Active Citizenship in a Post-transitional Context

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Abstract. The authors examine some present-day conditions for practicing active citizenship through volunteering in the broad context of globalisation and information age. The current analysis is focusing mainly on Hungary, where, similarly to other Central and Eastern European states, the country's post-communist legacy influences democratisation processes. In the authors' view, sustainable development requires the recognition of compatibility between socioeconomic welfare and psychosocial well-being. In the current analysis, civil society is regarded as a framework, volunteering as a form of behaviour, and generativity as the psychosocial aspect of sustainability. The authors conclude that sustainable development demands transforming passivity into personal experiences on democracy and relational responsibility in an era of global crisis.

Keywords: active citizenship, transition, civil society, volunteering, generativity

Democracy and sustainability in a globalised context

During the third wave of democratisation, communist societies in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) have changed their social systems, and many of them soon joined the European Union, hoping to establish their own democratic welfare states. The broad context of the transformation was globalisation and the concurrent emergence of information society. In Hungary, processes transforming

the soft dictatorship of the Kadar-system were controlled by the ruling regime. It is much beyond the scope of the current paper to evaluate the outcomes and processes of the transformation. The current analysis is focused on one aspect of the change: possible transition from a passive 'the state will provide' and 'they know what's best for us' attitude to practicing active citizenship. Such change occurs slowly, as these attitudes have been formed in the communicative memory of citizens, and are passed on to subsequent generations by non-conscious forms of experiential and social learning (László, Ehmann and Imre 2002). To explore mechanisms of inhabiting one's own society and culture, Van Dijk introduced a new area: epistemic discourse analysis, the "study of the way knowledge is expressed, implied, suppressed, distributed, etc. in text and talk" (Van Dijk 2009: 11). He examined how one's personal context models, that is, mental representations of social situations are formed. Van Dijk's epistemic approach connects discourse, cognition and society. In this triangle model, speakers work to harmonise their own stories with the dominant discourse of their communities. Consequently, democratic development should be manifested in social practices and institutions, in community discourse, and in people's individual context models. In this view, personal models on democracy and direct experiences on active citizenship are a key aspect of genuine social transformation.

Democracy is re-interpreted in the global context. Two recent and interdependent developments influencing democratic potentials in late modern societies are globalisation and the rapid advancements in infocommunication technologies. Sustainable development in the globalised world depends on the collective decisions of present and future governments. In order to make decisions that support sustainability, relevant knowledge and commitment to basic ethical values are necessary. In our era, knowledge is essentially fragmented; further, it is often tacit or experiential, which makes it more difficult to share, organise and unify (Nyíri 2005). The individual voter's knowledge on public issues is undoubtedly limited; but that does not entail that experts always make better decisions (e.g., the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion – see Griffin 1997, 231). Democracy facilitates the cognitive division of labour. The essence of the democratic experience is that no one can 'take it all.' On the contrary, the roles of the 'winner' and that of the 'loser' are interchangeable. Therefore, one knows that s/he has the chance to get what s/he wants; further, one can trust that one's achievements would not be destroyed by one's counterparts. In a stable democracy, the capability for change and compromise are considered important virtues. Public decisions are not always wise; but the decision that decisions should be made in a democratic manner, respecting the diversity of opinions and thereby eliminating groupthink fallacies, is wise (Surowiecki 2007).

In their empirical analysis, Li and Reuveny (2003) have reviewed 17 different scenarios concerning the possible effects of globalisation on democracy. Some

of the positive views are related to the concept of information society and the parallel increasing role of non-governmental organisations. Negative expectations highlight the erosion of the concept of citizenship as a basis of democracy; economic volatility and the resulting frequent crises; and an increasing number of domestic losers. Domestic governments in less developed countries are forced to please global investors and firms instead of representing their own people's interests. Expected reductions in welfare costs result in an increased class polarisation. Li and Reuveny have tested the conflicting theories in an empiric investigation, and assessed possible connections between globalisation and the level of democracy for 127 countries in a pooled time-series cross-sectional statistical model. For the period between 1970 and 1996, they have found that both in developed and less developed countries, trade openness and portfolio investment inflows negatively affect democracy. Foreign direct investment inflows have an initial positive impact that is weakened over time. The only factor positively influencing democracy was the spread of democratic ideas. Authors raise the question whether the desirable goal is economic efficiency maximisation or democratic governance – based on their evidence, these two are hardly compatible. Less developed countries have proven to be more vulnerable to impacts of globalisation as they lack adequate resources for social safety needs. Li and Reuveny suggest that the only viable alternative is to slow down the process of globalisation, and lay more emphasis on citizen advocacy groups, that is, on civil society initiations, introducing a third force to balance between market and government.

