Youth participation in NGOs in post-soviet country Lithuania

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on youth volunteering in the post – communist societies, more specifically, in the post-soviet country Lithuania. Volunteering as a formal action performed by organizations is well known in Western Europe for ages, but in Eastern European countries, especially in Baltics it has been a new phenomenon after the collapse of the former Soviet Union.

During the communist regime, volunteering was compulsory for young and for old generations. In this period of time not only the volunteering was under Soviet Union control but also the civil society, which was the keystone of voluntary activities. After the fall of the communist regime volunteering levels in Eastern Europe have decreased. However, in Lithuania volunteering in NGOs has recently become one of the most popular culture movements of youth. This research paper aims to raise an awareness on the positive and negative impacts of it.

Chapter first addresses to the significance of the topic; chapter second critically reviews the existing theoretical underpinnings related to the theme; chapter three represents the story of Lithuania; chapter four is focused on the research carried out.

Addressing the issues of youth engagement in NGOs this paper concludes that research made together with literature review can be sufficient enough to justify the negative reasons of the youth engagement in NGOs in post-soviet state.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Importance of the theme

Variety of NGOs actively spreading their ideas, trying to improve local living conditions or helping people most in need is one of the most important elements of an open society. The main feature of non-governmental organizations (in a world and in Lithuania), according to which we can identify them in the social system and distinguish them from other institutions and organizations is that they are founded without government affiliation. These are voluntary groups of organizations or individuals that are designed to protect the needs of members of the organization. The right or freedom of association or non-association is considered to be one of the most important human rights and it is included in the Constitution of almost every democratic state (Zimmer, Priller and Freise, 2004).

Active engagement of young people in decision-making process at the local and national level is essential for every society as well as Lithuania which is willing to become more democratic and prosperous. Participation means not only a contribution to the decision-making process. It is all kinds of participation in order to create a better society. Local and regional authorities are the closest to young people and should, therefore, play an important role in involving young people in the society. Moreover, local and regional authorities can help young people not only to become familiar with the principles of democratic social world but also to apply this knowledge in practice. On the other hand, the involvement of young individuals should not only be a formation of active citizens and the creation of future democracy. In order to make it really meaningful for younger generations, it is very important to give them a possibility to influence decisions or measures taken and shape these decisions not only when they are older, but also in their youth. By supporting the participation of young people in cultural activities, local and regional authorities promote social integration of youth which helps not only to cope with their own problems and difficulties but also with the challenges of a modern society (Egle Vaidelyte & Egle Butkeviciene, 2017).
Unfortunately, it is not enough to expand and reform political and administrative systems to ensure that young people's engagement in local and regional life is successful, stable and meaningful. Any strategies and measures to increase the participation of young people in the society need to be implemented in the spirit of respect for youth and in the light of the diverse needs, aspirations and circumstances. In addition, it is necessary to use certain entertainment and pleasure elements (3sektorius.lt, 2018).

**Problem.** Significant changes and developments in the recent history of Post-soviet country Lithuania have been very important in organizing citizen activity outside the boundaries of the state and the market.

Recently, due to an active participation of NGOs which are usually called as a third sector, in contrast to the public and private sectors, in a public life of Lithuania and due to the goals and measures implemented, NGOs have become a competitor to both the state and the profit-making sector. Non-state organizations are capable of taking over many functions of public administration from the governments (social security, organizing of sports activities, financial or cultural projects of education, crime prevention and etc). Usually when we talk about NGOs, we analyze the history, structure, financing, legal status, creation problems of the NGOs in order to compare them with other countries. However, it is hard to find an information explaining the motivation of people to volunteer in NGOs. A key finding from the current analysis indicates that despite the broad variation in the incentives why Lithuanians join certain NGOs, there is really one consistent distinctive feature: NGOs become first enterprises for young people where they can get their first job experience and successful interventions are those which address the personal and professional needs of the youth (3sektorius.lt, 2018).

**Therefore, the aim** of this paper would be - to find out the purpose of youth volunteering in NGOs in Lithuania. **The object of the research** - participation of young graduates in the activities of Lithuanian NGOs.
Research questions and structure

The research questions are the following:

1) For what reasons youth gets involved in NGOs? What are their motivations and strategies?
2) In which ways NGOs advertise themselves and attract young people as progressive agents for social change?

Research methods - comparative research and qualitative research method – interviewing and questionnaires.

The research study will be conducted using a comparative analysis method via secondary data from academic books and articles in relation to the concepts and theories of this paper. Questionnaires and interviews – social intervention, which uniquely transpires in social situations in which two or more individuals are physically involved will bridge the gap between applied and academic anthropology, will examine different case studies and will appreciate the context of each one. This situation invites comparative analysis and the posing of similar question how each of them conceptualizes social change processes.

