



# **Finnish Civil Society Now**

## **Its operating environment, state and status**

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# Preface

The original Finnish version of this working paper was written especially to Finnish Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) active in strengthening civil societies in the global South. By being aware of their own background and the added value gained from it the Finnish CSOs can be of more help for their Southern partners.

The Finnish old-hand activist Hilikka Pietilä tells in her biography (Yli rajojen, 2013) that she started to write on the improvement of women's position in Finland and on the history of Finnish welfare state after realising that this kind of information was the best she could offer for the Southern partners.

We wish that the partners of the Finnish CSOs and other foreign readers find this working paper useful for them. Finnish Civil Society Now is a concise account of the main features of Finnish civil society's history, transformations, players, characteristics, operating environment, relations with government, and future directions. It also provides ideas for monitoring the state of civil society and information on key areas of legislation covering civil activity. Recognising the special characteristics of the Finnish civil society hopefully enables the partners to better understand the differences of their operational environment and why some solutions don't apply everywhere.

The paper reveals many of the challenges Finnish CSOs face in their own society, which they can share extensively with their Southern partners. Safeguarding the genuine involvement of the public is perhaps the most crucial one. The development of a culture of participatory governance opens up opportunities for spontaneous public political involvement. Though there has been much progress, the channels for discussion and debate maintained by government are underused. On whose turf should such discussion and debate take place? Experience has shown that government officials are not necessarily enthusiastic about citizen participation, as it consumes both their time and power. Finnish CSOs still have to put up with pseudo consultations with officials. Obligatory inclusion does not automatically ensure that the voice of CSOs counts for anything.

Getting sufficient resources is another key challenge. Fund-raising from different sources, in addition to government funding, counts for a growing proportion of Finnish CSOs' overall turnover. The fund-raising terrain is rapidly changing and becoming commercialized. Successful fund-raising requires more than ever the ability to suitably package the activities of a CSO for each different sponsor. Organizations have to devote more time and money to secure enough resources, while at the same time bearing in mind the boundary conditions of their own operations.

A debate held on the conclusions of this working paper included discussion on the consensus seeking nature of Finnish civil society which enables a tone of cooperation with government, but at the same time dilutes social debate and participation. Some consider consensus seeking to be a resource of Finnish society in its global participation that is worth of celebration. Discussion between civil society and the state would certainly be impossible without customary contact. In the debate, some expressed their hope that increasing multiculturalism will challenge Finnish consensus seeking and develop our discursive culture.

We hope that this working paper will contribute to strengthening the cooperation between the Finnish CSOs and their partners in the global South. We encourage the readers to bring their experiences, ideas, and visions to the international debate on strengthening civil society in order to construct together more resilient civil societies.

Helsinki, 20.8.2013

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# 1. Civil society within society

We can define civil society as the space for social and political participation and innovation in which citizens formally or informally organize around their common concerns or in order to promote them.

Some define civil society as one of three sectors of society, the other two comprising the state and the markets.<sup>1</sup> Others include a fourth sector, involving the family and individuals.<sup>2</sup> Another definition of society involves four sectors: the state, the markets, the political system and civil society. It views the political system as separate, but partially overlapping the other three sectors. All four interrelate with one another and are in perpetual flux.

Their boundaries are fluid, and some players may belong to several of them.<sup>3</sup> Social enterprises, the use of business models by civil society organisations (CSOs), and the transferral of social obligations to them and to enterprises all illustrate the changeability and fluidity of sectoral demarcations. What civil society players have in common, however, is that they are non-profit-making; they do not seek financial returns, or formal political or legislative power. The main characteristics of activity within civil society are citizen spontaneity, agency, autonomy, voluntarism, and communality.

Civil society acts as a counterpoint to the rigidity of government and the severity of the market. Optimally, it engages in dialogue, pre-

sents options for the other sectors and offers citizens opportunities to express themselves and get involved.<sup>4</sup> The main protagonists of civil society are the public, non-governmental organizations, citizens' associations and activist groups.

Civil society is a mediator between individual citizens and public decision-making, and supports the development of democracy. Civil society is also a robust service provider, which supplements, and partially substitutes for, deficient service provision capabilities.<sup>5</sup>

While most CSOs are non-political in nature, collective public action and advocacy mainly gets channelled to their organised activities. CSOs and movements challenge and renew the political system. In this respect, civil society supplements party politics. Civil society in Finland is nevertheless so heterogeneous that its social visibility is weaker than in other countries.<sup>6</sup> The lack of a common umbrella organisation for CSOs reflects this.

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<sup>1</sup> Ilmonen 2003, 7

<sup>2</sup> Harju 2010, 12; Grönlund 2012, 14

<sup>3</sup> Hakkarainen 2009

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<sup>4</sup> Harju 2010, 19

<sup>5</sup> Hakkarainen 2009

<sup>6</sup> Lattunen 2006

## 2. The state of civil society

### The trajectory of Finnish civil society

People probably always act together on issues they consider important. Persistent citizen activity arose during the Enlightenment, in the 18th century, when the European bourgeoisie started to demand equal social rights. In Finland, the end of the 18th century saw the rise of associations promoting national issues and culture.<sup>7</sup> The temperance issue and rise of charitable work due to poverty produced numerous associations from the early 19th century onwards.

Finland prospered under Russian rule, and the latter half of the 19th century saw the formation of a Finnish intelligentsia. This period laid the foundation for vigorous party and trade union activity, and in particular public activity linked to education and training. It also saw the start of fairly pronounced activity by the women's movement, sports movement, youth clubs and religious associations. Here too were the roots of Finnish development cooperation with the start of missionary work by organisations.<sup>8</sup> Nationalism was a common denominator in all these activities, which is why we can view civil society activity as having laid the intellectual foundation for the emergence of an independent Finland.<sup>9</sup> Pietilä writes that Finnish welfare came about from "the bottom-up", its instigator being civil society activity, and not public investment.<sup>10</sup>

The Civil War of 1918 divided the populace in two and the political divide saw a strengthening of activity by educational, cultural and sports movements. The right-wing hegemony of the 1930s forced many left-wing organizations to halt their activities, though many of them were later to begin operating again. In the post-war 1940s the same process happened to many right-wing associations. It was only at the end of the

20th century that the political division of the civil society activities is regarded as having come to an end.

Post-war prosperity, rapid structural change and urbanization greatly changed the forms of civil society activity. The trade union movement and the activity of other professional associations grew stronger. Other forms of communal civil society activity rapidly declined in the wake of urbanization and economic structural change.<sup>11</sup> The welfare state as a public sector investment began to take shape. The values of democracy, social justice, equality and solidarity comprised the matrix of the welfare state.<sup>12</sup> The same values made up a firm basis for civil society activity.

The growth of the welfare state in the early 1960s also linked civil society activity to the state. The expansion of the state's duties gave rise to various advocacy and special interest groups as well as lifestyle associations, which entered into a dialogue with government and supported the building of the welfare state. The period also saw an increase in concern and action for the poor in developing countries. News of them was more up-to-date, as television brought the famine in Biafra, the Vietnam War and the coup in Chile to people's living rooms. The Finnish developing-country movement started to emerge.<sup>13</sup>

Many traditional forms of activity by associations were killed off or transformed in the 1970s. The radical social awakening in Finland was largely channelled into the activities of CSOs. Intense politicization changed spontaneous movements into more bureaucratic power structures, which affected the entire terrain of activity. Organization, planning, paid staff, and the financial assistance required by formalization permanently altered the field of organised civil society activity in Finland to be more hierarchical and rigid.<sup>14</sup> This period also saw the start of state subsidies for development organizations, at first on an individual basis, and then more systematically from 1974 onwards. These organisations were also important players in the emergence of Finland's official development cooperation. Government invited them to take part as specialists in the committees of this sector and recognised their role in the favourable formation of public opinion.