In order to stop the erosion of democracy and manipulation in the United States, and put active citizenship into practice, Ackermann and Fishkin have proposed the introduction of a 'Deliberation Day' – a national holiday as public consultation day in every presidential election year. Two weeks before the elections, registered voters would assemble and, working in groups, discuss central campaign issues. This kind of restoration to the very origins of democracy, to direct participation in political decisions, may help people identify with common welfare and well-being interests and may put an end to alienation and cynicism (Ackerman and Fishkin 2004).

One of the dilemmas of modern democratic systems is related to political interpretations of sustainability. In such systems, the solutions worked out for contemporary problems may violate the rights of future generations, as there is a tension between the long-term consequences of the decisions and the short-term interests of policy makers (Gál, Gulyás and Medgyesy 2011). The recent crisis has fixed people's attention to issues of economic and social sustainability, and to the dangers of the 20:80 societies that have corrupted citizen initiations, social solidarity and social justice (Martin and Schumann 1997). If only the hard work of twenty percent of the population is required to keep the global economy

growing (or just going), then the majority of people will be deprived of meaningful activities, full social participation and acceptable living standards. In many regions, the ills of globalisation have outgrown its benefits. In CEE countries, the passivity of state socialism has been transformed into a passivity of tittytainment; but such passivity has resulted in economic and social unsustainability. When interpreting sustainable development, the welfare and well-being of the individual and of the community are conceived as equally important goals. From this perspective, welfare is not identical with unlimited consumption, but it is inseparable from social and cultural development.

Democracy in the Information Age

Farkas (2002) has argued that one political consequence of entering the information society is a major transformation in the system of politics: information systems will dominate over the traditional power. To permanently control globalised communication seems a mission impossible – therefore, politically controlled areas of life would diminish. Information and communication technologies have a deterritorialising impact, an inconvenience to political powers, which may even question their legitimacy (Van Ooijen 2008). There are three scenarios as regards ICT-generated changes: the Orwellian (citizen-subject); the Athens (citizen-citoyen) and the Soft Sister (citizen-client) perspectives. Farkas' views support the Athens concept with increased participation on part of the citizens. Internet users become 'data miners' and constantly compare their findings, which results in the development of an active, critical-reflective stance and thereby supports democratisation processes. The Orwellian scenario highlights increased control and transparency – a virtual equivalent of Foucault's Panopticon. The current controversy between globalisation and democracy interests opens the space wide for various forms of manipulative communication, a long tradition in authoritarian systems. In the third scenario, the Soft Sister (the state) provides citizens (its clients) with a number of quality services via the Internet; in this view, ICT systems are practically service systems (Juhász and Pintér 2006; Z. Karvalics 2007; Van Ooijen 2008).

The Internet is undoubtedly an agora for those committed themselves to active citizenship. On 28th January, the Egyptian government shut down the Internet to limit communication among certain political groups (Chen 2011). This is not a unique example: similar ICT restrictions to control citizen initiations have been applied in Burma, Iran, China, Libya and Syria (Chander 2011). Pippa Norris (2004) has argued that technology does not significantly change one's attitudes: politically active persons remain active in the cyberspace, but passive persons are not mobilised by new technologies.

Network society, as a concept, goes beyond the idea of information society with its concomitant social, economic and cultural changes. Networking is a basic feature of human societies; however, the information technologies of the 21st century have resulted in a quality change in the organisation of society, culture and human experience by providing a new context, the cyberspace. The development of new technologies and new types of human networks is interrelated (Castells 1996–1998, quoted by Nyíri 1999). A specific feature of network societies is 'glocalization:' the renaissance of local communities that organise themselves via the social media. Though one's commitment to a community in the virtual space is not as strong as to traditional communities, empiric research has confirmed that the development of cyber networks entail the development of participation (Nyíri 1998). With the integration of telecommunication, interactive communities, that exchange real-time information and have their voice in the global community, are formed. These communities are usually more heterogeneous, and communication is less controlled, mediated or mainstreamed by social institutions – that is, the communities are wiser if Surowiecki's arguments are accepted. In our era, there is only one unlimited and renewable resource at our disposal: human knowledge in the context of knowledge-driven economy in knowledge societies.

