



Grassroots Volunteering: Definitions, Concepts and Themes

Overview of the literature

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Introduction

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The presented study is based on a commission by the AGORA civic association under the 'Grassroots Europe for Local Wellbeing' project, which aims to strengthen the dialogue between citizens and European Union institutions. The task was to carry out a literature review and explore the concept of 'grassroots volunteering'. Volunteering has become a phenomenon that is increasingly sought by policy-makers in many countries as a solution to a variety of social problems, from unemployment to youth delinquency or citizens' disenchantment with politics. The United Nations brought the world's attention to volunteering in 2001 with the International Year of Volunteers, and an even greater wave of attention has been generated in Europe recently with the 2011 European Year of Volunteering. Grassroots volunteering, specifically, has become a focus of attention as a means of community-building and building citizen involvement. Local associations are perceived as a way to improve quality of life in local municipalities and neighborhoods. The present review has been guided by the rather narrow term 'grassroots volunteering', but adopts a wider perspective when appropriate.

The term 'grassroots' has several, interconnected, meanings and cannot be translated easily into Czech. Grassroots volunteering is not a special political science or sociological (not to mention economic) term with a clear definition from which to draw. It is, however, a common term used in everyday situations, and so can be found in various texts written by foundations, large and small non-profit organizations, municipalities, governments, officials as well as academics, often with distinct and sometimes even contradictory meanings. It is explicitly described in a minor proportion of professional literature and studies. For example, a comprehensive work called *Volunteers*, summarizing the state of knowledge of volunteering (Wilson & Musick, 2008), uses the term 'grassroots' only once, in an index entry called 'grassroots activism'. The term 'grassroots' does not represent a specific topic in this case but rather describes local volunteering activities and comes across as a synonym for local districts or neighborhoods. Similarly, the index entry 'grassroots' does not feature in a recent publication called *Volunteering and Society in the 21st Century* by renowned authors who have focused on the concept of volunteering over a long period (Rochester, *et al.* 2010).

In professional literature, the term 'grassroots association', and grassroots volunteering associated with it, was introduced by an American sociologist David Smith (1997a, 1997b). Smith specifically defined 'grassroots association' and described it as a neglected topic which should gain more attention, in his opinion. His concept is one of the few comprehensive dialogues (if not the singular one) written on this particular topic. In keeping with Smith, we will consider grassroots volunteering as an activity carried out by grassroots volunteering associations. Grassroots associations are formal non-profit groups with a purely local dimension that are, to high degree, autonomous and based on the voluntary work of their members (volunteers). The majority or the whole of activities of these groups is usually carried out by their members, and volunteering is in this conception 'member' (associational) volunteering in particular. For more discussion on the definition of 'grassroots volunteering' see Section II.¹

Civil Society Helpdesk, accessible via the European Commission's webpage¹, explains the term 'grassroots organization' as follows:

"A grassroots organization is a self-organized group of individuals pursuing common interests through a volunteer-based, non-profit organization. Grassroots organizations usually have a low degree of formality but a broader purpose than issue-based self-help groups, community-based organizations or neighborhood associations." (Anheier & List 2005)

The definition is identical with the definition used in this study, except for the fact that it narrows the concept of grassroots organization too much. We do not consider the distinction between *grassroots* organizations from community, neighborhood or self-help associations as purposeful, and no support for such a distinction was found in our sources. On the contrary, the terms 'grassroots organization' or 'volunteering' are relatively broad and virtually identical with 'community organization', usually covering neighborhood, as well as self-help organizations (see Chinman & Wandersman 1999, for instance).

In many aspects, facts and reflections associated with volunteering in general apply to grassroots volunteering as well. This is why the study opens with a broader framework in which volunteering in general is described (Part I). Then (Part II), the text is focused directly on the specific characteristics, benefits, questions and issues of local volunteering. However, even in that section, we partly return to empirical data and arguments applying to volunteering as a whole. This is either because they apply to volunteering in general (including *grassroots* volunteering), or because there are no specific arguments, data or sources supporting

1 https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/aidco/index.php/Grassroots_organization.

grassroots volunteering (and we think the same can be applied here as in the case of other forms of volunteering). The next section (Part III) focuses on the level of international institutions and European Union institutions and briefly presents the political rhetoric referring to grassroots volunteering as an ideal.

Methodology

The bibliographic research drew on previous research for the preparation of the work: *Vzorce a hodnoty dobrovolnictví v české společnosti na začátku 21. století [Volunteering Patterns and Values in the Czech Society at the Beginning of the 21st Century]* (Frič, Pospíšilová, et al. 2010). Then a targeted research of 'grassroots volunteering' was carried out in electronic databases and international journals focusing on the non-profit sector and civil society Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly and *Voluntas*, without time limits.² Additionally, we carried out general research on sources associated with 'grassroots volunteering' on the Internet,³ followed by Internet searches of academic texts via Google Scholar (articles, and research reports).⁴

The use of English as a search language led to a move towards English-written literature, which, understandably, receives limited studies from European countries. The same applies to research reports published on the Internet: a minimal proportion of these are translated into English. However, the term 'grassroots' itself is English, namely American. According to Colin Rochester, the term 'grassroots association' is used in the U.S., whereas in the United Kingdom the term 'community sector' is used with a similar meaning (Rochester, *et al.*, 2010:12). While studies focusing on the U.S. are relatively easy to find, we hardly managed to find any sources on grassroots volunteering in European countries written in English. Europe-wide comparative overviews and research specifically focusing on grassroots volunteering are also missing from a recently published overview of European volunteering (*Study on Volunteering in the European Union*, 2010a).

2 The entry was also checked in the Springer and EBCSO databases. However, the research was not as systematic and started from the year 2000; nevertheless the output revealed nothing substantially new.

3 Research by a Google search on 'grassroots volunteering', the first 20 links; 'Grassroots volunteering, Europe', the first 20 links; and 'grassroots, European Union', the first 50 links (most of which referred to the EU initiative in the field of grassroots volunteering in sports, which will be covered shortly in Part III).

4 'Grassroots volunteering' search, first 50 records.

A number of studies cited in this overview therefore come from the U.S. However, this is not necessarily a problem. There are certainly numerous differences between Europe and America, but we cannot presume American volunteering is significantly different from 'European'. Tošner and Sozanská (2006), for instance, state that in America there is program volunteering, whereas in Europe it is community volunteering. However, program volunteering is flourishing in European countries. Conversely, in the U.S. and in many (not necessarily all) European countries, people traditionally get involved in community volunteering, which is often (as we have already mentioned) called 'grassroots' volunteering. Similarly, there are differences between individual European countries. Since grassroots volunteering is a distinctly local phenomenon, it is hard to envisage unified 'European' grassroots volunteering as a useful concept. An exception would be grassroots volunteering in the European Union perceived as an aspect of the relationship between the supranational level of the European institutions and the basic, local level of events and politics in the member states. In this respect, sources are not especially rich or significant, and no comprehensive source was found. Minor studies describe either the EU policy focusing on the development of democracy and civil society in third countries (e.g. Turkey, Africa), or various social movements in some EU countries (e.g. labor unions or women's movements). On the other hand, there is an extensive literature on European civil society, democratic deficits, or European citizenship, which we did not attempt to cover systematically but is brought into focus in Part III.

D. H. Smith (1997c) clearly states that grassroots volunteering is not of American origin, and traces its origin back to ancient history before the beginning of writing. Grassroots associations include labor unions and trade unions, churches (including sects and cults), local cells of political parties, and political clubs. We have mentioned that there is no dramatic difference between volunteering in the U.S. and Europe; however, there is one aspect in which America differs from other countries, possibly with the sole exception of the United Kingdom. It is its self-perception as a nation of participating citizens (Schlesinger 1944) and its focus on the history of associations, particular associations or their leaders (U.S. mentions abundant sources) including historic summaries on volunteering in the U.S. since the 16th century (Ellis & Noye 1990, Hall 1992, both cited in Smith 1997c). The Americans keep returning to what French political scientist Alexis de Tocqueville described in the middle of the 19th century when visiting America: to active association as an ideal and a democratic basis.

Comparison of the range of volunteering activities in European countries

The study does not describe specific characteristic of national types of grassroots volunteering, as there are no available sources to draw upon. Representative quantitative surveys mentioned in various sources focus on

volunteering as such, and it is difficult to extract grassroots volunteering from the data. (Apart from that, we would also need data on the number of employees in the organization where a particular volunteer works or on regional scope, which rarely figure in such surveys.) Comparable and reliable data on organized volunteering in European countries is provided in the *European Values Study* (2008). It is listed below to present an indicative overview, due to the lack of data on grassroots volunteering.

Table 1: Volunteers in the European countries (% of citizens aged 18 or over)

The Netherlands	47.3	Lithuania	16.0
Luxembourg	39.9	Malta	14.6
Finland	39.2	Portugal	14.3
Switzerland	36.6	Belarus	14.0
Denmark	36.4	Slovak Republic	13.6
Belgium	33.4	Romania	13.2
Slovenia	31.9	Bulgaria	13.2
Czech Republic	28.8	Spain	13.2
Austria	26.5	Hungary	12.2
France	25.9	Serbia	11.2
Germany	23.9	Northern Cyprus	10.8
Latvia	23.3	Kosovo	10.5
Estonia	22.9	Ukraine	9.3
Azerbaijan	22.8	Poland	9.0
Ireland	20.9	Bosnia Herzegovina	8.3
Albania	19.7	Montenegro	7.5
Northern Ireland	19.2	Armenia	7.1
Moldavia	18.1	Russian Federation	5.4
Cyprus	17.2	Georgia	5.2
Greece	16.5		

European Values Study, 2008. EVS data analysed by Martin Vávra.

Other potential sources of data on grassroots volunteering are national statistics offices, which, however, usually do not monitor non-governmental non-profit organizations separately as a specific group (not to mention as a sub-group of grassroots organizations).⁵ Therefore, the 'Satellite Account of Nonprofit Institutions' was created under the auspices of the United

⁵ Non-profit organizations appear in all three monitored basic sectors of national economies (i.e. the sectors of corporations, government units and households).

Nations and within the framework of the International Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project led by the Johns Hopkins University, U.S., which aims to provide internationally comparable data on the number of non-profit institutions (and other parameters, such as the type of activities, number of employees, volunteers, etc.) (UN 2003). The Satellite Account collects data on non-profit institutions that were formerly included in the statistics on various sectors of national economies, thus providing a comprehensive overview of the non-profit sector. The Satellite Account enables the monitoring of volunteer numbers in a number of countries over the course of time, but its use is limited for monitoring grassroots volunteering itself (it would be necessary to extract the units without employees only, for example). We have not come across the use of Satellite Account data to specifically monitor grassroots volunteering.

I. Grassroots Volunteering in a Broader Context

I.1. Organized Volunteering: Definition

The professional literature focuses in general on organized volunteering (i.e. a voluntary activity carried out with no entitlement for remuneration to the benefit of people outside the volunteer's family for an organization or within the context of an organization). Individual volunteering (i.e. helping people outside the family and beyond the context of any organization) is a topic which has been researched to a much lesser extent. A major part of this type of volunteering is represented by a local, neighborly help. When talking about grassroots volunteering, however, we do not mean individual, but *organized* volunteering. This is exactly the focus of this study.

Organized volunteering is distinguished in the literature from individual volunteering as well as caring for family members and close friends. Wilson (2000) stresses the importance of this distinction: the care for close friends includes some sort of a 'forced' reciprocity, when a person feels obliged to care for a close person; the moment of obligation disqualifies such a care from being truly voluntary. Penner (2002) argues in a similar way.

Voluntariness as one of the central points of the definition of 'volunteering' is far from obvious. It is a complicated concept with philosophical overlaps that are not usually discussed in the literature on volunteering (What is actually voluntary? What is free will?). Another key element of the definition of a voluntary activity is the fact that it is carried out **without entitlement for remuneration**. However, this point is not taken for granted, and cannot be applied clearly in many cases.

In academic circles, there is no consensus on a single definition of volunteering. Based upon the bibliographic research, Cnaan and other authors (Cnaan & Amroffell, 1994; Cnaan, Handy, & Wadsworth, 1996) mention three points that are common to all of the definitions: voluntariness, not claiming remuneration, benefiting others. Dekker and Halman (2003), however, mention a number of points which make the limits of volunteering unclear.

Between free choice and obligation

There are voluntary activities that may involve some degree of obligation, and it is not easy to decide whether they actually represent volunteering or not. Let us mention some boundary cases: parents may feel obliged to

help in school or a club attended by their child (moral coercion); an employee may feel obliged to work in a program supported by his/her employer; voluntary work in a municipality may take the form of punishment (instead of imprisonment); voluntary work may be carried out by the unemployed, enabling them to reintegrate in the labor market or even conditioning some benefits; unpaid work may be carried out by students who wish to receive credits or pass a compulsory school course. Voluntariness can also be questioned in the cases where the work is motivated by a sense of guilt or a moral or religious obligation. In all of these cases, the work will be unpaid, however, it may not be convincingly voluntary in nature.