Through the comparative research method, qualitative research method and focus group of young graduates I will try to find out what are the motives and strategies behind young people’s participation in NGOS; whether youth volunteering is a form of non-formal education or a possibility to get a relevant experience to find a job.

Process of the research and focus group

For this research I have chosen the Lithuanian graduates between 22-29 who are part of certain NGOs or used to volunteer in the past.
The research will be divided in the three stages:

1. Comparative research method will let to make a document analysis of the theme chosen.
2. The questionnaires and interviews are needed to investigate better the reasons of young people of volunteering in NGOs.
3. Analysis, comparison and summary of the results.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society is the main concept of understanding the functioning of democracy and its processes. Many scholars believe that the term civil society can come in many forms, some informal and some formal, such as non-governmental organizations (NGO Pulse, 2012). Anastasia Kavada approaches the definition of civil society by using the theories of several different authors. Anheier, Glasius, and Kaldor (2001:17) coins global civil society as “the sphere of ideas, values, institutions, organizations, networks and individuals located between the family, the state and the market and operating beyond the confines of national societies, polities and economies”. Baker and Chandler (2005) adds that its development can help to extend universal human values and the institutions of democracy worldwide. Global civil society is basically viewed as a product of globalization (Kavada, 2014). That means that the civil society is much bigger and much more powerful than it looks like from the first point of view. It can go beyond national, regional or local levels.

Despite of a variety contradictory concepts of the civil society by other scholars, in this paper I used a broader definition of it which could reveal a widespread impacts upon democratic processes. The process of democratization should consist of elements which cannot be reduced to NGOs alone, as many authors while talking about civil society claim. For many personal reasons active citizens tend to join associations and various movements which give them the chance to represent their interests more efficiently. According to Linz and Stepan civil society is the “arena of the polity where self-organizing and relatively autonomous groups, movements, and individuals attempt to articulate values, to create associations and solidarities, and to advance their interests” (Zimmer, Priller & Freise, 2004). However, Tufte argues that practice of communication for social change is both growing and changing its character. This means that despite the development of civil society, technological improvements and the mass use of digital media is giving the largest wake-up call for communication for social change, especially for deeper social movements they are part of. They are achieving much bigger results than more traditional
communication initiatives could achieve for in civic, community development and in other development areas. (Tufte, 2017 p. 40 & 43).

Civil society in the post-Soviet countries is weaker because of the previous compulsory participation in the state-controlled organizations that have existed in the communist regime and the passive representation of the needs of citizens. As a result, citizens are less motivated to join and actively participate in non-governmental associations. However, what encourages young people to join non-governmental organizations if the overall pattern is absolutely opposite (sc.bns.lt, 2017)?

**PARTICIPATION**

Participation as a part of social movement is closely linked to local development processes. Therefore, participation of individuals in these movements is a vital part of social movements’ success. Mayonzo uses a concept of Sherry Arnstein ‘ladder of participation’ confirming that participation definition derived from social movements so called “new social movements” in 1960s and was linked to citizens’ engagement in community development schemes. Thus, historically, participation was concentrated not on the particularities of development cooperation, but on more fundamental perspectives of citizens engaging in social change. Accordingly, this concept has been closely associated to participation in social movements, from difficult processes of citizen engagement in deliberation, enhancement and visibility in the public sphere as well as activism and empowerment (Mayonzo, 2012).

Nevertheless, author agrees that in relation to Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009), even if the scope, techniques and objectives may differ, at the centre of participation should be primary stakeholders that are the fundamental components of an intervention (Mayonzo, 2012 p. 157). Furthermore, Scott adds that Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009) identify two major forms of participation, so-called “social movement” perspective and the “institutional” perspective. In terms of institutional perspective, participation is defined as “the reach and inclusion of inputs by relevant groups in the design and implementation of a development
project, ensuring the inclusive provision of services, gathering input from civil society to pursue advocacy goals, monitoring the progress of a project and/or as a way of evaluating a project” (Scott, 2014 p. 58). From the social movement viewpoint, participation is much more broader definition which as empowering process includes the mobilization of people “to eliminate unjust hierarchies of knowledge, power, and economic distribution” (Scott, 2014 p. 58). Since participation involves people who can take the control of the decisions that have a strong meaning to their own lives, this idea characterizes participation as a process of empowerment.

However, taking into account other approaches participation has been linked not only to the larger processes of social change but also to community developments, governance processes and particular spheres of development areas.

