SELFISH GIVING? VOLUNTEERING MOTIVATIONS AND THE MORALITY OF GIVING

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Following gift exchange theories, this paper explores the concept of giving in volunteering for community care in London. By looking at volunteering motivations, it explores three facets of volunteering: 1) an instrumental use of volunteering as a substitute for paid work, 2) the perceived power inequality between service users and volunteers, 3) the role of voluntary organisations that sets the morality of giving. It concludes that volunteering is characterised by its dual nature, and there is a constant process of negotiation of meaning and appropriation of its expression.
Keywords: *volunteering, gift exchange, self-fulfillment, morality of giving, unpaid work.*

Prispevek sledi teorijam o menjavi darov in se poglablja v koncept prostovoljskega darovanja na področju socialnega dela v Londonu. Ob analizi motivacije prostovoljcev se posveča trem vidikom: 1. instrumentalizaciji prostovoljstva kot nadomestka za plačano deo, 2. percepciji neenakosti v primerjavi prejemnikov storitev in prostovoljcev, 3. vlogi prostovoljskih organizacij, ki vzpostavljajo moralnost darovanja. Osrednja ugotovitev članka je, da je prostovoljstvo v svojem bistvu dihotomno in se udejanja v nenehnem procesu pogajanja in prilagajanja pomenov.
Ključne besede: *prostovoljstvo, menjava darov, samoizpolnitev, moralnost darovanja, neplačano delo.*

INTRODUCTION

Why do people volunteer? What makes people give their time for others? Is volunteering really for those who are in need or volunteers themselves?

While the idea of the gift and gift exchange is often used by practitioners of volunteering, it is also one of the research areas to which anthropology has largely contributed over decades. Gift exchange is a significant social phenomenon which reflects the way society is constructed. It is a "total social phenomenon" which reflects economic, religious, juridical, moral and aesthetic rules of society at once (Malinowski 1922). Gift exchange theories see giving as an expression of solidarity, power and hierarchy (Bataille 1988; Bourdieu 1990; Mauss 1990; Sahlins 1972). The nature of gift is double-edged that gives us pleasure and poison at the same time. Mauss (1990) sees all gifts as being constrained and interested however unconstraining and disinterested they appear. Generosity in his view is a political strategy.

The gift in our society is also much about "emotional management" (Hochschild 1979). That is why accepting and refusing a gift is often taken as accepting and refusing the giver.

Un-reciprocating a gift is similar to its refusal as it is a sign of neglect. Inalienability impels the return gift (Godelier 1999). This is how it regenerates social relations: "if friends make gifts, gifts make friends" (Sahlins 1972: 186). Thus, there is "no free gift" in our society (Douglas in Mauss 1990: vii). If there is giving, there is taking, that's how our society works. At least, that's what we think. Every act of giving has its own purpose. What is given always has to be reciprocated, even if not immediately (Bourdieu 1990). Receiving without reciprocating brings nothing but a social stigma. Therefore, in gift exchange theories, such a gift has been either treated as an exceptional case or put into one of the existing categories of giving as a peculiar variation.

Giving in modern society is discussed also in relation to market economy. Rational choice theory's transactional model treats self-interest as an essential driving force of exchange. The focus on agency assumes that individuals are rational beings who voluntarily pursue self-interest and maximize profit. The logic of transaction considers the medium of a "pure gift" as both cost and reward. The transactional part of exchange is in its symbolic function. Altruistic giving is an "expression" of "institutionalised morality" which can eventually secure the actor's "non-altruistic interest" (Parkin 1976: 170). By giving without taking, a giver can receive approval from society, which positively values altruistic and egalitarian giving. The "pure" gift is either a cost, an investment, or a reward. In this way, the two seemingly contradictory ideologies, the ideology of altruism and the ideology of negotiation, can coexist.

Nevertheless, the possibility of a pure gift hasn't lost its position. One such approach is to distinguish gift from commercial exchange. Commercial exchange is concerned with reproduction of objects whereas gift exchange is about reproduction of social ties (Carrier 1995). "With the gift, it is the intention that counts…with the market, it is the opposite: 'it's the result that counts'. That is why the gift has no price…the value of an object's ties has no monetary equivalent." (Godbout 1998:179) But others argue that the boundary between commodity and gifts may not be always clear. Bloch and Parry (1989) argue that the distinction between money and gifts is neither inherent nor absolute. The meaning of money and its sphere of exchange are culturally constructed, which should be explored by studying the "morality" of exchange in the whole context of the exchange system (Bloch and Parry 1989; Zelizer 1994). Bourdieu also says that the characteristic of the gift is in its "dual truth", the "ambiguity" which allows two opposing phenomena to coexist. On the one hand, the gift refuses self interest and egoistic calculation, and represents the generosity of the giver. On the other hand, the same act of giving does not deny the logic of exchange, its risks and constraining character (1997: 231).