A specific question, however, not discussed in detail by Dekker and Halman in their overview, is the voluntariness of 'voluntary' activities during the socialist era in Central and East European countries, when the regime required unpaid involvement as a token of loyalty, made it a condition for access to some levels of education, job promotion, etc., and the failure to perform such work may even have led to punishment. The prevailing source of literature therefore considers volunteering during the socialist era as enforced and virtually non-existent (Voicu & Voicu 2003; Hodgkinson 2003; Juknevičius & Savicka 2003; Howard 2003). On the other hand, some studies argue that civil society and volunteering in a certain form were feasible even during the socialist era. Skovajsa (2008) suggests distinguishing between a 'narrower' civil society, complying with the classical definition (i.e. independent of the state), and a 'broader' civil society that had been controlled by the state to a certain degree and that had existed even before 1989. The concept of a broader civil society enables us to reflect on the new forms of volunteering and participation after 1989 as a follow-up of activities and social structures from the times before the fall of the regime. Konopásek (2000), also deconstructs the concept of a radical breakthrough in 1989.

Associational, grassroots volunteering had been widespread in the Czech Republic even before the beginning of the communist regime in 1948; the communist regime put an end to the tradition only partially and rather used it to gain the loyalty of its citizens. Associational grassroots organizations, as well as their nationwide unions, were united into the National Front, led by the communist party. This is why they lost their independence and autonomy from the state, and why voluntary activities did not cease to exist for participants (Pospíšilová 2011). Member (associational) volunteering existed in social organizations in the fields of sports, culture, ecology or youth activities approved by the regime (Devaux 2005; Frič, Pospíšilová *et al.* 2010). In this respect, the situation differed significantly in various communist countries and cannot be generalized (additionally, a more thorough research is beyond the scope of this study). Communist regimes varied in their form and followed from different (or

absent) histories of voluntary associations and democracy from the era before their establishment. The tradition of grassroots volunteering and voluntary associations survived the communist era, at least in the Czech Republic.

Remunerated and unpaid activities

Remuneration of volunteers has been a topic for discussion (Rochester 2006). There is a range of methods associated with this, from the reimbursement of travel expenses and charges connected with voluntary work, through small gifts, to bonuses in the form of free access to services or events. Blacksell and Phillips (1994, cited in Rochester 2006), found that a significant percentage of volunteers in the United Kingdom had received – apart from the reimbursement of their expenses – a certain form of a payment. The lack of remuneration is not taken for granted: expenses associated with voluntary work are normally reimbursed (travel expenses, meal allowance), and symbolic gifts and bonuses are a common form of recognition. In the Netherlands, for instance, it is common that a volunteer receives services and products from his/her organization for free (such as tickets for a concert). (Meis *et al.* 2003: 29) A specific topic is the payment of wages lower than market value, which can even lead, according to Dekker and Halman (2003: 2), to the reformulation of the non-paid criterion of “the work not being undertaken primarily for financial gain”. In some countries, the issue of the remuneration of volunteers has been discussed (Charity Commission 2003). However, Rochester claims that any payment provided to volunteers interferes with the substance of volunteering as a gift.

Personal benefit and working for others

Some definitions of volunteering include the condition that the activity must be of public benefit, and therefore, one should not consider leisure activities (sports, culture, hobbies, recreation, etc.), or unpaid work for one's own organization or group (providing help for its members) as volunteering (Dekker & Halman 2003). This brings forth a significantly narrower definition that can be applied to certain purposes, but does not cover the largest field of voluntary activities in most countries (i.e. sports and culture). The narrow definition of volunteering as an activity for the public benefit would not even cover grassroots volunteering, defined by Smith as a mutually beneficial activity (Smith 1997a, 1997b).

I.2. Main Approaches to Volunteering in the Professional Literature

The professional literature on volunteering generally takes three different approaches (paradigms). However, this does not imply there are three different types of volunteering. These are rather approaches to the same reality, a way of perceiving the same thing. What is stressed in one approach might be neglected or even ignored in another. Each highlights different types of voluntary activity and the different motivations of volunteers. They examine volunteering in slightly different types of organizations. Each type has its representatives (scientists, professionals from the non-profit sector, officials or politicians), who usually reflect on volunteering from the 'inside' of a particular paradigm. People 'inside' a paradigm know each other, read the work and papers written by others, and discuss the issues. On the other hand, their familiarity with the research, literature and important issues and questions raised by the representatives of a different paradigm is much less profound, or they are not familiar with them at all. The three approaches to the issue of volunteering are presented here according to Colin Rochester (Rochester 2006; Rochester, Paine & Howlett 2010: 10-15), who has drawn on the work of Lyons *et al.* (1998).

Dominant approach: the non-profit paradigm

The main drive behind volunteering is the effort to help others: altruism. While philanthropy implies the donation of money, volunteering regards the gift of time. Volunteering is perceived firstly as a **service** and the provision of care, support and advice to those in need (e.g. the elderly, children, the sick, disabled or poor citizens). We may even speak of a "service paradigm" (Bennett 2008). Volunteering usually takes place in larger non-profit organizations with a formal structure, and employs paid employees. Volunteers are considered as 'human resources' who add value to their organizations through unpaid work. In the context of the dominant approach, significant effort is devoted to attempts to somehow express the value of such work in terms of money. Volunteers as a human resource should be managed, educated, monitored, evaluated and remunerated. This approach has contributed to the creation of a 'volunteering industry' and the new profession of volunteer manager (Rochester, Paine & Howlett 2010: 11).

Alternative approach no. 1: the civil society paradigm

The main drive behind volunteering is the effort to help each other. Volunteering is perceived primarily as **activism**. The core of volunteering comprises self-help groups on the one hand, and activism on the other;

activism aims to improve the situation in terms of social care as well as in such fields as transport, territorial planning, the environment, etc. A typical form of organization usually offering volunteering opportunities would be a small, purely voluntary organization with no paid employees. In the U.S., the term 'grassroots' has become established for such organizations, while the 'community sector' is more common in the United Kingdom (Rochester, Paine & Howlett 2010: 12). Volunteers are not considered as helpers with a certain role assigned to them by their organization (cf. the non-profit paradigm), but rather as members of an association who share the work.

Alternative approach no. 2: the leisure paradigm

The main drive behind volunteering is not to help but an opportunity to experience something, learn something or to simply feel the joy. Volunteering is perceived primarily as a **leisure activity**. Volunteering is not restricted to a single field, but it also includes sports, recreation and cultural activities. The term 'leisure activity' is commonly associated with short entertainment, and therefore volunteering can be short-term, volatile and perceived by a volunteer as fun, above all. However, the Canadian sociologist Robert Stebbins highlights a specific type of leisure activity referred to as "serious leisure". These are activities taken very seriously by volunteers, who engage in them in the long term in their free time and build parallel, sometimes even lifelong careers based upon them (Stebbins 1996; 2006). In terms of the form of organization or the role of volunteers, the leisure perspective remains open.

Volunteering can be studied from all three perspectives; however, each will lead us to place emphasis on slightly different activities or actors. Our study focuses on grassroots activities, and we should therefore adopt the civil society paradigm and consider volunteering as a civic activity connected with the activities of member (associational) volunteering organizations in view of the assignment. However, we should also reflect on the relationship between grassroots volunteering and the provision of services and professionalization on the one hand (the dominant non-profit paradigm), and on the importance of leisure grassroots volunteering in the fields of sports, culture and recreation (alternative leisure paradigm) on the other.

I.3. Volunteering Types and Functions

Volunteering is primarily connected with non-governmental (non-state), non-profit organizations, sometimes referred to as being voluntary. Volunteers work to a lesser extent in companies (e.g. hospitals, schools) and public-administration organizations (municipalities, state-funded

organizations such as museums, youth centers, retirement homes, etc.). As we are interested in grassroots volunteering, we focus solely on non-governmental, non-profit organizations, which are, by definition, connected.

There are a number of typologies that distinguish between non-profit organizations based upon their area of activity. For example, the International Categorization of Nonprofit Organizations (ICNPO) divides them into 11 categories:

- 1 culture, sports and recreation;
- 2 education;
- 3 health;
- 4 social services;
- 5 environment;
- 6 community development;
- 7 civil/advocacy organizations;
- 8 foundations and non-profit sector infrastructure;
- 9 international organizations;
- 10 professional organizations and labor unions;
- 11 other (Salamon, Sokolowski & List 2003).

Non-state non-profit organizations can also be categorized according to whether they have paid employees. The term ‘grassroots’ refers to the type of voluntary organization with no employees, and which operate as associations on the basis of the voluntary activities of their members. The second type of voluntary, non-profit organization involves paid employees (professionals). In such organizations, there can be many or very few (e.g. on a foundation’s governing board) volunteers.

Grassroots organizations working in the field of leisure activities – art, culture, hobbies and sports, in particular – usually embody voluntary citizens associations relying fully or mostly on the voluntary work of their members. Therefore, the scope of grassroots volunteering in different countries can be assessed based on the scope of leisure volunteering. Countries with the largest scope of volunteering in the field of sports,

recreation and culture include Norway (57%), Sweden (51%), Finland (48%), France (47%), the Czech Republic (44%) and Italy (42%) (Salamon, Sokolowski & List 2003).

Table 2 shows that it is the field of leisure activities (such as culture, sports and recreation) where the majority of voluntary work is carried out in most European countries (the table is based on the conversion of hours of voluntary work to full-time employment equivalents). However, there are countries where the largest proportion of voluntary work is oriented, as in the U.S., to providing social services. These include, for example, Belgium or Romania.

Table 2: scope of volunteering in the civil sector according to area of activity (full-time equivalent) (%)

Country	Culture, sports, recreation	Social services	Education
Norway	57	7	3
Sweden	51	8	2
Finland	48	14	2
France	47	16	9
Czech Republic	44	17	3
Italy	42	24	7
Germany	41	10	2
The Netherlands	39	23	16
Slovakia	38	22	1
Poland	37	28	17
UK	31	20	5
Belgium	34	56	1
Hungary	31	34	4
Romania	24	42	13
Spain	22	29	12
U.S.	12	37	13

Source: Salamon, Sokolowski & List 2003 – selection of three areas of activity⁶ (rounded up to a full percentage)

⁶ The full list of areas of activity according to the International Categorization of Nonprofit Organizations (ICNPO): culture, sports and recreation; education; health; social services; environment; development; civil/advocacy foundations; international; professional; other. The 100% sum would work out if volunteers in all areas, not listed in the table, were included.

Other typologies distinguish non-profit organizations according to the main functions they fulfill for their members or for society in general. The most important international systematic project comparing the non-profit sector in various countries (and is also behind the ICNPO categorization) is the *John Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project*, which distinguishes two basic functions of non-profit organizations:

- **service function** (non-profit organizations dealing with social services, health, education, development);
- **expressive function** (non-profit organizations dealing with the environment, advocacy, professional organizations and labor unions, culture, sports and recreation). (Salamon *et al.* 2004)

Grassroots volunteering prevails in the field of leisure, recreation and advocacy (i.e. it fulfills the expressive function), whereas volunteering in non-profit employee organizations typically represents the service type. Nevertheless the typology cannot be used clearly to specify grassroots volunteering. It is not a rule that volunteers belonging to member organizations cannot offer services - there is no reason why grassroots volunteering should not represent the service type. On the other hand, volunteers in professionalized non-profit organizations with employees can be found in the field of ecology or advocacy (i.e. in the context of the expressive function).

Babchuk and Gordon (1962, cited in Pearce 1993: 24) distinguish between: (1) **expressive** organizations (expressing or fulfilling the interests of their members); (2) **instrumental** organizations (being a tool to achieve a social change or the manufacture of goods and providing services to non-members); and (3) a **mixed type** in an often applied typology of voluntary organizations. Their typology is virtually the same as the above-mentioned typology by Salamon, with the only exception that the 'service' function is classified as the 'instrumental' function. However, the authors do not even correlate the typology with the size of an organization, the degree of formality or the percentage of volunteers and paid employees in an organization. Using this typology to specify grassroots volunteering does not seem meaningful in this case either. These issues will be further addressed in the next part.