Passivity as a 'soft dictatorship' legacy

Alienation, including citizen passivity, excessive individualism, craving for control and the parallel dread of responsibility in one's relationships, as grave social problems of the 1970s, were discussed by renowned Western scholars as symptoms of the 'culture of narcissism' (Lasch 1984; Deetz 1992). In the soft dictatorship in Hungary, similar patterns could be identified. In the background of such problems, however, some other problems were present, as well. In his cultural anthropological study on Hungary and Belarus, Smith (2002) explored the possible role of a specific relational pattern named double bind by Bateson (2000). Double bind, as a prerequisite for authoritarian operation, is a continual communication practice forming one's long-term expectations on relational contexts. An order, received from an unquestionable authority, is simultaneously denied on a more abstract level. In a double bind context, one's physical and/or psychological survival is at stake, but escape is made impossible. When the helpless and powerless stance has been formed, and the victim of the double bind setting is absolutely confused over the inconsistent messages, no external threat is needed any more (Bateson 2000). Due to the absolute loss of control in a threatening situation, double bind relations often result in self-destructive behaviour or the construction of false selves and a visionless approach to life. Stagnation, loss of hope, helplessness, passivity and dependence, lack of

solidarity, unconditional acceptance of external control, ultimate reliance on external resources, self-censorship, and experiencing one's life as meaningless may be considered as the consequences of double bind relations. These relations are maintained by certain discursive techniques, such as vague or paradox meanings embodied in floating or empty signifiers in the discourse (B. Erdős 2010; 2011; B. Erdős and Kelemen 2011). As a consequence of unpredictable, inconsistent rules and conventions, self-censorship and passivity, as the safest personal survival strategy, dominated.

(Graph by the authors, based on a visual application of Van Dijk's triangular sociocognitive approach, Van Dijk [2009, 64]. The image of the impossible triangle is from Paradox and Infinity.)
Graph 1. The paradox triangle of double bind discourse.

Inconsistency and ambiguity impaired collaboration, both among the different social groups and on interpersonal levels. Permanent chaos is a prerequisite for the maintenance of totalitarian operation – as a conclusion, the creative, reconstructive powers in the society are restrained by military oppression and manipulation (Szakolczai 2001). 'Open' dictatorships rely on military power more, whereas, in a 'soft' setting, discursive manipulation is the main means of control. Counter-selection, a systematic and collusive social practice leading to the waste of human resources, was established to prevent consistent public criticism and genuine leadership. Counter-selection is easy to maintain as subordinates' low achievements are not subjected to but are rewarded by an incompetent leader (Hunyady 2002). The practice of counter-selection has significantly contributed to the economic and social unsustainability of communist systems.

Generativity as the psychosocial aspect of sustainability

Generativity is an important psychosocial aspect of sustainability. According to the original conceptualisation by Erik H. Erikson (1950, 267), generativity is the "concern for establishing the next generations;" guiding and caring for

them to promote their well-being. In this respect, generative behaviour facilitates socio-cultural evolution. Positive contribution to the next generation may be manifested through parenting, teaching, mentoring, leadership, creativity, and care in order to leave a constructive legacy of the self for the future (Erikson 1968; MacAdams 2006a). By mutuality of benefit (Slater 2003), generativity serves as a bridge among the generations, strengthening social solidarity and relational responsibility within the society (McNamee and Gergen 1999).

On the level of the individual, several studies identified generativity as an important factor of well-being, life satisfaction and success (e.g., de St. Aubin and McAdams 1995; Grossbaum and Bates 2002; Bauer and McAdams 2004; Bauer, McAdams and Sakaeda 2005; Morfei, Hooker, Carpenter, Mix and Blakeley 2004 McAdams 2006b; Huta and Zuroff 2007; Bauer, McAdams and Pals 2008). High generativity has been associated with less anxiety and depression; and more mature coping strategies in times of stress and overall psychosocial adaptation (Vaillant 1977; Van Hiel, Mervielde and de Fruyt 2006).

McAdams and his associates (McAdams, Diamond, de St. Aubin and Mansfield 1997) have identified a characteristic narrative organisation in highly generative adults' narratives, and termed these 'stories of redemption,' in contrast with low generativity, 'stories of contamination.' Penezić, Lacković-Grgin, Tucak, Nekić, Žorga, Poljšak and Škraban (2008), when conducting an empirical study on patterns of generativity, noted that in Croatia, similarly to Hungary, the level of development the country used to have before the transition, has not been reached so far. As their study has revealed, this is perceived as useless efforts and failed contributions on part of the previous generations. Further, in CEE countries, citizens were deprived of the continuity of a stable democracy. Continuity was interrupted by sudden ideological shifts. When a population is repeatedly forced to give up shared beliefs and visions on the future, how could they realise their generativity and leave a constructive legacy for the next generation?