The concept of stranger is an archetype which allows such possibility. Godbout argues that the gift to strangers is "quintessentially modern" in the sense that it is not circumscribed by primary obligations of kinships and friendship (Godbout 1998: 77). It is modern because unlike what the "negative reciprocity" of Sahlins' model suggests, donations and charitable giving are not meant to be aimed at a return gift exceeding the value of what has been given. The modern strangers derive from a feudal system, and are different from the archaic strangers. While archaic society in which mercantile exchange is largely to do with inter-group

exchange, modern society is characterised by "the market's infiltration of the relationships between members of the same society" (Godbout 1998: 150). What the market has done is freeing people not from the primary social obligations, but from constraints from the others in the feudal system. The gift giving in modern society is a means of communal bonding within society and not that of generating a new bond with a complete outsider.

> Modern culture, instead of concerning itself primarily with what binds us to each other, aims to free us from others, to emancipate us from social ties, which it views as unacceptable constraints. The end result of this process is that any social ties must become voluntary. This great gift of modernity is the exit, universalised: our personal relationships are freely chosen, and assumed by them. (Godbout 1998: 162)

These insights into giving offer us a rich perspective into our understanding of giving, and volunteering seems a perfect example to explore a mechanism in which we practice giving in modern society. The theories of gift tell us that the gift functions as a social glue, and the very idea of the social derives from the sense of reciprocity. Then what about giving without reciprocity? If there is no apparent return gift, do people still give? What are the reasons for such act? As an act of giving, volunteering appears to be giving without an apparent return benefit but it is also promoted as a form of exchange at times. Is it a form of exchange or a rare example of free gift?

Exploring such ambivalent balance between different values and qualities of volunteering requires a more detailed study which takes social and cultural contexts into consideration. Volunteering is indeed, a highly cultural activity. Titmuss's famous study of blood donation in Britain and America, illustrates how the morality of giving reflects onto the patterns of giving (Titmuss 1970). A more recent work by Wright (2002) reveals how the terms "charity" and "philanthropy" are perceived differently and hence practiced differently in the two countries.

In the following sections, I will illustrate how volunteering motivations reflect the individual volunteers' understanding as well as prevailing social perceptions of volunteering.

VOLUNTEERING FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN LONDON

Volunteering and formally organised voluntary action have a long history in Britain (Kendall and Knapp 1996). There are also a number of different definitions of the "voluntary sector" and "volunteering" (Lewis 2005). The area of activity is diverse and covers social and health service, criminal justice, education, employment, cultural and leisure activities, development and environmental activities to name a few (Low et al. 2007). In the British context, "volunteering" generally refers to any activity based on either "non-profit" or "free-will", and it includes wide varieties from a formal volunteering through an institution to an informal volunteering in a self-help community (Davis-Smith 1992; Rochester 1992). In the followings, I explore a formal volunteering that is an act of free will and does not involve any material return benefit.

The data is based on 18-months fieldwork in two locally based voluntary organisations in

the inner city London in the period 2002-2004, and 2010. The data collection was conducted by means of participant observation, semi-structured interviews and informal conversation with volunteers, paid workers and service users. The area is characterised by a socio-economically diverse neighbourhoods: it contains several wards which are recognised as the most deprived in the country while the rest was inhabited by wealthy residents with above average income. In the last decade, the area has seen an increasing number of ethnic minorities and migrants. The sharp contrasts between the poorest and the wealthiest, long-time British residents and newly arrived residents of various nationalities, and a growing population of the elderly and young professionals and students, were remarkable. The two organisations were located in the area which signified a geographical boundary between the affluent and deprived neighbourhoods. I will call them Volunteering for the Elderly and London Community Project hereafter.

Volunteering for the Elderly aimed at supporting the independence of people over the age of 60, by providing services such as shopping trips, telephone links, accompanying hospital visits, be-friending and gardening. London Community Project was a community centre which offered free computer facilities, a low cost photocopying machine, a low cost fax machine, free English language courses, computer courses, a homework club for local children, leisure activities, and meeting rooms for the local community meetings. Tea and coffee was provided for 30 pence to all visitors at the reception in which there was free access to computers and an information service on welfare matters and local events. Wheelchair access was built in 2000 which was the only disabled access in public facilities in the area. I had an access to 103 volunteers during my fieldwork. Amongst them, I had a regular daily or weekly contact with 51 volunteers.