II. Grassroots Volunteering

II. 1. Definitions

The *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary* defines the term 'grassroots' as "(1) the very foundation or source; (2) the basic level of society or of an organization esp. as viewed from higher or more centralized positions of power".⁷ In a Czech dictionary (Hais & Hodek 1997), the term 'grassroots' is defined as: (1) country, rural regions, rural population, ordinary voters; rural, provincial (e.g. provincial democracy); (2) foundations, substance (e.g. substance of a political organization); fundamental, substantial (e.g. fundamental study on life in the U.S.).

'Grassroots volunteering' should then be understood as either "rural, common volunteering" or rather as a type of volunteering which is a foundation of something higher (especially in terms of political organization) or directly as a **foundation of democracy**. A significant part of this type of volunteering represents a foundation of the activities carried out by political parties.⁸ The so called grassroots democracy implies that decision-making processes must be carried out at the lowest geographic level of organizations and public life. According to this, national organizations should be particular about the rule that an essential part of their decisions should be made by their grassroots organizations. 'Grassroots' involves an emphasis on the maximum rootedness in a local community (i.e. in the grassroots context) as opposed to the national or international level.⁹

'Grassroots' volunteering also places a focus on the **territorial importance of local volunteering**, which is performed in a certain location, not only in rural municipalities (using the meaning of the term in the Czech translation

7 Merriam-Webster, Inc. 2003. *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th edition. Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Inc., p. 546.

8 In the Czech Republic of the inter-war era, the activities carried out by a number of mass voluntary association were loosely connected with political parties; the communist regime continued this tradition and did not abolish the majority of voluntary organizations but 'occupied' and used them to gain and maintain legitimacy and the loyalty of citizens (Frič & Pospíšilová 2010). The change of political parties in modern society and their relation to the voluntary participation of citizens is a specific issue, which does not represent the subject of this study.

9 www.websters-online-dictionary.org/definitions/Grassroots+democracy?cx=partner-pub-0939450753529744%3Av0qd01-tldq&cof=FORID%3A9&ie=UTF-8&q=Grassroots+democracy&sa=Search#890 (accessed 9.2.2011)

as 'rural' is therefore not appropriate) but also in cities or districts, as opposed to the nationwide or international level. It is always a contrast when a certain, more basic level of activity is differentiated from a higher level, so a region, for example, could be perceived as 'grassroots' in a certain, specific context in relation to the national or European level. However, we would more often classify a region as being at a higher level, rising from the 'grassroots' level of municipalities, towns and cities. From the territorial point of view, we have come across the division of voluntary organizations as follows: (1) community-based (i.e. local); (2) city-wide; (3) national; and (4) international.¹⁰ However, such a classification lacks the otherwise important regional level.

'Grassroots' volunteering has a community aspect as well. Based upon the present overview of literature, we cannot clearly state if the term 'grassroots' volunteering is absolutely identical with 'community' volunteering, or if each of these terms implies something entirely specific. Both of these terms come from the English-language literature, although possibly from different cultural or professional traditions.¹¹ In any case, 'grassroots' volunteering is to a large extent identical with **community volunteering**. We assume it serves a certain local community, is based upon it and builds and supports it at the same time (featuring community self-help, community identity). Grassroots volunteering is, according to David Smith, part of a community, considered as a local network of relationships outside a family (Gans 1962, cited in Smith 1997a: 288). In the literature, grassroots volunteering has increasingly become the center of attention as a means of community-building and the building of citizen involvement. Local associations are perceived as a way of improving the quality of life in local municipalities (neighborhoods). Local grassroots organizations provide services that had been missing in a municipality (Toepler 2003). More will be said on communities and volunteering in Part II. 7.

The meaning of the term 'grassroots' is clearly defined in a contrast with higher hierarchy levels, not only in a territorial perspective, but very often in the context of a certain organization's hierarchy. We have already mentioned this in reference to the workings of political parties, which

should draw on grassroots volunteering and citizens' involvement in local organizations in democratic systems. A typical example of grassroots volunteering is voluntary, unpaid activity in **grassroots voluntary organizations**, associated in larger unions. Grassroots volunteering thus involves activities carried out by basic organizations of gardeners, football players, small animal breeders, modelers, dog trainers, by tourist groups, local scout groups, etc. Each basic organization of a national or regional association is a 'grassroots' organization, whether in the field of sports, culture, social services, or education.

The contrast with higher levels of a hierarchy does not necessarily need to be in an organization structure of a certain union (i.e. the relationship between a union, basic unit and a member), although it is typical for the term 'grassroots volunteering'. The documents found on the Internet even used the term 'grassroots' for activities carried out by individual **non-member** volunteers working as **ordinary volunteers** in a large national or international organization (when, for example, an American fund for UNICEF looked for volunteers, 'foot soldiers', to inform citizens in their neighborhood about the fund and encourage them to get involved in fundraising¹²).¹³

The last, not entirely typical, meaning of 'grassroots volunteering' is the volunteer work which focuses directly on offering help and contacting clients in a particular field. 'Grassroots' means to do something genuine, **to be there**, and to see the real results of one's work (i.e. to be close to the people being helped).¹⁴ International non-governmental organizations contributing to the development of poorer countries are often criticized in this sense, as they lack the 'grassroots' dimension. They come to such countries from afar, do not know the local situation, are not **in contact with reality**, and therefore cannot provide efficient help even if they employ volunteers.

The definition provided by David Smith, who discovered and defined the term 'grassroots organization' for the field of non-profit sector studies, can be considered as a key definition in the professional literature. In his article

10 Non-governmental organizations in terms of territorial level of cooperation (Wikipedia) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-governmental_organization (accessed 9.2.2011).

11 While the term 'community' is more deeply rooted in sociology, 'grassroots' has its origin rather in political science (however, this hypothesis is not supported by systematic research). In sociology there is a branch called 'community studies', for instance, which focuses on the study of political culture, civil society, public administration and economy in municipalities and other 'communities'; in addition, there is the methodology term 'community study', used for a specific research design, a type of a case study focusing on a 'community'. A similar background for the term 'grassroots' has not been found in sociology or studies on civil society and the non-profit sector.

12 http://volunteers.unicefusa.org/volunteering/vol07_positiondescription.pdf (accessed 8.2.2011).

13 Or when a large national foundation announces a program in order to build a resource center for ordinary volunteers who would help fulfill larger goals associated with the works of local communities, organizations, companies (distributing flyers or brochures, small fund-raising campaigns, etc.). See: Grassroots Volunteer Program of The Army Historical Foundation, www.armyhistory.org/ahf.aspx?pgID=893 (accessed 8.2.2011).

14 When, for instance, Vodafone in the United Kingdom invites volunteers to volunteer in municipalities: "From helping to run a local recycling scheme through to supporting children with confidence issues, there are many ways you can help in your local area and see real grass-roots results." (highlighted by the author) <http://worldofdifference.vodafone.co.uk/news/archives/766> (accessed 8.2.2011)

published in 1997, Smith pointed out that basic associations are often beyond the focus of quantitative studies, which exclude purely voluntary organizations with no employees when selecting the sample. He refers to them metaphorically as the “dark matter” of the non-profit universe, as they are not visible and nobody pays attention to them. According to his qualified estimations, grassroots organizations prevail over the visible – investigated and described – part of the non-profit sector or civil society with a ratio of 10 to 1. He claims that 90 per cent of non-profit organizations do not feature on the imaginary map of the non-profit sector in the U.S. (1997b: 128). This conclusion is revisited in more detail or adopted by other authors, such as Toepler in his study of grassroots volunteering in the field of culture and arts (2003). We basically do not come across a paper including the terms ‘grassroots’ and ‘volunteering’ that would not more or less refer to Smith’s work. Hence, this part of the presentation will conclude with Smith’s definition, including key points that will be discussed in more detail later.

‘Grassroots associations’ are “locally based and basically autonomous, volunteer-run, non-profit groups that have an official membership of volunteers” (Smith 1997a). Regarding the latter aspect, voluntary membership, Smith identifies grassroots volunteering with “associational volunteering” and contrasts it with service, volunteer programs running under professionalized non-profit organizations.¹⁵ Smith’s view on grassroots, local volunteering is presented in brief, and with a certain degree of simplification, in Table 3.

¹⁵ These are mostly non-profit organizations, but program volunteering is also associated with public administration institutions or companies (e.g. hospitals with a Ltd. legal form). The difference between program and associational volunteering will be discussed later.

Table 3: definition of grassroots volunteering

Associational volunteering (= grassroots)	Program volunteering
a volunteer non-profit organization = mostly a grassroots association	a paid-staff non-profit organization = part of a broader category of ‘employee organizations’ with paid employees (professionals) and operating in other sectors as well (public administration, companies)
an organization with no or very few paid employees	an organization with paid employees
a volunteer = an active member	a volunteer = a ‘recruited’ non-member
the core of activities: community activities with capacity for political action	the core of activities: services without capacity for political action
the purpose of activities: an associational, or a mutual benefit, in particular	the purpose of activities: an external, or a general benefit, in particular
main source: the work and enthusiasm of members themselves (→relative independence of external resources and an opportunity to be even radical)	main source: external grants and contracts (→relative dependence on external resources and the duty to respect donors’ rules)
usually small hierarchy and horizontal structure of the organization (i.e. grassroots organization, not a hierarchically structured and centralized union including the grassroots organization as a member)	usually a hierarchic structure and centralization

Adaptation according to Smith (1997a; 1997b, 2010)

Smith bases his conception of grassroots associations on the ideal of those that have the capacity for political action and which would lead to the activation of citizens. Even though the majority of grassroots associating and volunteering is basically connected with non-political areas (e.g. skittle playing, gardening, amateur ornithologist clubs, etc.), Smith assumes that they have some capacity for political action, involve political debates, and that they teach their members political skills, such as the organization of meetings, writing petitions, etc. (see more in Part II. 9). This is why he defines the core of their activities as community activities with the capacity for political action. Smith puts grassroots volunteering in contrast with volunteering in programs aimed at providing services where volunteers rather act as unpaid employees and pursue the role assigned to them by an organization or program. That is why he does not consider the capacity for political action in this case, and it is not listed in the previous Table.

However, this would be a certain simplification. Smith actually leaves aside the phenomenon of professionalized non-profit advocacy organizations such as Greenpeace or Transparency International. These are organizations that

acknowledge civil society values, but at the same time rely on the work done by paid employees in particular, and are therefore not grassroots organizations. Their volunteers are usually non-members, because these are not massive associational organizations and operate under planned campaigns or programs led by professionals. By saying this, we would like to point out that program volunteering in employee (i.e. professional) organizations is not only connected with the field of services, but with the field of activism and influencing politics as well. Therefore, program volunteering certainly does not lack the capacity for political action.

Additionally, Smith highlights the fact that grassroots associating and volunteering does not necessarily need to correspond with standards and values usually connected with civil society (such as equality, tolerance, freedom or non-violence). The definition of 'grassroots' actually does not exclude activities and organizations rejected by society (e.g. radical movements using violence, nationalist or racist organizations, hooligan groups). Grassroots volunteering also involves social movements that sometimes break existing laws in their fight for what they see as a public benefit goal (environmental protection, fighting against injustice, etc.). Smith considers their role, the ability to be independent, and more rarely their radicalism, as being beneficial in principle (1997a).

In the following sections, we will discuss some aspects of Smith's definition of grassroots volunteering in more detail. Each is a certain challenge to the traditional definition, at the same time. We will thus observe the limits of grassroots volunteering on the basis of boundary cases or cases that fall outside the scope of the traditional definition.

II. 2. Empowerment Projects as a New Type of Voluntary Organization

Smith differentiated grassroots volunteering from program volunteering; grassroots volunteering and work organizations are not compatible (see Table 3). However, experience and the literature show that there are a number of non-governmental non-profit organizations which are small, local (operating in the location itself) and work with volunteers, but they also employ a few employees who manage the organization and are responsible for its running. Such non-governmental organizations are not large foundations, hospitals or national humanitarian organizations - they are not large, hierarchical organizations, and that is why it does not seem practical to exclude them completely from our reflections on grassroots volunteering. Nina Eliasoph (2009) has posed a challenge to the traditional definition of grassroots volunteering and brings into the picture a new

organization form of volunteering - what she calls an "empowerment project". We could visualize this as a third column in Table 3, or as a specific subcategory of 'program volunteering'.

Eliasoph claims that the traditional definition of grassroots volunteering is obsolete because the volunteering world has changed significantly in the last decades both in America and Europe. We witness the emergence of a layer of professional and semi-professional non-profit organizations fulfilling service functions (as a supplement or replacement of the state) that are at the same time financed by the state or foundations. Many of these work at the local level as community organizations, use volunteers for their activities, and aim explicitly to develop civil society, emancipate and educate disadvantaged or excluded citizens. Although their goals are connected with the ideal of civil society, they cannot be considered as grassroots associations (i.e. traditionally supporting civil society and participative democracy, according to the traditional definition). This is due to the fact that such organizations are neither purely voluntary nor mutually beneficial and therefore do not fall within the scope of Smith's definition of grassroots organizations. Eliasoph therefore suggests calling them "empowerment projects".

