Activation in Modern Governance
The case of the Finnish Civil Participation Policy Programme 2003-2007

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Abstract

This paper looks at the activation of civil society. By using the case of the Finnish Civil Participation Policy Programme 2003-2007 it analyses techniques of activation with respect to the empowerment of citizens. The three main techniques within the programme were fostering of formal electoral participation, civic education and systematic screening and dissemination of information. It is argued that these techniques constitute an approach that fits well the Finnish tradition of civic engagement but falls short of embracing a broader range of civic activities, in particular those that not only include fundamentally divergent views, conflictual action repertoires but also activities that are close to citizens' life-worlds.

Key words: Activation, Civic engagement, Civil society, Education, Finland, Governing, Information, Participation, Policy programme, Social movements.

Introduction

This paper discusses the activation of civic engagement in Finland by introducing the structure and focus of the Finish Civil Participation Policy Programme of the first Vanhanen government

that was in power between 2003 and 2007[1]. The outline of the programme together with the measures taken in its course are instructive for the "official reading" of civic engagement. Formal participation, civic education and the use of information are central in the attempt to activate civil society.

Civil society as the sphere between the state, the market and the family is a central concept to underpin modern democracy. It goes along with an understanding that not only rules but also aspects of political culture are relevant for the working of democracy. The Nordic countries have traditionally enjoyed an image of consensual democracies with low levels of conflict in the public sphere. In Finland this had earlier found its expression in a strong president and oversized coalition governments that included a broad range of actors. Changes in the basic law have led to a modification of these phenomena. An awareness of Finland's long standing democratic heritage with one of the oldest rights for general suffrage is central to the Finnish political culture. Participation and a commitment to an inclusive, egalitarian welfare policy are important values. This is deeply rooted in society and even political parties favouring market solutions are careful to assure their commitment to the welfare state. De-commodification of services remains a feature of the Finnish welfare state. Health care, social services and education are provided to a large extent by the public sector. But since the last decade third sector organisations and private firms play an increasing role in this field. This is underpinned by recent changes towards economic flexibility and a reorganisation of the public sector (Hämäläinen & Heiskala 2004). Civic engagement is embedded in this particular democratic culture and welfare arrangement.

[1] Hallituksen politiikkaohjelmat - kansalaisvaikuttaminen (2006) ULR: http://www.vn.fi/tietoarkisto/politiikkaohjelmat/kansalaisvaikuttaminen/ohjelma/fi.pdf (retrieved 11.6.2009)

Activity of citizens that emerges from and is directed towards civil society can take many forms. Civic engagement encompasses social, political and other forms of involvement. It is debated from different perspectives, for example in the context of democracy, welfare reform, nonprofit economy and community integration and as such has also come to the attention of politics (Hilger 2006).

In many countries activation is in the first place associated with the activation of welfare dependent persons to enter or re-enter into employment in order to contribute to ones own subsistence (Dean 1995; Drøpping et al. 1999). Benchmarking reports of the OECD and the European Union that compared levels of unemployment, relative size of the active workforce and regulating frameworks have been influential in shifting the approach across countries (Keskitalo & Mannila 2002, 198). This is part of a larger movement that tried to establish a third way beyond market and state centred governing. It is inspired by a strong scepticism towards the abilities of the state to solve current problems by way of intervention as it was common in Keynesian demand side politics. The Third Way-approach stresses "equal opportunity, personal responsibility and the mobilizing of citizens and communities" (Giddens 2000, 2). Instead of relying on big government citizens shall take responsibility and be given the opportunity to solve their problems themselves. This also includes an activation of the agencies of civil society.

As Nikolas Rose (1999, 168) notes, this policy creates a paradoxical relationship. Constituting a third space next to the public and the economic sphere civil society is often seen as a counterweight to the state and its bureaucratic apparatus. Activating citizens to govern themselves, however, does not install citizens as a counterweight. The state acts as the promoter of autonomous citizens not in order to enrich the life of citizens but to solve problems the state faces and cannot cope with. This paper

addresses the Finnish understanding of civic engagement along these two poles.