MULTIPLICITY OF VOLUNTEERING MOTIVATION

Volunteers of both organisations had diverse backgrounds in terms of their age, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic circumstances. Although there were slight tendencies of finding more women of older age in care-oriented activities, paid workers said such characteristic was not significant enough considering the gender proportion in the population and also the change in generation. Paid workers of both organisations also claimed the diversity of volunteers regarding their socio-cultural backgrounds as well as their reasons to volunteer. Volunteering involves a wide range of activities and each activity allows individuals to find multi-faceted functions. The versatility and multi-functional nature of volunteering make it difficult to discuss volunteering in general as Wilson (2000) claims, and pinpoint what volunteers are looking for out of their activity. Their answers varied from a general explanation such as "being asked", "having time", "meeting people", to a more specific one referring to an activity of their choice such as an interest in the service users' group and the activity itself. However, not all volunteers were clear about their motivation. Although there is a prevailing understanding that "being asked in person" is a very common and often the most effective strategy to recruit

volunteers, volunteers in the field whose motivational elements were either not clear or external such as being asked, showed less commitment to their activity (Davis-Smith 1998; Verba et al. 1995). In both organisations, paid workers considered "asking in person" as the most effective device of volunteer recruitment. In fact, recruitment devices which were available to these small voluntary organisations usually were limited often due to lack of funding: asking in person, leaving brochures and posters at public places, and getting in touch with the local volunteer bureau; a "clearing house" to mediate volunteers and voluntary organisations. Asking in person was, almost the only device they could directly work on. A paid worker explained that this strategy was also a good way to raise an awareness of volunteering:

> It's just about this idea of 'free' participation…if it's voluntary, people usually don't pay much attention, don't think about it…maybe, they do, but not enough to actually make it happen. There are also just too many (voluntary) organisations…especially in London, people are rather annoyed by those fundraisers on the street. Most people don't bother…it's (voluntary organisations) everywhere, really…Asking in person is good, not just because people find it difficult to say no…I hope (laugh)…but I think it gives an opportunity to think about it to people who otherwise wouldn't volunteer even if they are interested.

Even if it was not compulsory, volunteers whose participation was not entirely voluntary had negative consequences. At Volunteering for the Elderly, paid workers sometimes received a complaint from service users that students who volunteered as a part of their school programme sometimes showed relative disinterest or cancelled their appointments without notice: it was common amongst young teenage students who were encouraged by the school to volunteer to show their lack of interests by action. Such finding supports what Clary and Snyder (1999) argue in their analysis of the use of volunteering opportunity to enhance pro-social behaviour, and negative consequence of involuntary participation.

Overall, many volunteers had more than one reason for volunteering to talk about which they thought affected their motivation. Multiplicity of volunteering motivation was a remarkable feature (Chacón and Vecina 2000).

These motivational elements had a different weight at different times as volunteers changed their perception of volunteering through their experience and varied life circumstances. In many cases their motivation is re-negotiated from time to time. Multiplicity of volunteering motivation helps resistance to certain changes which may affect volunteering participation: a loss of one's motivational factor does not necessarily mean an end to volunteering as it can be handled by other motivations.

The function of volunteering also varies in different activities. Each volunteering involves different types of activities and offers different experiences which may connect to volunteers' individual needs and motivations. Moreover, individuals find a different value in the same volunteering activity. The function of volunteering in terms of volunteering motivation is therefore difficult to generalise. In this regard it is more helpful for the study of volunteering to look at the fluidity of volunteering and how they pursue their multi-faced interests than treating the function of volunteering in a general term as it is fixed.

There are also a number of external elements which affect one's engagement in volunteering such as time, money, paid work, family responsibilities and other commitments in life. In volunteering management studies, these elements have been put into a single issue of personal circumstance: while a change in personal circumstance has been treated as one of the main factors for dropping-out, its mechanism has not attracted much interest from either practitioners or researchers on volunteering (Hooghe 2003). These elements are in fact, indirect resources of volunteering which fuel or burn out volunteering motivation, and are important for the continuation of volunteering as well as motivation. In a wider context, these are also resources which affect one's quality of life, and which volunteering may have to compete against. The degree of impact these elements have on volunteers' motivation depends on individual volunteers' priority in life regarding their interests and needs. In these contexts, flexibility and understanding on the part of voluntary organisation plays a pivotal role regarding the maintenance of volunteers.

SELFISH GIVING: IS VOLUNTEERING AN ACT OF SELF-FULFILLMENT?

Another characteristic of volunteering motivations is volunteers' focus on self-fulfilling purposes. Their explanations of motivational factors were self-completed and they had little to do with service users in their explanations. Such characteristic appears to suggest that volunteering is a self-satisfactory activity.