The civil/nonprofit sector as a context for social and political engagement

"There are a series of studies that have shown that generativity is linked to greater social and political engagement (…) volunteering in charitable organizations, fighting for civil rights, voting etc." (Penezic et al. 2008, 239; Peterson and Duncan 1999).

In contemporary Hungary, the civil/nonprofit sector is the most important social context for volunteering and may open a potential space for direct social

and political engagement. There was a significant 'civil boom' at the beginning of the 1990s in Hungary, with an increasing number of civil/nonprofit organisations.
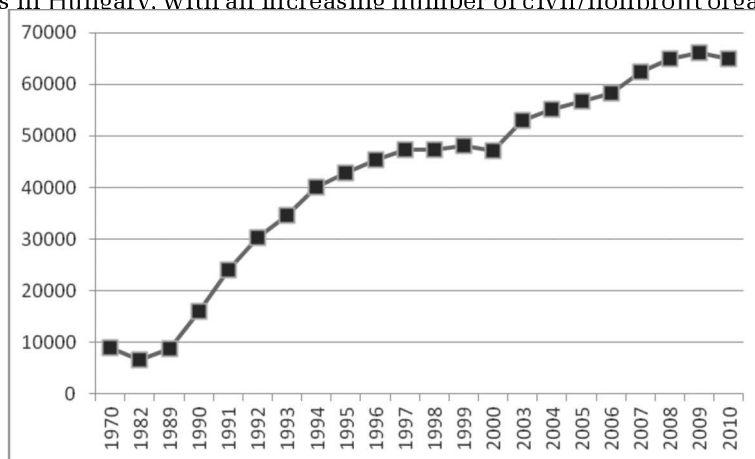
(Sources: Tokaji 2008; Központi Statisztikai Hivatal [Hungarian Central Statistical Office] 2011)
Graph 2. The number of nonprofit organisations from 1970 to 2010.

Parallel to differentiation processes – changes in activities and organisational forms –, centralisation has become a determining feature. By 2006, 95% of the total income of the non-profit sector was realised by some major organisations with a yearly income exceeding 5,000,000 HUF. Such organisations make up 18% of all the nonprofit organisations. The remaining 82% shared only 5% of the total income. Public utility companies, a small group (altogether 3%) of all the nonprofit organisations, shared more than one third of all the resources. More than half of the state resources were concentrated in the capital, Budapest. Rural organisations shared only 6% (Tokaji 2008, 58–62). In the civil sector, the representation of community interests, social inclusion and solidarity are normally a priority over economic growth and power centralisation. In spite of the steady growth in the number of nonprofit organisations, the 2006 data reflect a marked abuse of the civil society.

Presently, both the employment capacity and the networking potentials of the domestic non-profit sector are relatively low (F. Tóth and Nagy 2009; Kákai 2009). There is an inverse tendency between the number of volunteers employed and the income of the nonprofit organisation employing volunteers (Czike and Bartal 2005: 57).

The participation of the Hungarian civil organisations in the information society was explored by INFONIA Foundation. 252 organisations were included in the sample. Researchers concluded that the civil organisations had expected guidelines 'from above,' that is, from the existing economic-political power to designate the desirable development routes in the information society. The civil

organisations that had multiple identities, that is, simultaneously participated in the different sectors, did not consider their civil statuses significant. A system overemphasising economic growth and party politics at the expense of citizens' active participation in all regions, undermined the development of the civil society (Pintér 2006).

A national survey on medium/small scale organisations was conducted in 2005 on overall developmental potentials, with special regard to human resource management issues. Results reflected the volatile economic and political context, which impaired the organisations' capacity for strategic planning. More than half of the organisations could not specify future plans and strategic aims (visions and missions). The low number of paid employees and a great extent of fluctuation indicated low levels of long-term commitment and a threat to organisational sustainability. Due to high costs of administration, insufficient financial conditions, bureaucratic operation and poor organising, the organisations were characterised by an overall weak performance. Deficiencies in the organisational structure and leadership problems were probably associated with state socialist legacies. Conscious application of management techniques were not among the solutions to chaotic states and functional breakdown. Instead, informal solutions were applied with ad-hoc decision making by the one or two representatives who owned all the information. As for qualifications and work experience, there was a considerable gap between performed activities and employees' expertise. Second language skills were not satisfactory either, reducing the chances for international collaboration in a globalised network (Juhász and Garai 2007).

Volunteering

Growing needs, financing problems and the ambition to meet earlier professional standards as well as respond to deepening social problems are a major challenge for non-governmental organisations (Graff 2005; Juhász and Garai 2007). In CEE countries, three major factors have resulted recent budgetary cuts in social welfare areas: the transformation of the economic system, globalisation processes, and the 2008 global crisis. In new EU member states, health, education and culture budgets have significantly been restricted. Social spendings, that were relatively high in Hungary (in 2008, 17.8% of the GDP, an average similar to those of early member states), have recently been reduced (Palócz 2010).

