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**Governance of Volunteers in  
Municipalities: Institutional differences  
and similarities between Italy and  
Sweden\***

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### ABSTRACT

The paper is investigating invariant factors and the possible institutional variance produced by differences between countries, that impede or stimulate the utilisation of voluntary labour in municipalities, using data from one Italian and one Swedish municipality. Our major findings are 1. that the major invariant factor is that the uncertainty of the voluntary labour stimulates the mediation of it through organisations, and 2. that the institutional variance is influenced by the state actions.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The state of western societies has been facing a resource crisis ever since the '70s, and a decrease in social and democratic legitimacy. At the same time, social and economic changes have brought about an increased acceptance of the work of non profit organisations in general and voluntary work in specific. One obvious part of a solution to the state crisis would simply be to increase the utilisation of these resources, especially the use of volunteers, since they offer low cost resources, and a public engagement, thus increasing the democratic legitimacy.

The voluntary sector does not, however, appear to offer a solution. Its impact is rather low and its magnitude is of a rather modest level. The non-profit sector, which the voluntary sector is a sub-area of, accounts for 2,0% of the Gross National Product in Italy, 4,1% in Sweden, 3,6% in Germany and 3,3% in France. Considering the low level, given the possibility of the sector to offer a solution to the state problems of today, there is a need to understand the moderate engagement of non-profit organisations and voluntary work, and thereby finding possible ventures to actions.

The knowledge about the utilisation of volunteers in government agencies and municipalities are, however, very limited. According to the authors knowledge, only one study has been presented, with the findings that volunteers tend to cluster in specific areas of public service, and that volunteers tend to be more used by agencies with greater resources, than with less resources (Brudney, 2000).

We argue that in order to develop the understanding of volunteers and their utilisation, the problem of utilisation of volunteers could be treated as a corporate governance problem, implying the governance of the border of an organisation. In this perspective, to engage a volunteer or a voluntary organisation in the production of a municipal service is a matter of the municipality's capacity and

interest to utilise the resource of volunteers. Thus, we have to investigate the factors that stimulate or prevent an organisation from resource utilisation.

The capacity and interest of an organisation to utilise a resource has been explained by principles of governance, for example, transaction cost minimisation (Williamson, 1996) and resource dependency (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). They tend, however, to deal exclusively with market induced input factors, such as hired labour and with factors treated in an institutionally invariant manner.

Voluntary labour and voluntary organisations are, however, induced by both market failure and government failure. They establish themselves outside the market, offering a service without price, and complementing or supplementing municipal service. Thus, volunteers and the utilisation of volunteers can hardly be explained by these theories without theoretical development that consider the specificity of the voluntary resource.

Governance of organisations cannot, however, be fully understood without considering the variance of factors due to institutional differences. To consider institutional differences when explaining utilisation of volunteers offers 1.) theory the opportunity to give a more complete explanation, and, 2.) praxis the opportunity to consider those factors that could be subject to management action and those that are given and thus unmanageable for a single entity. We trace the institutional factors through our empirical method of a comparative case study, using one case from Sweden and one from Italy, thus maximising certain important institutional dimensions, while at the same time minimising some situational dimensions, in order to be able to focus on institutional variance.

The aim is to find factors that can explain the utilisation of volunteers and voluntary organisations in municipal organisations, using the perspective of governance, and combining factors that are

institutional invariant and institutional factors. We develop the explanation through developing a set of hypothesis that was initially deduced to explain utilisation of volunteers without any institutional impact. These hypotheses create the conceptual basis for a survey and they structure an interview guide, which were used in order to collect data in two cases studies, one from Ferrara in Italy and one from Lund in Sweden. Through a confrontation between the hypotheses and a comparison with the two cases, we find those factors that appear to be institutionally invariant and those that are influenced by the institutional milieu. With this research we contribute specifically with an extension of the knowledge of the utilisation of volunteers in government agencies, and in general, we emphasise the institutional view in corporate governance.

The paper presents first a set of hypotheses that pinpoints the factors that hamper or stimulate the use of volunteers in municipal organisations. The following method section describes how this theory has been used to structure the survey and interview guidelines to gather data from two municipalities. The third section analyses the Italian and Swedish context and the data gathered in the two case studies. Lastly, we conclude with our findings and their implications.

## **2. THE MODEL PREDICTING THE MAGNITUDE OF VOLUNTARY ACTIVITY IN MUNICIPALITIES**

Corporate governance deals with those mechanisms that shape the corporation and influence the firm. Theories of corporate governance have been focused on organisations located in a market environment (e.g. Jensen and Meckling, 1976; Williamson, 1996), the organisations being externally governed by market exchange, and internally by hierarchical exchange. We deal with voluntary labour, which is defined as a resource lacking market price, since it has no financial reward, and being outside the realm of hierarchical control, since volunteers have the right to withdraw unilaterally

from the work. Thus, we are facing a governance problem of a resource that on one side would be expected to be very frequent in use, due to it being a resource without a market price, and on the other hand, would be avoided due to the impossibility of controlling it in the organisation. However, additional mechanisms influence these contrasting factors, making it costly to use volunteers or making volunteers controllable. Thus, there are sets of mechanisms that influence the magnitude of use of volunteers in municipal operations.

The aim of this section is to present a governance model that reveals the important mechanisms influencing the magnitude of voluntary labour. It is a development of an earlier presented model of concurrence between voluntary and municipal actions (Hellström & Collin, 1999). The new model focus on the demand side of voluntary labour, and is based on the dichotomy between the impeding factor of control and the prospectus factor of resource without market price, with the addition of the influence of social values.

The supply of individuals as volunteers is assumed as invariant. This is a severe simplification since individuals vary in their intensity to engage in voluntary labour. It has been showed that individuals tend to increase their activity if they belong to a society with high social cohesion (Corbin, 1999). Individuals tend to increase their engagement if the service provided by the individual can be utilised by the individual or the individuals family, though in a diluted way, such as parents walking the streets at night in order to reduce the level of aggression between youngsters, their own included. Thus, the individual's life situation and the individual's internal factors influence the propensity for the individual to be part of the supply of voluntary labour (Grassman & Jeppsson, 1997). We delimit our study, assuming invariant tendency towards volunteering, in order to reduce the variables studied.

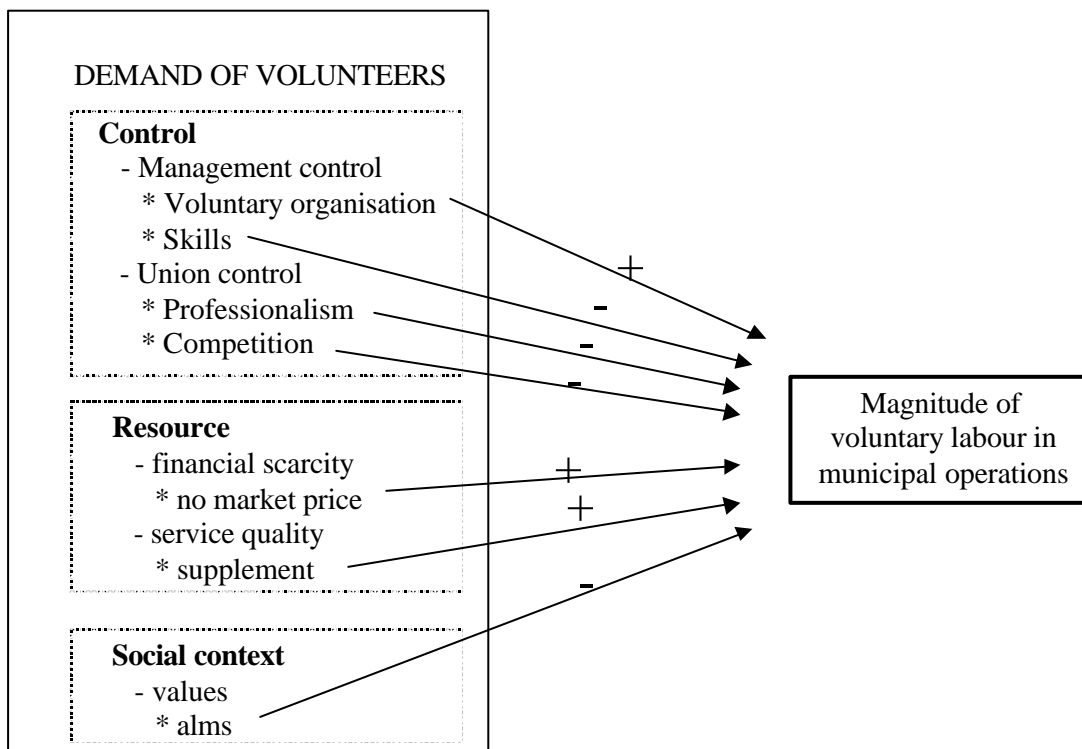
An overview of the hypotheses is presented in figure 1. The magnitude of voluntary activity, i.e. the utilisation of voluntary activities in a municipality, is hypothesised to be influenced by

A.) Control considerations, where the existence of voluntary organisations with the capacity to make the supply of volunteers less uncertain is a stimulating factor, but the unpredictability of volunteers skills are an impeding factor.