There was also a clear indication of individuality and decreasing significance of social influence, especially that of family members and friends in their stories of volunteering. Apart from several exceptions who talked about their familiarity with volunteering and its connection to their kin members and close friends who were engaged in volunteering, most volunteers denied any such connection. Instead, they emphasised that it was their personal choice. When I asked further about volunteering experience and its influence on other people around volunteers, many claimed that they did not even talk about their volunteering experience to their friends and family members. The tendency was more remarkable with younger people; older volunteers were more likely to talk about their volunteering "as much as you talk about other stuff". A student volunteer in his early twenties said,

> I don't see any point. Why should I go on (talking) about my volunteering? Nobody is really interested. They don't ask me either...and I don't have that much to say...I guess I have other things to talk about.

For another volunteer in her late twenties, talking about volunteering to others was not only needless but patronising.

> It sounds like I'm doing something. I do it for old people, but I enjoy it. I don't feel that I'm doing charity, do you know what I mean? ... it's like "oh, you, such a poor thing. I feel so sorry for you. Let me help", that kind of thing. I think it's really patronising.

These volunteers considered actively talking about volunteering to others unfavourable or even distasteful and regarded it as an expression of self-praise. Altruism in such context was seen as being hypocritical and fake. In fact, the significance of altruism and volunteers' interests in others' benefit in volunteering have been uncomfortably set also in the study of volunteering. While a traditional image of volunteering, which typically comes from the Victorian era, carries altruism as the main part of volunteers' motivation, altruism almost loses its significance in today's studies of volunteering. Scholars are usually suspicious of altruistic motives for volunteering and that the fact that many people choose "wanting to help others" in survey research is considered as a potential fault caused by a sentiment of having to give the right answer (Davis-Smith 1998; Smith 1983). Altruism is seen as a mask to camouflage self-interests, which corresponds to Berking's argument on the ideology of self-interest as a moral code of practice (Berking 1999). They argue that there are personal reasons for volunteering behind altruism and conclude that "it's usually not possible to demonstrate that altruism is truly a cause of voluntarism" (Piliavin and Charng 1990: 55).

Does this indicate that volunteering is a self-fulfilling act? Is helping others only a by-product of volunteering activity and not its purpose? In the following sections, I will explore three facets of volunteering: 1) the relation between volunteering and paid work, 2) volunteers' perception of service users and a sense of inequality inherent in volunteering, and 3) the logic of exchange used by voluntary organisations and organisational culture which promote an instrumental aspect of volunteering.

WORK AND VOLUNTEERING: IS VOLUNTEERING MERELY UNPAID WORK?

What volunteering offers in its relation to paid work is becoming increasingly important (Gay 1998). As the UK job market treats work experience as a crucial requirement, volunteering is a great opportunity to gain some knowledge and skills. In fact, volunteering is generally accepted as a type of work experience in the job market, which adds re-assuring value to volunteering that is important, especially for many young job seekers who wouldn't otherwise have any job opportunity. Such close relation to labour market is also affecting the perception of the social value of volunteering. It has become a common practice that the significance of volunteering is evaluated in terms of the potential monetary value of its productivity in comparison with other labour forces in market economy.

Another work related motivation for volunteering is its connection to previous work experience (Tylor 2003; Wilson and Musick 1997). For those who are retired, a volunteering activity can be something through which they could use their skills and knowledge learnt in their previous experiences of paid work. Using their skills and experiences, volunteers may feel more comfortable with what they do. Familiarity is one of the criteria of volunteers' preference

in their choice of activity. These connections to paid work support what spillover theory claims (Wilson and Musick 1997).

Work is in fact, not only about being paid (Wallman 1979; Parry et al. 2005). It has various other functions some of which can be pursued in volunteering. Work offers a framework to arrange time, a "rhythm of life" which helps people organise a life cycle. Work also generates a sense of achievement and being useful. The feelings of being useful and contributing to society are particularly prominent in formal volunteering through an organisation. Unlike informal volunteering, working through an organisation carries social recognition. The presence of an institution plays a role in certifying their participation and acknowledging social significance of their work. These functions attract many people who are out of the job market for various reasons such as age, physical and mental disorders, and other commitments and responsibilities in life. In this regard, volunteering can be a substitute to paid work.

Nevertheless, it does not mean that most volunteers are out of work. Although there were not many, some volunteers had full-time or part-time paid work. These individuals volunteered after work or during weekends. Despite their constraints of time, they showed no less commitment than volunteers who were unemployed.

George was in his mid twenties, and was part of shopping escort group for the elderly. He lived and worked in a rough part of the neighbourhood near the organisation. George had full-time work as a postman. He was talkative and very friendly to everyone in the shopping group. His interest in volunteering had "several reasons". He had been volunteering for roughly six months, but he was thinking of volunteering long before. One of the reasons was his work shift. He was free and available.

> I have time. Everyday, I finish my shift by noon. I start early but what do you do after? My girlfriend has got work until five. I'm on my own. This volunteering stuff is once or twice a week. It's good…you know, to fill in some time *(laugh)*.

Another reason was his dissatisfaction with paid work.