We will first review general developments in governing and civic engagement (section 2 and 3) before we turn to the Finnish citizen participation programme (section 4) and discuss three techniques applied within it (section 5). They are formal participation, civic education and the use of information. The article concludes with an evaluation of the Finnish Civil Participation Policy Programme (section 6).

Governmentality, rule and governance

The ideology critical perspective on power has usually focussed on hidden coercion in the workings of the state. Modern governments, however, try to use incentives instead of coercion in their repertoire of tools. Michel Foucault has proposed to closer investigate how, under conditions of autonomy of society, it is possible for governments to achieve certain effects in the population. He tried to analyse the art of government in its attempt to rule and administer society. This view is not necessarily limited to governments alone but encompasses the whole complex of societal institutions that have an impact on governing.

The avoidance of open coercion in liberal societies does not mean that coercion has ceased to exist. Even though the claim to freedom of the individual is constitutive for modern liberal governmentality only certain types of social conduct are accepted while others are not. Once certain types of knowledge are established this also effects the ways things are commonly done. In this sense, unwritten rules do the ruling. Liberalism still sees a necessity for governing the population, but it should not necessarily be the state that does the governing (Dean 2002, 42). Open coercion has been replaced by more subtle mechanisms. Modern techniques for the exercise of power make use of structures and agencies that are embedded within society.

The subjects of government are seen "as members of a population, as resources to be fostered, to be used and to be optimized" (Dean 1999, 20). Since it is the general goal of policy to bring about change in the behaviour of citizens this is not by itself a critical stance. The claim of the government for freedom and autonomy, however, is limited by the prevailing concepts of common sense about how individuals should run their lives. There are three major forms in which norms or practices generated outside the state are applied to substitute open steering by the state. These operations include less of traditional hierarchical steering but still enforce compliance with the rules of the game, most notably those of the market economy. They increase autonomy and at the same time "generate specific norms of individual and collective life" (Dean 2002, 40).

The first operation is the transfer of values and expectations of civil society to the state, the second is the application of market mechanisms to the operations of the public administration and the third is the use of agencies of civil society for governing (Dean 2002). These three operations are also central elements of the activating state approach. It is crucial to note the voluntary character of citizens' participation in this project (Cruikshank 1998, 147-148). For this to be possible the establishment of certain types of knowledge and, connected to it, prevailing ideas about truth are highly significant. It is through the way the social world is interpreted and explained that inferences about certain routes of action are supported and legitimised.

Obligations, public management and governance

A central element in the concept of the activation state is the idea that citizens are activated and enabled to take care for their own affairs. This is accompanied by emphasising a balance between rights, in particular entitlements to social welfare, and obligations. Obligations are justified formally as being the flip side

of the coins that make the system work. They are also grounded in an ancient principle of social conduct. Citizenship includes obedience of the law and respect of other person's rights. This view stresses obligations of those who are able to work for their own subsistence, take care for one's children and so forth.

Another crucial development is the reform of public management. Formerly, professional bureaucracy was promoted as the most rational way to govern society. Fiscal crisis and limitations of steering capacity in the face of demand in our more complex societies were among the reasons to call for a new approach. One answer was a partial privatisation and marketisation of the public sector. New Public Management introduced market-like processes and criteria into public administration. It emphasises efficiency, flexibility, minimising the state and the quantification of outcomes to benchmark them. This type of public sector reform creates a tension to fundamental principles of state activity such as legitimate procedures, equal treatment of citizens, reliability and the provision of crucial services.

A related means to enhance the problem-solving capacity and effectiveness of governments is informalisation. The notion of governance is commonly understood as the inclusion of a wide range of (non-political) actors into the process of political decision making. Governance has been introduced as a concept to unfocus steering from government alone. A central element is steering through a variety of parties beyond government, who are connected through network relations where roles are contingent and not formally legitimised. The role of government is increasingly understood as setting directions while the fulfilment of tangible tasks is left to other parties. This is often seen as providing for an increased role for citizens and their associations.