Based on Arnstein and supplemented by Cicilia Peruzzo there can be three types of participation: non-participation, controlled participation and power participation. Peruzzo argues that non-participation, when citizens choose not to get involved still needs to be considered as a form of participation. Tufte defines how different approaches to participation outline different levels in social change processes (Scott, 2014 & Mayonzo, 2012 p.158). Arnstein’s and Peruzzo’s approaches are mainly based on the power distribution between government and the people. This approach was challenged in the late 1990s and the 2000s. The rise of the digital society expanded the term of participation at all the levels. The Zapatista revolution in 1994 was significant part of it (Tufte, 2017, p. 63 & 66). However, Arnstein’s approach of participation has been still widely used by many scholars.

Moreover, Tufte proposes very different concept of participation than other authors. He focuses on how communication processes contribute to citizenship and positive change and why citizen involvement makes that change. Nevertheless, he agrees that not every form of this kind of participation necessary creates progressive changes. Citizens sometimes can push progress back. However, as Tufte shows, societal changes necessary require citizenship (Tufte, 2017 p. 14). He claims for a fundamental rethinking of the significance of citizens’ voices, participation and power in processes of social change. This approach enables to take a step back from analyzing the particular definitions and instead review the
participation practices between subjects and institutions from a much broader social and cultural perception. In this paper I will examine whether the youth is succeeding in communication for social change. According to Tufte, there is no magic formula and each participation intervention is unique. Scott adds, the final reason why it may be tricky to specify what is participation because it contains significant variations of how participation can be understood (Scott 2014, p. 76).

Tourin’s new social thought is important for participation as well because it places into the centre not only the rights and needs of very individual and group but gives a possibility to decide who is empowered to act (Tufte, 2017 p. 13). Therefore, participation as well as social movements became a transformative concept, developed within those movements and community-based initiatives.

Overall, participation is “the state of being related to the larger whole” (Livingstone, 2013). It is the process during which individuals, groups and organizations have an opportunity to become actively engaged in a certain project, program or any other kind of activity. Youth involvement is usually linked to the participation in sports, cultural or any other activities where young people are engaged into decision making processes and other acts for social change (Joe.org, 2007).

In Lithuania until now only an integrated individual and formal institutions such as education or vocational training organizations and a labor exchange have been seen in the process of participation in terms of the labor market where all individuals were treated in the same way, unless were divided according to formal criteria such as gender, age, health status and etc. Just relatively recently, national government began talking about young graduate problems, consequent individualistic approach to these problems and the influence of non-formal knowledge and skills on labor market integration (Savanoriaujam.lt, 2018).

Participation is important in the context of this paper because I argue that Lithuania needs to adopt a new approach at the role of NGOs in youth integration process - focusing on the specific needs and problems of this socially vulnerable target group, trying to integrate youth into the labor market and to meet their needs through participation in NGO activities.
COMMUNICATION AND PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION

Scott declares that the role of communication should be not to disseminate information in order to change individual behaviors but to simplify the inclusive expression of communities’ needs. Therefore, it should involve communication that is both horizontal and dialogic, rather than vertical and monologic. In other words, communication is understood as a method of ongoing conversation between equal parts rather than as a one-way system of delivery of information from ‘one to many’. Communication is not characterized as a tool for achieving a particular objective but as process of empowering all members of the community to have their voices heard. In general, its role is to promote the empowerment processes in the society (Scott, 2014 p. 49 & 73). This explanation leaves the question open of what role the media plays in participatory communication.

In terms of NGOS, Scott declares that any media is not an independent force acting upon society but is shaped by its relations with other processes in the society, the choices and inevitable compromises involved in NGO communication. Therefore, it needs to be more appreciated because everyone can assess to it. (Scott, 2014 p. 166).

Also, Scott defines 4 stages of participatory communication: assessment of situation by using communication methods and tools; analysis of the investigation on defining the best way to apply communication to achieve the desired change; determining where the activities planned in the previous stage are to be carried out, and evaluating through the whole communication programme the final impact of the intervention (Scott, 2014 p. 76).

In regards to communication practices, “Singing revolution” is a good example how activists use the music to communicate a message through which they achieved their “informal independence”. Also, it slightly correlates to the relative deprivation theory of social movements which focuses on social deprivation.

In this paper I will critically examine how local NGOs interpret and implement the approach of participatory communication for social change, what kind of role participants have in decision making process. The main focus will be based on the following factors: a
lack of deep understanding of participatory principles among the NGO staff and volunteers, issues between development strategies that are detached from the local context and avoid broader investigation, economic and cultural challenges for youth in Lithuania. NGOs appealing to youngsters are becoming first bridges to the youth future careers as well as to their societal visions. I argue that in order to get positive results for social change, local NGOs and volunteers need to start discussing about current issues and social inequalities as part of their participatory approach.