Eliasoph carried out a four-year ethnographic research (a participant observation) in the U.S. focusing on three local empowerment projects aiming at disadvantaged young people aged 5-18 (safe leisure activities after school, helping pupils with their homework, summer programs for young people, etc.). Based on the thorough knowledge and similar research carried out in France, Belgium, Italy, Albania and Canada, she formulates several fundamental differences to traditional grassroots voluntary organizations, thus questioning their traditional definition. This conception is summarized, in a rather simplified form, in Table 4. It is evident that her view is challenging and leads to a certain redefinition of the role of traditional grassroots volunteering.

Table 4: difference between traditional grassroots volunteering and empowerment projects

Traditional grassroots associations	Empowerment projects
<p>1. Paternalist distance between clients and their helpers</p> <p>Traditional volunteering tends to attract people from privileged circles (better educated, wealthier people). Their voluntary help to those in need is efficient, but often carries connotations of compassion, if not superiority.</p>	<p>1. Considering clients as equal citizens</p> <p>The aim of empowerment projects is two-fold: to help and to empower at the same time. Help involves the effort to teach a client to look after himself/herself. Those in need are considered as equal citizens and are engaged in activities as volunteers.</p>
<p>2. No transparency or expertise required</p> <p>Traditional voluntary associations do not need to be accountable to general public, present annual reports or prove their success.</p>	<p>2. Transparency and expertise are required</p> <p>Empowerment projects need to satisfy institutions that fund them and often present statements of their activities. They must prove they are grassroots and successful (number of volunteering hours, number of volunteers coming from disadvantaged groups, number of clients served, etc.)</p>
<p>3. Connections and slight diversity</p> <p>Traditional voluntary associations embrace similar people, tend to be internally homogenous from the social perspective (in terms of education, religion, nationality, etc.) They can withdraw from the wider world, and are not forced to be open and inclusive.</p>	<p>3. Diversity</p> <p>Empowerment projects must be socially inclusive and open: this is one of the values they must fulfill according to their donors (governments, foundations).</p>
<p>4. Disconnection from politics and institutions</p> <p>Traditional voluntary associations often have no or little capacity for political action; they focus on their own narrow interests and do not care about anything else.</p>	<p>4. Connection to politics and institutions</p> <p>They need to monitor and discuss political situation, trends and regulations affecting their funding (and thus, more generally, values, civil society, etc.).</p>

Based on Eliasoph (2009)

On the basis of Eliasoph's article, we can conclude that 'empowerment projects' are neither traditional grassroots organizations nor traditional program volunteering, featuring in the opposition implied in Smith's definition. They are out of the scope of Eliasoph's concept of 'grassroots', because volunteering is not associational, and neither is it apolitical - on the contrary, the values of civil society and participation can be recognized. According to Eliasoph, empowerment projects constitute

a **new organization form of management** with a number of specifics. Even though they are similar to grassroots organizations (they are local, address the issues of local people, work with volunteers and recognize civil society), they differ in two fundamental aspects: they rely on paid employees and depend on external funding. This goes hand-in-hand with practical consequences for their operation as well as their role in society.

First of all, the service role of empowerment projects can be partially in opposition to the parallel requirement to empower their clients. In accordance with the empowerment requirement, clients themselves become involved in providing services, but it is necessary to comply with their needs and adjust the nature of services (timing, etc.); however, this can lead to less purposeful or efficient provision of services. Secondly, the requirement to report activities brings about formal requirements for the work of an organization (e.g. the problem of young people having to register their working hours). However, such a spirit of formal evidence actually makes the activities of an organization difficult (as much as half of a volunteer's time is spent discussing the reporting methods and reporting itself). Thirdly, the requirement of inclusiveness and diversity leads to a situation where people who do not know each other often meet in an organization and are expected to collaborate (volunteers change, leave and are replaced by new ones). It is difficult to bring this into line with the requirement to create a friendly, comfortable environment for clients.

II. 3 Tensions between Grassroots Volunteering and Professionalization

We use the term 'professionalization' of a non-profit voluntary organization for a situation where a voluntary organization starts to employ paid employees instead of volunteers. The professionalization process can be connected with the development of one organization in the course of time. Smith (1997a) states that grassroots associations often run for a relatively short time, and if they operate for longer, they tend to become more and more complicated and bureaucratic, finally becoming a non-profit organization with paid employees. In this context, he describes the process of de-radicalization (in the small majority of radical grassroots associations) when public administration or a foundation provides the association with external finances for their services, thus co-opting and "disarming" them.

The process of professionalization can, however, be associated with civil society or the non-profit sector as a whole (i.e. grassroots associations disappear and new, professional organizations are established). Lester

Salomon (2005: 93-95) observes the professionalization of the non-profit sector in the U.S. from the 1980s, notably in: (1) the arrival of fundraising as a specialized job; (2) the creation of many intermediary organizations providing a background for other non-profit voluntary organizations; (3) the establishment of a research and education apparatus focusing specifically on the non-profit sector; (4) the press focusing on the non-profit sector. Theda Skocpol (2003) perceives the departure from association towards professional organizations with the program-style management of volunteers as a transformation of American civil society. According to her, it was the shift to new, professionally led advocacy organizations that replaced the mass social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and to professional non-profit service organizations acting as experts in their particular field, and spokespeople for their clients.

However, professionalization does not imply the employing of paid workers only – an effect of ‘dislodging’ amateurs by professionals – but principally a more extensive division of labor, specialization, greater formalization of activities and professional standards and values associated with it, brought to the organization by professional employees. The civil ethos is then replaced by a professional ethos (Jantulová 2005: 143).

Eliasoph convincingly described the tension between the spirit of volunteering, connected with friendship, informality and laid-back atmosphere, and the professional spirit of formal management and reporting (see Table 4). The issues that a grassroots organization and its volunteers come across at a time when they are trying to provide services at a professional level are described in many articles. According to Bennett (2008), total UK government contract payments to voluntary organizations have increased 20 times in just 10 years. Yet, reliance on voluntary organizations with volunteers to provide services is not without its problems. Being able to provide quality services on a purely voluntary basis is not easy, and it is by no means guaranteed to be successful.

According to Smith's (2005) definition of grassroots organizations, this is a boundary situation, because the core of grassroots association activities should be for the mutual benefit of their members (although Smith has taken into account the capacity of some associations for being of general benefit, cf. Part II. 9). When grassroots associations start to provide services for the public benefit (such as education) the topic of the modern management of volunteers becomes important, too. Milligan and Fyfe point out that good provision of services requires the professionalization of a voluntary organization, which can, however, lead to the losses of volunteers and impact upon the empowerment of an organization at a local community.

Gardiner and West (2003) summarize the issues of community (grassroots) organizations connected with providing services as follows:

- the lack of a clear mission, vision or a declaration of values;
- non-functional governing board;
- bad finance management;
- lack of strategic planning;
- lack of necessary procedures and measures;
- extensive employee and volunteer turnover;
- inability to use technologies;
- lack of some necessary services in their offer;
- bad image within the community, distrust of the organization;
- lack of coordination and cooperation with other service providers;
- dependence on a limited number of financial resources.

Although these types of organization are usually very dedicated to their mission, they are often overwhelmed with the everyday tasks of providing services and do not have time for administrative tasks. The result could then be that the organization finds itself on the verge of collapse, with a decrease in the quality of services it provides. The authors claim this is not a reason for excluding such types of organization from providing services; on the contrary, the municipalities served by these community organizations should support them (Gardiner & West 2003).

Sharpe (2006) addressed the issue of the organization capacity of grassroots organizations working in the field of sports, culture and recreation. How can grassroots organizations survive and from where do they get their resources? Organization capacity is defined as the ability of an organization to gain and use the capital (financial, human and structural) necessary to fulfill its mission (Hall *et al.* 2003, in Sharpe 2006).

Financial capacity: the ability to accumulate and use financial capital (i.e. money or values transformable to money, such as properties). Grassroots associations have limited financial capital, few of them own the building they operate from (they usually rent their premises from other community members, such as churches, schools, universities, municipalities). However,

the accumulation of capital is not their goal. They are able to work at low cost and can therefore be more autonomous. However, finding resources is the greatest challenge that larger non-profit organizations have to face. The accumulation of capital requires volunteers' time and energy, but grassroots organizations are not willing to invest in this.

Human capacity: the ability to obtain human capital (i.e. paid employees and volunteers), as well as develop the knowledge, skills, experience, attitudes and motivation of these people. Grassroots associations do not have professional management skills, their members are not trained managers and everything they learn is done informally. However, they perceive informal management as their advantage and do not want to bother with excessive administration. "As with financial capital, grassroots associations may see their informal approach to administration as a desirable quality and in some cases resisting more bureaucratic models in favor of a more casual and leisurely approach of 'muddling through and learning through trial and error.'" (Smith 2000, in Sharpe 2006: 389).

Structural capacity: the ability of organizations to make use of their social relationships and networks on the one hand, and their internal infrastructure and regulations and procedures on the other. Grassroots associations are informal and therefore do not have internal infrastructure, procedures or methods; thus they have social capital - networks and relations - available. Unlike the first two types of capital, this type is a strength of grassroots voluntary associations.

Sharpe focused on the organizational capacity of grassroots organizations working in the field of sports and culture. She drew on Smith's definitions of grassroots associational organizations, where low financial and human organization capacity is not a weakness but can be perceived as a strength intentionally maintained by members. However, if we move to the service function of grassroots organizations, these relatively strong points suddenly emerge as real weaknesses. Fredericksen and London (2000) focused on community organizations dealing with the long-term revitalization of town quarters. According to them, the growing popularity of community projects in the U.S. raises questions of whether local community organizations have the capacity to handle such projects and provide quality services. Other studies focus on the capacity and conditions for the success of grassroots organizations (see Bettencourt, Dillmann & Wollman 1996).

When volunteering as a social phenomenon leaves the grassroots level of purely voluntary associations and becomes a human resource for the provision of community services, we can treat volunteering as an 'industry'. This type of volunteering is not 'by itself' any more, and neither is it Smith's mutual associational voluntary help that requires no external funding or public support. We cannot expect that a community voluntary

'industry' for the public benefit can survive only on their members' initiative or from voluntary sources. In this aspect, it is useful to revisit David Smith's definition and insist on the difference between **grassroots volunteering**, which is associational and virtually exists by itself, does not need bureaucratic management and reporting and can even go without public support; and **publicly beneficial volunteering** that faces, unlike the first type of volunteering, management and financial challenges, issues connected with reporting, etc. Additionally, publicly beneficial volunteering serves the community, but at the same time carries out activities which are not taken for granted, and therefore requires the support of public administration (financial, legislative, etc.).

II.4. Volunteer-management Styles

Smith basically defines grassroots volunteering as associational volunteering, as opposed to so-called 'program volunteering'. Institutions operating on the basis of paid employees (these can also be non-profit organizations as well as state organizations, public administration or companies) draw on the work carried out by non-member volunteers, often in the form of so-called volunteering programs (e.g. in hospitals, retirement homes, programs similar to the American 'Big Brothers, Big Sisters'). Program volunteering has developed to a large degree in the U.S. and was 'imported' to some post-communist countries after 1989 together with the support of democracy and civil society. A large share of foreign foundations' or foreign governments' finances intended to support democratization and the development of civil society was not allocated to purely voluntary grassroots associations, but to professional citizens' organizations (either service or expressive) relying on their employees, in particular (Císař 2008).

Whereas grassroots volunteers are - as members of the organization - at the same time its 'owners' and can participate in decision-making in terms of the future of their organization, program volunteers find themselves in quite a different situation. Their position is similar to the position of paid employees: they have a role defined by their organization and they work solely for others as they have no say in their organization's management (Pearce 1993). Apart from the position of volunteers in an organization, there is a difference in the purpose of their work, too. Volunteers/members work for an organization and thus for themselves. The core of associational volunteering is for mutual benefit (although we can certainly speak of a general benefit as well, see Part II. 9). This means, for example, that volunteers who are members of the Sokol, a traditional Czech sporting organization, voluntarily maintain 'their' field, decorate 'their' gym, voluntarily organize sports events for their members in particular, and discuss issues associated with their organization at their meetings. On the

contrary, volunteers in a hospital, for instance, come to someone else's institution and help 'others'. Their own benefit from their work is rather the joy of helping someone, or their impression of having learnt something useful for their future, or about themselves.

