

Civicness in the governance and delivery of social services

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Chapter 1

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Civiness in the governance and delivery of social services

The spheres of the state, the market and the third sector (or civil society) have all been heralded as breeding grounds for civility, as well as decried as sources of vice. We argue that sectorial perspectives should be left aside and examine how civil behaviour can be identified and encouraged in any institutional setting. To that end, this chapter introduces the concept of civiness, discusses its basic dimensions, and applies it to the area of social services. The chapter ends with a brief description of the other chapters in this edited volume.

1. Introduction

The spheres of the market, the state and the third sector have each been credited with the guardianship of civilization. Not only are such claims to exclusivity dubious in empirical terms, they also lead us into a conceptual dead end. This book aims to introduce the concept of ‘civiness’ as a means of helping to overcome these sectorial biases and taking theory-building in a new, more promising direction.

It has often been claimed that third sector organizations are carriers of civil values and that participation in non-political voluntary associations enables people to learn civic skills and, in effect, to be ‘civilized’. According to that line of thought, the third sector and its organizations have broadly been identified with civil society. Third sector organizations are termed civil society organizations (CSOs) and civil society itself, as an “organized civil society”, is associated with a sector of special organizations. However, as Dekker notes in his contribution to this volume, the evidence for the positive contribution that these organizations make to the civility of individuals and society is, at best, mixed. Any effects of internal socialization they might have appear to be quite limited and their often narrow representation of special interests in the public sphere does not necessarily advance a civilizing public discourse.

As for the market and the state, similar points can be made. In his chapter, Evers refers to claims about the civilizing effects of *doux commerce*, the ability of trade and commerce to mitigate conflicts and convert them into peaceful competition. Indeed, one of the assumptions behind the work of Adam Smith was that the market

system would free citizens from tyranny. Yet to others, the market represents greed and oppression, and is the world's primary source of vice. Similar charges have been made against the state. It can be an instrument of oppression and bureaucratic imperialism. Yet, according to many political theories, as well as in legal and public administration literature, democratic states and their institutions are the ultimate guardians of civil virtues. People that become active in civilized ways do so as members of the citizenry that, as a collective, forms the state as a democratic republic. All of this is true, but none of it in an absolute sense.

We believe that such sectorial perspectives fail to address the real issue, and fail to reflect the realities of contemporary civility. Civilized forms of action may refer to peoples' role in economic exchange, their role as active citizens and as members of one or more third sector organizations which advance special demands and represent special perspectives. And as some of the contributions to this book show, the degree of civility within social services, which we take here as a case in point, cannot simply be traced back whether these services belong to one or the other sphere or sector. Our concern should not be to promote the virtues of any one specific sector, but to examine how virtues and 'virtuous' behaviour can be identified and encouraged in any institutional setting.

We would like to introduce the unusual term 'civicness' as a catalyst for this crossing of spheres and cross-disciplinary discussion of modern civil society. We hope it will prove useful in liberating us from narrow sectorial approaches, and in connecting the knowledge we can use from philosophy, sociology and political science, social policy and even public management literature. But what is civicness? The book will address this issue both in theoretical terms through a discussion of concepts and academic disciplines, and in empirical terms through the analysis of its realization in various institutional settings. Empirically, our analysis of these processes and institutions focuses on the area of social services, because this is an area where (1) state, market and third sector combine, and (2) civicness is itself central to the delivery of services.

2. A working definition of civicness

The aim of our collective efforts was to take up and develop the notion of civicness as a point of reference for the analysis of services, especially in the field of social services. The notion of civicness is closely related to that of 'civility'. When the latter term is debated, it is usually associated with the virtues and manners of individual citizens – commitment to other people, social concern, involvement and responsibility; the ability to refrain from aggression in conflicts, mutual respect – all these are associated with civility. Likewise, there is much agreement about what constitutes its opposite: selfish behaviour, indifference towards others, the inability

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to refrain from aggression in conflicts, irresponsible behaviour, a low level of internalization of general moral rules, and other vices.

There is no generally accepted definition of the term. We will interpret civickness as *the capacity of institutions, organizations and procedures to stimulate, reproduce, and cultivate civility*. By using this definition, we want to spotlight the interaction between institutional settings on the one hand, and the behaviour of politicians, professionals and users on the other. Accordingly, our focus in this book is on the processes and institutions in society that promote the attitudes and values mentioned above.