B.) Resource considerations, where the absence of market price is a stimulating factor in case of strained financial resources, but the costs of organising the volunteers because of their uncertain character is an impeding factor. Additionally, the use is stimulated by the volunteer's capacity, due to its high variety, to create a supplementary service.

C.) Social context, which influence through being an impediment when based in a society that have the opinion that volunteers are producing alms.

**Figure 1**  
**Hypotheses predicting the magnitude of voluntary activity in municipalities**



## Control

Transaction cost theory (Coase, 1937; Williamson, 1996) argues that firms are organised in order to handle uncertainty, especially in the operating core (as argued by Thompson, 1967) which is accomplished through open-ended contract with labour, giving the employer control over labour through fiat (Hart, 1995).

Voluntary activity, in contrast, is of non-contractual nature. While the salaried worker has agreed on giving up a certain degree of freedom, accepting fiat, the voluntary worker has not abandon its freedom. The prefix, voluntary, is opposed to fiat. No penalty, no sanctions, except exclusion from the operation, can be levelled against the voluntary worker. Thus, the effort made by a voluntary worker is uncertain. In order to protect the operating core from the uncertainty in effort, the core operations of municipalities can be expected to avoid using voluntary workers. Hence, we hypothesise

$H_{C1}$ . Voluntary activity will be less in the operating core of the municipality than in peripheral operations.

The hypothesis can be more specific if we notice that voluntary work can add to the output of the municipal operation in three different kinds: Additive production, i.e., producing the same service or product as the municipality does and adding it to the supply of the municipality. Substitutive production, i.e., producing a service or product that will replace a service or product produced by the municipality. Complementary production, i.e., producing a product or service that is not produced by the municipality, but adds to the variety. Hypothesis  $H_{E1}$  states that operations of considerable importance for the municipality tend to avoid volunteers. This statement does, however,

assume that the volunteers influence the core operation. If, however, the activities do not influence the core operations, they introduce no risk of production failure or even unpredictable variation in the production. The category of voluntary activities that can be assumed to influence core operations the least is the complementary production since it only adds variety. Thus, we hypothesise that complementary production moderates our first hypothesis. This can be expressed in different ways, but we prefer the general statement that of the three categories of production, complementary production is the most frequent type since it can even be accepted at the operation core of the municipality. Hence, we hypothesise:

$H_{c2}$ . Complementary production is positively correlated with the magnitude of voluntary activity.

The relationship between the magnitude of voluntary activity and the municipality can, however, be moderated by the existence of a voluntary organisation. A voluntary organisation has the capacity to create a more predictable supply of voluntary activity, thus inducing the municipality to use the service provided by the organisation instead of individual volunteers. Voluntary organisations must guarantee their future presence and constancy in efforts. Those that are able to demonstrate it have higher possibility to be preferred by a municipality. An organisation that is not able to cope with the planned commitments will hardly keep the local government's trust as well as the social legitimisation (Comolli & Garbagnati, 1994).

Voluntary organisations have the capacity to create certainty in supply because they can store voluntary labour, they distribute status and create loyalty, and finally, they try to survive. The voluntary organisation store voluntary labour through their capacity to attract and rebundle voluntary labour. Voluntary organisations perform a function similar to the intermediate function performed by wholesalers, collecting a diverse supply of volunteers and distributing it in different bundles of



services dependent upon the demands of the retailer (Stern & El-Ansary, 1992), which in this case is the municipality. Since by the very nature of voluntary labour it is impossible to create a predictable supply of it, the organisation need to have access to more labour than needed, i.e., it needs to store voluntary slack which can be canalised when demand arises. A municipality could perform the same function, since it is quite possible for a retailer to act as a wholesaler. But what the municipality cannot offer is the status of being engaged in a voluntary organisation. The capacity to contain the status of volunteering is probably an important resource of volunteer organisations.

Additionally, the voluntary organisation can use the members feeling of loyalty in their production of certainty. As Gramlich (1987) puts it, that without formal organisations each individual tends to 'wash his/her hand'. Organisations, then, stimulate the engagement of individuals in voluntary activities. It can be assumed that a voluntary organisation has the capacity to create an incentive that stimulates the volunteer to higher efforts. This incentive is the feeling of loyalty towards the organisation. A voluntary organisation can do the same as the municipality, both organisations can appeal to persons with the argument that the labour is needed in society. The voluntary organisation can add another appeal, that the labour is needed in the organisation. Since it can be assumed that the sense of loyalty is higher towards an organisation which the member has chosen freely, the voluntary organisation can make use of a higher degree of loyalty, and thus create a larger voluntary slack.

Finally, the organisation has the instinct of survival, which the individual lacks as a volunteer. The municipality could subsidise the organisation through assuming their rents, giving them financial aid, or assist with other economic resources. The organisation consumes the resources and thus becomes dependent on them, which induces the organisation to supply the municipality with voluntary labour in

order to get the resources and thereby survive. Thus, the organisation could be dependent upon offering a certain level of voluntary activity to the municipality in order to survive.

These reasons for a predictable supply of voluntary labour produced by voluntary organisations add up to the following hypothesis:

H<sub>c3</sub>. The mediation of voluntary activity through voluntary organisations is positively correlated with the magnitude of voluntary activity in municipal operations.

We conclude that voluntary work is preferred in complementary production, but that it can reach closer to the core of the municipality if intermediated by an organisation.

The voluntary organisation can reduce uncertainty in another dimensions as well. Since voluntary labour cannot be extracted with help of regular incentives, the common way of fitting skills and competence with work positions is not accessible for a receiving organisation. They get what they get, due to the person's incentives to engage in voluntary activity. This creates a situation where there is an undifferentiated labour supply, not only in efforts, but also in skills. A rational response is to allocate the undifferentiated labour to work positions where there is no demand of specialised skills and competencies. Thus, in general we hypothesise that:

H<sub>c4</sub>. Unskilled work is positively correlated with the magnitude of voluntary activity in municipal operations.

A voluntary organisation can, however, bundle the volunteers and create a package of service to the municipality. The voluntary organisation can monitor the skills of the volunteers, and even develop them. Thus, the intermediating voluntary organisation absorbs the skill uncertainty of the voluntary labour. The effect is that volunteers from voluntary organisations can be used in operations with a

variety of skill demands. Thus, we expect that the unskilled hypothesis will not be significant if the volunteers are intermediated by a voluntary organisation.

To conclude, voluntary labour being uncertain in quantity, effort and skill induce the municipality to engage volunteers in complimentary production and in unskilled activities, unless an intermediate voluntary organisation create a predictable output of volunteers.

Control is, however, not only a concern of the municipality, but also a concern of the municipality's labour unions. The labour unions control of the working place and of the labour staff decreases if the amount of volunteers increase. Volunteers are not members of labour unions, implying a loss of potential labour union members. Additionally, if the volunteers are used in additive and substitutive production, they compete with the salaried staff since salaried staff could have performed their activities. Engaging volunteers does also put at risk the professional character of the activities performed. As argued above, there could be a tendency to engage volunteers in unskilled activities.

If this is true, then volunteers imply unskilled activities, which have a spill-over effect on the salaried staff, implying them being unskilled. Thus, a strong labour force and a strong union will put severe limitations on the utilisation of volunteers in substitutive and additive production. Brudney (2000) found, as a contrast, no relationship between labour unions and the magnitude of volunteers in a survey on US personnel managers of state agencies. Without being capable of observing the strength of labour unions, however, the survey results cannot be regarded as a falsification of our hypothesis.

Thus, we hypothesise that:

H<sub>CS</sub>. The utilisation of voluntary activity in additive and substitutive production is moderated by the strength of the labour force and their unions.