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7 Harju 2003, 21

8 Ainamo et al. 2011, 97

9 Harju 2003, 24

10 Pietilä 2007, 5

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11 Harju 2003, 88

12 Pietilä 2007, 3

13 Hintikainen 2011, 18

14 Harju 2003, 26

The current renaissance of civil society started in the 1980s, when people realised that on its own the state was unable to produce sufficient welfare for everyone.<sup>15</sup> Civil society acts effectively and innovatively at local, grassroots, level, and is therefore regarded as being important for economic development. The role of civil society started to be considered important as an advocate and guardian of good governance. Funding for development organizations increased: by 1983 there were already 59 projects receiving support.<sup>16</sup> The role of development organizations in providing information was considered important from the outset, and they also received funding. The intention was to create a positive environment in Finland for development cooperation.

During the 1980s and 1990s civil society activity began to break away from party politics, and new types of organization started to appear. Funding for organizations changed from being annual subsidies to separate grants and project funding. This had the effect of fragmenting the operational terrain and started to transform it fundamentally. New social movements mushroomed and new forms of activity spread: short-term, spontaneous action with strong international links, and highly media savvy.<sup>17</sup> Still, the 1980s is looked on as the 'decade of organizations'.<sup>18</sup> Many considered the development cooperation done by CSOs as more effective than that of government, and so organizations came into being and received funding both in the West and the global South. Increased funding also goaded them into greater professionalism and growth.

During the recession of the early 1990s, government cut public health and social services. It did not restore them to their former level after the recession, but increasingly outsourced welfare services to the private sector, organizations and families.<sup>19</sup> The 2000s saw the income gap start to widen in the wake of the recession, and poverty increased. This has compelled organizations to operate more than ever as substitutes for state-run services. This has tested their values and customary place as a complement to the public sector.

## Civil society timeline

- Established civil society activity grew out of the Enlightenment of the 18th century.
- In Finland, the roots of CSO development cooperation go back to the missionary work of the late 19th century.
- The Civil War in Finland politically divided the CSO terrain in half. This division only ended in the 1990s.
- The growth of the welfare state in the 1960s harnessed civil society activity to the state.
- Activity became systematically organized in the 1970s, with increased planning, professionalism, bureaucracy, and regularized funding.
- The 1980s is considered the renaissance period of civil society: it was realized that the state cannot produce sufficient welfare by itself, and so CSOs took on the role of supplementing services.
- The state regards civil society as important in terms of domestic economic development. Increased funding saw growth of development cooperation projects. CSOs' activity had to become more professional.
- The recession of the early 1990s saw cuts to social and health services. There was pressure on CSOs not just to supplement services but also to produce them.

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15 Harju 2010, 11

16 Hintikainen 2011, 7

17 Itkonen 2000, 17

18 Hintikainen 2011, 13

19 Grönlund 2012, 76

## Civil society's main actors

From a civil society perspective, the state appears as either a partner, a target for making demands or as even as an opponent.<sup>20</sup> On this basis we can classify different sorts of actors that 1) focus on service production and supporting the welfare state, 2) comprise advocacy and interest organizations, and 3) seek political change.

The organizations and groups that represent the first group, and which produce services in those areas where government activity is insufficient. Their work stems from a palpable need that they want to meet, such as care for older people, voluntary work with sports clubs, and work on mental health care. The purpose here is not so much political change as getting things done. Most such activity is based on voluntary work.

CSOs involved in advocacy work are highly organized, usually comprising professionals, and draw on voluntary work to run mass campaigns and events. In the Finnish context, we can include the federations of the trade union movement as part of the political system, due to their strong negotiating role. Their activities at local level, as well as those of other advocacy and interest groups constitute traditional civil society activities.

Groups working for political change have previously functioned as organizations, such as the local and youth structures of political parties, or associations non-aligned to party politics.

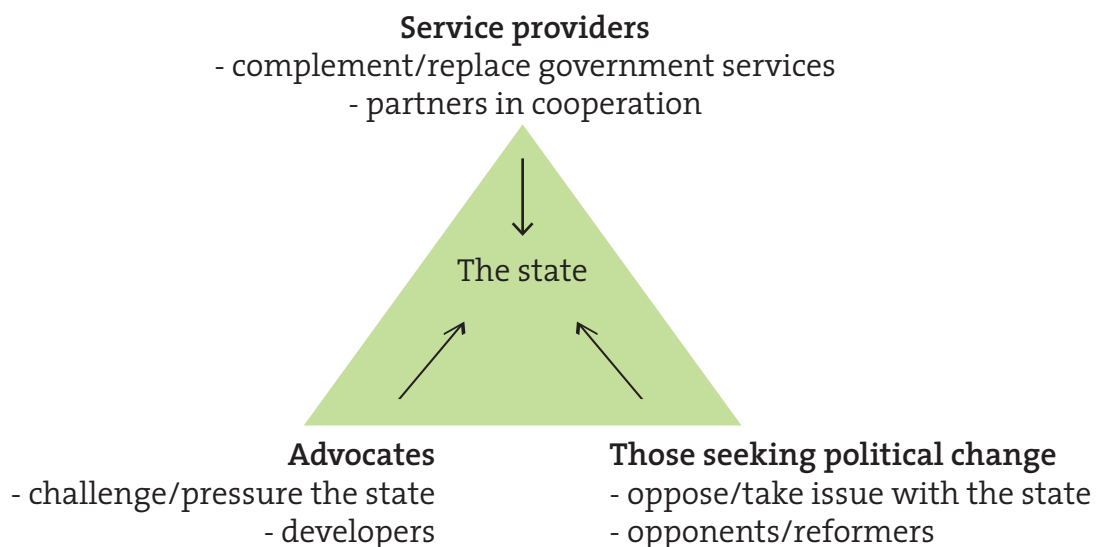
Nowadays life-style and other non-profit organizations have become part of this cluster, as well as a large number of movements that combine such things as globalization-critical and environmental issues. What was formerly state-oriented activity, with demands for change directed at the state, has broadened into protest against market forces and supranational decision-making. Some activity aiming for political change is fairly anarchic, and the groups involved comprise their own sub-culture. The demands for political change of most players nevertheless mainly get channelled into official consultation processes and social discourse.

Civil society activity that operates on the political terrain has remained somewhat inconspicuous, trailing behind party and financial interest groups.<sup>21</sup> Despite this, CSOs and social movements are invaluable instruments, able to challenge the political system with their demands and renew it with their innovations. Such organizations therefore play an important role as supplements to representative democracy.

20 Siisiäinen 1998

21 Saukkonen 2010

Figure 1. The roles of CSOs





## A tenfold division

This differentiation of CSO activity depicts a tenfold classification of CSOs according to their types of activity and stage of development:

a) **Religious movements** comprise an internally heterogeneous group whose common trait is a strong element of inner commitment and solidarity, while on the other hand being inward-looking and taking little interest in exerting an influence in society. Many religious actors are nevertheless placed in other categories.

b) **Alternative movements**, “anti-organization activity”. Their activities differ from those of traditional CSOs, though some are registered associations. Organizational activities are not the main point, rather high-visibility activity of a radical, even illegal, nature.

c) **Organizations aiming to realize global values**, includes political but not usually party-political players. Some of these, such as human rights and environmental groups, had radical beginnings but modified their work along more traditional lines.

d) **Non-profit and charitable activity**, which is based on realizing shared values and solidarity through associational work. The main group of CSOs active on development and global issues forms the core of Keva’s traditional membership.

e) **Solidarity-based local networks**, such as neighbourhood or workplace association activities, may involve formal and registered associations or loose networks.

f) **Civil society activity linked to special interest and advocacy work**. Local trade union activity and work by various interest groups dealing with minority and equality issues, which is characterized by strong representation in proportion to their membership or support, and clarity of common purpose.

g) **Market-mediated players**, which compete with commercial enterprises, typically comprise sports and recreational activities. These do not involve any ideological commitment. Their extensive use of volunteer work defines them within the CSO sphere.

h) **Large semi-governmental organizations** that have a strong role as service providers. They include many social and health sector, and cultural organizations. Cooperation with enterprises is an integral feature of their work. The challenge they face is to retain their CSO character and values.

i) **Associations in crisis and with limited operational capacity**, whose working model developed over time and whose serviceability is undisputed. For them the status quo is the safest option in which to carry on. Future prospects: demise or renewal.

j) **Moribund associations** kept alive despite an absence of common goals or interests by their members. In their day many of them emerged as channels for strongly patriotic or other ideological fervour. As times have changed, their old values no longer apply and their activities persist due to habit and their veteran stalwarts. Literature on CSOs is highly critical of the future of these associations and of their “glorious history”: if it doesn’t work, it should discontinue and make way for something new.