In such a social context, volunteers are expected to work in the frontlines of the services – as they do in developed states where NGOs and state services also rely on their professional competencies. Their responsibility may include professional work in social and health services, representing the organisation,

making important decisions and actively shaping organisational policies. Volunteers work with vulnerable populations, handle money or confidential information. As a consequence, new definitions and ways of volunteering challenge traditional conceptualisations which identify it as a form of charity, and highlight professionalism and work experience.

In Hungary, volunteering is currently interpreted as an activity for the common good, excluding the benefit of one's own family or close friends. Volunteers are not motivated by individual financial interests and are not coerced in any ways to undertake their activities (F. Tóth and Nagy 2009). Safrit and Merrill (1995, quoted by Merrill 2006) suggested a similar definition, but emphasised the active involvement of the person, excluding donation or sponsorship. In their view, volunteering may be an individualised or even a self-serving activity, provided the outcomes are beyond the level of the individual. A European perspective highlights civic participation, constituting democracy in action, and mutual benefits for the community and the volunteer (Volunteering in Europe, sine anno).

F. Tóth and Nagy (2009) emphasise that spontaneous and informal collaboration is a deeply rooted Central and Eastern European tradition. In her analysis on these traditions, Molnár (2009) has demonstrated that informal community assistance was available in a number of different life situations throughout one's life cycle. In the decades of state socialism, such constructive traditions were damaged. Volunteering and reciprocal community assistance was transformed into centrally organised and coerced forms of 'societal work' (unpaid and coerced work done in one's leisure time for some 'community'). On 'Communist Saturdays,' employees worked to support 'developing countries,' that is, to extend political influence to these countries via economic assistance. 'Societal work' done in one's own neighborhood generated more favourable impacts. These benefits have vanished soon after the transition of the social system in 1989 when 'state property' (in these cases, community property) was privatised and the work of many served the interests of the lucky few (B. Erdős and Juhász 2011).

Recent approaches on volunteering do not only include professionalism, but focus more on reciprocity, a basic norm in all human societies. Reciprocity facilitates collaboration, social stability and trust. Bekkers (2007) in his analysis identifies indirect and generalised forms of reciprocal relations (the volunteer in need will receive help form a third party) and the 'shadow of the future' (the volunteer will receive help when assistance is needed in the future). Indirectness facilitates the construction of a dense social network with diverse and abundant resources where collaboration is based on mutual trust. On the contrary, rigidly determined roles in charity (donator vs. recipient) may generate adverse impacts, especially in secular societies; and may lead to helplessness, disempowerment

and compulsive helping, altogether, a waste of resources, a polarisation of social strata and further disruptions in the social network.

Volunteering has a basic role in reconstructing the weak ties within the community, thereby multiplying social capital in the society (Coleman 1990, quoted by Kákai 2009). The theory of weak social ties proposed by Granovetter (1973) explains how closely related persons belonging to different in-groups are connected within the broader social context. "The weak tie between Ego and his acquaintance (…) becomes not merely a trivial acquaintance tie but rather a crucial bridge between the two densely knit clumps of close friends" (Granovetter 1973, 201). Weak social ties connect people from different social groups and promote the overall level of solidarity, social stability, and tolerance within the society. Persons with many weak ties have more access to knowledge outside their immediate range of experience, which improves their problem-solving capacity. Marginalised persons, similarly to upper layers, have an inclination to build strong ties only: while the rich usually do not have problems in accessing the resources they want, for those living in the margins the strategy may be a result of repeated deprivations and several crisis situations where unconditional help received from the close network of one's strong ties is a priority (Granovetter 1973; Csermely 2005). A paradox of social crises states is that these crises can not be solved in closed contexts, as relevant knowledge for problem-solving is usually missing. Therefore, volunteering with its strong networking potentials may have a special role in social crisis situations.

In his study on volunteering, Merrill (2006) has identified several factors that influence contemporary global volunteering: time pressures, variations in the definition and value of volunteering in the different countries, demographic changes with special regard to the extremes of the age continuum, pluralistic approaches, recognition of the role of reciprocity, solidarity, active citisenship and information technologies. Including retired persons into volunteering is a special challenge, but in ageing societies, such initiatives may ensure extra human resources and generate positive impacts on the lives of the elderly. With young persons, work experience is frequently emphasised, but volunteering helps develop personal qualities, as well. Volunteers may even be more successful in contacting and communicating with marginalised persons than with professionals. Volunteering can be devised in a way to provide special opportunities for social inclusion, especially in the contexts in which volunteers and beneficiaries may change roles. Common visions and carefully designed work situations, in which activities are performed together with members of marginalised groups, may reduce prejudices among the members of the different cultures.