**NON – FORMAL EDUCATION**

The main difference between formal and non-formal education is that formal education is usually linked with schools and training institutions; non-formal with community groups and other organizations.

Non-formal education became a part of the international discourse and part of lifelong learning concept in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Community.lincs.ed.gov, 2016). Non-formal education is also known as informal training (Dumitrescu, 1999). Tight (1996: 68) states that while other concepts are based on extension of education and learning throughout life, non-formal education is about highlighting the importance of education which stands beyond acknowledged educational institutions. Fordham (1993) suggests four elements that could define non-formal education: contribution to the needs of disadvantaged groups, attention to specific interests of the person, an emphasis on precise purposes and flexibility in the organization (infed.org).

In many Nordic countries non-formal education is usually called as community education and community learning, informal education and social pedagogy instead of non-formal education. Moreover, new approaches of formal education includes the great emphasis on development which primarily depends on the people themselves and that much more stress should be placed on improving their quality of life (infed.org). Tufte agrees that citizen perspective is a first key component which approaches to the processes of change and consequently to communication for development. It can be a starting point for common
understanding of new generations of communication for social change and “empowering communication activism” (Tufte, 2017 p. 14 & 88). Therefore, non-formal education plays a significant part in the social change processes.

In southern countries historically there have been many questions about usefulness of the concept when looking at the process of education. In terms of the development of non-formal education and political change the 1970s can be described as the decade of non-formal education (infed.org).

According to Lithuanian laws, non-formal education is training carried out in accordance with non-formal education programs, upon completion of which a state-recognized document confirming a degree, a certain stage or a separate regulated module or the acquisition of qualifications is not issued. The non-formal training program is designed to acquire or improve competences (E-tar. It, 2014).

In Lithuania, the main directions of activities of non-governmental organizations include: education, social and health protection, youth affairs, democratic development, assistance to disadvantaged people, culture, women's empowerment, economic development, employment, crime prevention and etc (3sektorius.lt, 2018).

The law regulating the status of non-governmental organizations defines the area of activity of these organizations very widely. The law on Public Organizations does not mention the areas of activity of these organizations. The activities of NGOs are based on their own statutes (E-seimas.lrs.lt, 2018). Consequently, a large number of non-governmental organizations are engaged in the provision of educational service. They are very active in the field of non-formal education in organizing seminars, consultations, courses, providing educational and scientific services, participating in various programs, projects, etc. In addition, non-governmental organizations help to raise staff qualifications (3sektorius.lt, 2018).

Youth policy in Lithuania is a new and flexible field of activity, started to be developed only after 1990s when Lithuania gained its independence. In 2003, the Parliament of Lithuania (Seimas) adopted the Law on the Basics of Youth Policy, which contains the
main areas of implementation of Lithuanian youth policy, defines the principles of implementation of this policy that are in line with the priorities of the European Union. Important new education and training methods were also in need to meet new challenges. One of them is non-formal education (E-tar.lt, 2003).

The purpose of youth non-formal education is to develop a conscious personality capable of solving their problems responsibly and creatively as well as actively participating in the society and developing their own social competences. Youth non-formal education helps young people to free themselves. A young person feels able to take responsibility, but in some situations overestimate his readiness for life, and adults sometimes tend not to trust and unreasonably limit the opportunities of a young person. In youth non-formal education a safe place is given to the person to feel and test his potential, and openly adopt himself to the new environment (NFE Book, n.d.).

According to the data of the Department of Statistics to the government of Lithuania, the youth accounted for 24 per cent of the total population of Lithuania. This part is gradually decreasing due to declining birth rates and increasing emigration. Therefore, it is important to create favorable conditions for Lithuanian youth, to offer a wide range of activities, to include them in the decision-making process relevant to young people and etc (15min.lt, 2017).

The Lithuanian Youth Organizations Council (LiJOT) is the largest non-governmental youth organization in Lithuania, uniting more than 68 national youth organizations and regional youth organizations. Such a large number proves that young people in Lithuania are sufficiently active, willing to participate in public life, engage in useful activities, help not only themselves but also other people.

In Lithuania the activities of a non-governmental organization have been operating relatively recently - just over a period of more than 25 years, therefore, non-governmental activity traditions, youth's skills to participate in public and civic activities in Lithuania are not fully developed. However, these organizations play the role of non-formal education for
youth as well as influence youth policies, and thus, contribute significantly to the development of youth citizenship (3sektorius.lt, 2018).