This delineation emphasises the life cycle concept of an organization: the hazards of demise and or sustaining ersatz activities. Regardless of the accuracy of this division, it may be hard to locate some of the newer civil society work, such as consultancy and research-related activity. This attests to the heterogeneity and rapid development of CSO activity.

*(Source: modified from Siisiäinen 1996, cited in Harju 2003, 159.)*

## The Promised Land for CSOs

According to the Register of Associations there are 135 000 associations in Finland, about 70 000 of which are active.<sup>22</sup> There are also probably about 20 – 30 000 unregistered associations. By international comparisons, the amount of association activity is large in relation to population size. Why is such activity so popular in Finland?

One explanation is the nature of Finnish administrative culture. The legacy of Russian tsarism left behind an operational culture that favours organization and compliance with rules. Acting within an association is at its best clear-cut and safe, as everyone knows their role and authority, and debate takes place within a formal, ordered framework.

We can find another explanation in the history of association activity. The significance and impact of civil society activity have been profoundly important in the emergence of Finnish identity, nationhood and post-war prosperity. Spontaneous and voluntary associations have taught Finns about tending to matters independently and about the effectiveness of such activity.<sup>23</sup>

They consider that activity by associations generates social capital (networking by people, building trust, expanding the common good) and increases active citizenship and good social skills. These qualities have been important during the construction of Finnish society. At various times they have been channels for social discontent, preventing it from taking more radical expressions.

Saukkonen points out that registrations of traditionally popular (party) political organizations, and to some extent associations in the professional and economic sectors, are declining, while those of a wide range of lifestyle associations (cultural, recreational, sports) have markedly increased.<sup>24</sup> It seems that the focus is shifting and that people prefer lifestyle associations providing self-realization and individualization at the expense of traditionally flourishing types of organization.

Separate activity has been a typical feature of the CSO culture in Finland. Collaboration between associations can complicate factors to do with staying power and commitment, and the

small number of players involved.<sup>25</sup> The operational culture also does not involve an interest in socializing and networking, and activities are confined to their own sphere. Cooperation can also be hampered by personal relations, practical organizational issues, previous experiences and prejudices targeted at collaboration in general.

On the other hand, cooperation can be facilitated by a bold, open-minded and unbiased attitude, and interaction between different CSOs. In order to nurture cooperation, it is crucial to determine the possible forms and advantages of collaboration. There have to be changes in the operational culture as well as in attitudes and ways of thinking, if we want to sustain the robustness of civil society activity.<sup>26</sup> Civil society's future developmental requirements include a vision of the common good, networking and collaborative learning.

### Sources of CSO activity

- The Finnish administrative culture, where operational practices favored organization and compliance with rules. Being in an association was at best a clear and secure way of operating.
- The significance and impact of CSO activity have been crucial to the emergence of Finnish identity, nationhood, independence, and prosperity.
- Association activity generates social capital and nurtures active citizenship.

## Finnish civil society's defining features

In Harju's view, civil society activity in Finland has focussed on definite activity, while the building of civil society itself has been not been a priority.<sup>27</sup> There was a strong tradition of volunteerism in Finland when it was a poor country, which helped harvest the potato crops and build village halls. By contrast, active citizenship, exert-

<sup>22</sup> Saukkonen 2010, Harju 2010

<sup>23</sup> Harju 2003, 105

<sup>24</sup> Saukkonen 2010

<sup>25</sup> Kapilo & Savolainen 2012, 41

<sup>26</sup> Aro 2012, 16

<sup>27</sup> Harju 2003, 116

ing an influence and getting involved were far less pronounced in Finland than in its western neighbours.

As a result, the social role of civil society activity has been less significant and recognized than in other Nordic countries. In addition to voting, the sphere of formal influence-bearing by the public includes the right of appeal, the shop steward administration, consultative referendums, and the principle of publicity concerning access to information.<sup>28</sup> There has been a critical debate on referendums, and their influence is viewed with scepticism. Are the public too benighted to take important decisions? Compliance with the principle of publicity has been disputed, including in the courts.

Activity by associations in Finland in itself occupies a highly important position.<sup>29</sup> Association memberships and, increasingly, online activism generate much social capital, networking and confidence in the running of society through being actively involved for people in Finland. This acts as a bridge to the arena of formal decision-making. On the other hand, politically active citizenship tends to be feeble. As Harju argues, Finns admire institutions and are inclined towards submissive thinking.<sup>30</sup> They are passive when it comes to the exercise of power, and are uncomfortable with critical social debate. Civil society values emphasize conformity, predictability and a search for compromise.<sup>31</sup> We may even start to wonder whether there is any real civil society in Finland.

As in other Nordic countries, in Finland the welfare state in provides many services that in Central and Southern Europe are covered by voluntary organizations, the Church and families.<sup>32</sup> As a result, the third sector's GDP share in Finland is comparatively small. Workforce organizations in Finland employ fewer people than on average in other Western countries. The key fields of voluntary work in Finland are sports and exercise, and social and health activity. After these come voluntary work related to the upbringing and education of children and young people.

Finland has sometimes been considered as a developing country in terms of voluntary activity. Yet studies show that in voluntary work

we are well on the European average.<sup>33</sup> Voluntary activity in many former socialist countries involves less than 10% of the population, while in Sweden and the US the figure is over 50%. Finland comes midway or slightly above, with over 30% doing voluntary work, alongside countries such as Belgium, India, Ireland, Singapore and Denmark.<sup>34</sup>

The large proportion of volunteerism in the US is linked to the country's lightweight public sector and the emphasis of social values on power and success. People do voluntary work for networking and for building their careers and achievements. In Grönlund's view the core values associated with voluntary work in Finland are altruism, social and gender equality, solidarity and equal treatment for all.<sup>35</sup> These reflect the dominant values of the welfare state, which are also linked to the experience of free political and individual expression and trust in the people. These prevailing values in society are slow to change, and this value base of volunteerism is unaltered, despite claims that social values are harsher.<sup>36</sup>

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33 Nylund & Yeung 2005, 14

34 Musick & Wilson 2008, 34

35 Grönlund 2012, 16

36 Grönlund 2012, 80

### Characteristics of Finnish society

- The third sector accounts for a relatively small portion of GDP.
- Political citizenship is feeble. People value institutions and are passive in use of power.
- The key areas of Finnish voluntary activity are in sports, exercise, and the social and health sector.
- Finland is on the European average in terms of voluntary activity.
- Core values include altruism, equality, solidarity, and equal treatment for all.