A relatively new improvement is volunteering in the virtual space. The Internet offers great flexibility for some disadvantaged groups who have special skills but may also have serious commuting problems.

Forms of corporate volunteering have recently been introduced to Hungary. Corporate volunteering is an important opportunity to expand and strengthen social networks and bring prestige for all the concerned parties (F. Tóth and Nagy 2009). Volunteering in academic programs may be a form of community-based experiential learning for the students. Academic institutions have a traditional role in promoting constructive changes in the society and the spread of volunteering may confirm this role (Edwards, Mooney and Heald 2001).

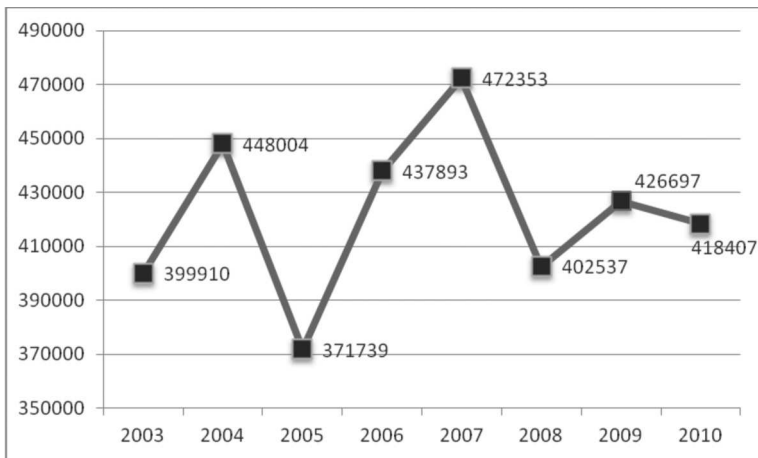## Problems of statistical analyses on volunteering

Data collection on volunteering is far from being systematic, and this holds not only for Hungary and CEE countries, but for other parts of Europe, as well: "In the absence of Eurostat or other general statistics, the number of Europeans undertaking voluntary work cannot be quantified with any certainty" (European Commission Special Eurobarometer, 75.2: 3). Surveys are often related to special events, such as the International Year of Volunteers in 2001 and the European Year of Volunteering in 2011. In the domestic context, the birth of the law on volunteering (Act LXXXVIII of 2005 on Volunteer Activities for Public Utility), major projects as the ÖTLET program for the social inclusion of unemployed persons through volunteering, and shaping the national strategy on volunteering in 2011 were among the important milestones.

The data below reflect that statistics on volunteering should be interpreted with utmost care, as conceptualisation problems have resulted great differences.

Table 1. Different conceptualisations – different results on volunteering

Year/source	Czakó et al. (1993)	National Statistical Bureau (2007)	Czike-Kuti (2005)	EVS (2008)	Eurobarometer (2011)
Conceptu-alization & sampling	Broad, ran-dom sam-pling	Narrow, self-report of registered organisations	Broad, ran-dom sam-pling, volun-teers over 14	Intermediate Representa-tive sam-pling, volun-teers over 18	Eurobarometer Survey, with 26,825 Euro-peans inter-viewed
Number/ percent	1,726,778 persons, 17% of adult popu-lation	472,353 per-sons, 5% of the entire popu-lation	3, 474, 731 persons 40% of the population over 14	901,545 per-sons, 11% of the adult population	22% of the Hungarian population over 15 (Euro-pean average is 24%)

Sources: *Bartal 2010, Nemzeti Önkéntes Stratégia 2011–2020 (submission) s. a. Special Eurobarometer 75.2 2011.*

Graph 3. Volunteering in Hungary between 2003–2010.

These differences may further be complicated by other problems of input data. E.g., when someone is asked if she undertakes volunteering she may answer 'no,' because in her view she is involved in societal (community) work or charity – but not 'volunteering.' Others may be hesitant whether non-registered or informal volunteering (e.g., assistance given in the local neighbourhood) should be mentioned – or simply forget about it, as such help is "natural." The Red Cross classifies blood donors as volunteers; such an activity is included in some of the categorisations, but it is excluded from other samples. Blood donors themselves would probably not think of their activity as a form of volunteering.