While some claim that such a practice increases efficiency and offers the state opportunities to regain steering capacity others argue that it weakens accountability and violates political equality (Greven 2005, 267). These critics argue that formal bodies and

legal procedures better guarantee influence for those weakly equipped with political, economical or social power. Stoker (1998, 21) notes that governance "push[es] responsibilities onto the private and voluntary sectors and, more broadly, the citizen." Therefore it is disputable whether socio-political governance which not only includes corporate actors but also tries to activate the population (Kooiman & van Vliet 1993), really increases opportunities for citizens to influence decision making, or even, whether that is intended at all.

Consequently, citizen's activity has moved into the focus of government. One result is the establishment of programmes to foster engagement of citizens. In the following two sections we will first take a brief look at some characteristics of civil society in Finland in order to get an understanding of the background of citizens' activity and then turn to the governmental programme that tries to influence citizens' engagement. Together both will enable us to evaluate whether the programme results in an empowerment of citizens or continues a tradition of citizens' use as a resource.

Civic engagement in Finland

Civic engagement is one out of numerous notions to refer to civil society and its activities. Citizens cannot be coerced into civic activity since it is intrinsically voluntary and thus requires a conscious decision. Part of the motivation can be an expectation of personal gains but it is not done for return on investment and personal material gain alone. It embodies a contribution to the common good. Its activities take place among people outside the private sphere of the family and are usually carried out with or in relation to others. In that sense it is often collective and co-operative. Important forms of civic engagement are associations, social movements, internet participation and volunteering.

Associations of the third sector are sometimes seen as an independent realm next to the public and the private business sector. In practice, even in liberal countries, the third sector is interconnected to the state and even to business. The third sector anticipates and reacts to needs arising in society, but it fulfils its tasks often in close cooperation with the public sector. While the public sector may set targets and provides for funding the third sector delivers tangible services. In recent years this mode of pubic private partnership has been introduced into the Finnish welfare state and became part of public management reform.

Structures of the third sector have existed throughout history. But during the crisis of the early 1990s the third sector received new interest in the context of self-help, service provision and as an employer. Two aspects have been of particular importance. Associations of the third sector were discussed as providers of those services the welfare state would no longer afford or deliver itself. The sector was also seen as a possible employer to compensate for a share of workplaces lost during the depression. From an initially supplementary role the sector has acquired increasing prominence in recent years (Matthies 2000, 213). The cooperative character of the third sector produces a tension between an advocatory role in amplifying citizen's interests and its role as a service producer.

Finland has seen several waves of social movements starting with those involved in nation-building in the late 19th century. The 1930s saw semi-facist movements; and a radical left-wing movement emerged after WW 2 (Siisiäinen, 1992, 22-24). The late 1960s gave rise to a new radical movement, partly fuelled by students, before in the late 1970s strong environmental movements emerged. One decade later prominent issues were the protection of forests and squatting of empty houses. More recent issues have been animal rights activists in the 1990s. The latter movements involved between a dozen up to a hundred persons (Siisiäinen 1998, 229-232) and continue to mobilize citizens. At the

turn of the millennium also a larger globalization critical movement appeared (Lindholm, 2005, 36).

Although social movements emerge out of conflicts on particular issues, their trajectory in Finland is usually consensual (see for the following Siisiäinen 1998, 222-227, 238). While earlier the class structure between the political left and right has been dominant, the 1980s introduced the middle classes and students as main actors in protest events which are often based on educated social milieus. Protests are oriented towards the state and increasingly towards the media. Protests usually avoid conflict with officials, and, except for a few instances, private property is respected and preserved. Social movements rarely develop spontaneous activities. There is a strong membership culture characterized by a tendency to register citizen groups as formal associations. Protests are presented as a rational way to communicate interests, less as a way to represent identities by means of play.