> It's pretty impersonal. There is no communication. Do you think it's strange? I thought so too! *(laugh)* yeah, it's not like "having a chat while delivering". I don't get to talk to people at work, but you come here and it's all different. The ladies are nice and they want to talk, right? I like that.

His volunteering, however, started after his travel to India where his family was originally from. Having seen a "different world", he felt he wanted to do something.

> It was just different…things are better here, better there, it depends…but when I came back, I thought old people were treated badly here…it's not right. I searched on the internet and found the Voluntary Bureau. They sent me here. It's good, it's rewarding. I feel better.

For George, volunteering was complementary to his paid work. It helped him organise

his free time, offered him an opportunity to contribute to a wider social issue that he was interested, which gave him a sense of satisfaction.

A work-related perspective however, has a potential risk of treating volunteering as unpaid work. This logic not only looks at volunteering simply in terms of its lack of economic benefit but also assesses the value of volunteering in terms of its labour force and gives volunteering a subordinate value. In fact, it is a common practice to describe the social value of volunteering according to its dedicated labour force and estimated monetary value.

Those who consider volunteering as a stepping stone to paid work especially shared this view. Volunteering was a tool to find better work whose value is socially proved in the form of payment. Volunteering as unpaid work is, at this point, not merely a matter of the lack of payment but is work which is not good enough to have a social value. Therefore, paradoxically, local authorities which encourage the unemployed to volunteer for their work experience do not encourage the unemployed to volunteer for long time. This is seen as lack of willingness to find paid work.

In both organisations, there were remarkably larger numbers of people who volunteered for work experience in an activity-oriented volunteering such as a local newspaper group than in care-oriented volunteering. They were mostly in their twenties and early thirties, studying or looking for a job. Not only did they show a particular enthusiasm and have a clear objective in their volunteering participation, they were more likely to apply their work ethic to the volunteering activity they were engaged with. These included time management, group cooperation, and equal participation of individual volunteers as the most important, all of which ultimately affected the efficiency and quality of work. These criteria were constantly applied to assess volunteering activities, and sometimes other volunteers when in a group. While these volunteers were appreciated by paid workers for their commitment and enthusiasm, a potential problem of such a work-oriented approach was that they could be disappointed with their activity for not being able to reach their standard of work. They were also more critical and often frustrated with other volunteers. This was more prominent in a group activity in which volunteers did not always share the same idealism: some people volunteered to enjoy an activity and some others did not want to make much commitment.

In the case of Paul, his expectation caused him constant arguments with other volunteers. Paul was one of the regular members of the community newspaper editorial group. He was in his early thirties and had a degree in politics and mass media. While he had work experience in a few different fields, at the time of my fieldwork, he was unemployed for a year. Paul had a strong interest in journalism influenced by his journalist father who passed away a few years earlier.

For Paul, volunteering for the local newspaper was not just an activity but an equivalent to work. In fact, he mentioned his willingness to make the newspaper "as good as national ones". He always came to the meeting, made a number of suggestions and engaged in the whole process of publication. He wrote a few articles in every issue, dedicated himself walking around to make contract with local shops for advertising, actively attended public meetings, and learnt computer software for editing. People like Paul, who volunteered for work experience, in fact,

shared similar sense of efficiency and professionalism. Their strong emphasis on efficiency, however, soon made them critical of other volunteers who were not as enthusiastic as they were and who disagreed with their rather strict work ethics. Paul was not happy when other volunteers did not write an article by an expected date. He was not satisfied with the quality of articles which were "poorly written" and that he had to edit. When the editorial group started showing much improvement and receiving letters of appraisal from the readers, he was one of the most proud in the group. Yet, his understanding of volunteering grew increasingly negative. Paul commented that it was "unfair" that the paid workers were paid as much as they were since "they do nothing".

> I know I agreed to do this for free. But sometimes I feel it's incredibly unfair that we get nothing for so much work...and they *(paid workers)* can't even give us what we need. We ask them a few things, remind them a lot of times, and we end up getting nothing or very little. We had to learn a lot for that. Now we are much better. Better organised and a lot more efficient, it seems...ah, don't call me a volunteer! I don't want to be called a volunteer, and I'm not. It's degrading. We are more professional.

For Paul, working for the newspaper became an unpaid job. Volunteering was degrading because it didn't provide satisfactory level of productivity, efficiency and rewards that he expected from paid work. When he saw his work was more "professional" regarding its quality, he no longer considered himself as a volunteer. It was more appropriate to be called "unpaid labour".

This association between volunteering and market economy explains an increasingly popular perception of volunteering: volunteering is becoming more and more instrumental in getting paid work or its substitute. It is a matter of result rather than the actor's intention and participation. It is yet questionable whether we could conclude that volunteering is an individual pursuit of self-fulfilment. Although its relation to paid work is undeniable, not all volunteering activity is equally related to paid work, and not all volunteers consider paid work to be relevant to their participation in volunteering.