Control is thus a subject for the municipality and the labour union. The municipality, it is hypothesised, tend to engage volunteers in complimentary production and in unskilled activities, unless the supply of volunteers are mediated through voluntary organisations, with the capacity to control volunteers and their skills. The labour unions can be expected to check the use of volunteers, especially when volunteers through engaging in additive and substitutive production pose a threat to the wage-labour force through competition and by degrading the professional character of the labour force occupation.

### Resource

Voluntary activity is by definition a resource without a market price, and the volunteers do not receive financial rewards. It constitutes thereby a resource that has no direct costs such as wages, but only indirect costs associated with the organisation and control of the resource. As with all free, or in this case, almost free resources, they tend to be intensively utilised, even over-utilised. Municipalities facing budget deficits would then think about voluntary activity as an offer they simply cannot refuse. Thus, we hypothesise that:

H<sub>R1</sub>. The presence of severe resource scarcity is positively correlated with the magnitude of voluntary activity in municipal operations.

Reformulating the hypothesis with the terminology previously presented, resource scarcity could lead to municipalities using voluntary activity in operations that are close to its operating core, if it only implies addition to already present operations. Thus, voluntary activity could be additive:

H<sub>R2</sub>. Additive production is positively correlated with magnitude of voluntary activity when the municipality is subject to severe resource scarcity.

Brudney (2000) argues that the costs of using volunteers are substantial, thus hampering the utilisation of volunteers in agencies with a weak resource base. Instead, he claims and finds weak empirical support from a survey, that volunteers tend to be used by state agencies in order to create a more diverse service, which can only be accomplished by agencies with a strong resource base. Thus, utilising the distinction between different production orientations, we find that municipalities facing a diverse demand on service could utilise volunteers with supplementary orientation, thus increasing the service quality. Therefore we could expect volunteers with a supplementary production orientation to be frequent in agencies with a strong resource base. Thus, we add the following hypothesis

H<sub>R3</sub>. Supplementary production is positively correlated with magnitude of voluntary activity when the municipality is subject to less resource scarcity.

In summary, we claim that the resource situation of the municipality influence the magnitude and the orientation of voluntary activities. In scarce situations, volunteers are engaged in additive production, and in abundant situations, they tend to be frequent in supplementary production.

### Social context

The social context, containing societal values, influences the municipality's opportunity to utilise volunteers. Voluntary activity is hampered, it can be assumed, by certain values, such as the value of equality. The core operations of the municipality are the ones given by law and strong traditions. These are regarded as utilities that belong to all citizens of the municipality. Thus, these services are rights belonging to the citizen. If volunteers offer these services, it creates an image of the service as a privilege given freely by one person to another. Thus, it is not a right but an alms. A study of

voluntary social work in Norway (Lorentzen et al. 1995) found that voluntary efforts were disliked and even avoided by receivers, who felt that mere gratitude on their part was not enough to restore the balance between the producing and receiving individuals. Thus, since humans tend to have a sense of reciprocity, voluntary activity, which according to definition is unilateral, is avoided in situations where individuals may experience debt.

Additionally, presence of voluntary labour can be seen as a changed political environment, now more open to '*rolling back the frontiers of the State*', with outsourcing of services and outside forces taking part in some of the municipalities functions.

In consequence, the character of alms and the opposition against the retirement of the state restricts the use of volunteers in operations, especially those that are substitutive in character. Thus, we hypothesises that:

H<sub>v1</sub>. Operations where voluntary activity tends to be treated as alms is negatively correlated with the magnitude of voluntary activity.

## Summary

In this section, we have found conditions that impede and promote concurrence between the municipal organisation and volunteers. In order to control the production of the municipal service, the municipality tends to use volunteers in unskilled operations, far away from the operating core, unless an intermediary, the voluntary organisation, controls the volunteers through selection, storing and education. The labour unions, if powerful, hamper the use of volunteers, especially if the volunteers are contributing with additional and substitutive production. The resource situation of the municipality are expected to influence the concurrence, making poorer municipal operations more prone to use

volunteers in additive operations, and municipal operations experiencing more abundant situations tend to utilise volunteers in supplementary production. Finally, we expect to find that values of society influence the magnitude of voluntary activity.

### **3. METHOD**

The hypotheses in the model were deduced without considering the institutional situation of the volunteers and the municipality. That is, the hypotheses are expected to be institutionally invariant. This is, however, an under-socialised view of humans, revealing an extreme trust in the basic logic of the voluntary resource, being unilateral, non-contractable, and lacking a market price. While it can be assumed that there are invariant aspects of the volunteer as a resource and its utilisation, according to an institutional perspective, institutions influence the resource and its utilisation. The problem is to find theoretical reasons to institutional variance in this specific case. One attempt, according to the authors' knowledge, has been done to find institutional factors explaining relationships between government and non-for-profit organisations. Young (2000) found through a comparative four case study that it could be hypothesised that the orientation of the relationship varied according to private economy prosperity, government level of activity, diversity of society, significant minorities, need of national unity, social unrest and political turmoil, and level of private initiatives. While being interesting hypotheses, the case studies were based solely on a literature review, thus being built on data of an unsystematic type.

We will follow the same comparative stand as a methodological solution on the institutional variance problem that Young (2000) used. The model of voluntary activity in municipalities will be added institutional variance through empirical examination of the presented model, using the method of

comparative case study. The data collection differs, however, since our method is more systematic and rigorous compared to the Young method, using the same data collection instrument.

In order to find institutional variance in a model, it is important to find cases that can offer high institutional difference, and low organisational difference. Thereby will the institutional factors come to the fore, while specificities of volunteers, that can be assumed to be institutionally invariant, are kept to a minimum. It is, of course, hard to find an optimum where the first variable is maximised and the other one is minimised. Our case studies are a comparison between Ferrara, a small university town in Italy, and Lund, a small university town in Sweden.

Italy and Sweden offer the possibility of a strong contrast. Italy has a small municipal sector and Sweden has a large sector, which would influence the willingness and need for engaging voluntary workers. In Italy, with right wing domination, there has been an emphasis on the strength of private institutions pervading the society. The policy in Sweden has been social democratic dominated, thus emphasising state involvement. Italy is considered to be a country with a strong family tradition, boosted by a strong catholic culture, thus internalising activities that in Sweden, being a more individualistic culture (Hofstede, 1980) are more a subject for the state or the society at large. Thus, the culture differs substantially, making Italy and Sweden a good contrasting example.

Ferrara and Lund offer the possibility of reducing the variance on specific organisational factors. The municipal organisations are situated in small cities, with inhabitants not exceeding 100.000, containing a large university, surrounded by small villages, and being situated in a developing region. Thus, some of the factors offered by Young (2000) are quite invariant, for example the municipalities are situated in regions that can be considered to be prosperous, with a low degree of diversity, lacking significant



minorities and social unrest. Thus, the comparison offers the possibility to capture strong institutional differences.

The case studies were designed to offer a high capacity of systematic observation. A theory was deduced, which created the relevant concepts that were transformed into a survey. The survey contained closed as well as open-ended questions. The data from the survey did only cover the specific municipalities. In order to create a context for the two municipalities and the voluntary sector the specific data were supplemented with data on the Italian and Swedish voluntary and non-for-profit sector.

The case studies were designed to gather data on voluntary activity in all varieties of local government operations in a single municipality. The data was collected through either personal interviews or interviews by telephone. In the Swedish case of Lund, 26 local government employees were interviewed, of which 14 worked in managerial, administrative positions while the other twelve were more directly involved in the production of service. In the Italian case of Ferrara, 20 interviews were made among 18 employees and services' managers and 2 elected members.

It should be noted that the data collected reflects the perspective of local government elected members and officials. Objections could be made to such a one-sided approach to a problem of interaction between two parties. We argue, however, that it is this perspective which is in accordance with the study's focus on the possibilities and ability of the receiving organisation, i.e. the municipality, to utilise voluntary activity in the production of welfare services.

The survey was based on the theory presented in Hellström & Collin (1999) and was developed by Caroline Hellström. The survey was originally created in Swedish, without any intention to be translated. The survey was, however, translated to English by Sven-Olof Collin, and then to Italian

by Enrico Bracci, before it was used in Ferrara. This translation procedure makes the reliability of the instrument questionable. The uncertainty in observation is increased when recognising the lack of established, mutually recognised and unambiguous terminology.