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28 Harju 2003, 114

29 Siisiäinen & Kankainen 2009

30 Harju 2003, 105

31 Suurpää 2011

32 Harju 2003, 34

## Development and global issues in Finnish cs

Despite the drastic cut in the Finnish ODA budget in the early 1990s, the appropriations for the development work of CSOs did not decrease. These organizations were already a strongly established part of public sector development cooperation, and have been seen as promoting global solidarity in Finland and as increasing civil society in target countries.<sup>37</sup> In 2011, the state provided support to about 150 organizations by giving grants for 650 projects in 103 countries. The foreign ministry also provided financial support to 82 organizations for communication and development education projects to be conducted in Finland in 2011. In 2012 budget for CSO development work for the first time exceeded EUR 100 million.

The highly critical discourse on development in Finland during the 1990s prompted severe criticism of the justifications for development cooperation. People started looking for new alternatives to the objectification of developing countries and to increasing aid dependency. The discourse and criticism concerning globalization made Finland's entanglement in global problems conspicuous.<sup>38</sup> There was greater emphasis on the role of the global North as the cause of global poverty, and Finland also became a focal point of activity: CSO activities placed stronger emphasis on influencing political decision-making and educating public attitudes.

The advocacy work of CSOs began to expand at the end of the 1990s following a number of massive international campaigns, including the Jubilee 2000 debt relief campaign. Professional advocacy developed rapidly. It was accelerated too by growing links with seasoned European advocacy campaigns, as well as by a growing appreciation in CSOs of the importance of impacting political decision-making in order to eradicate

poverty. CSOs saw advocacy not only as a means of public involvement in decision-making, but also in increasing their visibility and making fundraising more effective.<sup>39</sup>

Many Finnish development CSOs view global education to be part of advocacy and campaigning.<sup>40</sup> They see development cooperation as needing a commensurate training of attitudes, communications and public debate in Finland. Global education predominantly involves education on development, multiculturalism and equality. CSO global education activity is diverse, from the very local to national levels. As with other CSO activity, CSOs working on development and global issues are changing amidst social and cultural changes.

Such work involves a number of government ministries in addition to CSOs, the main ones being the ministries of education and culture, foreign affairs, and employment and economy. In 2012 the foreign ministry disbursed EUR 2 million for communications and development education to 73 CSOs.

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<sup>37</sup> *Ainamo et al. 2011, 104*

<sup>38</sup> *Hintikainen 2011, 73*

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<sup>39</sup> *Saloranta 2008, 4*

<sup>40</sup> *Saloranta 2008, 6*

### 3. Civil society trends and current debates

#### Changes in voluntary activity

Voluntary activity is an active force that changes society. It both follows social trends and transitions and causes them to happen.<sup>41</sup> It acts as the conscience of society by often being the first to respond to new social problems and needs, and by providing innovative solutions to them.<sup>42</sup>

In today's society the greater emphasis on individuality, on increasing wealth, choice and social mobility are reflected in the forms that volunteerism takes. The erosion of the welfare state even highlights the significance of voluntary activity. We can see it as an "enclave of equality" in the midst of society's liberalization.<sup>43</sup> The responsibility for providing help falls increasingly to CSOs, which increases the appreciation of voluntary work but carries the risk of its workload becoming excessive.

Population ageing is both a challenge and an opportunity for volunteerism. The dependency ratio of older people (over 64-year-olds in relation to people of working age) will be the worst in Europe by 2025.<sup>44</sup> This could mean that welfare services will be transferred increasingly to the care of CSO activity, and thereby alter the character of civil society. In any case, in the future civil society activity will increasingly involve hale retired people. Does this mean that civil society will become more conservative and toothless?

It appears that volunteerism is not in decline, despite its changing character.<sup>45</sup> The structures of voluntary activity should be supported in order for them to function in the future, with sufficient resources to coordinate work, improved planning and follow-up, accumulating skills and investing

in recruitment are the main ways of securing voluntary work in the future.<sup>46</sup>

#### Changing commitment to civil society activity

There are clear changes in the commitment of people in Finland to civil society activity. Intensified hurry, the insistence on intense experiences, and vacillating points of interest have all reduced people's long-term commitment to focusing on a single activity. This is a challenge to traditional CSO activity, the maintaining of which would require a perseverance and dedication that are increasingly alien to present-day life. Civil society activity therefore needs to seek out new forms of operating in order to bring new people on board, for instance by being more project-oriented, increasing virtual contacts, international networking and genuine possibilities to influence things, as well as by being altogether more spontaneous.

The spread of Finnish affluence and customer-centric thinking support service users and the role of payers in civil society activities, where voluntary inputs and volunteer work can be outsourced to service providers. Do people any longer have a genuine desire and interest to join communities? How can we strengthen communality? A problem for CSOs is the core activity that such communality creates being neglected when resources have to be devoted to producing services with more easily measurable and rapidly visible results.

Civil society activity is part of consumerism. This challenges CSO activities to increasingly prompt renewal, effective marketing and investment in the quality of their work.<sup>47</sup> If organizations are to arouse people's interest, they must more precisely monitor and analyse changing values and trends.

Advocacy that aims to bring about political change is not only channelled through existing groups, associations or political parties. It is individualized and turns into separate and transient lifestyle experiences, a new form of communality, that emphasize self-direction, virtuality, spontaneity, and varying engagement and disengagement.<sup>48</sup> We speak of 'shopping basket activism', where people collect together various campaigns

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41 Nylund & Yeung 2005, 13

42 Harju 2003, 49

43 Grönlund 2012, 83

44 Harju 2010, 31

45 Lager et al. 2011, 34

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46 Pessi & Oravasaari 2010, 167

47 Harju 2010, 35

48 Stranius 2009, Niskanen 2006, Roivainen & Korpela 2008

and bits and pieces of CSO activity into a package that suits them. One estimate has it that over half of 20-30 year-olds are involved in light forms of activism of various kinds. This is characterised by bureaucratically low-density involvement, ethical lifestyle choices and internet advocacy.

Pessi and Oravasaari maintain that young people should be inspired to get active by understanding their needs: nonalignment enables renewed enthusiasm and a plurality of values, and relativity prompts us to make choices.<sup>49</sup> Individuality entails challenges by which we construct our own identity. Young people are not selfish – it is just that individuality denotes a different way of acting, with interspersed, project-based activities, in which the involvement threshold is low, uncomplicated and spontaneous, and with not too much pre-devised activity to be responsible for. Activity should be varied, ideological, fun, concrete. Active recruitment may even be somewhat aggressive in nature.

We can expect involvement to be cumulative, with the socially advantaged doing voluntary work and getting involved, while some prefer to withdraw and be left alone with the internet and entertainment.<sup>50</sup> The idea that in an appropriate peer group socially disadvantaged people feel that they are useful and in a community can inspire people away from being alienated from civil society action towards getting involved.<sup>51</sup>

## Virtual civil society activity

Civil society activity in cyberspace turns the future scenarios of organizations upside-down. They are no longer dependent on resources or professional know-how. The politicization of issues no longer needs organizational bureaucracy, as internet policy punctures the constraints of time and place.<sup>52</sup> The flow of activity has run from the society to the individual, as through the internet anyone can participate in a new initiative without any previous experience and without commitment: “Good civil society activity is like a high wrap in ice hockey: you need an inspired individual performance”.<sup>53</sup> It can bring about great strength in numbers just at the right moment.

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49 Pessi & Oravasaari 2010, 172

50 Kareinen 2009

51 Mokka & Neuvonen 2006, 8

52 Häyhtiö 2010, 80

53 Stranius 2011

## Changing nature of civil society activity

- There is diminished long-term commitment to common endeavors.
- The third sector is expected to play a bigger part in tending to services. There is a growing need for voluntary activity, and a mounting workload.
- Traditional CSO activity no longer appeals nor does it fit with the present way of life. There is pressure to revamp and change activities to become more project oriented and attractive to individual involvement.
- Participation is becoming individualized, and the supply of activities has to be diverse and with a low threshold for involvement.
- The importance of the internet as a facet of CSO activity has grown.
- Participation accrues around specific actors.