Further, the survey by National Statistical Bureau excluded many forms in the previous social system that would equal to traditional or modern volunteering, thereby contributing to traditions of active citizenship and solidarity. E.g., the national system of telephonic emergency services for suicide prevention founded in the 1970s in Hungary has always relied on professional volunteering. Organisational frameworks were very vague and not any of those volunteers appeared in the statistics, as they worked in the state health sector and did not belong to any civil organisation (B. Erdős 2006).

Certain problems of volunteering may be explored by analysing the impact of the Pecs 2010 Capital of Culture project on local volunteering. This, as an event, motivated city leaders to lay the foundations of a city policy on volunteering. Cultural events and other community programs attracted a large number of volunteers to join and share the tasks and experiences. When the ECoC year was over, however, hosting institutions were unable to employ so many volunteers, and there was a significant drop in the numbers.

Graph 4. The number of ECoC volunteers.
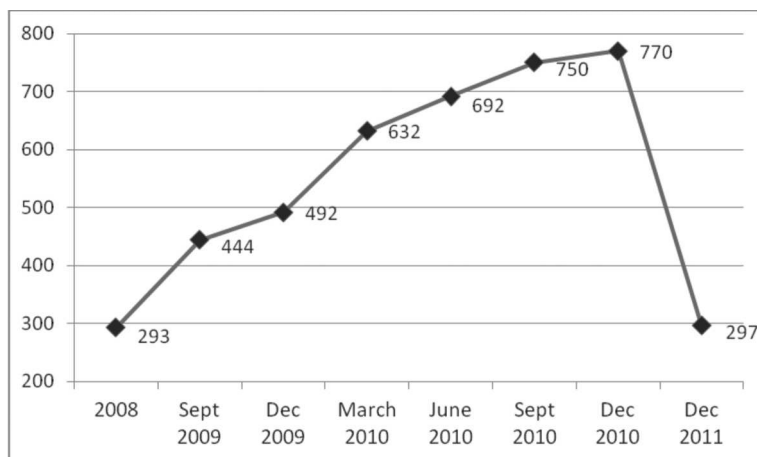
Presently, the number of volunteers is 297 at the Baranya County Volunteer Centre. However, the 2011 data are a bit vague: permanently unemployed persons who are required to perform 30 days of community service (or any other regular work activity) in order to obtain unemployment benefit are also registered as volunteers. This policy was introduced in 2011 to raise the extremely low rate (3.6% – Czike and Bartal 2005) of volunteering among unemployed persons, and thereby promote their social inclusion. Whether these additional 141 persons are considered volunteers or not, depends on conceptualisation (here, authors excluded them from the sample).

Statistical data reveal that the significance of hosting organisations is probably under-represented in the domestic professional literature and policies: the Pécs ECoC case demonstrates that 'demand' may be more decisive than 'supply.' Volunteers' motivation, which largely determines 'supply,' is a core issue in both the international and the domestic studies. In the draft of the National Strategy on Volunteering 2011–2020, authors state that regular volunteering is not characteristic of the Hungarian population: many undertake volunteering, but, unlike in Western European countries, do not take long-term commitments in a given organisation. According to a previous survey, the typical Hungarian volunteer is a middle aged woman who is active in the labour market and is motivated by values related to traditional forms of volunteering (altruism and charity instead of work experience) (Czike and Bartal 2005). The Eurobarometer report (2011) concluded that Hungarians emphasise the following factors as social benefits of volunteering: maintaining and strengthening social cohesion (40%); acquisition of knowledge and skills and integration into working life (29%); sustainable development and the protection of the environment (27%).

The draft of the National Strategy proposes to include more people in volunteering and raise awareness on the possible benefits in order to meet this goal. It is very probable, though, that low participation is not a cognitive level difficulty; rather, it is the volatile and unexpectable economic and social environment, extreme workloads of the working populations and a high level of material deprivation of unemployed persons that are in the background of the problem. As far as the low participation rates of mothers on maternity leave or old-age pensioners are concerned, infrastructural developments (traffic conditions and availability of free child-care services) would probably contribute to solving the problem.

Further, the Strategy notes that volunteering among young people is around the average, in spite of the fact that volunteering is not particularly encouraged by legal means. The bill on public education in 2011 evoked many debates on the introduction of "required volunteering" in Hungarian secondary schools, that is, 60 hours of community work as a precondition for graduation from high school.