Each interviewee was asked to state all cases of contact with voluntary organisations and individuals that occur within his or her field of operations. Moreover, an open-ended questionnaire was submitted in order to underline additional aspects in accordance to the initial hypotheses. The utilisation of direct interviews, other than evaluating the hypotheses, made it possible to adopt a flexible approach which, we believe, is the most appropriate to the characteristics of the research. Consequently, this allowed us to question the interviewees in different ways as well as to clear out blurred concepts and definitions. Thus, the decrease in reliability produced by the translation process could be counteracted through this mechanism.

The case data were compiled both qualitatively and quantitatively, and analysed together. Since it is a two case study, the results can only be theoretically generalised (Yin, 1989), in this case into an extension of the model of utilisation of voluntary labour in municipal organisations.

#### **4. THE MAGNITUDE OF VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES IN ITALY AND SWEDEN**

The magnitude of voluntary activities is assumed to vary because of control, resource and value factors, as well as because of institutional differences. In this section we present the analysis of the two cases studies of Ferrara (I) and Lund (SE). We have found that the variance observed in the material can partly be interpreted as influenced by institutional factors. Thus, in order to enhance the understanding of the analysis the section starts with a macro description of the voluntary sector in the two countries, then focusing on the two cases in an overall description, and ending with a part where the institutional invariant hypotheses are being examined.

#### **4.1 The Voluntary Sector in Italy and Sweden**

The extension of the voluntary sector in the countries seems to influence the governance of public and private organization boards. Cultural and historical variables as well as state actions and regulations represent the 'genesis' of many differences. In the cases of Italy and Sweden many differences appear to be due to state actions. Sweden nationalised part of the voluntary sector during the 1960's. Italy, following its administrative tradition, has stimulated the utilisation of voluntary organisations through extensive regulations, both at the central level and at the regional level.

The different traditions of countries could produce the differences in the way society reacts toward the possibility of behave as volunteers. The Italian catholic tradition and the family focus society long considered the family and church as institutions delivering social services. The state control this service through regulation. In Sweden, an individualist society with a strong state, choose to internalise the operations, making it a state action.

As a matter of fact, the utilisation of wage earners in the voluntary sector indicates a fundamental difference. Table 1, column 2, shows the high number of persons that Sweden has engaged in voluntary work: in fact, per capita they produce twice as much full-time employment than the volunteers do in France and three times the amount in Italy. Therefore, it is clear that the non-profit sector in Sweden is mainly producing through voluntary labour while in Italiay and Germany wage earners produce almost twice as much as the voluntary workers in the non-profit sector.

**Table 1**  
**Produced Full Time Employee (FTE) and its distribution**  
**on wage earners and voluntary labour\***

1. Country	2. FTE per capita	3. Wage FTE per capita	4. Voluntary FTE per capita	5. Voluntary FTE / Wage FTE
France	25	14,4	10,6	0,73
Germany	21	12,6	8,4	0,67
Italy	12	7,3	4,7	0,65
Sweden	36	9,5	26,5	2,77

\*Source: Salamon & Anheier, 1996

The above observations require to underline that inside this data is compounded the Voluntary action whose weight is the most problematic to measure and to detect. Economic analysis conducted on Italian data (Zamagni, 1998; Borzaga, Fiorentini, Maticena, 1996, Ascoli, 1987) found that the voluntary sector represents some 0,6%-0,8% of GNP with more than 450.000 persons involved (ISTAT, 1999). Furthermore, this figure is related to active volunteers joined to some registered organisation, according to a survey by the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT). ISTAT made the effort to extend the analysis to the whole population, and it emerged that in 1997 7.3%, i.e. 3,6 millions, of population aged 14 or more affirmed to have taken part, at least once in the year, in a volunteer activity.

As the indicator above mentioned, the sectors expenditures share of the Gross National Product could contribute to explain the relevance of voluntary work in the national economy. The non-profit sectors share of the GDP was 4,1% in Sweden and 2,0% in Italy (Salamon & Anheier, 1996). Although these are rude measures, it can fairly well be concluded that there is a large sector of voluntary work and non-profit production in Sweden, and it contrasts to Italy which has a comparable smaller sector, and where the organisations rely more on wage labour.

The political, economical and institutional events of a country can give different orientation to the voluntary work and the non-profit sector. In Sweden, during the sixties, the fast growth of the social democratic welfare state implied that the state, through central government and regional government, acquired some activities such as old age care, social domestic assistance, some health care and education (Lundström & Wijkström, 1997). Those areas mainly belonging to the welfare state, i.e., education, health care and social service are a small part of the whole non-profit sector in Sweden. According to Salamon & Anheier (1996), this fraction of the non-profit sectors total expenditures amounts to 27% in Sweden, but 62% in Italy. Thus, while Italy appear to have professionals, i.e., wage earners, employed in their non-profit sector, the social democratic state in Sweden internalised this part of the sector with one of the arguments being that it needed professionals.

The non-profit sector in Italy and Sweden is mainly funded through its own earning capacity. Revenues generated through earnings amount in Sweden and in Italy, respectively, to 61% and to 56% of the total revenues of the sector, while the amount of government spending on the sector amounts to 41% for Italy and 30% for Sweden. These results could be a reflection of the greater emphasis in Italy on activities that are organised through the state in Sweden.

Thus, Italy could well be considered to have a rather different trend in term of non-profit sector funding. Italy has been experiencing a growth of voluntary work during the last fifteen years. Although voluntary organisations have always been a robust and strong reality in many Italian regions (especially Tuscany, Emilia-Romagna and north-east), during the period from 1981 to 1995 more than 60% of the recognised voluntary organisations were born. Considering the south of Italy, where historically the voluntary work in the past, for social and economic reasons, was less rooted in the

society, in the same period the data raises up to more than 80%. These data, from ISTAT (1999), let us to consider that the voluntary wave in Italy has quite recent origins.

If we analyse the distribution of resources spent in the non-profit sector (table 2), it shows clearly the Swedish non-profit focus on culture and recreation, such as sports activities. This area engages more revenues and full time employees than the other areas, and consumes almost a majority of the volunteer's activities. This can represent the opposite situation of health care, social service and partly education. In this area, there are only a small part of volunteer work conducted, wage labour share is greater than the voluntary engagement, and this area have a comparable larger share of the revenues, with a majority of them being generated from the state. As a result, activities belonging to the core of the welfare state are small, funded by the state and mainly conducted by salaried personnel.

Despite the Swedish experience, Italy has much more voluntary work conducted in the health care and social sector. According to ISTAT (1999), 31,3% of all voluntary activities, performed in registered organisations, were in the field of social assistance, 40,3% in health care, and culture and leisure consumed only 12,6% of the work. As a consequence, this reinforces the impression that the Italian voluntary sector is strongly concerned in areas of health care and social service, i.e., the area of services that was 'nationalised' by the Swedish state.

Data presented in table 3 show the Italian non-profit and voluntary orientation towards social, health care and cultural services. These areas engage the most part of revenues (Health care 16,4% Social Services 25%) as well as volunteers and full time employees. Political will could be brought out as an explanation of this distribution. The Italian government has often promoted the cooperation of volunteers in the public health care system, as an example the National Health Care Plan 1998-2000

*“A solidarity pact for public health”* says *“the voluntary work represents a strong element of the new solidarity pact, in relation to its contribution to the humanisation of the service (health one) and for the ethic values it bears. Its presence helps to give voice to the needs of disadvantaged and it carries out a shared valuation of the service quality”*. The same orientation has been adopted at the regional level which is the delegated responsible for the healthcare system.