The culmination of issues and the clear confrontations emerging on the internet may reintroduce people who have been disconnected from politics to civil society debates. Alongside the participatory channels provided by government, a multilocal and multimodal network has developed in which people act spontaneously, in “collective individualism”.<sup>54</sup> The masses of organizations that are mutually dissociated and dissimilar in their ways of working are united into an issue-based network that transcends national borders. Civil society anti-war activity, for instance, is increasingly shifting to online swarming, where its activists meet, communicate and make themselves felt in different ways and directions. It is typical of online swarming that those taking part are very different in terms of their values and perspectives, but the point is to unify them at a particular moment.<sup>55</sup> The internet is a perfect environment for forming and maintaining swarms, which create a sense of team spirit, community and learning together.

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54 Häyhtiö 2010, 80

55 Häyhtiö 2010, 83

Technological development creates opportunities for civil society action. The increase in knowledge, people's accessibility, real time contact, and fresh practices create entirely new dimensions to advocacy and action. On the other hand, increasingly sensational and surging communications may also introduce counteractions and paralysis. When we cannot control the flood of information, opportunities and options become excessive.

## Aggressive activism

From the end of the 1980s, animal rights activism started to take on more aggressive features, through which it has had increased media attention. Violent campaigns and illegal attacks spread to other movements focused on social ills.<sup>56</sup> The attention economy always requires more in-your-face actions in order to get noticed by the media and powers that be. But while we do see radical and violent forms of activism in Finland, tendencies that appear internationally generally become tamer when they reach Finland. There has been some discussion on whether the outbursts of violence of past years are mere hooliganism or whether they carry a social message.<sup>57</sup> On the other hand, some feel that the state subdues activism either by allowing a small degree of space for its demands or by marginalizing and crushing it.<sup>58</sup> A typical instance is the involvement of activists from the environmental movement in decision-making, or then their being simply labelling them as troublemakers.

Many radicals criticize involvement in socially approved discourse as selling out.<sup>59</sup> They fear that their message, which they consider non-negotiable, will get watered down. As such, they see civil society activism as merely tinkering around and as part of support for the prevailing social system. They question the way society defines legality, and dispute whether safeguarding property is more important than protecting life.

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56 Tuomivaara 2006, 306

57 Vanhanen 2006, 58

58 Muurimäki 2006, 72

59 Saarikoski 2006, 84

## Growing professionalism and business cooperation

Professional CSO activity is also on the increase. Both CSO project work and advocacy, campaigning and lobbying entail greater professional expertise if they are to have any impact. Growing transparency and optimal standards, especially in state funding for activities increase the need for professional planning, monitoring and assessment, and augment the workload. Activities to market donors, voluntary actors or in order to gain political visibility also require professional know-how. Increasingly, work in CSOs that was previously done by volunteers has been shifted to professionals, while on the other hand it is becoming harder to integrate volunteer amateurs into professional work.

With the professionalization of the work of CSOs the interest by businesses in collaborating with them has increased. CSOs reckon that working with businesses creates bigger opportunities for realizing their aims and getting more funding. For businesses, charity work and sponsoring CSOs is not enough.<sup>60</sup> They want to cooperate with CSOs not only to parade their own sense of responsibility but also to carry out their key operations. They offer CSOs greater space for initiative, and mutually beneficial deals that at best could generate new activities.

Enterprises can engage in charity work and sponsorship even with small CSO players, but the closer the joint activities they engage in are to companies' core activity and business, the better large, well known and international organizations suit cooperation partnerships.<sup>61</sup> At their best, collaboration between businesses and CSOs can produce new innovations and a fruitful exchange of expertise to the benefit of both. The risks of cooperation with businesses are greater for small CSOs, whose know-how and resources may come under strain or who may be tempted to bend their principles in order to obtain funds.<sup>62</sup>

Another aspect of CSO and business cooperation concerns its impact on the operational environment. People consider civil society as something that drives and reinforces democracy, good governance, transparency and accountability. These play an important role in providing a

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60 Korppi 2012, 34

61 Korppi 2012, 81

62 Latvala 2012

favourable environment for business activities.<sup>63</sup> Enterprises have started to view CSOs as important partners precisely because of this. Government also favours closer ties between the various sectors.

Cooperation with businesses has in any case come to stay, and it would be naïve to imagine that it would not impact on the values and methods of civil society activity. Will the eradication of structural impoverishment be left out when there are developing country markets for western consumers?

## Multiculturalism

The first CSOs established in Finland of non-Finnish origin were Russian cultural and charitable associations, which started up immediately after Finland's independence.<sup>64</sup> Ethnic associations established since the 1980s describe their role as supporting immigrants in coping in new surroundings, managing the financial, social and cultural uncertainty, representing their own cultural traditions, and creating a sense of unity within their own ethnic group. Common to all of them is support in terms of administrative and service needs – promoting integration.<sup>65</sup> Such organizations serve as channels dealing with the identities and interests of various immigrant communities.

More multicultural or multi-ethnic associations are being established. They allow for a mixing of cultural influences with one's own culture, as well as for crossing cultural boundaries.<sup>66</sup> It appears that there is a unification of immigrant communities towards greater multi-ethnicity and multiculturalism. Their activities will in the future be more defined by supporting integration and shared interests other than those of an ethnic or religious aspect.<sup>67</sup> There will also be more such CSOs registered, and they will become stronger authentic participants in society.

From the societal perspective, multicultural activity constructs social citizenship. It creates freedom, agency, and spontaneity, and enables action and resistance. It is in this way that the practices of society become socialized. It also opens up the possibility for expanding the defi-

nition of citizenship.<sup>68</sup> Could multicultural associations introduce more political activism to traditional Finnish civil society activity?

The most important forms of cooperation between immigrant associations and the authorities have proven to be various kinds of welfare-support projects and the involvement of these associations as specialists on advisory boards on multicultural matters.<sup>69</sup> Such cooperation is still in its infancy, but the forms that currently exist are a step towards a more equal and diverse society.

## The relationship with global civil society

With globalization civil society has to resolve issues that, on the one, hand demand international relations and decisions, and on the other local knowledge.<sup>70</sup> Building global civil society is a response to the need for involvement in transnational debate and decision-making in those international bodies that are run on democratic principles.

CSOs bring their expertise and act as watchdogs for these decision-making forums too. There is debate on how to select pertinent and specific-enough topics as the main civil society agenda, while satisfying CSO supporters, who comprise a highly diverse range of actors. Finnish participation in global discussion and decision-making forums is still fairly cautious. Due to the European Union, national borders have to some extent become lower, but the perspective of Finnish CSOs is still very Finnish-centric.

Who do civil society representatives actually act for in the global arena? Because they do not have power and responsibility by virtue of being elected, their input is to produce information and to bring it to the public debate. How can civil society decisions be made that are fair and strategically sound? Doing so requires solid preparation, strong collaboration, and collective organization.<sup>71</sup> We can also question whether it is justified to be involved at the heart of global processes when there is no actual power to exercise, and one's very presence can be interpreted as taking an undesirable stand. Could it be that the limited

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63 *Hakkarainen 2012, 3*

64 *Pyykkönen 2007, 71*

65 *Pyykkönen 2007, 75*

66 *Pyykkönen 2007, 19–20*

67 *Pyykkönen 2007, 119*

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68 *Pyykkönen 2007, 22*

69 *Saksela 2007, 25*

70 *Harju 2010, 26*

71 *Hakkarainen 2012, 4*



scope for participation and leverage erodes the capacity to exert an influence, as the issues are complex and only some of those involved have the chance to affect things and present their own viewpoints?