An important feature of a modern society, especially in the terms of young people, is the division and belonging to different social groups. Therefore, creating certain conditions for real participation of young people in the society is very important. This implies that information on the training of young people on how to participate in the society should be constantly developed, youth projects supported and admitted that young people are ready to devote themselves to public affairs and volunteering. Participation in public life is only fully recognized if the role of youth in political parties, trade unions and public associations is acknowledged, and especially efforts are made to support the organization of youth associations by the forces of young people themselves (A new impetus for European youth, 2001). I declare that NGOs are seen as institutions capable of developing the general skills of unexperienced young graduates in the modern world in the labor market. Participating in non-formal activities improves not only general skills but also social capital, whose importance in integrating into the labor market is also strongly appreciated. The acquisition of social capital is particularly important for the unexperienced young graduates, who are faced with additional difficulties in the process of social integration and can be negatively impacted by employment issues in the future (Savanoriaujam. Lt, 2018). Voluntarily work in NGO could be understood as a form of active citizenship where non - formal education become a part of structured learning of activism which falls between a paid job and formal education. One of the purposes of the research of this paper is to find out the motivation of youth participation in non-governmental organizations, the availability of activities of organizations and their attractiveness to young people (3sektorius.lt, 2018).
CHAPTER III: THE STORY OF LITHUANIA

Civic engagement in Baltic countries: history and terminology

Some scholars believe that in order to represent the Baltic states in their current mess more than words and numbers are needed (Lucas et al., 2009). However, all three countries of Baltic states - Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are the only ones of the former Soviet Union that have fully integrated themselves into the European Union (Grigas et al., 2013).

History says that Baltic countries had stopped existing to the outside world for nearly half a century. Soviet Union successfully brought a cultural revolution to each Baltic state. National leaders were killed or deported while others starved to death. Collectivization destroyed the peasant farms that had been the basic grounds of Baltic economies and societies.

However, the downfall of the German and Russian empires during the World War I endorsed the Baltic countries to establish their own independency. Therefore, from 1944 many Baltic citizens fought hard against Soviet armies, even “shoulder to shoulder with the Nazis at times (Lucas et al., 2009).”

Formation of civil society of Baltic countries

Civil society which embraces social movements and social establishments such as NGOs in all three Baltic countries including Lithuania was very weak during the period of Soviet Union. Therefore, even if the concept of civil society has many faces in Baltics it was relatively “empty” and dependent on Western countries’ aid. Level of organizational membership in post-communist European countries was considerably low than in the countries with strong established democratic structures. Organizational membership in the Baltic states was even one of the lowest in the Countries of Central & Eastern Europe (CCEE).
Singing revolution as the biggest civic initiative

The major political and economic reforms in Baltic states influenced by Western world has started in 1988 with beginning of “Singing revolution“. The term was coined by the Estonian artist Heinz Valk after the Tallinn Song Festival Grounds, in 1988 (Grigas et al., 2013).

Singing revolution is said to be the biggest civic initiative in Baltic countries which is still called as social phenomenon by many authors and is related to independence movements during the last years of Soviet domination (NENO, 2008). It was called as a nonviolent movement that enabled Baltics to become autonomous from the Soviet Union in 1991. What is very remarkable in all this process - music was an exceptionally central force. Presenting the sense of unity - raising forbidden Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian flags and singing banned national songs Baltic states began taking an advantage of their unique and rich cultural heritage in order to encourage a national reawakening (Reinbold, 2009).

There were no specific arrangements among all three countries but rather period was mature for a phenomenon like this to emerge naturally in more than one place with a similar cultural background and political situation. Nevertheless, a few events were organized commonly. One of the most important - Baltic Way which is special for many reasons while a chain of about two million people holding hands for 675.5 km uninterrupted from Lithuania (Vilnius) to Estonia (Tallinn), during August 23 1989, in the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany (Grigas et al., 2013).
One of the main goals of this revolution was integration into the Euro-Atlantic relations and structures. The result of that - international community became aware of the national claims of these countries, eventually acknowledging their right to exist as independent states. From the beginning of the ‘Singing revolution’ in the Baltic countries, majority of the organizations have sought membership in the European federations. Many non-governmental organizations, trade unions, business associations, political leaders have joined equivalent federations of the EU.

So what is the role of this united independence movement in the present Lithuanian intellectual and organizational discourses? Firstly, the Singing revolution promoted the country as such (and not as a Soviet Republic) with its flag, language, values, traditions and choices. Moreover, it has influenced the main actions that helped to join the EU and shaped an organizational culture of the NGOs (Mic.lt, 2015). The EU has played an active role in establishing links between non-governmental actors in the Baltic states and the older member states. Certain programmes have developed partnerships among NGOs across Europe.