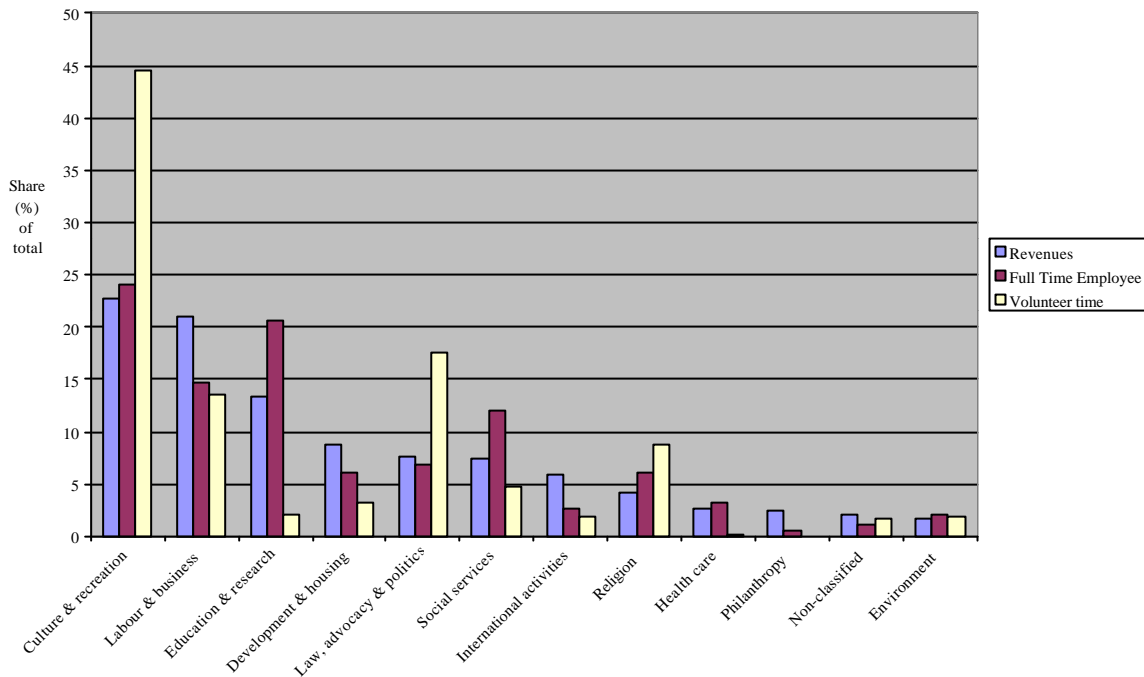
In general, we can also underline a positive correlation between the presence of volunteers and employees, which is different according to the characteristics of the subsection we refer to. There is a dominance of volunteers in subsections like ‘culture and recreation’ where a not highly specialized personnel is required, while the opposite relation is in ‘health care’ where the demand is mainly for professionals.

Thus, the states differ in their impact on the orientation of the voluntary sector and they differ in their regulatory intensity. They do not, however, appear to differ in attitude towards volunteers and voluntary activity. Therefore, the huge differences in intensity of regulation that will follow in this presentation, is probably not an expression of differences in attitudes, but in administrative traditions.

In Italy, the regulation of voluntary organisations was implemented in the beginning of the nineties. The very first law was the *“Legge Quadro del Volontariato”* n. 266 of 1991 that established the role and the definition of voluntary work and of voluntary organisation. This regulation brought about more clarity and certainty among the subject, while, before it, it was applied the articles of the Civil Code related to common associations. Up to that time, the voluntary work was not institutionalised and recognised. This law clearly indicates the attempt of the Parliament to stimulate the aggregation

of all volunteers into organisations, preferably registered, which are more easily controllable and accountable.

**Table 2**  
**Distribution of Revenues, Full Time Employee equivalent and**  
**Voluntary time engagement in Sweden**

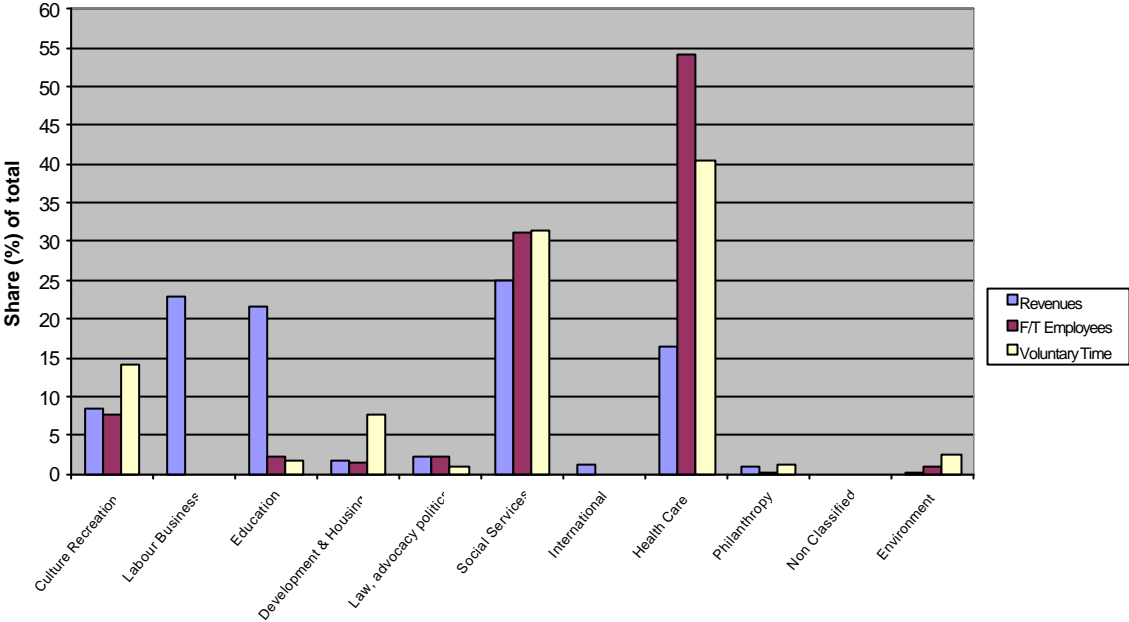


In the Italian context, the analysis of the normative framework is important in order to state the attitude of local governments to establish relations with the voluntary sector. As anticipated, the double legislation level requires Regions to implement national principles. Considering the Emilia-Romagna Region, where the survey has taken place, many regional laws (R.L.) have to be analysed. The R.L. 37/96 defines the voluntary work a “*social value*” and assigns the local government the role of stimulating its development in order to bring about the social, cultural and civic objectives pursued. Furthermore, registered organizations are regulated and they are allowed to: a) Take part to the public planning phases regarding their activity field; b) Propose to local authorities, according to



their territorial influence, programs and initiatives related to their specificity; c) Ask for a copy of all the studies and documents related to their activity.

**Table 3**  
**Distribution of Revenues, Full Time Employee equivalent and Voluntary time engagement in Italy**



\* In Italy, according to the law 266/91 and general thought, Labour and Business activities are not considered as voluntary activities, then they do not appear in the national statistics. The data about revenues in table 2 and 3, are taken from an international study (Salamon & Anheier, 1996) which adopted a different approach. It is sensible and correct to estimate that most part of the revenues in Labour and Business activities will be spread among Social Services, Health care and culture.

The analysis of the regional legislation clearly meant at stimulating the voluntary organisations to register, creating, in this way, a more regulated and controllable environment. As a consequence, the number of organisations enrolled into the register has grown rapidly. Since its institution, in 1995, the figure was 8.343 with some 482.000 active volunteers, Emilia-Romagna accounted for 12.2% and 15.3% respectively. These data can be considered as revealing a wide participation of the local society in voluntary activity with a high ratio of volunteers per organisation. Moreover, one of the

highest number of volunteers per inhabitants, 188.6 against the national average of 84.1, can be referred to the Emilia-Romagna Region.

The voluntary activity regulation reflects the Italian administrative tradition, and this is specially stressed when public sector is somehow involved. As a matter of fact, the Law 266/91 points its focus on the relation between public sector and voluntary organisation; it was mainly aimed at creating a certain environment which politicians and public employees could hold on. Since Italian context is a highly administrative one, public sector follows its own rules and laws. Then, to stimulate the utilisation of voluntary activities by local government, a regulation was required.

By the institutional perspective, the close regulation of Italy contrasts sharply to the Swedish absence of regulation. No explicit regulation of the voluntary sector through law has been performed in Sweden until 1996; the regulations that have been made are still in many areas made with the use of case laws. Thus, there is no legal definition of a voluntary organisation. Lundström & Wijkman (1997) speculates that the reason is that the non-for-profit sector has been dominated by organisations that have had political interest in belonging to an unregulated environment, and that have had the power to enforce this interest. Sweden, not offering the same regulative environment for their non-profit sector, appears though, to offer the same hospitality for the non-profit organisations. In an investigation of the history of the non-profit sector, Lundström & Wijkström concludes that *“...a growing welfare state of the social democratic type ... can be found in peaceful co-existence and close co-operation with a thriving non-profit sector.”* (1997:105).

Italy has been regulating the voluntary sector through incentives to the organisations, and Sweden has just recently been offering specialised laws for voluntary organisations. Different political traditions

could explain this difference although it does not appear to signify a difference in the states attitudes towards voluntary work, an attitude that appear to be very friendly and supportive.