The aspiration is for strengthening global civil society by making it representative. The notion of a World Parliament envisages having a global democratically elected organ that would represent the world's citizens and act as a counterforce to international, corporate and state actors.<sup>72</sup> Its role would be to resolve global problems and conflicts and secure rights for the people. In Andersson's view, it would be possible to establish an advisory body, and then after a few decades gradually make the transition to decision-making powers.

Viherä predicts that in the future there will be no place for the state in a world where issues are dealt with and decided on in line with regulations that transcend national borders.<sup>73</sup> "Of course, it's not going to suddenly happen, or in five or ten years, but gradually in the global future. A participatory and deliberative civil society is on the way."

72 Andersson 2011, 77–78

73 Viherä 2010

## Future directions of civil society activity

Despite various changes, civil society activity in Finland remains for the most part organized. Harju sees the main challenges as maintaining the value base of non-profit-making, and people-oriented action: the purpose of a CSO must be clear and it must have genuine and close connections with its membership.<sup>74</sup> It is possible there will be stronger organizational bureaucracy in the CSO field, guaranteeing growth and activity funding, but there is also more than ever a threat of it becoming ossified. Another course would be to return in the direction of people's movements, with their functionality, self-direction, and horizontal distribution of power.<sup>75</sup>

Between these two extremes there are new, small scale and localised CSOs, involved in such things as neighbourhood activity, which arise out of people's everyday situations and respond to their community needs. Their orientation lies in the direction of service production, highlighting their market based, specialist character. In all cases, flexibility, responsiveness and an ability

74 Harju 2003, 175

75 Harju 2003, 166

Figure 2. The future directions of civil society



to carry through changes in a controlled manner are prerequisites for the future vitality of civil society activity.<sup>76</sup>

Kari and Markwort characterize the future of civil society according to four possible scenarios.<sup>77</sup>

In the **New public administration scenario** the third sector, being a well-organized player, takes over tasks from government, in its capacity as mentor, but does so within strict competitive processes and contractual arrangements which aims to maximize the benefits of competition within a complex social market.

The **Social capital scenario** depicts the third sector self-organised into an ostensible state player. This emphasises a civil society that respects a strong sense of individuality, involvement and connectivity. It pre-empts social problems and adheres well to the overall structure of society. Government itself is small, and restricted to performing technocratic duties.

In the **Liberal scenario** the third sector operates between government and the markets as a balancing force that oversees 'correct' activity by both and generates social movement, multiplicity and pluralism.

The **Corporate scenario** brings the business world to civil society. Through expanded social responsibility programmes, and together with third sector organizations, corporations will produce social welfare and services, as well as other services society needs, which were previously the job of the state.

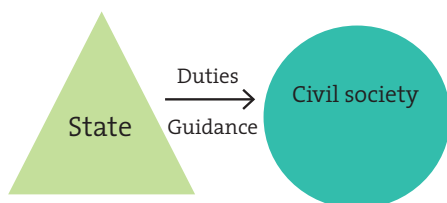
If we take into account the past and present complexity of Finnish civil society, it would seem possible that all these scenarios could be realized concurrently. They also clearly show that civil society's functional options relate directly to the way the state develops.

76 Harju 2010, 50

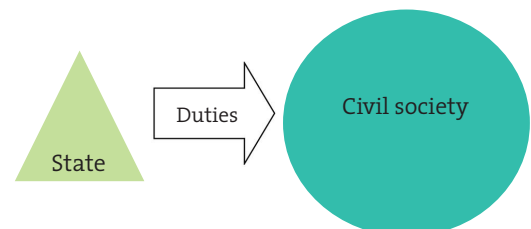
77 Kari & Markwort 2004, 18–19

Figure 3. Future scenarios

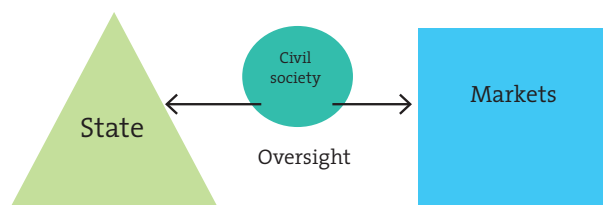
**New public administration scenario**



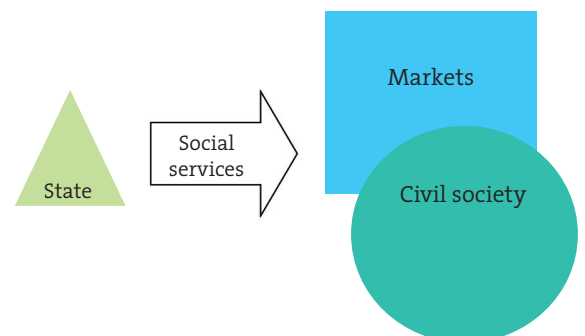
**Social capital scenario**



**Liberal scenario**



**Corporate scenario**



## 4. Civil society's operating environment

### Legislation

Autonomy remains a distinguishing feature of Finnish civil society.<sup>78</sup> The state has regulated civil society activities fairly modestly. People are able to set up non-profit associations for social or ideological purposes. The Associations Act and the Accounting Act are the main regulators of CSOs' basic activities.

The Associations Act was amended in 2010. The new law takes better account of the needs and current situation of different kinds of associations, allowing for remote participation in association and delegate meetings. Auditing may now be done by laypeople in small associations, which reflects existing practices better. The law does not concern the financial activity of CSOs, which is covered by tax legislation, the Public Procurement Act and other regulations.

When a CSO outsources its basic activities, the legislation that applies was originally designed for state owned enterprises or private companies. This brings new challenges for civil society activity. An association can only conduct the sort of business or gainful employment that is specified in its rules or which otherwise directly concerns its purposes, or which is deemed to be financially insignificant. In practice, the Associations Act permits large-scale economic activity as long as the purpose is social or ideological, and it does not allow for the acquisition of financial gains or other such benefits from involvement in an association.

The general experience of many CSOs is that tax interpretations have become less favourable for them. More than before, the tax authorities aim to actively determine whether a CSO's activities count as taxable business activity.<sup>79</sup> Tax legislation or the criteria for taxable activity have not changed as such. This legislation is thus not

very adept at recognizing the facets and features of CSO activities.

In Finland, voluntary bodies do not have any particular status defined by law, and there is no separate legislation covering voluntary activities. Instead, they are touched on by a number of other laws, such as the Associations Act, the Cooperatives Act, and the Foundations Act.

### The financial operating environment

In the past, CSOs received state support in the form of general grants, which left leeway for them to decide how to use them. Nowadays, there has been an increase in project funding for specific purposes, together with more official guidance.<sup>80</sup> In a survey of CSOs conducted in 2009, two-thirds of respondents reported having problems related to applying for and getting funding.<sup>81</sup> Respondents also expressed preference for, among other things, general grants instead of project funding, advisory and support services, and with respect to different government agencies consistent procedures when applying for funds and concerning supervision, as well as tax-deductibility for donations to CSOs. Problems CSOs encountered in funding for development cooperation work included ambiguous guidance, and inconsistent and unpredictable procedures in terms of applications and reporting.

The relationship between the state and civil society activity in Finland has had connotations of complementarity and mutual support, and by international comparisons Finnish administrative culture is fairly low-key. CSOs have become homogenized, as the requirements for professionalism and quality, as well as the uniform treatment by the state of a miscellaneous range of players, have shaped their activities.<sup>82</sup> Channelling funding to CSOs is therefore a way for the authorities to guide them, a form of remote control.<sup>83</sup> Since the state's interests involve both its own security together with the wellbeing and welfare of the population, it regulates civil society's room for manoeuvre using funding, creating for it an area of 'controlled freedom'. For its part, organized civil society regulates the nature and

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<sup>78</sup> Harju 2003, 44

<sup>79</sup> Brax 2008

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<sup>80</sup> Harju 2003, 44

<sup>81</sup> Harju & Niemelä 2011, 17

<sup>82</sup> Hintikainen 2011, 87

<sup>83</sup> Pyykkönen 2007, 24

power of its resistance by operating in associations, and the public's and government's wishes and interests.