Thus, the Singing revolution in many cases has determined the form of the organizational culture of the current society with the support of the European Commission and the other European institutions to a wider engagement of civil society in a global level (Lucas et al., 2009).
Rapid changes transforming economies from socialism to a free market economy faced organizational, legal and social challenges that caused many social diversities. Democratization in the Baltic countries has been in many ways encouraged by the EU and other Western Europe societies. Encouragement has often been handled in the form of support for local NGOs and growth of the various actions of civil society (Spurga, 2007).

Integration of European norms and common understandings in the countries have been considered as a way of reforming society in terms of strong commitment to become the part of the EU. Nevertheless, a diverse historical context and differences in political systems between the older EU member states and the Baltic countries sometimes have caused more superficial outcomes than expected in terms of socialization. Many displays of consolidated democracy in the Baltic and other CCEE countries were significantly different according to the countries with the “mature democracy”. As a result, the process of the integration into the EU had a strong impact on Baltic civil societies. Therefore, one of the reasons of complicated democratic development quiet usual in post-communist countries is a weak civil society. However, in order to promote democratization EU was aiming to strengthen NGOs and other actors of civil culture (Spurga, 2007).

The “Singing revolution” where many independent social and political actors played a key role was a huge surprise for the local and Moscow communist leaders as well as for others from Western world countries. Peaceful movements in the Baltic region and in CCEE countries were carried out by revived civil societies. It was expected to have a strong post-communist civil society (Howard, 2003).

In 1999, European Commission created a new ACCESS programme (“institution building” programme) which replaced the Phare LIEN and Partnership programmes and was designed to strengthen the civil society and to prepare the ten candidate countries in Central and Eastern Europe for accession (Ec.europa.eu, 1999).

Thus, even if the immediate post-Soviet time was marked by economic instability, the beginning of the 21st century experienced rapid economic growth and closer integration into the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization—two organizations that all three Baltic States joined in 2004 (The Baltics: Three Countries, One Economy?, 2017).
Consequently, I could say that the impact and the result of this movement in Baltics could be easily compared to Civil rights movement in US. It is a big movement which achieved many things. It did not end the racism but it forced racism to retreat. “Singing revolution” was a first and significant step towards the independence of three countries and it encouraged many other important social actions later.

Additionally, what impact had “Singing revolution” and EU democracy programmes for the Baltic countries in terms of development of NGOs?

The period from the late 1980s and the end of the East-West conflict due to the Baltic Sea territory has become important for the past and new developments of regional co-operation, especially in the light of development of democracy and civil society in Central and Eastern Europe. The previously mentioned factors have contributed to the growth of the NGO sector which played a crucial role in the process of democratization. EU democracy programmes have developed public administration, supported local democracy and strengthened NGOs (Spurga, 2007 & Mic.lt, 2015).

In 2001, NGOs within the Baltic Sea Region started working together in the annual Baltic Sea NGO Forum. Baltic Sea NGO Network was founded in 2003, in order to organize inter-forum communication. It does not tend to represent all sectors and actors of civil society in the region. Instead of that it is open to every organization which shares the same concerns in developing and strengthening civil society in the Baltic Sea area to join this network and to establish the civil society of a truly united Baltic Sea region (Temper, 2018).

**HISTORY OF NGOS IN LITHUANIA**

**NGOs**

Anastasia Kavada uses several authors to characterize NGOs. She argues that NGO sector is difficult to define as it includes a variety of organizations, such as charities, foundations,
voluntarily groups and even think tanks. However, in agreement to Martens (2002:282), author admits that all NGOs are orientated towards the public good. Moreover, by expending the theory of Diani (1992), Kavada compares social movements and NGOs. Author explains that NGOs are defined as more informal and fluid actors with a rather loose and less structured organization while social movements are non-institutional as their participants come from the broad range of actors, including churches, trade unions, and neighborhood associations (Kavada, 2014).

Nowadays, Lithuanian public authorities begin to recognize the importance of non-governmental organizations and their status as public administration entities. The sector of non-governmental organizations is gradually and steadily growing. However, some issues in relation to identification of non-governmental organizations remain the same. According to the many public opinions, the majority of Lithuanian residents and interviewed business representatives cannot say exactly which organizations are considered as non-governmental. Moreover, people do not really know how many such organizations operate in Lithuania (although there is still no precise list of non-governmental organizations and therefore accurate number of organizations is difficult to determine). Also, there are many difficulties in understanding various concepts and features of non-governmental organizations as well as various criteria for classification of them (3sektorius.lt).