On the basis of this definition, one can distinguish at least three dimensions of civickness:

- The *social* dimension of civickness includes issues like the overall degree to which a society or political community addresses citizens as equals, in spite of their differences. When it comes to service systems, the question is to what extent they contribute to social inclusion and integration. By contrast, the “uncivic” qualities of such systems would privilege or stigmatize specific groups.
- The *personal* dimension manifests itself in people’s everyday behaviour, from passivity and egotism to respectful and tolerant behaviour. In the area of services, this personal dimension of civickness concerns the extent to which the subjective points of view, personal situations and autonomy of users/ clients/ customers are respected, as opposed to authoritative or impersonal behaviour on the part of professionals and organizations.
- The *political* dimension relates to governance and its democratic qualities, and the degree to which people are addressed as active citizens. In the area of social services, there are issues about whether the structures of governance and service delivery include opportunities for public debates and processes of deliberation, forms of democratic participation by citizens, either in decision making or in the co-production of services.

Within the general theme of civickness, the various contributions to this book address a range of subject areas. In doing so, they cover both the level of service delivery and the level of governance.

At the level of *service delivery*, the civickness of organizations is related to their internal relationships (a point addressed by Brandsen in his chapter) and to relationships between professionals and users. What configurations of organizational characteristics and what forms of service interactions are most likely to cultivate civility? In social services such as education, health care, social services, welfare and other fields, there are some tough questions about the position of professionals and clients, especially after the rationalization imposed by the public management

reforms of recent decades. In elderly care, for instance, it is difficult to see the person in need of care as a member of a family at a time of scarce resources and tightened supervision. There are service areas where these issues are at the forefront of the debate, for instance, in discussions over the influence of social and community work in urban settings, or debates in health care over self-determination, privacy and lifestyles. In such cases, what is the proper role for managers and professionals? And which attitudes and skills make 'good' clients?

At the level of *governance*, a basic point of contention is the extent to which democracy needs civic virtues. For some, democracy can be brought about mainly by intelligent institutional arrangements that make it possible to turn a society of devils into a community that works for the common good, making the best for society out of people that may only be concerned with their own personal advantage. For others, democratic forms of governance are inconceivable without a culture of active citizenship and the civic virtues that go with it. The latter point of view has gained wider recognition over the last decade, as is evident, for instance, in the discussion on social capital. Our book also begins with this normative assumption. It emphasizes that any search for civiness, whether it be generally or in the field of personal social services, needs a basic public element – public spaces, where people can debate and participate freely and in which different sectors can be looked at from joint perspectives and be opened up to mutual influences. In this way, equality and respect can pervade business and, correspondingly, an entrepreneurial attitude can influence politics of state-institutions and third sector organizations.

3. How civiness is brought about

However, even when we accept this assumption, it is far from clear how a civic culture can be realized and what kind of balances and links are needed between public and private elements. With respect to the civiness of social services for instance, the predominant belief was that a completely state-public service and a professional public service ethos would – along with democracy – be best suited to bringing about a civic culture in social services. This was a central element of the welfare legacy, but an element that has now been called into question. But what can take its place? The reality, increasingly, involves hybrid system of service delivery – at times involving a greater role for market elements, private business and users as consumers, and on other occasions (but sometimes simultaneously) involving greater decentralization, local and more individual choices made by the users themselves in the co-production of services with a diversity of both public and private partners in mixed service systems.

How should such systems encourage civiness? Some argue for more active citizenship at higher levels of participation of individual citizens in governance and

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through a more active role for third sector organizations. This important idea is taken up in this volume in particular by Pestoff and Tonkens. However, things become more complicated when the users of social services and the citizens also begin to act as consumers, and third sector organizations take on a role as consumer lobbies. More civiness in social services must remain based on public opinion building, but in this context of a public of citizens, consumers and co-producers, both voice and choice may have a role. What at institutional level(s) can be interpreted as the struggle between the relative impact of the state, the market and the third sector, develops as a complementary relationship at the personal level of individuals who must act simultaneously as citizens, consumers and members of a local setting or a special community of interest when it comes to using social services.

Given that background, it makes no sense to privilege or to talk down the role of one or other sphere or sector, because beyond some structural peculiarities their real natures are to a large degree historical, marked by the impact of policies, projects and movements and the mutual impact sectors have on one other in the context of the rise and fall of such historical projects and discourses – see the description of different ‘regimes’ of civility and civiness described in this vein in the contribution of Evers. Although there are many examples of the de-civilizing effects of big capital and/or big administration taking over and the impact of a critical public is on the wane, there are also many examples of the civilizing effects that both market and state intrusion can have if they are embedded in a wider civic culture.