There are also two different types of volunteering defined in the literature in terms of a different approach to the management of volunteers (Smith 1997a; Meis & Hoogdstadt 2001; Rochester, Paine & Howlett 2010; Zimmeck 2001). Grassroots volunteering in voluntary organizations, in particular, is associated with a 'home-grown' model of volunteer management, whereas program volunteering is connected with a 'modern' style of management (Zimmeck 2001); similarly, there is also the division between a management style focusing on association, and that focusing on a program (Meijs & Hoogstadt 2001). Moreover, it is precisely the modern, program management style that is described in manuals, books or courses on volunteer management, as the 'home-grown' management style does not represent professional management. One of the exceptions is *Volunteering to lead: a study of leadership in small, volunteer-led groups* (Ockenden & Hutin 2008).

Modern style of management

- Synonyms: bureaucratic, workplace, formal, program
- Main ideas: volunteering as unpaid work, volunteer as 'human resource'
- Management style: rather formal
- Suitability: for larger, hierarchical organizations or organizations providing some sort of a service (we can add professional advocacy as a general benefit, see Frič, Pospíšilová *et al.* 2010)
- Comment: non-profit organizations adopt this model, and because there are other organizations using it, there is a risk they will steal potential volunteers. Some research demonstrates that volunteers themselves appreciate more formal management and thorough organization of their work (Rochester, Paine & Howlett 2010:151). Another reason for adopting this type of management is that organizations as general service-providers must prove their efficiency to their donors and stakeholders, and this is often a precondition stated in grant applications. That is why such organizations have to be able to manage, monitor and register their volunteers in more detail and this management style enables them to do so. They work with their volunteers as they would with employees. Volunteers are enrolled based upon previously agreed procedures. Their motivation includes training, covering expenses, insurance, evaluation and remuneration. There is a maximum division of labor (special and often written tasks).

'Home-grown' style of management

- Synonyms: informal, democratic, collective, associational
- Main ideas: volunteering as participation
- Management style: less formal or informal
- Suitability: for smaller, less hierarchic (i.e. egalitarian), notably associational organizations (e.g. Zimmeck states it can also be adopted by organizations with paid employees)
- Comment: this management style is informal, *ad hoc*. Volunteers are enrolled informally on the basis of friendship and connections. The motivation is fun, joy, collective values and standards of friendship, in particular. There is a minimal division of labor, members do what is required and play different roles in an organization. (Cameron 1999, Netting *et al.* 2005 in Rochester, Paine & Howlett 2010).

Karr and Meijs (2006) identify a number of differences between the two styles of volunteer management based upon their case study on scouts in the U.S. and the Netherlands. The modern, program style of management is more formal, enrolls members and officials actively (even outside the framework of the colleagues, friends and acquaintances) and hires them based upon formal procedures, trains them formally and registers their activities, etc. The associational, 'home-grown' type of volunteer management is more collective, less formal and less focused on results or efficiency; it recruits members from a circle of friends and acquaintances, 'home-grown' officials among experienced members, the training provided is not compulsory, etc. Grassroots volunteering is mostly connected with 'home-grown' style of volunteer management in the literature. Other alternatives are neglected in our sources. For example, they omit the possibility of finding modern-style management in purely member associations. However, Frič and Pospíšilová demonstrated in their research in the Czech Republic that two-fifths of volunteers that had experienced a modern style of management¹⁶ worked voluntarily in purely associational organizations with no employees. According to the authors, a formal, modern style of management becomes a standard that replaces the 'home-grown' volunteer management, even in amateur voluntary organizations where it used to have a place and purpose (Frič, Pospíšilová *et al.* 2010: 142-163).

¹⁶ Namely, they had come across at least four aspects of formal management: there is a volunteer coordinator working in an organization; the volunteer has passed a targeted training; the volunteer has passed an entrance interview; the volunteer has been provided a job description; references were required; the volunteer signed a contract with an organization; the volunteer had been sent by a volunteer center.

II. 5. Member vs. Non-member Volunteering

'Grassroots volunteering' usually goes hand-in-hand with associational or member volunteering. Discussing grassroots volunteers, therefore, means discussing members of grassroots organizations. Smith (1997b: 122-123) distinguishes between passive association (connected with financial and opinion support of an organization) and active association (dedicating one's own time). Active association has two forms: either the participation in meetings and events, which is not considered as volunteering by Smith, or voluntary work for an organization without entitlement for remuneration (i.e. grassroots volunteering).

Association in voluntary organizations correlates positively with volunteering in all countries. A high percentage of formal volunteers can be observed in countries with a high share of members. In the U.S. or the Netherlands (countries with the highest share of members) there is also the highest proportion of formal volunteers (Musick & Wilson 2008: 13). Recent research carried out in the Czech Republic revealed that more than half of the members of voluntary organizations are at the same time volunteers. However, it is the area of activity that matters (the percentage of members among volunteers is highest in sports, hobby and recreation activities where it is close to 100 per cent, while it is lowest in the field of social services where 'only' 63 per cent of volunteers are members of the organization) (Frič, Pospíšilová *et al.* 2010).

Association and volunteering cannot, however, be considered identical. Apart from the above-mentioned fact that association goes hand-in-hand with aspects other than simply volunteering, a number of volunteers work via organizations as *non*-members. There is no data available on the percentage of volunteers who are non-members in different countries, but one thing is for sure: it will be higher in countries with highly developed program volunteering. On the other hand, a low share of volunteers who are non-members will be observed in countries with a strong tradition of association and associational volunteering.

When studies emerged announcing the decline of civil society (Putnam 2000), researchers paid more attention to monitoring the percentage of members of voluntary organizations among the population. Even though we can observe a certain trend towards the decrease in the association in voluntary organizations in the U.S., for example (Musick & Wilson 2008), it is not relevant to volunteering in the long-term. On the basis of data on volunteering in Europe between 1981 and 1999, Halman (2003) demonstrated no decline had taken place in volunteering in general (some countries witnessed an increase, others a decrease). Inglehart (2003)

claims that the constant number of volunteers is due to young people who outnumber the older generation in their involvement in volunteering. In addition, it is not only the number of volunteers, but the character of volunteering: young people engage in voluntary activities without being members of a particular organization. The number of members is on the decrease, but the volunteering rate remains stable, as a new phenomenon has emerged: the non-member volunteer.

This new type of volunteer does not work for one particular organization for a long time, and neither are they members. It does not matter to them what organization they work for; it is the type of work that counts. This is about a shift from volunteering based on a long-term loyalty to an organization and connected with association towards voluntary work chosen and 'managed' by volunteers themselves with respect to their goals, to their personal integrity, personality and knowledge development, maintaining a particular and meaningful career path (Dekker & Halman 2003). Lesley Hustinx and Frans Lammertyn (2004) distinguish between the collective and reflexive type of volunteering in terms of this shift. Reflexive volunteering can also be called 'individualized' volunteering or volunteering *a la carte*, implying that volunteers choose their work as if from a menu, according to their 'taste'. However, an individual citizen does not necessarily have to be a self-centered citizen (Rothstein 2001: 219). Individual volunteers want to help but they do so in a different way than traditional volunteers.

The new type of a volunteer seems to reflect society-wide changes, the so-called arrival of second or late modernity (Beck 1992; Giddens 1998). A citizen willing to help sees a wide range of activities to become engaged in, and decides which to choose. Such a decision is rarely permanent and volunteers tend to change their work. The world has become more and more variable, uncertain, risky, and people are busier, more mobile, and their lives have become increasingly unpredictable. A proportion of volunteers find it increasingly unlikely to become a member of an organization for a longer period. It is as if traditional voluntary organizations, with all their work carried out voluntarily by their members, wanted too much from their volunteers - too much involvement for too long, unconditionally and too much loyalty. Therefore, authors connect the decrease in the number of members and increase in the number of people who sometimes engage in volunteering with the notion of episodic and short-term volunteering (Macduff 2005; Rochester, Paine & Howlett 2010; Frič, Pospíšilová *et al.* 2010). This trend is also perceived by non-profit organizations, willing to catch all volatile volunteers:

"We are entering the age of volunteerism. Generation X has shifted charity from the hierarchical, corporate-backed Red Cross and United Way, to a grassroots, episodic volunteerism of, say, tutoring neighborhood

children. [...] Enter episodic volunteering: short-term, project-based, local, and hands-on, this is the type of charity that can improve your karma and your career."¹⁷

Although the quote above associates grassroots volunteering with a short-term, episodic type of individualized volunteering, it is not a conclusion supported by our literature review. Grassroots volunteering, as defined by Smith, remains linked to association, and therefore has a long-term character in most cases. This is a situation where traditional forms of volunteering are confronted with new ones, and new trends undermine old definitions. Solving these real or apparent contradictions is not a task for a literature review, but rather for a more extensive theoretical analysis.

II. 6. Grassroots Volunteering and Participation

As part of the tension between grassroots volunteering and professionalization described above is the participation aspect of grassroots volunteering. As mentioned before, the spirit of professionalization, modern management, careful division of labor and reporting, dominate over citizen spirit related to the value of active citizenship and democracy. These tensions have been observed both in empirical research, for example, the above-mentioned study by Jantulová in the Czech Republic (2005). However, the theoretical and normative dimensions are also important here. Grassroots associations are perceived as the core of citizen participation by participative democracy theory (Pateman, 1970). Smith also suggests that grassroots volunteering, **due to its participative nature**, is different from service or program volunteering (Smith, 2000).

Although grassroots associations may and often do have a service role, the core of their activities is defined as participation. Therefore, let us repeat where the traditional *grassroots* volunteering takes place. It takes place in voluntary membership associations (Smith 1997a), which may have several paid employees, although there must always be less paid staff than volunteers/members (Wollebaek 2009; Ockenden & Hutin 2008). Grassroots organizations must be both local (they are active in an area smaller than a region) and small (Wollebaek classifies a 'small' organization as one with less than 30 members, while Ockenden and Hutin suggest less than 50 active members). Grassroots organizations may be related to sports, ethnicity, they may help their members to fight cancer or promote religious activities, they may unite youth or children, or be active in the field of humanitarian or service work.

Small *grassroots* associations are praised for significant positive impact which includes the socialization, activation and democratization functions (Wollebaek 2009). It was Tocqueville in the mid 19th century who noted in his study of American society that even absolutely non-political volunteer civil associations can play a crucial part in the development and support of democracy. The American political scientist Robert Putnam later described the decline of voluntary associations in the U.S. and pointed out the threat to civil society and democracy (1993, 2000, reproduced in Skovajs *et al.*, 2010). Putnam links grassroots with the concept of social capital which has become largely popular lately not only among political scientists and sociologists but also in public and political debates. According to Toepler, the economic impact of grassroots associations is marginal but they are crucially important in terms of **social capital** (Toepler 2003: 238).

Putnam (2000) differentiates between two types of social capital: (1) **bonding social capital** means the relationships between the members of an association, between similar people; it represents shared values, trust among people of a kind and the comfortable communication and cooperation it implies, creation of a shared identity, cohesion, support and solidarity. This type of capital is typical for *grassroots* membership associations according to Smith; (3) **bridging social capital** represents the relationships between people from different groups, the so-called weak ties (Granovetter, 1973) between people who normally belong to different social spheres. In establishing weak ties, citizens come across such issues as differences and mistrust. For this reason, it is not easy to create bridging social capital. In fact, it involves difficult and often uncomfortable communication and cooperation (Eliasoph, 2009). While it is natural for grassroots associations to create **bonding** social capital, according to some authors, the most beneficial at the societal level and at the same time the least available and difficult to create and sustain would be the **bridging** social capital (Musick & Wilson 2008). Bonding social capital is not an automatically positive concept, as it may be also associated with closed groups, corruption and *mafia* practices and have negative effects (Beugelsdijk & Smulders 2003).

Grassroots associations do not contribute to the bridging social capital in any privileged way - only to a certain extent, when they operate on the basis of openness and inclusiveness and help to integrate disadvantaged people; empowerment projects are an example (see Table 4). The empirical evidence of the connection between volunteering and social capital is not very definite (Musick & Wilson 2008, for more see Part II.9).

When we extend our thoughts about social capital to participation, two basic views on the role of voluntary associations can be distinguished. Although the majority of authors do not doubt that grassroots associations are democracy actors (e.g. Kubicek, 2005) and following Putnam, view

17 www.taprootfoundation.org/about/media/newsroom/2005-05-29.php (8.2.2011).

grassroots volunteering as the key to citizen activation and participation, in the past decade a number of authors have adopted a critical view of traditional non-political *grassroots* volunteering. From their point of view, Putnam's non-political associations are rather an example of the decline of politics and, thus, a threat to democracy (Eliasoph, 2003, cited in Wollebaek, 2009). According to these authors, the key sign of civil society is the existence of a public space where it would be possible to have an open critical debate about values and politics (Cohen, 1998). They think that interpreting *grassroots* organizations as a way of social integration and bridging social differences is rather romantic (Wagner, 2008) and they warn against idealizing participation in small groups (Skocpol & Fiorina, 1999). They criticize the social-capital theory for placing too much emphasis on interpersonal relationships, as opposed to institutions and society formations of a higher level (Wuthnow, 2003). They believe that serious social problems such as poverty, inequality or political passivity of citizens cannot be solved by local associations and volunteering – they need to be solved at the level of public institutions (Skocpol, 2003).