As a synthesis, the structural context of the voluntary sector is different in Italy and Sweden. The focus is on different kind of services: Italy is more focused on health care and social service, and Sweden is more focused on recreation and culture. These differences allow us to mirror and point out a domination of voluntary work utilised in Sweden and a domination of professional, salaried personnel in Italy. However, similarities can be referred to the following elements: the sector in both countries is funded mainly through its own earning capacity; the central government appears to be supportive of voluntary work, although the regulations differ in quantity and intensity.

#### **4.2 Volunteers in the municipalities of Ferrara (Italy) and Lund (Sweden)**

This section presents the summary data in tables and gives an overall picture of the similarities and differences between the magnitude of volunteers in Ferrara (I) and Lund (SE) municipalities. The actual hypotheses examination will be conducted in the following section.

Table 4 presents the percentages distribution between exchange types of the observations of municipal and voluntary concurrence in different areas of local government operations in the municipality of Ferrara (I) and Lund (SE). Table 5 points out the percentage distribution between statutory and optional and different types of voluntary production of the observations of municipal and voluntary concurrence in the two municipalities.

**Table 4.**  
**The distribution between exchange types of the observations of municipal and voluntary concurrence in different areas of local government operations in the municipality of Ferrara, (I) and Lund, (SE)**

Factor/Tot	Exchange of manpowerSE	Exchange of informationSE	Exch of mon res subsidiesSE	Exch of mon res Bus relSE	TotSE	Exchange of manpowerI	Exchange of informationI	Exh of mon res subsidiesI	Exch of mon res Bus rell	TotI
<b>Social sector</b>	<b>14,5%</b>	<b>16,1%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>8,3%</b>	<b>38,9%</b>	<b>18,8%</b>	<b>13,5%</b>	<b>22,9%</b>	<b>6,3%</b>	<b>61,5%</b>
Care for the elderly	2,6%	8,3%	0,0%	2,1%	13,0%	1,0%	0,0%	2,1%	0,0%	3,1%
Day-care for children	1,6%	1,6%	0,0%	6,2%	9,3%	3,1%	1,0%	4,2%	1,0%	9,4%
Social welfare	8,3%	5,7%	0,0%	0,0%	14,0%	12,5%	12,5%	15,6%	4,2%	44,8%
Immigration service	2,1%	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	2,6%	2,1%	0,0%	1,0%	1,0%	4,2%
<b>Education</b>	<b>1,6%</b>	<b>3,6%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>1,6%</b>	<b>6,7%</b>	<b>2,1%</b>	<b>1,0%</b>	<b>10,4%</b>	<b>2,1%</b>	<b>15,6%</b>
<b>Technical sector</b>	<b>3,6%</b>	<b>6,7%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>10,4%</b>	<b>1,0%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>1,0%</b>	<b>2,1%</b>
Park maintenance	3,1%	2,1%	0,0%	0,0%	5,2%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	1,0%	1,0%
Drainage & water supply	0,5%	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	1,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%
Streets & traffic	0,0%	2,6%	0,0%	0,0%	2,6%	1,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	1,0%
Physical planning	0,0%	1,0%	0,0%	0,0%	1,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%
Public transport	0,0%	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%
<b>Rescue service</b>	<b>2,1%</b>	<b>1,0%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>3,1%</b>	<b>1,0%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>1,0%</b>
Fire-brigade	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%
Civil defence	2,1%	1,0%	0,0%	0,0%	3,1%	1,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	1,0%
<b>Health &amp; environment</b>	<b>1,0%</b>	<b>0,5%</b>	<b>1,0%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>2,6%</b>	<b>3,1%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>2,1%</b>	<b>4,2%</b>	<b>9,4%</b>
Health & environm. control	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	3,1%	0,0%	2,1%	4,2%	9,4%
Agenda 21	1,0%	0,5%	1,0%	0,0%	2,6%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%
<b>Culture &amp; recreation</b>	<b>21,2%</b>	<b>5,2%</b>	<b>7,8%</b>	<b>2,6%</b>	<b>36,8%</b>	<b>3,1%</b>	<b>1,0%</b>	<b>6,3%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>10,4%</b>
Public libraries	2,1%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	2,1%	2,1%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	2,1%
Other culture & recreation	19,2%	5,2%	7,8%	2,6%	34,7%	1,0%	1,0%	6,3%	0,0%	8,3%
<b>Administration</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>1,6%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>1,6%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>
<b>Tot</b>	<b>44,0%</b>	<b>34,7%</b>	<b>8,8%</b>	<b>12,4%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>29,2%</b>	<b>15,6%</b>	<b>41,7%</b>	<b>13,5%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

Exchange of manpower: some kind of work is performed, and both parties participate  
Exchange of information: councils and spreading of information  
Exch of mon res, subsidies: Exchange of monetary resources, subsidies paid by the municipality  
Exch of mon res, Bus: Exchange of monetary resources, business relations

**Table 5.**  
**The distribution between statutory and optional and different types of voluntary production of the observations of municipal and voluntary concurrence in the municipality of Ferrara, (I) and Lund, (SE).**

Add/TotSE	Sub/TotSE	Comp/TotSE	Sum/ToTSE	Add/TotI	Sub/TotI	Comp/TotI	Sum/ToTI	
<b>4,7%</b>	<b>3,1%</b>	<b>42,5%</b>	<b>50,3%</b>	<b>33,7%</b>	<b>20,2%</b>	<b>31,5%</b>	<b>85,4%</b>	<b>Statutory operations</b>
0,0%	0,5%	12,4%	13,0%	3,4%	0,0%	0,0%	3,4%	Care for the elderly
1,0%	1,0%	6,7%	8,8%	3,4%	2,2%	1,1%	6,7%	Day-care for children
3,6%	0,0%	10,4%	14,0%	20,2%	4,5%	20,2%	44,9%	Social welfare
0,0%	1,0%	6,2%	7,3%	2,2%	7,9%	6,7%	16,9%	Education
0,0%	0,0%	2,1%	2,1%	1,1%	0,0%	1,1%	2,2%	Public libraries
0,0%	0,0%	1,0%	1,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	Physical planning
0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	2,2%	5,6%	2,2%	10,1%	Health & environm. control
0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	Public cleansing & refuse collection
0,0%	0,5%	2,6%	3,1%	1,1%	0,0%	0,0%	1,1%	Rescue service
0,0%	0,0%	1,0%	1,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	Drainage & water supply
0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	Public order & safety
<b>2,6%</b>	<b>9,8%</b>	<b>37,3%</b>	<b>49,7%</b>	<b>4,5%</b>	<b>3,4%</b>	<b>6,7%</b>	<b>14,6%</b>	<b>Optional operations</b>
0,0%	0,0%	2,6%	2,6%	0,0%	0,0%	2,2%	2,2%	Immigration service
2,1%	1,0%	2,1%	5,2%	0,0%	1,1%	0,0%	1,1%	Park maintenance
0,0%	0,0%	2,6%	2,6%	1,1%	0,0%	0,0%	1,1%	Streets & traffic
0,0%	0,0%	0,5%	0,5%	1,1%	0,0%	0,0%	1,1%	Public transport
0,0%	0,0%	2,6%	2,6%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	Agenda 21
0,5%	8,8%	25,4%	34,7%	2,2%	2,2%	4,5%	9,0%	Culture & recreation
0,0%	0,0%	1,6%	1,6%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	Administration
<b>7,3%</b>	<b>13,0%</b>	<b>79,8%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>38,2%</b>	<b>23,6%</b>	<b>38,2%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	

Add: Additive production; Sub: Substitutive production; Comp: Complementary production

The analysis of the data related to Ferrara (I) and Lund (SE) discloses the kind of difference that could be expected according to the institutional differences found in the preceding section. The table

4 inspection shows that in the case of Lund (SE), the most common relationship is exchange of manpower (44%), and in the case of Ferrara (I) it is exchange of subsidies (42%). The particular bias of Italian voluntary organisations to preserve their independence and integrity could be the reason to explain this difference. Beyond the different traditions characterising the two experience we are analysing, it could be possible to point out that the Italian voluntary organisations prefer to run alone, which the strong subsidiary indicate, instead of being involved in some kind of external restraint or control, which exchange of manpower could imply.