All this leads us back to our initial hypothesis: civiness and civility should not be conceived as, first of all, the result of the structural specificities of special sectors but rather seen as by-products of social and political concepts, movements and projects that seek to strengthen civic virtues as they develop in the public sphere and cut across sectors. The degree to which society at large is civilized and civic is, then, ultimately to be understood as the result of the continuing interplay between this kind of self-production of society and the structural impact of basic spheres and sectors.

4. The structure of the book

The subsequent chapters (2,3) start by exploring the general concept of civiness in more depth. **Paul Dekker** challenges the traditional notion that activities in civil society, seen as the sphere of society in which voluntary associations are dominant, are the most important source of civility in modern society. By interacting and finding solutions to common problems, members of associations are believed to become citizens with an interest in the common good. However, the evidence for this is, at best, mixed. It is not voluntary associations in a separate societal sphere of

civil society, but combinations of associational with public and commercial modes of social coordination that appear to offer a more promising option for civilizing modern society. The chapter discusses examples of hybridity and concludes with a plea for a wider acceptance in social research of civiness as a normative perspective. **Adalbert Evers** also argues that reflection on the concepts of civiness and civility make a difference to the usual civil society and third sector debates. He argues that there are good reasons why some of the concepts of civil society are not confined to a specific sector, but rather, by making reference to images of society at large and/or the public space, affect all sectors, depending on their constellation and interplay. Likewise, civiness and civility cannot be understood as sectoral issues. However, beyond a fundamental consensus, civiness and civility can mean different things and the predominant meanings change over time. Evers discusses these with reference to changing discourses on welfare in the field of social services. He argues that, despite the contested meanings of civility and civiness, they are points of reference for a richer discussion about the quality and overall design of social services.

The following chapters (4,5,6) analyze the concept of civiness in more specific contexts. In his chapter, **Taco Brandsen** defines the meaning of civiness in organizations. In the process of delivering services, organizations have to deal with conflicts over competing and sometimes irreconcilable values, especially at a time when they are facing competitive pressure and diminishing resources. The civiness of organizations expresses itself in how they enable positive interaction concerning such conflicts between their members. The chapter focuses specifically on the relationship between professionals and their managers. By infusing social behaviour with civil values, organizations can contribute to a wider culture of citizenship. Again at the organizational level, **Evelien Tonkens** discusses the relationship between civiness and the participation of citizens in social services. The chapter starts with the question of how participation contributes to civiness. It concludes that participation has a higher chance of success, and of fostering civiness, when certain conditions are met: when participation is structured rather than organized on a laissez-faire basis; when it is based on experience rather than expertise; when representation is substantive rather than merely descriptive; and when it is recognized that all the actors involved struggle with the tension between public and personal/group interest, and not only citizens. In a different way, **Victor Pestoff** also takes up the topic of participation in relation to civiness. Many countries in Europe are searching for new ways to engage citizens. His chapter focuses on the political dimension of civiness and co-production in a universal welfare state – Sweden. Co-production is a technique for promoting greater participation by citizens in the provision of public services. It implies a mix of both public service agents and citizens who contribute to the provision of a public service. A favourably disposed state regime and legislation are necessary for promoting greater civiness, co-production and third sector provision of welfare services.

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The next three chapters (7, 8, 9) move up to a level of analysis that focuses on the interaction of organizational issues and the system of governance. The contribution by **Kai Leichsenring** deals with the challenge of strengthening civiness in reformed methods of managing social services which seek to combine the advantages of market mechanisms, bureaucratic administration and third sector approaches. Such attempts obviously need the support of internal and external sources. Leichsenring describes two distinctive examples in the context of long-term care systems to show how a type of systemic organizational development that blends different perspectives can help to strengthen 'civic' elements – specifically communication, dialogue and shared responsibilities. **Ota de Leonardis** analyses the organizational dynamics of service provision in the framework of the welfare contractual turn in Italy, comparing two cases in order to examine when and how civiness is fostered. Particular attention is devoted to how power asymmetries on the boundary between the public and private realms are handled in organizational settings. The chapter also raises questions concerning justice vocabularies and choices. The role of service recipients – especially the least advantaged – proves to be a key issue in investigating the civiness of service provision. The interplay of state regulation and different organizations on service markets and its relationship to civiness is also the theme of the contribution by **Stéphane Nassaut** and **Marthe Nyssens**. The type of quasi-market which they look at involves the provision of personal social services at the user's home and, at the same time, labour market integration services, since the workers hired in the framework of a service voucher system are mainly disadvantaged workers. In this type of regulated market there was no simple link between the institutional status of the service providers and civiness. The for-profit providers, for instance, operated with different business practices that contained various levels of civiness not only with respect to the profile of the services but also in terms of the way the organizations dealt with vulnerable employees.