The particular form of demonstrations is not rare in bigger cities, although many of them are small. In Helsinki there are usually somewhat below one hundred registered protest events every year[2]. Risto Alapuro (2005, 394-95) interprets the Finnish pattern of social movements as solidarity based on mandate instead of visibility of actors themselves. People have "more direct links to the attention of political decision-makers" (Pesonen & Riihinen 2002, 110). Representatives are close to the people, for example many members of parliament at the same time serve on municipal councils. Parliamentarians are easily invited to speak even to small groups of demonstrators in front of the parliament during sessions or they participate in debates of grass roots groups. The country has also seen huge mobilisation, for example in the course of the USA-Iraqi war in 2003.

[2] In 2005 the number of protest events was exceptionally high (Metro/STT 9.10.2006).

In recent years classical street demonstrations have been complemented by internet based protest. These include networks that exchange information and citizen petitions that can be signed on the web. Besides information, networking and mobilisation internet forums are virtual meeting places where people exchange, support and enforce opinions (Häyhtiö & Rinne 2006). It is more and more common to give one's opinion in chat-rooms or web-discussions. Also the classical letter to the editor has re-emerged on the web with an enormous intensity. Every day the main Finnish newspaper receives hundreds of electronic commentaries, in particular when issues are contested. Email lists are increasingly used to prepare meetings, organise demonstration and deliver petitions.

Protests of the unemployed are situated within the framework of traditional associations (Alapuro 2005). Street protest is more common on human rights issues whereas protest connected to welfare services takes more often place among experts who act as watch-dogs and use the web to coordinate themselves. Activists constitute overlapping circles that involve a core of persons concerned about public services. Members and contributors are often based at separate organisations, e.g. trade unions or associations. Such a network is itself connected to other networks. It distributes information and discusses interpretations of political developments and eventually mobilises for protest activities.

Volunteering probably constitutes the least formalised form of engagement. Volunteering and activity in association in welfare related fields are well appreciated. They are considered to contribute to the common good and bring people in contact to each other. Both self-oriented and other-oriented motives play a role (Nylund 2000, 123) in volunteering which involves more than one third of the population (Yeung 2004, 89-90). Volunteering is largest in the field of culture and recreation. The second largest field is civic activity including local interest organisations, consumer and patient organisations as well as political

organisations outside political parties (Helander & Laaksonen 1999, 54).

Although these forms of engagement bear a potential for resistance, they also fit smoothly into the idea of society steering itself. They are an expression of social conduct that takes responsibility for usefulness. As a general rule, not opinions as such are seen as legitimate but rather opinions loaded with societal benefit. Civic engagement is appreciated foremost when it reduces social distress (Julkunen 2000, 66). One can conclude that that in Finland there is a rich history of civic engagement which is usually well accepted as long as it takes a constructive form.

The Finnish government's approach to civic engagement

Politics on engagement have rarely been researched, mostly with respect to policy formulation only (Kendall 2000). Since engagement policy does not constitute a policy field of its own there is usually no single department in government to deal with these issues (Hilger 2007, 153). The Finnish approach consists of measures centred on a cross department policy programme.

The creation of this specific policy programme was based on perceived negative developments in civil society. Reviewers of Finnish civil society noted that civic skills and abilities for dialogue had decreased in recent years. Lack of public debate is a known feature of Finnish civil society, partly as a consequence of social homogeneity. Other current problems were a decreasing turnout at elections. The former minister of Justice, Leena Luhtanen [3], responsible for the Civil Participation Policy Programme, warned that membership in political parties, associations and participation in daily affairs was not satisfactory. This added to down going trust into societal institutions and elected representatives. As a result,

[3] Leena Luhtanen, Minister of Justice, speech delivered at the seminar on the knowledgebase for democracy (demokratian tietopohja), Helsinki, 17.3.2006.

citizens experienced power as remote and did not feel to have much influence on decision-making. Against the background of Finland's democratic tradition, the important dimension of municipal self-governing and the widespread involvement in civic associations these developments called for intervention.