WHO DESERVES VOLUNTARY SERVICES? IDENTIFICATION OF STRANGERS

A significant aspect of volunteering which has been missing in the self-focused discourse of volunteering motivations is those who receive volunteering services. Service users are not only a part of volunteering activities but also one of the aims of volunteering which many volunteers consider in the course of their participation.

Amongst various services which volunteers provided, there were activities which involved a direct interaction with service users such as taking care of the elderly and school children, and those which didn't as in the case of the local newspaper group. When we discussed volunteering motivation, volunteers in the former group mentioned their understanding of service users while those in the latter were focused on the activity itself. The presence of service users

seemed to have affected their understanding of the meaning of their activity in several ways including the social need of volunteering and what they thought volunteering meant to service users as well as to themselves. This corresponds with some studies that indicate a possibility of altruism in volunteering. Empathy for instance, is considered as a strong element which leads to an altruistic behaviour (Batson et al. 1983). Other scholars suggest that helping others cannot be fully explained by a simple notion of self-interest. Instead, they propose a pluralism of motives which allows altruism and self-interest to co-exist. (Batson and Shaw 1991; Chacón and Vecina 2000).

Volunteers who were engaged in care-oriented activities had a particularly high level of understanding about service users. It was mainly concerned with who they were volunteering for, and volunteers rarely ignored the end point of their support. While there was a significant anonymity in volunteering participants, such an attitude suggests that volunteers were not necessarily working for an abstract general collective. Volunteers choose people of one particular group as a service user over the others. It was rather an exclusive choice. Even though volunteers' relationship to service users was not personal that rarely developed into a friendship, each volunteering programme was designed for a specific group of people. Anonymity therefore, was within a given category of service users.

Identification of service users involved a different set of criteria between the voluntary organisation and volunteers. The criteria a voluntary organisation had for service users were mainly demographic such as age, the status of living, and kind of needs, whereas those of volunteers were more concerned with moral values. The difference reflected the interest of both groups: while paid workers' purpose was to clarify the eligibility of service users in order to set their target of their activity, what volunteers cared about was who deserved the voluntary services in their eyes. These values were typically related with the service users' ability to afford a service they received and what they were entitled to receive: they were perceived as those who lacked resources and as a consequence, had no alternative way to get any equivalent service without a volunteer.

A volunteer gardener Laurence once commented that she would only volunteer gardening for the registered service users of the organisation and not for her friends who could afford a gardener. Laurence started volunteering to practice English and meet new people. She was in her mid thirties, originally from France. She and her husband had lived in London for a few years. Her husband had long working hours and travelled for his work very often. Although she could sometimes accompany him, she was often on her own. She used to work for a journal as a writer before coming to London, however, she didn't feel her English was good enough to find a similar job in London. She also volunteered at a museum where she was hoping to get a paid work in the future, but her lack of confidence in language remained. She explained that it was mainly because she didn't have enough opportunity to talk to native English speakers. People she met in London were mostly French speakers who were from her husband's work contacts and she only spoke French both at home and outside. By visiting the locals who were mostly English elderly people as a volunteer gardener, she found it easier to improve her English.

While Laurence enjoyed her weekly gardening, she was clear about the receiving end of her service. Explaining why she would only do it for the service users, she said:

Once I told somebody about my volunteering, and they said, "oh, you can come and do my garden, if you like". I would never do that! I said no. Why should I volunteer for them? They can hire a gardener. I volunteer for these people *(service users)* because they cannot afford a gardener, and they can't do it by themselves. I wouldn't otherwise do it for free.

Laurence was also active in talking to the paid workers to improve the services they were offering. She asked them to buy some gardening equipment which other volunteers may also need, and tried to learn more about the organisation as she found that many service users didn't know what other services they could receive from the organisation. Such information was valuable to the organisation especially to paid workers who were eager to learn ways to improve their services. Paid workers listened and appreciated such ideas and suggestions from volunteers and incorporated them into their projects.

Another volunteer George whom I introduced earlier was also strongly concerned about the need of change in the way old people were treated. These comments show how their understanding about the service users related to the support they were offering. At the same time, such understanding also manifested their need to be involved as a volunteer. In this regard, volunteers' selection of service users indicated their perception of both social needs and social responsibility. These volunteers were also likely to value their volunteering activity in terms of their personal contact with some individuals in the course of their participation, and the service users' reactions and achievements they observed.

For some volunteers, whom they volunteered for was more important than which activity they were engaged in. The significance of volunteering for those who had a strong attachment to an organisation, such as Sean, was defined in terms of his relationship with the organisation's support which had a great impact on his life. These volunteers' act of giving was also much to do with their self-identity in a sense that volunteering activity formed part of what they valued of themselves.