The following three chapters (10, 11, 12) focus on the differences and relationships between sectors and the question of to what extent the civiness of organizations is linked to their (third) sector adherence. **Håkon Lorentzens** looks at the Norwegian volunteer centres that exist in different forms of ownership – as autonomous, voluntary and municipal organizations. It is usually assumed that when similar welfare services are produced by different institutions, their form of ownership will put some kind of distinctive stamp upon the service they provide. However, when this assumption was tested on the Norwegian volunteer centres, a striking degree of similarity was found. The question then became how we can explain the similarities in spite of the different forms of ownership. The similar type of professionalism to be found in all the centres is seen as a major element in explaining this – the cross-sectorial impact of a professional discourse that represents itself a hybridization of different perspectives and concerns. In their chapter, **Michaela Neumayr** and **Michael Meyer** report on a research project that was guided by the hypothesis that

in the field of social services, the attitudes found in and the forms of services provided by third sector organizations are characterized by a loss of civiness as they become more market-oriented. Civiness is conceptualized as an organization's capacity to foster civility, which is understood as an individual attitude. The assumption was that CSOs would be characterized by higher levels of civiness if they were involved in advocacy and community-building activities, and by lower levels if they had a more market-oriented approach to their activities. However, to their surprise, the authors found no such negative correlation at the attitudinal level to support their hypothesis. **Silvia Ferreira's** chapter indirectly takes up the finding that there is no clear link between sector adherence and civiness. Beyond simple indications that the type of 'sector does not matter', she makes the point that the civiness of an organization must be traced back to its position within a complex environment, where sectors are just one influential element among many others. By describing the features and trajectory of the welfare mix in social service provision in Portugal, she discusses what she calls the 'contextuality' of the conditions for civiness in social services. The co-evolution of state and third sector has hampered the emergence of an explicit civiness discourse in Portugal, but the issue plays a role in the present development of new welfare mixes.

The last two chapters (13, 14) focus on politics and governance. **Bernard Enjolras** analyses recent policy changes in the regulation and governance of social services in Europe. Their contested nature is reflected in competing methods of regulation: market-based or competitive governance versus civic-based or partnership governance. It is argued that the market and civiness constitute two distinct repertoires of action and coordination mechanisms which mobilize different justifications and which view persons and objects according to different value systems. Currently, the governance of social services in Europe seems to be based on a compromise between the market-based and partnership-based governance regimes. The civic dimension of this mixed governance is enhanced by the interplay of mechanisms of representation, deliberation and participation. **Janet Newman's** chapter explores the paradoxes of contemporary public services in Britain and elsewhere. On the one hand, they are becoming less public because of a growing emphasis on competition and efficiency, and on the other hand they are being charged with more tasks relating to the interests of the public. As regards the public interest, they are supposed to serve civic values associated with citizenship rights and democracy, but are actually becoming more involved in managing and disciplining the public for the sake of civility. Newman deals critically with the still dominant trend of integrating third sector organizations in contractual relationships and with the dominant assumption that public interests can easily be realigned in hybrid public/private arrangements.

The final chapter leads us back to the first chapters dealing with the meanings of civiness and civility. In the real situations presented and analyzed in this volume, there seem to be more tensions and contradictions in efforts to become more civic

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and civil – or in efforts to make others more civic and more civil – than acknowledged in our initial serene conceptualization of civicness as the capacity of institutions, organizations and procedures to stimulate, reproduce, and cultivate civility. A strong(er) focus is needed on the changing content of civic/civil ideals and the inconsistent capacity of policies to reduce uncivil behaviour and enhance active citizenship. This is of particular interest in terms of the governance and delivery of social services, as demonstrated in various chapters and in particular the comparison of welfare discourses in Evers' chapter. They demonstrate a range of very different notions of what constitutes a civil or good society and a range of different models of service provision in the state-society nexus. We hope that this volume, with its variety of perspectives and empirical cases linked by a common concern, will stimulate further discussion and empirical analysis of what is civic and civil in the changing ideals, policies and practices of the delivery of social services.