The period of growth that followed the depression of the 1990s had focussed on technology and innovation but in the new millennium the Jäätteenmäki government had put the welfare state back on the agenda (Kantola 2004, 87). Furthermore, it also established a specific programme on participation. This was adopted as one out of four priorities when the government took office in June 2003. The aim of the programme was to activate participation on various levels. It operated with the general notion of citizen influence (*kansalaisvaikuttaminen*) and civic activity (*kansalaistoiminta*), both broader than the concept of (political) participation (*osallistuminen*).

The programme was coordinated by the Ministry of Justice. Co-operating partners were the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Education with a focus on civic education. Further, the Ministry of the Interior brought in an interest in municipal democracy, the working of municipal trustees and elected officials. The governmental programme provided for basic funding for coordinating purposes. The projects under its coordination themselves were financed by the respective ministries. They were also responsible for carrying out the projects (Niemelä 2005, 23-24).

To realise the goal of enhancing participation the government used a number of well-known measures (Hilger 2008, 184). Legal measures were the preparation of changes in the electoral system, referenda and changes in the position of municipal representatives. Another type of measures were financial support for projects mainly to collect information about civic activity, and, to a certain extent, also to prepare new web-based platforms for participation. Projects were financed to research indicators of participation, the

inclusion of youth and educational practices. But the range was not limited to the repertoire of hierarchy and money. It also included symbolic measures like publications, discussions, dissemination seminars to communicate results of the studies conducted under the coordination of the ministry. Further, political speeches of ministerial staff and the dissemination of information in brochures, reports and on websites were important. These activities presented facts in the frame of an official interpretation of the current state of participation. Finally, organisational measures consisted of direct activities of the state. The state itself established new entities that worked on the enhancement of engagement. Examples were the establishment of workgroups, committees and web-portals to produce and disseminate information. These included web based portals for democratic communication, committees on civil society and representative democracy, the preparation of a portfolio for democracy within the Ministry of Justice as well as research efforts to monitor the development of democracy in Finland. A number of projects were carried out by staff of one or more ministries who reorganized themselves by forming thematic workgroups for a given period.

Altogether, the policy programme was a step towards a more centralised activation of engagement. The concept of civic engagement that was presented here is centred around legal participation in established channels supported by a general sense for civilisation and education and supplemented by the gathering and distribution of information. Projects to experiment with new forms of involvement were only minor elements of the programme although there were few projects aiming at participation via the internet. They provided for information on the state of civic activism, web-based portals to encourage participation and the provision of information that could enhance participation. Next, we will take a closer look at the programme's three main techniques of activation, namely formal participation, education and information.

Techniques of activation

If we ask for the rationality of activation it is crucial to understand the working of the activation programme. Governments have long reacted to citizen engagement with scepticism. Often they have tried to repress movements by applying law, police, counter movements or □ nderpinned□ ng them through labelling. They have also tried to co-optate movements or integrated engaged citizens' causes by adapting the political system to realise these goals, as it has happened with environmental concerns. The measures of the citizen participation programme relate to three techniques of governing. These techniques can be used to activate citizens for its own sake but they could also be seen as a way to govern the population.

Formal participation

Legal measures envisaged were closely related to electoral processes. They structure the allocation of individual will to produce lists of preferences among citizens. Voter turnout in elections is the basis of legitimacy in pluralist democracies. They are complemented by referenda that provide for additional input on preferences on particular issues. The conception of engagement we find evaluates such electoral participation highly. It gives rise to a formalistic understanding of democracy. This is not to criticise formal participation as such. However, a vivid version of democracy has to face the fact that elections are only a mechanism to make democracy work on a very basic level. All debates in modern democratic theory go beyond a formal understanding and address the issue of involvement in other forms of collective regulation of interest. The concept of civil society as it saw a revival in the past two decades rests on the assumption that beyond elections other forms of involvement in associations, demonstrations and self-organised platforms are needed.