Conclusion

Globalisation, in spite of some promising catchwords, actually impairs the level of democracy. The recent crisis has raised doubts on benefits of democratic systems with their slow decision-making practices due to long discussions among the different interest groups. The authors propose an alternative way of reasoning. In knowledge-based network societies, human knowledge is the only unlimited resource to ensure sustainable economic and social development. Democratic and dialogic decision-making effectively eliminates groupthink fallacies and results in qualitative and quantitative growth in human knowledge; therefore the real problem behind the crisis is probably not "too much democracy," but, on the contrary, democracy deficits. Representing democracy in public discourse is a necessary but not sufficient condition. Democracy is constituted in everyday social practices, and in the personal experiences of people. It is manifested in active citizenship, understood as direct participation in informed and responsible decision-making and in community life in general.

The global crisis that has reached CEE countries during their ongoing recovery from communism may tempt these states to step back to less democratic forms of governance; or, on the contrary, it may speed up transformation processes as state resources are scarce and citizens are expected to take more responsibility for their own welfare and well-being. CEE countries face major challenges if they wish to strengthen and improve their new democratic systems in the current crisis. Citizens should not only be informed about, but be empowered to gain personal experiences on how democracy works in general, and how it

works for them. The civil society may provide adequate frameworks for such personal and collective experiences, even if its evolution has been rather slow and has long been influenced by state socialist traditions. Currently, the civil sector in Hungary is not yet in a position to adequately respond to emerging needs and balance between market and government; it is facing a challenge in social innovation to combat growing social problems and improve democracy. A marked potential of the civil sector, however, is the diversity of approaches and problem solving skills – alternative perspectives in a democratic milieu often prove a rich reservoir in crisis situations.

Although volunteering has some early traditions in the Hungarian society, modern forms of formal volunteering are associated with the social transition from 1989. A variety of recently emerging social phenomena functions as signifiers ('proofs') of the social transition in the public discourse (e.g., unemployment, homelessness and the dept trap). Negative connotations of the transition dominate, and losses are emphasised over the gains – in Hungary, this was a characteristic feature even before the beginning of the global crisis (B. Erdős 2008). Volunteering seems to be an exception to this generalised "trouble talk." Investigations of the field have confirmed that both the volunteers and the recipients are aware of the many benefits.

Hungary is among the European countries that determined their legal framework on volunteering and initiated a volunteer policy. Policy makers, however, can not always rely on accurate statistical data, as conceptualisations are far from being unequivocal. Another permanent problem is the lack of necessary resources in infrastructure and human management in the hosting organisations. For most of the NGOs in Hungary, the lack of resources have turned NGO existence a tough struggle where employing volunteers is often regarded a kind of last remedy. Volunteering is definitely not free: volunteers have to be recruited, selected, trained, organised, supervised, and rewarded by competent persons. The results of cost-benefit analyses are often distorted, as time and expertise is not measured correctly, and management costs are neglected. Some of the benefits, such as increase in social capital, active citizenship, a stronger community network, personal growth, etc., are not represented either (Merrill 2006).

In an NGO-friendly and volunteer-friendly society, predictability is a key issue: organisations in Hungary often reflect their unpredictable environment when they ignore strategic planning. One related problem with modern volunteering is that volunteers do not normally take long-term commitments in a volatile economic and social environment, even if such commitment would be required in key and confidential positions. Benefits of volunteering seem irrelevant when the individual is struggling with serious problems, such as unemployment or poverty. Further, with a high level of overall unemployment in the society, volunteering may be regarded as a competing activity, one that 'takes away'

possible workplaces from prospective employees. Even if vulnerable groups could benefit from volunteering in the long run, their short-term survival needs are a priority. The solutions for the problem cannot come solely "from above," but should be based on empowering these groups.

The philosophy of volunteering is related to the theory of generativity, understood as care for others and for the welfare and well-being of the next generations. Living a meaningful life is living a responsible (response-able) life, actualising one's potentials in generativity via active social participation. Such ideas have a vital role in solving social crisis states, when old modes of operation have proven unsustainable, but new ones (urgent as they are) have not been worked out yet; generativity is inseparable from socio-cultural innovation. CEE countries are on their way to transform learned helplessness attitudes into a more active, constructive and resourceful stance. Focusing more on social development than on forced economic growth and, for this purpose, reconstructing models of generativity and creativity, are important steps in the process. New opportunities of network societies as well as new demands and responsibilities identified in the current global crisis require new modes of conceptualising work, creativity and care, and the related innovative social strategies. CEE countries have substantial reasons to focus on the civil society as a framework, on volunteering as a form of behaviour, and on generativity as an underlying philosophy of transforming passivity to a more active stance. One of these reasons is the current and unavoidable tendency of reducing state resources in many areas of life that determine citizens' welfare and well-being, while another reason is to assist unfolding democratisation processes and realise their recovery potentials from communism.

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