Sean was in his early sixties. He was one of few volunteers who were a part of the editorial group of the local newspaper from the very beginning. At the initial meeting when the newspaper group was set up, Sean came with his son. He was always friendly and talkative. On the newspaper, he had his column in which he wrote a number of historical anecdotes of the Borough and some of his daily thoughts often over a traditional English lifestyle in a reminiscent tone. A few years prior to the time we met, Sean was in trouble with his accountant who caused him his bankruptcy. His marriage finished during the same period. His elder son who lived in Spain after dropping out of school came back with his daughter. His son was alcoholic. Sean loved his granddaughter, "she is sweet. I love her very much. I'm always amazed how positive this little girl is". Sean said it was through his elder son who came to the organisation for a weekly meeting as a part of his rehabilitation program that he got to know the place. In the Christmas issue of the newspaper, he wrote an article to introduce the thirtieth anniversary of the legal advice centre run by volunteers. It was a sister organisation of London

Community Project next door. In the article, he explained that it was his younger son who was engaged in "some kind of charitable work" who found Sean sleeping rough in despair. He was at the end of his "tether, being homeless, penniless and feeling utterly dejected". The organisation gave him advice and supported him to get back his life. It was these experiences Sean went through which led him to engage in volunteering. In some ways, it was not only the volunteering activity which he enjoyed, but also possibly more importantly, the connection he felt with the organisation which helped his commitment to volunteering, and empathy to those who were going through hardships in their life.

These examples illustrate the ways in which volunteers can develop connection, empathy, and understanding of service users through their volunteering experience.

INEQUALITY, DISINTERESTEDNESS, AND MORALITY OF GIVING

Volunteers' understanding of service users as those who cannot otherwise afford the type of service volunteers offer, is also related to what allows them to just give without receiving. Service users' inability to take care of themselves is also about their inability to reciprocate what they receive. This understanding allows volunteers not to expect reciprocity for what they give, which helps them to avoid a feeling of being used and exploited. For this reason, volunteers often offer a service only to those who are in need and not others including their friends and kin members. Volunteering for those who are in fact capable of doing it by themselves or paying for the same service is allowing them to take an advantage of volunteers. It is a matter of exploitation. The inequality of volunteers and service users is inevitable in this regard. Ultimately, volunteers' choice of service users is what enables volunteering to be "giving without receiving". On the part of service users, this understanding represents volunteers' sense of care, which is often considered as the reason why they prefer volunteers to social workers for daily support.

That does not however, mean that volunteers are only interested in pursuing their self-interest. On the contrary, volunteers' choice of service users shows that they do care about and are interested in the service users. What they are not interested in and not expected to be interested in, is an ultimate reciprocity of help. This is a paradox of interests and disinterests in volunteering: volunteers are interested in a group of people that allows them to be disinterested in return benefit.

Representation of self-interest has yet a further implication. There is a moral code of equality in the organisational context. Despite the apparent perceived inequality between volunteers and service users described above, volunteers associate self-sacrifice and altruism with arrogance: altruistic people are, in their eyes patronising and disrespectful to the recipients of their support because it certifies the receivers' inferiority to the giver. Inequality is a social stigma. On a number of occasions, volunteers showed no hesitation in talking about others' volunteering as "helping" and approved of its value in the work of the organisation they volunteered for. Nevertheless, the stories of their volunteering motivation were heavily

focused on themselves and there was a significant reluctance to talk about altruistic intention in volunteering. Answering my question of whom they volunteered for, many volunteers said that they did it for themselves. These attitudes also corresponded to their reluctance to share their experience with their friends and family members. These individuals considered actively sharing their experience with others as showing off their social contributions and thus treated their participation in volunteering as a personal matter.

Such attitude corresponded to the organisations' values. Equality was an important value which voluntary organisations emphasised. Both organisations I looked at had a clear statement concerning equality amongst all participants. A policy of equal opportunity, negation of hierarchy, calling each other by first names, and encouragement of equal participation were all part of the organisational principle in volunteering. Equality was a moral code of practice in volunteering applied to all relationships between volunteers, service users and paid workers.

In this light, focusing on volunteers' self-fulfilling interests is convenient for two reasons. It helps preventing people from facing politically incorrect issue of inequality between the givers and receivers. It also helps volunteers to focus on what is under their control and not what is not such as the way in which their service is perceived by the receiver. Voluntary organisations play a crucial role as a mediator in maintaining volunteering relationships which are otherwise often fragile and unreliable.

As Wright (2002) suggests, the discourse of giving involves social and cultural values and morality. While her research indicates that the word "charity" is preferred to "philanthropy" in the British context, what volunteers' attitude reveals is a negative connotation attached to the idea of giving itself which needs to be appropriated in certain context. By saying volunteers pursue their self-interests, an awkward notion of inequality can be avoided in volunteering discourse.

