reported voluntary activity and it was shown that

the Finnish civil organisations had more active members. The many memberships in Scandinavia may be an indication that the Scandinavian civil sector at large is both older and more institutionalised, i.e. having more one-sided latency functions and being to higher extent ruled by an organizational elite in society.

Traditional membership organisations tend to have latency functions in society and strive to set goals for the future. These organisations have strong legitimacy and their existence is taken for granted, but only a minority of the members take active part in organisational work. As a summary of the comparisons above based on the items in EVS 2008, figure 2 tries to bring the results in under the discussion about latency and integrative organisational functions of voluntary organisations for society. In the Nordic countries sports & recreation, culture and religion seems to represent relatively vital civil society sectors due to their latency functions. Relative vital resting on their integrative, short-term goals are youth organisations, community groups and environmental groups and to some extent also welfare, health and political organisations. The sectors which tend to suffer from low vitality are on the one hand near the latency pole, trade unions and professional groups, and closer to the integrative pole the peace movement and third world & human rights groups.

Figure 2. Voluntarism according to the L-I functional dimension and organisational vitality in Scandinavia and Finland (EVS 2008)

	Latency-pole/ long-term goals	Integration-pole/short-term goals
Higher vitality	Sports/recreation "Other" Culture Religion	Welfare organisations Youth organisations Political organisations Health organisations Local community groups Environmental groups
Lower vitality	Professional Trade Unions	Third world & human rights Peace movement

Discussion

The purpose of the paper was to compare Finnish voluntary commitment with the greater Scandinavian pattern and to create a typology of voluntary commitment according to organisational purpose and comparative data from the 2008 European Values Study.

The primary variables were data about membership and about participation in the work of

voluntary organisations. For a deeper understanding of the civil society Parsons AGIL model of society was presented and discussed as a heuristic means. From the perspective of social action it was argued that the societal functions L(agency) and I(ntegration) tend to be intertwined and that organised voluntarism in civil society may have both functions or at different times stand closer to one of the poles on the dimension. The fact that voluntary organisations are part of the societies they exist in makes comparative analysis difficult. Surveys answered by individuals leave out history, social and institutional contexts for voluntarism and historical and institutional comparisons may underestimate the global cultural trends that may affect the will for voluntary organising. So what do we compare?

The empirical data from EVS 2008 showed that most Scandinavians and Finns today are passive watchers or unknowing about the activity of voluntary organisations. The minority which supports these organisations are more often members than activists. This fact indicates a sense of loyalty and legitimation for voluntary organisations and underlines the L(agency) function of civil society through emphasis on values, ideals, lifestyle, culture and ambitions that imply a belief that what we do today has bearing on the future.

In the Nordic countries many civil society organisations are more than a hundred years old and established in the public society, from which they often receive economic support. Membership organisations in sports/recreation, religion, culture and undefined “other” group collect a large membership especially in Scandinavia. Some of the fields of interest for voluntarism that EVS asked about are such as the peace movement, environmental groups and third world/human rights groups play an almost insignificant role for the Nordic people in general. It is suspected that the popularity of the category “other” indicates what EVS did not ask about such as the engagement in choirs, musical or dancing groups, groups cherishing cats and dogs or other animals, film clubs or other hobbies that today engage many in the Nordic countries.

This paper has shown concerning involvement in civil society organisations that Finns have a profile which to some extent diverts from the pattern of the pooled Scandinavians. They were not as often members in organisations but those who were members were more active. In the Nordic countries many organisations are old and established and they seem able to occupy a central position in civil society also in the future. It is also a typical Nordic trait that

a minority of respondents are members of many organisations while most are members in one large membership organisation or none.

In the end it was stated that out of the 15 types of voluntary organisations that EVS asked about a few seemed to be almost insignificant to the Nordic respondents (the peace movement in 2008) or did not represent the traditional type of idealistic democratic associations clearly separated from the public or the private sectors in society. This was the case with the trade unions, which are involved into public society and professional associations that tend to be part of the private sector. It was shown that the remaining membership organisations could be divided between the latency and integration-poles among the voluntary organisations in society.

This paper wanted to state the need to speak about differences within organised voluntarism, we need to speak about voluntary sectors instead of lumping organisations together, and we need to understand that the strong membership tradition from the old established popular movements that still dominates the picture of voluntary organisations in the Nordic countries is a vanishing phenomenon. The importance of voluntarism in the future Nordic countries will most likely preserve the democratic traditions, while a shift towards service production services is dependent on the increasingly insecure future for the encompassing Nordic welfare states.

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