Another element is important for the constitution and formulation of Finnish activation policies. Benchmarking reports on civic knowledge and citizen involvement created concern that fostered the programme on citizen participation [4]. The establishment of the programme is not merely an expression of concern for the state of democracy; it is also an attempt to improve reputation. Finland is ranked highly in international comparative studies on democracy. Among other democratic standards this means reliability of legal public procedures, freedom of expression and association. From the government's point of view this is an asset vis-à-vis the population (and foreign powers) that increases leverage to act. This is supported by recourse on the democratic tradition which is central for the production and maintaining of Finnish identity. For example the 2007 centennial anniversary celebrations of the parliament and the right for general suffrage, including that for women, underpinned a central pillar of this identity.

One might, however, worry that the concern for reputation outweighs concern for inclusion. This is supported by recent developments in the public sphere. There is a thin line between participation and expression. Participation is a solid concept that has the governmental process of decision making as its object. Often the expression of own world views are a first step to involvement. Recent protest events in Finland had the intensity to dramatise civic action. In their course, however, citizen engagement got a bad name. Animal liberation activists who in the 1990s freed animals from fur farms were an exceptionally radical movement and got labelled as "eco-terrorists".

Even more significant, after a "Euro-May-Day" demonstration on April 30th 2006 bottles and stones were thrown at officers while a fire brigade and the police were trying to close a

[4] Head of the Programme Seppo Niemelä at the Seminar on the information base of democracy (Demokratian tietopohja-seminaari, 17.3.2006, Helsinki, Ministry of Justice, Säätytalo).

fire in a yard. This was perceived as a dramatic change in the form of public protest. It remained unclear whether the aggression had a political ground connected to a demonstration earlier the same day. It can also be seen as the outcome of traditional "Finnish craziness" [5] on the eve of May Day where usually alcohol is involved. To much surprise, a few days later almost the whole building, a symbolic store house that was due to be torn down in the week to come, burned down in a spectacular fire. Many saw an immediate connection to the earlier incident.

The debate that emerged is telling for the interpretation of civic activity. A new rise of activism was foreseen and it was suggested that violent models of contentious action are spreading to Finland. The most general effect was probably that the notion of civic activity received a negative connotation along the lines of: If that is what citizens do when they are active, we don't need this![6] The event also triggered a harsh course of the police towards demonstrators a few months later. In the course of a demonstration ("Smash Asem") on occasion of an EU-Asem meeting in Finland in September 2006 a large number of people was arrested albeit the demonstration had hardly started and did not take a violent form. Remarkable was the reaction of the Minister of the Interior and the head of the police who appreciated the arrest of 134 persons of whom a considerable fraction were only bystanders.

Such suspicion towards spontaneous action fuelled reference to established channels. Both incidents show some difficulty in accepting engagement of persons who represent difference. In the wake of these events also the "precariat-movement" that criticises a competitive and coercive labour market was de-legitimised. Angriness was projected on the organisers of their demonstration

[5] I am grateful for this notion to Dr Henrik Stenius (University of Helsinki, Centre for Nordic Studies), Interview on 6.9.2005.

[6] See different articles that appeard in Helsingin Sanomat after the incident, in particular: Miska Rantanen: Kriisipalaverin paikka, Sunday 7.5.2006.

that called the dominant lifestyle in question. At the same time also this particular form of expression of interests was de-legitimized. A coordinated process of gathering policy preferences is clearly preferred to a self-organising and spontaneous formation of interests. The ballot, as it is promoted by the policy programme, is an individualised activity that does not account for the social setting in which political decisions acquire relevance. It assumes an ideal speech situation with options that are not available in the real world. Electoral participation, as important as it is, is not sufficient to foster involvement according to modern conceptions of democracy.