In order to better characterise Italian and Swedish voluntary activities is important to analyse the different orientation the experiences show in term of activities distribution among the many sectors of municipal operations. This is revealed more clearly in table 5. Most activities in Ferrara (I) is in the sector of statutory operations (85%), and oriented towards social welfare (45%) and education (17%). The Lund (SE) voluntary sector engagement is mainly in the optional sector, with culture and recreation (35%), and then only slightly engaged in statutory operations such as social welfare (14%) and care for the elderly (13%). As a consequence, Italian voluntary sector is more engaged in activities that appear to have been internalised in the Swedish model. This impression is amplified when inspecting the distribution of the character of the production. Lund (SE) is mainly utilising volunteers in complementary production (80%), while Ferrara (I) have a rather even distribution, most remarkable being the substitutive production in statutory operations being 20%, compared to Lund (SE) 3%.

Analysing data, one remark, however, has to be done. In order to maintain a consistent analysis pattern only those sport associations listed as voluntary organisations are included in the study. The same thing has happened for cultural organisations. This can explain part of the wide difference

between the Italian and Swedish cases. However, within Ferrara (I) municipality operates more than 140 sport associations, a similar number is reckoned for cultural ones. This would imply that the optional operations and complementary production is underestimated in the Italian case. On the other hand, not being listed could imply a less preferable treatment from the municipality because of their interest in listed organisations. Thus, it is feasible that not all non-listed organisations have a relationship with the municipality.

The analysis of Ferrara (I) and Lund (SE) bring about mainly two similarities: business relationships and administration. In Ferrara (I) 14% of the relationships are of a business nature, and in Lund (SE) the number is 12%. There are few, if none, relations in administration which is not usually the activity field of voluntary work. These similarities seem rather natural since voluntary work is not considered to be of a business nature and administration.

Summarising these overall numbers, we find a support in our data for the description made earlier. It appears that engagement of Italian volunteers can be made in sectors and operations that are considered state engagement in Sweden. This indicates that the state is managing the line of demarcation between itself and the voluntary organisations. When the state are rolling, the voluntary organisations withdraw, and when the state is withdrawing, the voluntary organisations fill up the vacuum, or at least, parts of it. Thus, we can conclude that state activities influence the extension of the voluntary sector.

#### **4.3 Empirical examination of the hypotheses**

Finding institutional influence on the magnitude of volunteers suggests that we will not find a consistent pattern when examining the hypotheses from the model in part 3. When examining the

institutional invariant hypotheses, we will find those properties of volunteer activity that are institutional invariant, and those that vary with institutional context. The examination will follow the structure of the model in part 3, beginning with the control feature, continuing with resource characteristics, and ending with the social value of alms.

### Control

The first set of hypotheses regards different aspects of control and the voluntary organisations as a mean of reducing the uncertainty through a higher degree of control. It was hypothesised that the operating core would be guarded through avoiding volunteers. This is hardly supported in Lund (SE) (50%), if assuming statutory operations being core activities, and it has to be rejected in the case of Ferrara (I) (85%).

Developing the hypotheses, we assumed that there would be a focus on complementary production. This is the case in Lund (SE) (80%) but only weakly in Ferrara (I) (38%). This helps explain the failure of the first hypothesis, since it makes necessary to distinguish between core activities and activities supporting the core one. An example can clarify this statement. Education is certainly a core activity for every municipality, their primary focus is to teach pupils, and they are not meant to go further than that. A voluntary organisation will probably never concur in such a service, unless in complementary activities or additive ones, such as road crossing for pupils, or organisation of seminars regarding problems like handicap or drugs, and so on. In these cases and in many others, volunteers operate in optional activities, and local government, by law or statute, remains responsible for the primary, institutional activities. The differences found between the municipalities could, however, partly be due to the different orientation, Ferrara (I) having volunteer operations that are internalised in Lund's (SE) municipality.

The third hypothesis  $H_{C3}$  regards voluntary organisations as crucial mediators in municipal concurrence. It was expected a positive correlation between the presence of voluntary organisations and the intensity of voluntary activity. This has been confirmed by both the empirical data, some 98% of observations are related to organisations of volunteers in Ferrara (I) and 93% in Lund (SE). Moreover, only few sectors have some relation with individual volunteers, namely social service and education. The others had in the past some experiences, however as the voluntary organisations have grown in number as well as in importance and aggregated single volunteers, they tend now to collaborate with organised form of voluntary activity. This fact can partly explain the failure of the first hypothesis, since we hypothesised that it would be possible to use voluntary labour in the operation core if they were organised by an organisation, and even more if the organisation contained wage labour and professionals.

Skills and quality relate to the fourth hypothesis,  $H_{C4}$ . They result to be two of the main criteria characterizing the relation between the organization and the volunteers. It was found through the interviews in both Ferrara (I) and Lund (SE) that most of the voluntary activities are performed by unskilled people. Observations from Ferrara (I), however, indicate that during the last years the voluntary work improved both in terms of quality and skills. This can be ascribed to the efforts made by voluntary organisations, through training and awareness policies. The importance of training volunteers is clearly indicated in Italy, where some 94,9% of voluntary organisations organises seminars, meetings or courses in order to train new and old members (Casolino & Sgaramella 1992). The need to increase skills through training is even recognised by the municipality of Ferrara, which organises training periods for volunteers, organised or individuals.



The use of training, even by the municipality, is probably an indication of an ambition to secure a certain level of skills, and thereby quality. In Ferrara (I) the municipality keeps a strong control over the activity of volunteers. In Lund (SE) it was stressed that the local government is the guarantor of professionalism and quality in welfare services. Thus, it indicates that they work to secure a certain lowest standard when dealing with volunteers.

Thus, to summarise, voluntary labour tend to be unskilled, but today volunteer organisations and even municipalities have started to cope with the downward variance of quality through training.

The last hypothesis, predicting negative relationship between strong labour force and unions, and volunteer activities, have not been examined. Inspecting the data, it could appear that the low frequency of additive and substitutive production in Lund (SE), and the fairly even distribution in Ferrara (I) indicate strong labour movement in Sweden and weak in Italy. While it is probably true in Sweden, it could be rather true even in Italy. Nevertheless, we lack data, so the hypothesis has to be considered non-examined.

Thus, we conclude that control is probably of some importance, creating incentives for its use in complementary production, but voluntary organisations have the capacity to manage the volunteers, thus making it possible for municipalities to use volunteers even in core operations. We found it plausible that state actions put a limit on voluntary operations, where Sweden tend to internalise and Italy tend to regulate and to educate through the voluntary organisations.

### Resources

The second set of hypothesis deals with the relation between resources and the intensity of voluntary work. The testing of hypothesis  $H_{R1}$ , related to severe resource scarcity, was achieved through the semi-structured interviews made, since the quantitative data was not sufficient.

Local government in Italy and Sweden is under continuous financial constraint. The situation is worsened by the increased quantity and quality of needs required by citizens; our society is a welfare one, citizens have now a higher spending power than, say, twenty years ago, and consistently higher expectations from public services. They ask for improved quality as well as variety and quantity. This is, roughly, the picture of the environment that municipalities have to deal with, then they face severe resource scarcity for both spending and for increased scope of their activity. The interviewees revealed to have different approach to this issue, part of them, the majority, admit that one of the reasons for a higher intensity of voluntary activity is an economic one. In the case of Lund (SE) there were indications that an increase in utilisation of volunteers, especially involving exchange of information, was caused by the societal trend towards increased direct democracy. Thus, with demographic and cultural change it appears that the municipalities in both countries experience severe resource scarcity, but also an increase in resources from the voluntary sector.

Hypothesis  $H_{R2}$  arguing that additive production is preferred, is fairly well confirmed in the case of Ferrara (I), amounting to 38% of the relationships. In the case of Lund (SE) it has to be rejected because additive production is the least used form of production (7%). This is probably a reflection of the Swedish states objective of securing an output that is evenly distributed through internalising the activities, making additive production infrequent. Thus, state action appear to influence the magnitude of voluntary activity.

Moreover, the data confirmed the residual role of substitutive production, rather strong in the case of Lund (SE) (13%), and more weakly in the case of Ferrara (SE) (24%). This can probably be explained by the political and institutional attitude towards the role of voluntary organisations. Politicians do not consider volunteers as substitute of the local authority activity, especially in the case

of Sweden. The institutional variance hypothesised could be regarded as fairly well supported. It appears to be the case that substitutive production is more legitimate in Italy than in Sweden.  $H_{R3}$  does not seem to find support in the case, which shows contradiction. Although both Italian and Swedish local authorities are facing resource scarcity, the level of supplementary production differs substantially: Lund (SE) 80% but only 38% in Ferrara (I).