Further to the above-mentioned criticism which suggests that grassroots volunteering is not a simple remedy to democracy failures, we have also come across criticism that claims that, in fact, grassroots participation is not really 'grassroots'. 'Astroturf' is a new concept which metaphorically means an artificial turf,¹⁸ while in politics it is used not in the sense of artificial, fake 'grass' but as artificial, fake citizen participation (i.e. fake 'grassroots'). According to this opinion, there are specialized companies, PR agencies or NGOs which create this artificial volunteering and citizen participation in the U.S. They search for the right people and groups whose enthusiasm could be mobilized and later used in politics as an expression of the will of ordinary citizens (petitions, letters and phone calls to politicians, demonstrations, etc).¹⁹ According to Anderson, 'astroturf' is a part of almost any bottom-up citizen activity as long as it has a political impact. We need to ask ourselves though whether this concept is useful because it is impossible to avoid 'astroturf' in a media-controlled society where PR techniques are used on a regular basis.

18 AstroTurf was a brand of artificial lawn used in sports in the U.S.

19 The journalist William Greider describes a case (cited in Anderson, 1996). During discussions about clean air legislation in 1990 which would force the automotive industry to increase the efficiency of fuel consumption in cars, the automotive industry argued that they would be forced to curb production of big vehicles. A specialized PR firm was engaged to mobilize groups of citizens against the proposed legislation because they liked their big vehicles. The protesting citizens were policemen and farmer associations, handicapped people and also parents with children and the elderly. The company covered some of their expenses (phone, transport, etc.).

II. 7. Networking of grassroots organizations

David Smith (1997a: 276) differentiates between monomorph and polymorph grassroots associations based on their integration into formations at a higher level. On the one hand, there are basic organizations which are a member of a national association of other similar units (they are polymorph because there are many of a kind), while on the other hand there are basic associations which are not related to any higher organizational structure (these are monomorph because they only have one form). However, neither Smith nor other authors deal with the issue of interconnecting, uniting or networking grassroots organizations. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the topic is not worth studying.

In Scandinavian countries, the connection between the basic and the national level of volunteering is traditionally very deep and is perceived as an important element of democracy, (i.e. an element of connecting citizens to the national level of public affairs and politics). If we look at a Finnish survey carried out within the *Study on Volunteering in the EU* in 2010, the institutional framework of the volunteering sector is clearly emphasizes, especially those institutions which play the role of an intermediary between the basic (grassroots) and the national levels.²⁰ The Finnish national organization, Civil Forum, makes it its goal to engage basic organizations in strategic planning of volunteering at the national level. The Finnish Sports Federation also acts as an umbrella organization joining national and regional sports clubs, which in turn, act as umbrella organizations that provide services to basic (grassroots) volunteer sports clubs (*Study on Volunteering* 2010b: 13–15).

Wollebaek (2009) shows that in Norway the links between the small local associations and the national unions have changed in the past 20 years, but he thinks this is a part of the general trends. In Norway, there is a long tradition of grassroots associations with a national association at the top. The structure of membership is traditionally based on democratic hierarchy from the local grassroots level at the national level. However, Wollebaek observes an increase of local organizations which (e.g. in sports) begin to resemble market entities because a member is positioned more like a client who is not interested in the organization's problems or a broader context; he focuses only on consumption (going to the gym, using equipment, etc.). Also, the Internet and the possibility of instant messaging mean that the role of an intermediary is not perceived by citizens as necessary. This results in a two-part society where local initiatives are largely independent from national structures. Grassroots have broken from the center.

20 The Finnish survey is the only one in 27 surveys where the word 'grassroots' is mentioned more than once.

Wollebaek connects this with the international “neo-globalization” trend (Tranvik & Selle 2007, cited in Wolleabek 2009) and reminds us that globalization does not necessary mean only focusing on the international level – it can rather mean revitalization of local interests and identities including a return to the interest in the local culture, habits, associations, etc., including grassroots volunteering.

National umbrella organizations, either general or specialized in particular fields of activity (or both), probably exist in each country (such as the Latvian Youth Council in Latvia). They should be distinguished from resource centers that do not have membership, such as the National Volunteering Centre Foundation in Hungary (although their role may be in many ways very similar). However, the number of umbrella organizations and the number of individual organizations they provide a platform for is different and hard to judge using the available literature and without deeper research. For example, in the Czech Republic after the communist regime fell in 1989 and the former all-encompassing National Front umbrella disappeared, decentralization took place and associations became independent, while the national unions were abolished or reformed. When the need arose to create higher structures in the NGO sector in the late 1990s (due to regional planning and preparation for the EU Structural funds) it was very difficult to establish them (Vajdová 2001a, 2001b), and most viable networks were based around a certain field of activity, such as the environmental Green Circle, the Youth Council, national sports associations, etc. (Pospíšilová 2005). Frič (2000) labeled the unwillingness of NGOs to unite as the “National Front syndrome”.

The above-mentioned networking structures are based on bottom-up networking processes. It is also possible that the government establishes institutional basis for networking, coordination and representation of civil society organizations. So in Austria in 2003, the Austrian Council for Volunteering has been established as a consultative mechanism between voluntary organizations and the federal government (*Study on Volunteering* 2010d). In the Czech Republic, a Government Council for Non-state Non-profit organizations has existed since 1998.²¹ In Romania, there is no main public body responsible for volunteering. However, similar for example to the Czech Republic or Hungary, a coordination structure is provided by a network of volunteer centers, headed by the National Volunteer Centre (*Study on Volunteering* 2010e; *Study on Volunteering* 2010g). In Latvia, an institutional framework for promoting volunteering has been non-existent since the 2008 closure of the Secretariat of the Special Assignments of the Minister of Social Integration (*Study on Volunteering* 2010f).

21 www.vlada.cz/en/ppov/rnno/basic-information-45510 (accessed 28.4.2011)

II. 8. The Meaning of Community

As mentioned earlier, community volunteering may be largely perceived as synonymous with grassroots volunteering. However, one type of grassroots organizations – grassroots cyber organizations – poses the question of community explicitly. The Internet has influenced volunteer organizations in two ways: (1) it has helped large formal NGOs to expand their services and reach more clients (web advertising, lobbying or web fundraising); (2) the interactive nature of the Internet has allowed the development of social capital and civil engagement via **virtual or online communities** (Rheingold 1993, in Brainard, Brinkerhoff 2004).

Where can we find virtual communities? We can find some on the websites of formal organizations but these would be more an exception. Some organizations exist only in cyber space. Brainard and Brinkerhoff (like Smith) call them “the dark matter” because they are difficult to catch using the usual quantitative surface methods of research. Cyber organizations do not exist physically; their infrastructure consists of a website and a list of emails, online chat rooms or an electronic newsletter. Their main organizational activity is communicative. The question posed by Brainard and Brinkerhoff is: can they also be called ‘grassroots’?

From the organizational point of view *yes*, in some aspects, because:

- they don't employ paid employees;
- they are purely voluntary;
- they are non-for-profit;
- they are autonomous;
- they are informal.

And in some aspects *no*, because:

- they are not local in the geographical point of view;
- they are not small (they have hundreds of members);
- they do not tend to grow and become more complex (i.e. they remain simple, voluntary and informal);
- they are not based on face-to-face interpersonal relationships;

From the functional point of view, Brainard and Brinkerhoff see many similarities. Just like grassroots associations, cyber organizations allow their members to create and discuss new values and ideas, they engage individuals in collective activities, they are accountable to their members and bring advantages mainly to the members (i.e. they fulfill the agreed objectives such as joint campaigns or gatherings, they are a source of material contributions as well as solidarity).

One of the main differences is in a different interpretation of the term 'localness'. Cyber organizations cannot offer localness in the sense of territorial proximity allowing members face-to-face contacts. However, the authors insist that the core of the term 'grassroots' is not territorial localness as such but - first of all - mobilization of **ordinary** people (as opposed to the elite). In this sense, cyber organizations may be more 'grassroots' than local organizations because they can reach more ordinary citizens while maintaining solidarity between them. Let us add here that online organizations are more attractive to regular members because they can also participate without having to invest capital in the form of cash, personal knowledge or contacts, other than knowledge of the Internet and connections.

A community is defined not only as a certain location, but as something perceived by the people who are members of it. Therefore, many of the most important communities occupy not a physical space, but rather a space in our minds. Such 'imaginary' communities grow from connection to a **certain location**, or from our social identity, a connection to a **certain group of people and values** (nationality, religion, etc.). Research shows that people with a strong social identity are more inclined towards volunteering. It has also been proven that people who have feelings towards the place where they live are more inclined towards volunteering. However, in either case, we do not know whether volunteering results from the feeling of belonging to a group or a place, or the other way around (Musick & Wilson 2008: 315-319).

A number of studies have tackled the issue of whether the type of location has an impact on the volunteering done by its inhabitants. We suggest that just as locations are different in the number of schools, parks or gyms, they are also different in the proportion of volunteers among its citizens. In the U.S., there is a positive correlation between (for example) the length of living in a particular neighborhood and volunteering. It is possible that trust is higher between long-term residents and this works as a catalyst for volunteering. A positive correlation has also been proven in the case of a higher proportion of privately owned houses in the neighborhood. It is possible that private owners are more interested in economic terms in the quality of the neighborhood and are thus more interested in volunteering (*ibid.* p.529).

Volunteering is sometimes presented as a way of tackling social problems. However, it would be a mistake to suppose that, logically, volunteering would be more abundant in neighborhoods with a higher number of social problems. The so-called deprived communities (low income, unemployment, worse education, worse health, etc.) systematically report a lower than average level of volunteering. 'Bad' neighborhoods with a high crime rate also report a low level of volunteering. On the other hand, the level of volunteering is higher among people who say they like the place where they live and, in general, it is higher among socially homogeneous communities (i.e. where social differences between the citizens are small) (*ibid.* pp.319-330).

Neighborhoods differ depending on whether they are urban or rural. In Romania, the greatest proportion of volunteers can be found both in large cities and very small communities (*Study on Volunteering 2010e*). Musick and Wilson believe that the supposed differences between idyllic rural communities and the chaotic and selfish urban environment are pure romanticism; however, U.S. and European surveys do show that certain differences, albeit not large, are present. Statistically, there is a significantly higher percentage of volunteers in rural communities. However, this statement does not have universal validity - in underpopulated or poor rural communities, the share of volunteers is lower; on the other hand, in certain lively and socially homogeneous urban neighborhoods, the share of volunteers is higher. In the differences between urban and rural areas, the major role is played not by the density of population but by a higher social heterogeneity which is typical for bigger towns (Musick & Wilson, 2008: 334-335).

As we have already described in the previous sections of the review (Parts II. 2 and II. 3), grassroots organizations often deliver services and play an important community-building role (Toepler 2003). In Austria (as well as in the Czech Republic and other countries) public services that are completely funded in the cities are often organized on a voluntary basis in rural areas (e.g. voluntary fire brigades, education, etc.) (*Study on Volunteering 2010d*). We should also at least mention the important role played in community volunteering by religious organizations or church-based voluntary organizations. For example, in Romania, most volunteering activities are carried out in informal settings, such as in church groups (*Study on volunteering 2010e*).

II.9. Contributions from Grassroots Volunteering

David Smith (1997a) describes the impact of grassroots associations in five categories, as follows.

Social support and assistance, social services: mutual support and informal assistance among members of the association; some associations also provide short-term (during a natural disaster) or long-term services to non-members.

Stimulation, self expression, learning: associations act for their members (as well as for society as a whole) as a source of stimuli, information and experience; they are a form of self-expression and personal growth. This is especially vital for associations of marginalized citizens (minorities, the handicapped, the poor, etc.) and some associations which try to stimulate, inform or educate both non-members and the general public.

Volunteers can learn many things in grassroots organizations according to Smith, ranging from specific knowledge and techniques (leisure gardeners can learn about plants, members of a peer-patient group can learn about their specific condition, firefighters about extinguishing fires), to general knowledge of society (laws which they learn in the effort to promote their ideas), or techniques of protest or the know-how for organizing a strike (this brings us to point 4 below).

Happiness and health: social support of the association also brings its members health and the feeling of happiness and satisfaction.