We can therefore ask whether Finland's reasonably generous funding model (with 85% going to development projects and programmes) makes development CSOs "contractors in the development market", with the risk that their values will be sidelined.<sup>84</sup> Organizations working on global issues should carefully consider their relationship with their sponsors and the effect it has on their internal activity, independence and the content of their work. CSOs need to focus on what they do most effectively and as specialists in their own field.

The European Commission complicates the work of CSOs producing services with public sector funding, among other things by its competition directives. These stipulate that public sector support must not be allowed to distort competition. As a result, the Finnish Slot Machine Association systematically monitors the effects of its funding activity on the markets, and makes its funding decisions on the principle of correcting market deficiencies, and thereby tries to ward off market distortions. CSOs' use of income support for the unemployed, labour market support for people on work experience or even volunteers to organize spiritual festivities in summer are all examples where the authorities express reservations about the distortion of competition. The logic of solidarity and volunteerism is not without its problems in the world of competitive markets.

There are a number of government ministries whose agenda includes promoting CSOs' operating conditions. A key area of this concerns their economic and funding security.<sup>85</sup> This is related in particular to government concerns about social exclusion among young people. Government believes that civil society activity plays an important role in nurturing active citizenship and supplementing public sector service production.

Internationally, Finland is among those countries where the basis of CSO funding derives from membership subscriptions, which means that Finnish CSOs are less dependent on state funding. 58% of their income is self-generated, while 36% comes from state subsidies.<sup>86</sup> That funding

is weighted to the provision of project support nevertheless diminishes their self-sufficiency.<sup>87</sup>

Fundraising accounts for an important and growing share of CSOs' total revenue. Apart from membership payments, fundraising may include rummage sales, raffles, voluntary work, cooperation with enterprises, sponsorships, advertising, donations and money collections. The fundraising sphere is rapidly becoming modernized and commercialized. Successful fundraising and marketing require the ability to package a CSO's service or product in the right way for each sponsor. It's increasingly a matter of image marketing.

Finnish rights to tax deductible donations are among the most stringent in Europe, and companies are able to use them only to a limited amount of Euros.<sup>88</sup> Compared to other countries, donations make up about 6% of the third sector's income, while for other developed countries it averages a little over 7%.<sup>89</sup>

Fundraising is closely linked to the legislation concerning money collection. Under the Money Collection Act one needs a permit when collecting non-subscription money by public appeal. The system is very strict, and the law is currently being revised. The hope is that the permit system will be replaced by based on declaration and reporting, making the present rigid arrangement more flexible, at least for small-scale money collections.<sup>90</sup> Information on money collections could be compiled in a database that would be easy to inspect. Some even hope that the concept of non-profit will be dropped, so that any legally competent individual can start up a money collection.<sup>91</sup>

Gaming monopolies have a highly significant role for CSO activities. For example, the Finnish Slot Machine Association has provided some €1.5 billion in support to disabled war veterans since 1993.<sup>92</sup> The Lotteries Act has recently been reformed. The Finnish lottery Veikkaus Ltd, the Finnish Slot Machine Association and Fintoto Ltd will continue to have a monopoly on gambling. The government regards the use of their profits for civil society activity in the public interest since it moderates profit-making objectives and thus also the risks of gambling problems.

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84 Hintikainen 2011, 15

85 Harju & Niemelä 2011, 19

86 Salamon et al. 2004

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87 Leukumaa 2010, 32

88 Harju & Niemelä 2001, 36

89 Välimäki 2007, 16

90 Stranius & Laaksonen 2010

91 Oksanen 2012

92 Harju & Niemelä 2011, 39

## Traditional sources of funding and newcomers

- Project funding for specific purposes has increased, as has official guidance.
- The relationship between the state and CSOs in Finland has been complementary and mutually supportive in tone.
- European Union competition legislation has influenced CSO activities and the services they produce.
- By international comparison, Finland belongs to those countries where membership subs are the basis of CSO funding, but fund-raising is increasing and is more central to their overall proceeds.
- Active marketing and fund-raising are conducted in particular by large CSOs in Finland.
- An increasing form of fundraising is community financing. There is debate on entitlement to the tax deductibility of donations.
- The existence of gaming monopolies in Finland is of key importance to CSOs.

## Civil society's relations with the authorities

In the late 1990s there was concern over the results of an international comparison, which found that in Finland there is scant involvement by the public and CSOs in the policy-making process. Voting rates were dropping and discontent with government was increasing. 'Good governance' was the catchphrase, and people felt that this in part meant that the public's actual influence and government transparency must increase.<sup>93</sup>

A background report on the issue was made in which representatives of government were questioned on the role of CSOs in influencing the work of government. A third of them reckoned that CSOs have no role to play, another third con-

sidered CSOs as channels of information.<sup>94</sup> This left only a third of respondents who viewed CSOs as on the whole representing the public, while most thought that they only represent their members. Respondents thought that a complicating factor is that there are a number of CSOs competing with one another in the same field. Representatives of government therefore did not think that listening to and working with CSOs was necessary or that it contributes to decision-making.

Despite this, the 'Listen to Citizens' programme on civil participation (2000-2001) proposed that all ministries have their own CSO strategy, or work out ways of maintaining links with CSOs, as well as having a communications strategy that would pay particular attention to communicating with the public. The view was that listening to the public is part of leadership and it was recommended that officials receive training on civil participation. The project urged the development of guidelines for making statements to government bodies, involvement in public debate and an internet-based feedback forum<sup>95</sup>, as well as making systematic use of citizens' points of view.<sup>96</sup>

The Vanhanen government (2003-2007) continued this work with an extensive civil participation policy programme.<sup>97</sup> In addition to actually listening to citizens the programme focused on such things as researching civil participation, civil participation in schools, adult education on citizenship, promoting municipal democracy, as well as media skills and civil debate. According to the policy programme's final report, Finland's "development towards being a meritocratic society is leading to the majority of people not regarding themselves as citizens with full powers. In particular, young people and those with a low level of education need more opportunities for civil participation that can socialize them into civil activity and citizen participation."<sup>98</sup> The report recommends strengthening civil activity education and expertise. It also recommends ministerial CSO strategies. One of the results of the programme was the establishment of the Advisory Board on Civil Society Policy (known as KANE).<sup>99</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Harju 2003, 109

<sup>95</sup> [www.otakantaa.fi](http://www.otakantaa.fi)

<sup>96</sup> Holkeri & Nurmi 2001, 32

<sup>97</sup> Niemelä & Wakeham 2007

<sup>98</sup> Niemelä & Wakeham 2007, 15

<sup>99</sup> Niemelä & Wakeham 2007, 17

<sup>93</sup> Holkeri & Nurmi 2001, 5

The first CSO policy measures were the foreign ministry's response to the task given to government ministries to create CSO strategies. The policy was a sign of a greater recognition of civil society but also an effort to bridle it: "CSOs are independent actors but they must seek to attain the Millennium Development Goals."<sup>100</sup> CSOs were to be involved in instituting the follow-ups to the old structural adjustment programmes in developing countries, while at the same time acting as a counter to states' new development plans.