Summarising, we have found that scarcity can promote the utilisation of volunteers, but that the correlation is not a simple one. Some areas are expanding its use of volunteers, and at the same time receiving more attention from volunteers. Scarcity is however not a strong incentive for the use, the cultural attitude towards volunteers, and the resulting state action, appear to be stronger factor explaining the presence of volunteers. To this adds the presence of a strong labour movement. Thus, to conclude, we believe that state action and unionism are stronger explanatory factors than scarcity when explaining presence and absence of volunteers in municipal operations.

### Social Context

Hypothesis  $H_{V1}$  states that the feeling of alms reduce the intensity of volunteers. This hypothesis is not supported by data. Ferrara (I) contradicts it most strongly. Voluntary activity is not, by any means, in the Italian society considered as alms.  $H_{V1}$  implies that voluntary activity decreases in areas like social welfare, e.g. where it could be seen by receivers as alms. The data gathered and the interviews made do not support this prediction, in fact social service and health are the areas that experience some of the highest intensity of voluntary activity. Receivers generally accept the latter, in particular when it is co-ordinated with the municipality. Collaborating with local government gives to voluntary activities a form of institutional legitimisation, even though the strong tradition of voluntary action in Italy helped increase its acceptance within the society and institutional organisations. In the

case of Lund (SE) the social sector is the one that contains most relationships, thus falsifying the hypothesis.

In sum, we cannot find any support for the degrading of volunteers because of them offering alms.

### Summary

We have found that Ferrara (I) and Lund (SE) supports the prediction that there are invariance's between countries concerning impediments and prospects for voluntary work. The uncertainty of volunteer labour is an impediment, but one that a volunteer organisation can overcome. The uncertainty concerns not only showing up, but skills and quality too. This uncertainty is dealt with through using volunteers mainly in unskilled situations, or through training.

Variance between countries can be found, however, due to state action and due to values. Especially state action appears to be capable of defining the area for voluntary actions. State action, together with the strength of the labour force and their unions was speculatively considered stronger predictor of the utilisation of volunteers than the resource situation of the municipality. Values appear to be able to influence the intensity of volunteer activities. Values are hard to observe, but values appear to produce a more open mind in Italy towards volunteers in activities that are considered state activities in Sweden, and thereby outside the reach of voluntary activity.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL REMARKS**

The purpose of this study is to describe the actual trend of local government and voluntary organisations relation in two different countries, Italy and Sweden, and to find out the factors that can improve or impede its development.

Summarising the findings, we found that the voluntary sector of Italy appear to be more focused on health care and social service, and Sweden is more focused on recreation and culture. This difference imply a domination of volunteers in voluntary organisations in Sweden, and a higher frequency of professional, salaried personnel in Italian organisations. The voluntary sector in both countries is mainly financed through their own earning capacity, and they enjoy a rather supportive national government. The national government differs in their actions. The Italian government regulates voluntary organisations and utilises them in core activities, as indicated by its use in substitutive production. The Swedish government does not regulate voluntary organisations, but on the other hand, nationalise activities that earlier were conducted by volunteers. Thus, it appear that government influence the usage of volunteers mainly through regulating the organisations in Italy, and withdrawing operations from voluntary organisations through nationalising in Sweden.

In our theory section we deduced factors explaining the magnitude of volunteers without any institutional consideration. Through our data analysis we found support for some hypotheses, indicating that there are institutionally invariant factors. It appears that voluntary labour is hard to control, thus creating opportunities for voluntary organisations to produce certainty in supply and even in skill levels. Thus, voluntary organisations stimulate or could even be regarded as a prerequisite for the use of volunteers in municipal operations.

We found that resource scarcity could stimulate the usage of volunteers, but that the relationship was weak. We found an even distribution of supplementary, additive and complimentary production in Italy, but a dominance of complimentary production in Sweden. If resource scarcity would govern the magnitude of volunteers, then we expected to find a dominance of additive production. This is

certainly not the case in Sweden. Thus, we find indications that state actions and attitudes are stronger influential factors than the actual resource situation of the municipality.

Interesting to note, values connected with volunteers offering alms, which was assumed to hamper the usage of volunteers, appear to be falsified by the data. Values are hard to observe, but they appear to produce a more open mind in Italy towards volunteers in activities that are considered state activities in Sweden, and thereby outside the reach of voluntary activity. The Swedish Welfare State appears to be integrated, with voluntary organisations as being but residual producers of spare service. The Italian welfare state appear to consist of separate organisations, voluntary organisations being a negligible, but still a constituent part of the welfare state. While values are active in governing the usage of volunteers in municipalities, the most important restriction appear to be through state action, restricting the domain for voluntary work through nationalisation or through regulating the usage of volunteers through regulation of the organisations and their relations to the municipality.

This characterisation could be related to the culture of the countries, thus giving indications on relationships between culture, state action and magnitude of voluntary activities. Italy is regarded as having a family culture with strong hierarchical elements, while Sweden is regarded as having a horizontal individualist culture with strong collectivist elements (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1995). In horizontal cultures, the value of equality makes it hard to endure a welfare state where the service provided is not equally distributed. Only an integrated state can assure this equality, although it is conceivable that regulations could accomplish a certain degree of equal distribution. Using this argument and the two cases, one could propose the hypothesis that voluntary organisations are more integrated in the welfare state in hierarchical societies than in horizontal societies. Thus, governance is affected by societal values.

Summarising the findings on a theoretical level, we found that an economic theory has to acknowledge institutional variance, since the opportunity set of governance mechanisms available vary between countries, dependent on administrative traditions, state actions, and ultimately on societal values. The theoretical challenge, not accomplished here, is to integrate the institutional factors in the theory.

On the other hand, we found the problem of control appear to be institutional invariant. The problem induced municipalities to make use of voluntary organisations. Thus, one can regard certain organisations, such as voluntary organisations, as intermediaries producing certainty in labour supply through storing, bundling and training labour. The practical implication of this result is that it appears to be possible to transfer control of labour to another organisation.

The empirical findings are supportive of earlier results, that the state tends to internalise operations in Sweden, but regulate them in Italy. This result indicates that the validity of our empirical research is satisfactory.

There are two major implications for further research. First, we found institutional influence on factors influencing the magnitude of voluntary activities through case studies. We are in a need of a corporate governance theory that can integrate institutional influence in the theory, being capable of making institutional predictions that are possible to test. One example of this was the culture hypothesis offered earlier. But one hypothesis does not make a theory. Further theoretical work is indeed needed. Second, we disregarded the supply side of volunteers, the individual and institutional forces creating the supply of would-be volunteers. It cannot be disregarded that the supply of volunteers, the number of volunteers, and the characteristics of them in terms of age, sex, class, skills and so on, influence the municipalities and the voluntary organisations capacity to utilise the

volunteers. The supply could differ between countries and even between municipalities because of, for example cultural values and the social-economic composition of the population. Thus, in a holistic investigation, the supply side of voluntary activities has to be included.

One important praxis implication of our results is the opportunities offered municipalities through governing the relationship with voluntary organisations, although it could offer a threat to the very aim that the municipality is trying to accomplish. We found that volunteers and their production vary because of state action of the presence of voluntary organisations. Thus, municipalities need to influence the state, which could be made through national associations. More important, however, they need to manage their relationship with voluntary organisations. Since Italy offer an example of higher degree of integration of voluntary organisations in the welfare state, Italy could serve as an example in the governance of the relationship. For example, through specifying the budget of the voluntary organisation, and through specifying the education needed of volunteers. The threat, however, is that this method of governing the relationship through integration, but retaining autonomy, could decrease the engagement from volunteers. The effort of reducing the uncertainty of voluntary labour through growing formalisation and a closer link between the municipality and the voluntary organisation will, as predicted by us, increase the municipalities incentive to utilise voluntary labour. At the same time, however, this development could bring a reduced engagement of volunteers, as indicated by the recent decrease of members in voluntary organisations in UK (Davis Smith, 1997; 1998) and Italy (Frisanco & Ranci, 1999; Springhetti, 1999).

We conclude that voluntary labour appear to be rather similar, unaffected by institutional differences, and that municipalities can make use of them, especially if they can get organisational support through volunteer organisations, including allocation and training of volunteers. Volunteers appear to be a



flexible resource, engaged in activities where the state is weak, and absent in sectors where the state have decided to have a strong presence.

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