Moreover, quite recently the issue of accuracy and appropriateness of the term was widely discussed by many researchers: lawyers, political scientists, activists from non-governmental organizations and etc. Majority of them agrees that the term is not precise and does not fully reflect the legal framework, substance and purpose of these organizations in the society. The studies of various scholars include the term variations of various NGOs such as - non-governmental organizations, non-profit organizations, public organizations, voluntary organizations, associations, charities and etc. However, the positive feature of this definition could be the fact that even if it does not completely explain the direction of the organization's activities, but identifiable factors, for instance, the use of profits are quite clear. Nevertheless, the notion of non-profit organizations may have a different meaning: in the narrow sense, these are the organizations governed by the laws of non-profit
organizations and more generally, all organizations that are not profit-making and do not give returns to their owners. However, this term also can be the source for critiques. For example, what should be considered as the main element of a non-profit organization: the principle of profit-sharing or non-profit making (NGO Pulse, 2012)?

Thus, until today general knowledge about Lithuanian NGOs is still rather poor. Both government officials and NGO activists usually are not fully aware of the main features of NGOs that distinguish them from other organizations. Moreover, people who do not deal with such organizations do not fully understand their activities.

A. Guzavicius, who has discussed the characteristics of NGOs during his analysis of the efficiency of economic interest groups says that NGOs, especially public organizations, are closely associated with culture. It is a derivative of social factors governed by cultural rules where regular relations between groups refer to the values and norms that determine behavior (Stuopyte, Z. & Guzavicius, A., 2008). Therefore, the non-formal education becomes as a natural derivative of being a part of mostly any NGO.

**Volunteering**

Volunteering in Lithuania does not have particularly deep traditions that have lasted over the years. Therefore, there are currently no specific documents regulating volunteering in the society. One of the reasons - the concept of volunteering as well as the concept of NGO is still not defined in law or formally recognized elsewhere.

The notion of volunteering as an activity has only just began to be established in Lithuanian society and still has been considered as a challenge in integrating volunteering as a part of positive social change. The historic and economic background plays an important role in this situation. One of the reasons is negative thoughts spread by compulsory volunteering during the period of former Soviet Union. Another reason - volunteering is generally not
considered to be a high political priority in the country. There is very little attention given to volunteering under the previous social democratic government (National Report_Lithuania, 2015). Due to the same reasons voluntarily activities not widely accepted by Latvian and Estonian societies also. One of the initiatives - European Voluntary Service offering unpaid volunteering for young people reveals that none of the Baltics shows high level of development of volunteering.

However, although historical experience and the economic difficulties in Lithuania and in the Baltics have not created a particularly friendly environment for volunteering, a number of Lithuanians in the largest cities, especially young people, being interested in and getting involved in voluntarily activities has become increasingly noticeable (EACEA National Policies Platform, 2018).

According to development level in the Baltic states in line with their human capital index and economic growth, analysis shows that Estonia made the best progress amongst the Baltic States. Moreover, even if each country has diverse approaches for increasing volunteering in their societies, all of them have very similar challenges to use volunteering as an element which can accumulate human capital more effectively (Jaunmuktane, 2013).

**History**

NGOs in Lithuania have a long background. As it was mentioned before, the history of the emergence of non-governmental organizations is associated with 1991, when Soviet Union collapsed and Lithuania regained its independence.

The preamble of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, unanimously supported by a citizens' referendum in October 1992, outlines the main purposes of the Constitution which are "open, legal, civil society". The first resolution of the Government of Lithuania was adopted in the same 1992, called "On the Ratification of the Provision of the Main Articles of the Non-profit Organizations (companies)". On this basis the first non-governmental organizations were registered in Lithuania (around 260 organisations).
Nevertheless, the origins of the various organizations that could be linked to the third sector were severely limited during 18th-19th centuries by the Czarist Russian authorities in Lithuania. The first temperance societies under the leadership of Bishop Motiejus Valancius were established in 1858 and gained popularity across Lithuania very fast. The mass participation of Lithuanian peasants in temperance movements were based not only on their fight against alcohol abuse but also dissatisfaction with the existing situation, for instance, serfdom and political strategies performed by the Czarist government (Januzyte, 2005). The mass movements under the leadership of Catholic Church were related to the graduate process of becoming more civil minded (EGO | Europäische Geschichte Online, 2018).

In 1993, was found and NGO called "Renaissance" and two more organizations that were established soon after. In 2002, by uniting all three organizations an independent “Lithuanian Great Lounge” was created, recognized in the world among other countries (Gineitiene & Domarkas, 2000).