Socio-political activation and influence: even non-political grassroots associations involve their members in politics which – according to Smith – cumulatively translates into higher activism and participative democracy in the area. Moreover, membership in an association works as a ‘school of democracy’ for its members.

Economic impact: some basic organizations provide economic help to their members (trade unions, agriculture unions, professional associations, etc.) and some may provide important experience for the unemployed and lead to a paid job, help establish contacts, etc. Thus they improve the situation of the whole society, according to Smith.

The emphasis on the contributions of volunteering which has become evident in Europe and America recently is part of the effort to report, measure and evaluate the efficiency of volunteering and voluntary organizations, including grassroots organizations. Rochester and co-authors differentiate between the impacts of volunteering depending on whether they regard: (1) volunteers; (2) the organization using volunteers; (3) clients of the organization; or (4) community. Research into the impact of volunteering usually focuses on the impact on the volunteers themselves. In their overview, Musick and Wilson did not find many studies which would confirm the positive impact of grassroots volunteering on the community and, generally, this it would be the most difficult to prove an impact on the community (Rochester, Paine & Hewlett 2010: 165).

The impacts can be structured in different ways. In Table 5, we compare three different ways of evaluating the impact or contribution of volunteering; other ways are possible too. For all three sources, the contributions of volunteering are not based on any systematic empirical evidence.

Table 5: contributions from volunteering

Volunteering works*	Contributions from grassroots volunteering**	Manual for evaluating the impacts of volunteering***
		Physical capital (the length of the painted fence, distributed food)
Development (economic development, sustainable development)	Economic impact (economic cooperation among the members, the ability to find a paid job)	Economic capital (the contribution of volunteering after the subtraction of costs, availability of services, lower crime rate)
A safer and stronger community (link to the municipality or neighborhood, crime rate)		
Social inclusion (decreases social isolation)	Social assistance and peer help (mutual help, social integration)	Social capital (more trust, contact networks, higher participation)
Quality of life (well-being, health)	Happiness and health (satisfaction with life, health)	
Lifelong learning (knowledge, skills)	Stimulation, self expression, learning (information, education, source of skills, experience, personal growth)	Human capital (skills, self-confidence, the feeling of happiness)
	Social and political activation (learning democracy, learning political skills, political participation)	Cultural capital (supporting one's identity, respect for other cultures)

Sources: *Ockenden (2007); **Smith (1997a); ***Institute for Volunteering Research (2004, cited in Rochester, Paine & Howlett 2010)

It is difficult to measure the impacts of volunteering empirically. Chinman and Wandersman (1999) provide an overview of different ways of empiric establishment impacts of grassroots in the U.S. It is based on the traditional typology by Clark and Wilson (1961) who classify contributions as: (1) **material** (tangible, usually with a financial value); (2) **solidarity-related** (intangible contributions resulting from membership in the group such as respect or support); and (3) **purposeful** (intangible contributions for members resulting from achieving common goals, e.g. improve the municipality, protect the rights of disadvantages citizens, etc.). The authors show that the results of a research greatly depend on the methodology (e.g. on exactly what questions are included in the questionnaire and how many).²² Next to contributions, the authors also studied the costs of volunteering. Their conclusions are not fully unambiguous and they are very similar to the findings of Musick and Wilson above; we will not describe them here in detail.

Musick and Wilson offer extensive bibliography research as well as their own analysis in trying to study the impacts of volunteering. They divide the assumed positive impacts of volunteering into two broad categories: first, volunteering makes people better citizens and, secondly, volunteering has a positive impact on their employment and health.

Volunteering makes better citizens

Numerous authors assume that **volunteering makes people better citizens**, enhances their pro-social behavior and attitudes (trust in other people and institutions, voting, abiding by laws, etc.), as well as prevents negative behavior (crimes, delinquency). Although these impacts have been studied many times at the theoretical level, Musick and Wilson (2008: 455–485) believe that systematic empirical evidence of this impact of volunteering is missing.

One of the impacts of volunteering which is empirically studied relatively often is trust in other people. Musick and Wilson did not find a convincing link between volunteering and trust in a broad set of secondary sources; however, in research done in the Czech Republic we did observe a strong positive link (Frič, Pospíšilová *et al.* 2010). Nevertheless, Musick and Wilson rightly note that this type of research does not tell us which is the reason and which is the consequence. Does higher trust in others result from volunteering, or do people who trust others become volunteers more

²² The more questions (specific questions about specific contributions) there were in the questionnaire, the more types of impact resulted from the analysis (more than Clark & Wilson's three types). Where the questions were few, only two types of contributions came out (e.g. personal gain vs. helping others) and not three (Chinman & Wandersman 1999).

often? Without answering these questions, we cannot perceive volunteering as a simple way of improving trust among people (or trust in institutions).

One of the positive impacts of grassroots volunteering, according to Smith, is the fact that members in associations learn citizen skills (how to write a petition, form a lecture, discuss, organize meetings). We called this 'school of democracy'. Smith quotes Verba (1995), according to whom, at least one-fifth of members of *all* types of associations (no matter whether they are of political nature or not) have reported that they never discuss politics in the association (Smith, 1997a: 294). Hodgkinson (2003) uses data from 1999 to show that out of 47 countries in 35 volunteering is positively linked to engagement in politics (citizens discuss politics and are willing to sign a petition). Evidence also exists from a three-year panel study that civic talk has positive effect on civic participation (Klofstad 2010).

Musick and Wilson do not oppose this. It is true that volunteers tend to favor citizen participation more than those who do not volunteer. It is true that volunteers are better citizens. However, according to them, research does not provide evidence that volunteering could be considered the reason and attitude to politics, and behavior as the consequence. According to Musick and Wilson (2008: 473, 484–485), both belong to one group of interlinked citizen activities, values and attitudes which are difficult to distinguish from one another.

Volunteering improves employment and health

Theoretically, volunteering can increase the chances of getting **a job** in three ways, although evidence collected by Musick and Wilson does not prove this definitively (although it does not contradict it either) because the results may have more than one interpretation.

Volunteering leads to better education and, indirectly, to a better job. Evaluation of programs intended to improve school results of students by engaging them in service volunteering did not prove any long-term impact of volunteering on performance of the students at school. Other studies have proved a relation between volunteering and better grades at school or the possibility that the student would continue studies at a higher level of education (Astin *et al.* 1998, in Musick & Wilson, 2008). However, Wilson (2008: 488) believes that this is indirect influence of volunteering on self confidence and maturity of the students which are useful features for getting better grades at school.

Volunteering is a kind of job training. Volunteers will get the knowledge and skills which are useful for work (planning, management, presentation, editing a magazine, etc.). Research from Canada shows that between one-

third and one-half of volunteers perceive the skills they learned as useful for a paid job (*ibid*). Volunteering may also increase the self-confidence of the unemployed and restore their feelings of possessing knowledge or skills and being able to achieve something (Flanagan & Sadowski 2011).

Volunteering is also a source of social networks leading to employment. It is known that volunteers have more social contacts than non-volunteers. According to Musick and Wilson, although research does not prove any direct network impact on getting a job (neither has it been empirically proven that volunteering is the reason for wider social networks). Musick and Wilson quote mostly quantitative research. A qualitative analysis of the link between volunteering and paid volunteer work in the Czech Republic has documented cases when volunteering did lead to getting a paid job; nevertheless, such cases were documented only for women. On the basis of a qualitative study it is not possible to evaluate the frequency of such cases in the population; however, it is evident that volunteering may lead to getting a paid job. On the other hand, there are opposite cases when a paid job directly leads to volunteering – an employee may be approached by an NGO with a request to do volunteer work, for acquiring contacts, sharing knowledge, or for prestige (Pospíšilová 2010). Both models may ‘interfere’ with each other or become averages in quantitative models – for this reason it is difficult to find any statistical proof.

Volunteering has a positive impact on a volunteer’s health (both physical and mental). Let us first discuss **mental health**. This not only includes the absence of depression, but also satisfaction with life and feelings of being competent, having meaningful social relationships, all of which volunteering supports. Volunteer associations are a source of social integration (see Smith in the overview at the beginning of this sub-chapter) and as such they bring numerous positive impacts. Musick and Wilson (2008: 495) summarize potential impacts on mental health. Firstly, the positive impact on **social relationships** (on their frequency and intensity). At the same time, *different* social relationships are necessary for mental well-being and there is no reason to assume that volunteering is different in this sense in any way. Secondly, a positive impact on **self-perception** – we feel better when we do something that is good, something that is meaningful and makes us feel that life has a purpose, when we have a chance to develop and achieve something. This creates self-respect, self-value and a feeling of control over the environment.

Musick and Wilson found only a few long-term repeated empirical studies involving volunteers and non-volunteers which could reliably prove positive impacts of volunteering on mental health.²³ Nevertheless, the positive impacts of volunteering on mental health of the elderly (aged over 60) have been proven numerous times according to the authors (2008: 498). The increased significance of volunteering on the elderly is explained by the fact that ageing citizens fall out of their usual social roles, and volunteering offers a replacement for these lost activities. When we study the impacts of volunteering on mental health, it is necessary to take age into consideration because the same activity can have a different impact on younger people and on the elderly (e.g. half a year of volunteer work in a hospice increased self-confidence in the elderly volunteers, while the younger volunteers suffered from an opposite effect, because it was difficult for them to get used to the hospice atmosphere. (Omoto *et al.*, 2000, cited in Musick & Wilson, 2008). Other studies show that – as opposed to the elderly – younger volunteers adopt new social roles in their new life stages and a higher intensity of volunteer work (more than 100 hours per month). This may cause an overload and a decrease in the quality of life of young volunteers (*ibid.*: 505).

Sociologists believe that different types of social relationships have a positive impact on **physical health**. People who have family, friends and acquaintances are less likely to get sick, they stand a higher chance of the sickness being less severe and the healing quicker (Musick & Wilson 2008: 509). A study analyzing the impact of different activities on extending life expectancy (Glass *et al.* 1999, cited in Musick & Wilson 2008) discovered a positive correlation with all productive activities at the senior age, be it volunteering, gardening or fitness. Voluntary work was proven to be useful, but from the point of view of extending life expectancy, it did not differ from other activities, being simply one of a few. Other studies show that the positive impact of volunteering is not always the same and works only under certain circumstances. Musick (1999) used a cohort of U.S. citizens to show that voluntary work had the strongest impact on those elderly people who were only working for one organization. The positive impact on those who did volunteer work for more than one organization was not as significant. Also, volunteering had a positive impact only on those elderly people who had few contacts with friends and family; the impact on those who had diverse social interaction with family and friends was not remarkable because those people already had enough interaction for a better health.

23 Some data from longitudinal studies show (Thoits & Hewitt 2001, cited in Musick & Wilson 2008) that volunteering has a positive impact on mental health, but only during the time of the volunteering itself. This means that the impact of volunteering is immediate and it works as long as the person is doing the activity; it stops when the volunteer stops their work.

III. Grassroots Volunteering and the European Union

As mentioned at the beginning, we have been unable to find one major source on grassroots volunteering in the European Union. Literature is scarce in this field, while individual works either describe EU policy aimed at developing democracy and civil society in non-member states (e.g. Turkey, Africa) or different social movements in various EU countries (e.g. trade unions or women's movements). The main theme of grassroots volunteering in the EU is the recent EU initiative to support grassroots volunteering in sports.

However, a completely different situation would arise if we extended the focus of the review to include the theme of European civil society. Civil society in Europe, the feasibility of such a theoretical concept and searching for its empirical evidence, represents a frequent topic of writing in European studies, comparative politics, EU legal studies, etc. An even larger amount of literature would have to be covered if we considered the topic of 'Europeanization' (i.e. the influence of EU institutions and policies at the national or regional levels of civil society). The author of this review was of the opinion that these themes - although decidedly related to grassroots volunteering - were already beyond the scope of the review. Nevertheless, the concept of European civil society is so important to volunteering in Europe that we want to include it in this part of the review, albeit partially.

European civil society

The institutions of the European Union have been facing a crisis of legitimacy, and a so-called democratic deficit, at least since the beginning of the 1990s. One way of tackling the problem has been an attempt to engage civil society. Interaction with non-profit, voluntary organizations, and civil dialogue - a concept coined by Smisman in 1996 by the Commission's Directorate General responsible for social policy - was to support and legitimize the work of EU institutions. Smismans (2003) argues that, above all, the Economic and Social Committee and the European Commission has made use of civil society discourse.