Education

A second important element of activation was education. Civic education was seen as the key to civic engagement. It includes knowledge about political matters and structures but it goes far beyond that. Civic and political skills of dispute and debate as well as cooperation and conflict are crucial elements of a political sphere which is inclusive of citizens. Education produces knowledge. Historically it has been connected to obtaining skills that enable the population to use their labour force efficiently. It also helps integrate the community into a common pattern of thinking. The development of schooling, paradigmatically portrayed in the novel the Seven Brothers by the Finnish classical writer Alexis Kivi, was closely embedded in local parishes of the church. Foucault has analysed this as the pastoral power to shape patterns of thinking. Education in this sense not only serves the provision of information and problem solving capacity. It includes socialization into a style of behaviour, for example respect for the rhythm of industrial time instead of the agrarian daily cycle. It also includes the creation of a larger community and its construction as a sphere of common interests. The latter was emphasized in civic education. It directs attention away from individual interests

towards a concern for the community. This goes along with a non-conflictual image of civil society, a sphere, however, that in a pluralistic and heterogeneous society does not form a unity of similar interests.

Civic education includes tangible information about institutions, but it first of all refers to the rules of conduct in the public sphere. Teaching dispute and tolerance for difference, however, runs empty when a "non-event" like the afore mentioned "Smash Asem"-demonstration is used by the state to define and underpin norms of conformity in the public sphere. What remains is an action repertoire defined by those already in power. Education is both enlightening and disciplining. The potential of certain forms of expression is not well understood in the approach of the Civil Participation Policy Programme. This leads to the third point, the public use of information.

The public use of information

The civil participation programme also intended to monitor the state of democracy by using a large number of indicators. The selection of the indicators defined the scope of what counts as citizen engagement. A proposal for an index of democracy included (Borg 2006, 335-342):

- Electoral democracy: turnout, experienced influence, relation to political parties.
- Social capital: interaction with politicians and administration, knowledge about politics, participation in (electronic) forums of decision making.
- Associations: information about registered associations and citizens' views on associations.
- Attitudes: views of own identity as a citizen and attitudes towards political institutions and actors.
- Information: technical resources and the provision of opportunities to use different kinds of media.

- Institutions: opportunities for civic education, participation of youth, climate of participation in organisations, forms of participation in local democracy.
- Democracy and equal rights: information on social structure in different forms of participation.

These indicators ought to be traced through register data and surveys. They should produce a fairly encompassing knowledge about the state of participation. Gathering of information is a precondition for steering. On the condition of an analysis based on acknowledged facts, measures for improvement can easier be applied and justified.

Foucault's reasoning about discipline strongly rests on the establishment of statistics as a key science. This is a well known exercise in social regulation. The population is analysed according to gender, birth rates, illnesses, and so forth. The civil participation programme adds political indicators to this body of information.

Information works in two directions. Government transmits information to citizens. In critical cases this has been analysed as propaganda, but it is fundamental in every government's striving to disseminate opinions, plans and facts. More innovative is the other direction, the collection of input of citizens through different platforms. These can be used to equip the government and the administration with information about the range of preferences and topical points as well as for criticising the government. Thus, there are two sides to information, control and enlightenment.

Citizens today widely use internet forums of newspapers such as Helsingin Sanomat to express their views. To a much lesser extent they use official channels provided by cities or those that have been established by the Civil Participation Policy Programme. The latter are remote from daily life. The formal interest in democracy as it was advocated in the Finnish policy programme falls short of a connection to citizens' life worlds. Citizens participate when and where issues are on the table, not to satisfy formal requirements of a democratic system.

Conclusions

The three central techniques applied in the Citizen Participation Policy Programme are formal participation, education as well as screening for and the dissemination of information. Voting, the formation of associations and feedback in channels through the internet mainly work as input channels that do not expose the government to intensive scrutiny and debate. Education provides for knowledge about these formal channels. It trains citizens to understand the processes involved and to make use of information in order to give input into the system of decision-making. Education of citizens also ensures the diffusion of accepted norms of rights and duties connected to citizenship. Finally, information provides the authorities with an instrument to monitor the state of participation and prepare intervention when it seems necessary. These measures rest on the assumption of a rationalized mode of expression. Action taken by the Finnish government enforces this model that, on first sight, suits well the tradition of civic engagement in Finland.