These first CSO policy measures were followed in 2010 by the Guidelines for Civil Society in Development Policy. This viewed CSOs more broadly than as mere service providers. They are development policy partners for state development cooperation. The policy guidelines viewed strengthening civil society as an important prerequisite for reducing poverty and strengthening democracy. CSOs were prominently involved in preparing the policy guidelines and gave positive feedback on the participatory process.<sup>101</sup>

When KANE's first term, 2007–2011, ended it left a legacy for the next term of hopes for better CSO visibility, links with ministries and the need for a clear mandate. It had made careful efforts to avoid conflicts and make compromises, which in a heterogeneous body has sometimes meant that the voice of CSOs has been muffled.<sup>102</sup> CSOs' non-profit-making services and competition problems have been a key part of KANE's activities. The main aims of its new term, 2012–2016, relate to online participation and CSOs' financial operating conditions.<sup>103</sup>

The preparatory process for the Finnish Development Policy Programme for 2011–2015 was based on extensive consultations with stakeholders. The programme highlights human rights and a comprehensive understanding of climate change. "There can be no development without civil society," declared minister Heidi Hautala in an interview.<sup>104</sup>

The culture of participatory governance opens up opportunities for the public's spontaneous political participation. Though there has been much progress since the 1990s, the channels for dialogue maintained are poorly used. On whose turf should debate take place?

In developing a culture of participatory government it is important, especially at local level, to create participatory projects in which issues are easily approachable and people can genuinely be heard.<sup>105</sup> Examples of such projects include the Finnish Innovation Fund's Ominvoimiin (Done by me – by us), which aims to reawaken Finland's volunteerism tradition in a new manner: good ideas can generate democracy-making, in which government may be involved but implementation is in the hands of the participants.<sup>106</sup> One example of public virtual participation is the Ota kantaa online discussion forum run by the Ministry of Justice's citizens' participatory environment programme.<sup>107</sup> This is part of the Ministry of Finance's Action Programme on eServices and eDemocracy, which aims to bring e-services to both citizens and the authorities.<sup>108</sup>

Government could also form a vehicle for the public's own projects that would be funded by the private sector from micro-financing and from resources from a volunteer bank. This would point the role of civil society in a new direction.

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100 Hintikainen 2011, 71

101 Keva news 21.10.2010

102 KANE 2011, 16–18

103 KANE 2012

104 maailma.net 29.9.2011

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105 Häyhtiö 2010, 92

106 Aitamurto & Siivonen 2012, 6

107 www.otakantaa.fi

108 [http://www.vm.fi/vm/en/05\\_projects/03\\_sade/index.jsp](http://www.vm.fi/vm/en/05_projects/03_sade/index.jsp)

### Growing importance of international civil society

- At the end of the 1990s there was concern in Finland at the scant participation by citizens and CSOs in policy-making preparatory work.
- The early 2000s saw a willingness to include public participation as a part of decision-making. The 'Listen to citizens' programme proposed that all government ministries have their own CSO strategies.
- In 2006, the foreign ministry drew up guidelines for CSO development cooperation work. The guidelines recognized civil society actors but defined their role from the viewpoint of the state.
- The first guidelines on CSOs were followed by the 2010 Guidelines for Civil Society in Development Policy. This viewed CSOs more broadly than as mere service providers. They are development policy partners for state development cooperation.
- Finland's Development Policy Programme 2012 was prepared based on extensive stakeholder meetings.

## 5. The status and role of civil society actors

### The opportunities for making a difference

Apart from party and financial stakeholders, there is a cluster of other groups, associations and movements that influence politics and try to impact society from within their own interest framework. For instance, a 2003 report on Finnish attitudes published by the Centre for Finnish Business and Policy Studies found that nearly a half of those surveyed thought that CSOs are more successful than political parties in communicating opinions to political decision-makers. The public considers CSOs to be important players, which are in part even seen as competing with political parties concerning the tasks of interest representation and mediation.<sup>109</sup> This reveals not only the value attached to CSOs but also the mistrust of political party activities.

People consider the third sector as a terrain where activity furthering the public good is often in concord with, and not in opposition to, the state. Christian values and social democratic thinking typified the second half of the 20th century in the Nordic context. The relationship between the state and civil society has been characterized more by cooperation and amalgamation than conflict and opposition. The CSO sector has been massively important as an ideological impetus for the Nordic welfare state and it is at least partly thanks to civil society pressure that the public sector has taken major responsibility for promoting welfare.<sup>110</sup>

CSOs are also able to exploit some of the positions taken in government.<sup>111</sup> When the finance ministry has emphasized the benefits to the domestic economy from development cooperation, a strong CSO terrain has been useful for those authorities and politicians whose remit and political agenda includes defending development cooperation.

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<sup>109</sup> Lattunen 2006

<sup>110</sup> Hintikainen 2011, 16

<sup>111</sup> Hintikainen 2011, 64

When we analyse in more detail the relationship between political participation and the media, we quite easily see that since the 1980s, late modern society has undergone a significant structural change impacting the culture of political participation. Such changes have influenced the acceleration of globalization, the mushrooming of the commercial media and the powerful spread of digital communications. New interactive media and communications have expanded the traditional landscape of one-way mass media. People are spending more time on communications, interpreting their globalized living environment via mass media, and are involved in generating media content themselves.<sup>112</sup>

It is also evident that the realities of the operating environment of the late modern period have impacted in such a way that visions of a uniform political media have become obsolete. Individualization and globalization have resulted in the emergence of more diverse political interests, disparate cultures and varied protagonists. The terrain for participation is getting more varied. It is increasingly difficult for common messages and large advocacy groups to concentrate on a single issue. Doing so may succeed only momentarily.

## The place of those interested in globalization

The whole arena of civil society activity is undergoing a profound transformation. These changes are also affecting the activity of civil society organizations and groups that work on global issues. Their advantages, compared to other civil society players, are the relatively stable foreign ministry financing of development work and global education, as well as the positive attitude of people in Finland towards global solidarity.

Government relations with CSOs working on global issues have changed as the role of civil so-

ciety and its activity has generally become more visible in society. Over the last decade there has increasingly been a shift from being formally listened to towards open dialogue, and government makes greater use of CSO expertise. The participation of CSO representatives in official Finnish delegations is a good reflection of this growing regard and genuine cooperation.

Autonomy and cooperation with the public sector are the distinguishing characteristics of Finnish civil society. Its strengths are the rootedness of values, solidarity and working together. Could these be exported in CSO development cooperation activity?

The understanding we gain from the history of Finnish civil society activity is that the nature of the origins of activity lies in each culture. Perhaps instead of 'exporting' it would be more relevant to discuss with Southern partners what sorts of civil society activity would add value to society? How could civil society in each country best reduce the rigidity of the state and austerity of the markets, as well as strengthen democracy? How could we best multiply social capital, networking, and increase confidence and the sharing of the common good? How could we build connections with the membership base of CSOs and in that way increase the representativeness of advocacy? These considerations are also needed in building Finnish civil society to make it more participatory and politicized.

In the global South no one can be satisfied with the state of local or national civil society activity. In a globalizing world, the Southern voice must be heard in the activities of global civil society. Participation requires both financial support and the strengthening of civil societies, so that the voices included in the global arena are grounded in reality and commonly agreed priorities.

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112 Häyhtiö 2010, 73



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# Finnish Civil Society Now

## Its operating environment, state and status

Finnish Civil Society Now is a concise and accessible account of Finnish civil society – its background, players, operating environment, relations with government, and future directions.

This study is particularly intended for Finnish CSOs that work with partners in the global South to strengthen civil society in their countries. But it is equally aimed at anyone generally interested in civil society in Finland.

Finnish Civil Society Now is a wide-ranging source of information on the added value and defining characteristics of Finnish civil society. It also deals with many of the problems that Finnish CSOs share with their Southern counterparts. These crucially concern the difficulty of ensuring genuine public involvement and of securing sufficient resources in order to function effectively.

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