The European Commission sees European civil society primarily as being composed of European confederations of associations, with which it can interact directly at the EU level. According to Smisman, the prevailing conceptualization of civil society by the Commission is of civil society as

'functional participation' (voluntary organizations contribute to better policy making by providing expertise and ensuring the compliance and implementation of EU policies) and 'functional representation' (voluntary organizations represent the plurality of interests in the EU). The dialogue with civil society is also, to some extent, expected to ensure the 'decentralization' of EU politics and the 'politicization' of European issues (i.e. to ensure that European issues are debated at the grassroots level). However, this would require strong relations both between the European institutions and civil society organizations on the one hand, and between the latter and European citizens on the other. Smismans (Smismans 2003: 502) questions whether EU-level representatives of voluntary organizations and their confederations are able to return to the roots of their organizations: "When organizations have been established at the European level, the distance between the representatives in Brussels and their home roots often appears difficult to bridge. European associations are often created top-down, with EU funding, and are expertise- and lobbying-oriented, which often implies disarticulation from the social movement dynamics at the basis."

Kohler-Koch and Quittkat (2009: 16) conducted empirical survey and analyzed conceptions of civil society held by European experts and academics. They found two basic meanings of 'civil society' within the EU. The first '**governance approach**' defines civil society in terms of representation and puts emphasis on providing a voice to voluntary organizations and delivering services. This definition of civil society is in line with the prevailing conception identified by Smismans above (i.e. functional participation and representation). The second, '**social-sphere approach**' to civil society places emphasis on social interaction, public discourse, and the role of civic activities in promoting public well-being (*ibid*: 17). Kohler-Koch and Quittkat show that EU-level associations included in the civil dialogue by the Commission (DG Health and Consumer Protection) are considered as civil society only within the governance approach, but most do not fit with the social-sphere approach. That would mean that the EU approach to civil society consultations and dialogue is missing one large dimension of civil society - that of active citizenship, local community participation and contributions to a common well-being. However, the authors do not make it clear whether it is at all possible to address this dimension of civil society within top-down EU institutions and policies.

Evers and Zimmer (Evers & Zimmer 2010) observe in an edited volume that there is a "blossoming of grassroots organizations strengthening local cohesion" in the EU countries. However, the landscape of civil society organizations becomes polarized between the local grassroots activities on the one hand, and business-like non-profit organizations (primarily, service providers) with lobbying power on the other. While the latter type of

organization routinely cooperates with commercial and public institutions, it is detached from its membership base and “no longer providing avenues for societal integration”. This tendency has been specifically observed in Poland as the ‘oligarchization’ of an organized civil society: large powerful organizations, criticized for their detachment from grassroots and for special relations to politicians, existing next to smaller and/or less financially prosperous NGOs (*Study on Volunteering*, 2010c: 29).

It can be concluded that established channels of civil society dialogue at the EU-level fit only one conception of civil society and only effectively fulfill some of the roles expected of civil society, namely representation and functional contribution to better governance. The formalized and mostly top-down structures are not easy to reconcile with the development and support of grassroots participation and local volunteering.

EU actions and volunteering

We provide here an overview of the main actions of EU institutions concerning volunteering and developing civil society dialogue. It is based on two reliable overview sources (*Study on Volunteering*, 2010a; Smisman 2003). We recognize that activities of concrete EU agencies and institutions touch upon volunteering in manifold ways (such as individual DGs of the Commission – education, culture, social policy, consumer protection, environment, etc.) or the **Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)**, responsible for the management of certain EU programs in the fields of education, culture, youth, citizenship and audiovisual media. Important examples of policies would be the Europass (which includes a section on volunteering) or the Youth in Action program. However, a survey of their specific activities with respect to volunteering would be a theme for a separate survey and it is not our aim here.

The first declaration on volunteering at the EU level is from 1997 (*Declaration 38 on voluntary service activities*). It briefly declares support for voluntary organizations as a source of social solidarity, especially for organizations which associate with youth and the elderly. Only in 2001 did a recommendation from the European Parliament follow. It was focused on the mobility of (not only) volunteers in the European Union (*Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 July 2001 on mobility within the Community for students, persons undergoing training, volunteers, teachers and trainers*). The European Parliament recommended EU member states to take into account the specific nature of volunteering in the national legislation, to consider granting certificates for volunteering in a different country, and to ensure that international mobility would not put volunteers at a disadvantage with regard to social benefits and health care at home.

EU institutions started to pay attention to civil society (apart from the tri-partite partners, such as employer associations and trade unions, whose status in policy-making had been traditionally defined and institutionalized) in the second half of the 1990s. In 1997, the European Commission presented a Communication on ‘Promoting the role of voluntary organisations and foundations in Europe’²⁴ drafted by both its Directorate General for social policy (DG V) and the Directorate General for social economy, small and medium-sized enterprises, and tourism (DG XXIII). Voluntary organizations were clearly distinguished from cooperatives, trade unions and employers’ organizations, religious congregations, and political parties (who were excluded from the scope of the Communication). The Communication just addressed the relationships between the Commission and NGOs in the social policy field.

In 1999, the Economic and Social Committee adopted its Own-initiative Opinion on ‘The role and contribution of civil society organizations in the building of Europe’. This served as a starting point for its ‘First Convention of Civil Society organized at the European level’, a conference in October of the same year, which brought together some 300 representatives from civil society organizations to discuss their involvement in European policy-making. Among others, their definition of civil society explicitly includes “NGOs that bring people together for a common cause, such as environmental organizations, charitable organizations, etc.; community-based organizations (CBOs), i.e. organizations set up within a society at the grassroots level to pursue member-oriented objectives (e.g. youth organizations).” (Smisman 2003: 491).

In 2000, the Commission published a Discussion Paper: ‘The Commission and non-governmental organizations: building a stronger partnership’.²⁵ The Discussion Paper defined NGOs using the same characteristics as used to define ‘voluntary organizations’ in the 1997 Communication, but it addressed all policy sectors, not just the social policy field.

In 2001, the European Commission published its much discussed White Paper on European Governance²⁶ that was to serve as a guidance and ‘ideology’ statement for the administrative reform of the Commission. The goal of the Paper was to “to open up policy-making to make it more inclusive and accountable”, and dialogue with civil society holds an important place within it.

24 COM (97) 241 final, June 6, 1997.

25 24 COM (2000) 11 final, January 18, 2000.

26 COM (2001) 428 final, July 25, 2001.

In 2008, the European Parliament adopted a report on the contribution of volunteering to economic and social cohesion (*Role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion*). The Parliament called upon the member states to include within their national statistics special satellite accounts which would enable the measurement of the scale of the not-for-profit sector. This appeal from the European Parliament was supported by other European institutions, namely the Committee of the Regions, the European Economic, and the Social Committee.

In June 2008, the European Parliament proposed that 2011 become the European Year of Volunteering; the Council of the EU adopted the proposal in 2009. The widest scale of volunteering (education, sports, culture, youth, social and health services, etc.) is perceived here as an expression of citizen participation and democracy, fulfilling the value of solidarity and non-discrimination (*Study on Volunteering*, 2010a).

Study on Volunteering

At the end of 2008, DG Education and Culture of the European Commission began to prepare overviews of volunteering in all the member states of the European Union. A part of the project was a special study on grassroots volunteering in sports which had been announced back in 2007 in the White Paper on sports. The White Paper is based on the assumption that sports are a form of citizen participation. As Ylva Tiveus from the communications department of the European Commission said in the context of the European Year of Volunteering²⁷, “sport is one of the most important parts of active citizenship”. The European Commission here supports the traditional normative concept of grassroots volunteering as an activity which encourages citizens to be active and support democracy, even where the volunteering nature is purely non-political.

Almost none of the total number of 27 studies mentions ‘grassroots’ (in any form of the word). Neither the structure nor the contents of these studies contain the concept of grassroots volunteering. Three studies mentioned the word ‘grassroots’ once, but purely as a descriptive label without any impact on the message (the studies on volunteering in the UK, Greece and Malta). Only two studies, namely from Poland and Finland, describe grassroots volunteering, and only briefly. Both are included in this study and the information is mentioned in the text.

27 www.euractiv.com/en/sports/commission-looks-sports-drive-eu-year-volunteering-news-499729; publ. 15.11.2010 (accessed 9.2.2011)

The part of the European overview dedicated to volunteering in sports was not included in this study in detail because this source is very clear and easy to find, so there is no need to repeat it. However, this topic is very important because sport is the area where much non-political grassroots volunteering takes place. In many countries, basic sport-volunteer organizations are a key element of grassroots volunteering. The European study shows that grassroots volunteering in this area has different traditions and takes place at different levels. On the one hand, there are countries like the Czech Republic or Scandinavian countries where the bottom-up sports movement has historically had a mass nature and has taken part in building the state. In Austria, sport services are also mostly delivered by associations (*Study on Volunteering* 2010d). On the other hand, countries like France and Germany have developed mass top-down sports movements (*Study on Volunteering*, 2010a). In Romania, very few volunteers are involved in the sports domain at all (*Study on Volunteering* 2010e).

International volunteering rhetoric

The attention paid by the European Union to volunteering has international context. The General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) proclaimed 2001 as the Year of Volunteers and December 5 as the International Day of Volunteers. Ten years later, the European Union followed on by proclaiming 2011 the European Year of Volunteering.

More attention has been paid to basic volunteering in the past decade or decade and a half - it informs citizen-participation values, decentralization and a delegation to a local level which is closer to people. We could say that it is a part of a certain idea of what is right, a part of a certain ideology. Political rhetoric (especially in the U.S. and United Kingdom, but also within the EU in the last years) recognizes that small grassroots associations can tackle social problems and have other positive impacts such as community integration, democratization and citizen activation, enhancement, engagement and emancipation of marginalized persons.

Volunteering is supported in many countries but it is supported most in the U.S, where volunteering received public recognition at the Conference on Philanthropy and Volunteering organized by President Clinton in the White House on Oct 26, 1999 (Anheier & Salamon 1999). However, recognition of citizen associations is not a matter of only one political party in the U.S. Volunteer associations are perceived as the essence of the state and they have been at the foundation of the American idea of community and democracy since the times of Alexis de Tocqueville, who visited America in the mid 19th century. The Blair government in the United Kingdom also recognized the significance of local volunteer associations, not only within

the 'Third-Way' programmatic statement, but also in 1998 when it concluded a broad agreement (the Compact) with the volunteer sector (the agreement was renewed in 2009).²⁸

Although we may speak of 'rhetoric', the volunteering discourse has definitely borne fruit in the 'real world' as well. The studies on volunteering (2010d, 2010e, 2010g) bring enough evidence of the impact the UN International Year of Volunteers on the situation of volunteering in some countries. The Austrian Council for Volunteering was created in 2003 on the basis of activities of the national committee for the UN International Year of Volunteers in 2001. In the Czech Republic, the law on voluntary service was adopted in 2002 as a direct outcome of the 2001 International Year of Volunteers. Moreover, both in 2001 and the 2011 were created the direct impetus and argument (although not the financing) for the implementation of two large surveys on volunteering to be carried out in the Czech Republic (Frič *et al.* 2001; Frič, Pospíšilová *et al.* 2010). In Romania, the 2001 International Year of Volunteers helped to launch the Romanian Volunteering Law, and in Hungary in 2001 was paved the way for a 2005 law on volunteering, as well as the creation of a National Volunteer Center Foundation.

Conclusion

Grassroots volunteering is a phenomenon that is so far difficult to study through official national statistics or current comparable international research, such as the *European Values Study*, aimed at voluntary activities carried out for non-governmental organizations in general. The reason for this is the substance of grassroots volunteering itself as an activity of associations having no paid employees, and relying chiefly on the voluntary work of their members that often disappear as fast as they emerge. So far, they actually form the little-described 'dark matter' of the universe of non-state, non-profit organizations.

The study is based on the fundamental definition of grassroots volunteering as a voluntary and unpaid work carried out for local associations, which draw on the voluntary activities of their members and do not employ paid professionals. However, there are some limits to the traditional definition, as follows.

Membership of non-state non-profit organizations and volunteering is disconnected and a new phenomenon of individualized volunteers-non-members emerges. Therefore, grassroots volunteering does not necessarily need to be only associational any more.

The modern style of volunteer management becomes a model permeating grassroots volunteering, traditionally associated with a 'home-grown' style of management.

More and more often, grassroots associations act in the role of service providers. This is difficult to combine with their voluntary basis, and the requirement to provide quality services brings about a tension between the ethos of citizen involvement and professionalization.

Traditionally, grassroots volunteering is connected with the participation of citizens and democracy. In recent years, the literature has appealed for caution, and not to take for granted the ability of grassroots associations to fulfill this role.

Such issues result from the development of civil society and volunteering during the last 15 years, and challenge the traditional definition. It would be a task for a new study with a different focus to theoretically reconsider the concept of grassroots volunteering and solve the apparent paradoxes.

²⁸ UK Compact: www.thecomcompact.org.uk/homepage/100016/home/ (accessed 15.3.2011)

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