Participation is often sketched as rational communication of arguments and interests. However, actual instances of participation, e.g. in citizen forums or demonstrations, often do not conform to this model of speaking. People present their interests and opinions in idiosyncratic or even irrational ways. Iris Marion Young (2000) has criticised the Habermasian model of rational argumentation with a convincing argument. As a moral standard Habermas' model is applicable only when we consider certain types of speech, namely unconstrained, open and sincere argumentation. Young points out that there are other forms of expression which are also widespread and significant. For an inclusive model of democracy these forms have to be regarded in order to assure that speakers who are not socialised and trained in the model of rational speech get access to public deliberation. The difficulty is to find ways to take this type of contribution serious as

a form of participation. This is not an easy task because of the large gap between rational argument and idiosyncratic speech. The rational argument style is based on the assumption that there is an orientation towards the common good. Idiosyncratic speech by definition is oriented towards own interests and can as such not be generalized.

The Finnish civic sector is mostly characterized by a rational way of argumentation. Its cooperative trajectory brings it into close relation to the state. An independent sector, however, always bears the potential to develop adversary tendencies. In order to be credible, activation cannot take a peaceful trajectory for granted, but has to allow for leverage. Fostering only formal participation results in disregard of spontaneity.

There are a number of reasons why the activation of engagement can be in the interest of governments. Engaged citizens solve problems themselves by producing services. They allow for better decisions by contributing relevant points to decision-making. Inclusion of citizens also produces more legitimate decisions, lacking participation therefore can be interpreted as a quiet form of protest and withdrawal. And ultimately there is the freedom not to participate, the freedom not be a "good citizen" who fulfils his civic duty. The role of government is to create order while the political consists of conflict and creates disorder (Pekonen 2006). Since active citizens cannot be controlled completely, they always bear a potential for resistance.

The general concept of citizen engagement also rests on the assumption that not only involvement in common affairs but also altruism and social contact are relevant goals for the active. Against this background it is notable that forms of engagement in welfare related fields are not considered in the Finnish Civil Participation Policy Programme. More than the political sphere proper, which always only includes a small fragment of the population, the broad realm of engagement in social, cultural, environmental and other

fields bears potential for participation. This tradition of social volunteering seems to have no connection to the wider discourse of civic activism. There are two Finnish ministries that are concerned with social and health affairs, but none of them was included in the policy programme. While participation in fact is about shaping one's own social environment, involvement as it is presented in the Civil Participation Programme focuses on structures of explicitly political and representational participation. The rationality of the programme was to provide for information on how to participate, not to enhance participation where it generates in a basal form.

Participation can be fostered in two directions. Deepening participation would refer to the inclusion of more vertical levels of society into the process of political decision making. Not only formal institutions but also informal bodies and associations of citizens were to be included into this process. Broadening participation would refer to the involvement of citizens in fields beyond what is commonly understood as the institutional core of politics. This latter approach is particularly relevant with regard to civic engagement. As a concept that goes beyond political engagement it offers a way to realize participation in fields that are commonly not seen as areas for collective decision making. But also in these spheres tangible societal relations and conditions of citizens' life-worlds are being shaped.

What effective participation needs most are issues; conflictual fields where something is at stake. The serious impression that participation could make a difference is an enormous motivator. This is probably more easily to achieve in fields near to life-world contexts than in high politics. While citizen activity and civic engagement are concepts that embrace activities ranging from political participation and cultural engagement to social help, activation politics do not reflect this scope yet. As long as participation is conceptualized in a narrow way, the resource view is prone to prevail over the empowerment perspective.

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