Volunteering motivation therefore, cannot be reduced to a simple matter of self-fulfilment. Neither has the ideology of self-interest entirely separated individuals from a connection to others (cf. Berking 1999). Behind a self-completed discourse of volunteering motivation, there is sign of an interest in others' benefit in a certain type of volunteering. Unlike a prevailing image of altruism, their interest in others' benefit is not something which denies self-interest. Two seemingly contradictory elements therefore can co-exist in volunteering, which correspond to what has been claimed as pluralism of motives (Batson and Shaw 1991; Godbout 1998).

Self-interests and interests in others' benefit are more complementary than antithetical given the complex nature and context of volunteering which involves interestedness and disinterestedness at the same time.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have looked at volunteering motivation as a socially and culturally constructed discourse. Volunteers have shown diverse backgrounds and reasons to volunteer, which indicate multi-functionality of volunteering and pluralism of motives.

Volunteers focus on self-fulfilment and denial of altruism appeared to suggest that volunteering is a selfish act of giving. However, behind this selfish giving and disinterest in return gift was a complex mechanism of volunteering that requires contextualisation.

Like gifts, volunteering mediates people. It connects those who are in need and those who can afford to give. It can act as a social glue with a help of voluntary organisations. Unlike a traditional gift exchange setting, volunteering in urban modern society is anonymous and free from obligations. Participants emphasise the individuality and voluntariness of their participation which is free from external social influences.

But this giving is also not free from poison (cf. Laidlaw 2000, Parry 1986). As much as unreciprocated gift causes a social unrest in the world of gift exchange, the concept of inequality causes a social stigma in volunteering. Therefore, although return gift from the receiver is not expected, the issue of inequality has to be handled with care. Giving as a self-fulfilling act has a perfect place in this system. An increasing association between volunteering and labour market also causes a stir. Volunteering as an opportunity for work experience may invite more individuals but it involves a risk of making volunteering unpaid labour. This not only negates the value of participation but also makes it merely a tool to something else and humiliates participants who expect more rewards for their work. Thus, giving in volunteering is characterised by its ambivalent nature.

Volunteering does not fit comfortably either to a traditional model of gift exchange or to commercial exchange. It exists in an ambiguous zone between exchange and the gift, interests and disinterests, commercial market and giving without return benefits, public and private: it conflates spheres which are conventionally conceived of as being in opposition. Within a complex organisational context, there is a constant process of negotiation of meaning and appropriation of its expression.[1]

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SEBIČNO DAJANJE? MOTIVI PROSTOVOLJCEV
IN MORALNOST OBDAROVANJA

Prispevek sledi teorijam o darovih in njihovi izmenjavi, pri čemer se posebej posveča konceptu obdarovanja oziroma dajanja v kontekstu prostovoljnega socialnega dela v Londonu. Tamkajšnji prostovoljci opisujejo skrb zase in za lastne interese, hkrati pa omenjajo še koristi za druge, ki so udeleženi v prostovoljskih dejavnostih. Na ta način izpostavljajo večplastnost prostovoljstva in raznolikost motivov ljudi, ki se vključujejo v takšne dejavnosti. V vsakem primeru so motivacijski dejavniki prostovoljcev navadno povezani z njimi samimi, zaradi česar je njihovo razdajanje tudi samoizpolnjujoče. Altruizem se v takšnem kontekstu pogosto dojema celo negativno, saj zbuja pokroviteljski vtis pri prejemnikih prostovoljskih storitev. Avtorica prispevka pojasni, da se za takšnimi kontradiktornostmi vendarle skriva globlji smisel.

Prispevek obravnava prostovoljske motive v kontekstualno konstruiranem diskurzu, pri čemer se posebej posveča trem temam: 1. povečani zavesti o prostovoljstvu kot odskočni deski k plačanemu delu (ali kot nadomestku dela), 2. percepciji neenakosti med prostovoljci in prejemniki storitev, ki je neločljivo povezana s prostovoljstvom, 3. vlogi prostovoljskih organizacij, ki ustvarjajo moralna pravila o dajanju in skrbijo za promocijo prostovoljstva kot sredstva za izpolnjevanje lastnih interesov.

V sklepu avtorica ugotavlja, da je v obravnavanem družbeno-kulturnem kontekstu za prostovoljstvo značilna dvojnost. Prostovoljstvo se namreč pozicionira v dvoumnem območju med sferama, ki jih navadno percipiramo kot nasprotna pola, v kompleksnem organizacijskem kontekstu pa dejansko opažamo nenehen proces pogajanja pomenov teh polov in njihovega udejanjenja.

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