In terms of all three Baltic countries, NGOs and volunteering have derived mainly from two traditions: religious philanthropy and tradition of socialists as collective activities to achieve common goals (Jaunmuktane, 2013).

To talk about non-governmental organizations and volunteering during the time of Soviet Union, especially until 1018, when all public life was strictly controlled, is very complicated. It could be stated that there was a very strict and precise space where some of the rules could be attributed to the natural capacity of organizing something, leading someone, sometimes to take action in regional initiatives. This example brings back to the idea of social movements claiming that even if the simple action of getting together a group of people with the shared idea may be not allowed everywhere (Bayat, 2013). The main social organization was the Communist Party which controlled trade unions, a wide range of pioneering camps and etc. (Aleksandravicius, 2016). Therefore, in Lithuania, the system of non-governmental organizations was shaped by the principles of NGOs established in
the inter-war Lithuania. However, “Singing Revolution” and EU democratization actions have made major changes in the modeling and development NGOs. The current system of non-governmental organizations depends on how it is understood and based on what principles it functions in modern society (Simasius, 2007). Consequently, EU has promoted the forms of democratic consolidation and has been one of the main reasons of the improvement of civil society in the Baltic States. Growing social awareness and the exchange of various practices has been an essential source of the strengthening NGOs in Lithuania.

CHAPTER IV: VOLUNTEERING IN LITHUANIA.
RESEARCH

Contextual background

The Lithuania country report prepared for the European Commission confirms that the post-Soviet time was significant with a growing amount of NGOs in Lithuania. In 1994 there were 1 302 registered NGOs in Lithuania, and in 2013 the number of NGOs was over 24 000. However, as it was mentioned before, the real number of NGOs in Lithuania is not known. One of the previously stated reasons - most non-governmental organizations and associations do not meet the definition of NGOs in legislation, which makes it difficult to distinguish between NGOs by legal form or type of activity (Jatautaite and Vaidelyte, 2018 & sc.bns.lt, 2017).

Prior to 1989, voluntarily activities in Lithuania were controlled by Soviet government, where people of different ages were expected and forced to volunteer by the state. Thus, after the restoration of independence in 1990, volunteering was associated with lots of negative perceptions. This partly explains the unwillingness of older generation who experienced the Soviet „voluntary” processes to engage in the volunteering. Therefore,
younger people (who have not seen or were too young to be affected by Soviet regime) are much keener to volunteer (National Report_Lithuania, 2015).

Therefore, every year the number of volunteers is still growing. Numerous non-governmental organizations in Lithuania are waiting for volunteers to be able to allocate their free time to people who are facing specific problems or to share their professional knowledge with those most in need. Although volunteering plays an increasingly important role in Lithuanian society every year, a significant part still cautiously looks at this altruistic activity (Savanoriaujam.lt, 2018).

There are currently no specific legislations controlling voluntarily activities in Lithuania and the concept of volunteering is not described in law or formally documented elsewhere. However, in the public discourse it is usually characterized as participation of individuals of their own free will in some kind of activities without any remuneration (Sc.bns.lt, 2017).

Statistics in terms of volunteering is not collected systematically also (for instance, through the National Statistical Institute). There have been a number of researches done to explore the voluntary sector, but these are of an ad-hoc nature, performed by a variety of institutions and organizations, taking into account different methodologies and different approaches. One more interesting and important fact about volunteering in Lithuania is very well defined in the same report for European Commission: “the data on the number of volunteers has not been systematically collected over the years to allow for any statistically based conclusions on the growth or decline of volunteers in Lithuania to be made. Ad-hoc survey data would indicate that the number of volunteers has remained rather stable over the years” (National Report_Lithuania, 2015). However, this situation outlines not only the issues in Lithuanian society but in Estonian and Latvian societies too. Another report confirms that statistical information on volunteering in Baltics is not gathered in a systematic way. Therefore, the exact number of volunteers is not clear in all three regions (Jaunmuktane, 2013).

Moreover, the same report outlines that EU strategies and programmes in the context of youth have especially influenced the development of youth organizations and voluntary activities amongst youngsters. NGOS that offer opportunities to volunteer globally (‘‘have
transnational element involved”) are particularly attractive to young people (National Report_Lithuania, 2015).

One of the civic involvement projects “Discover yourself” is one of the examples where EU has played a key role in working process of it. The mission of this initiative is to help young people to integrate in the society.

Lithuania has included the Youth Employment Initiative in the Operational Programme for the European Union Funds’ Investments in 2014-2020. This programme was assigned to the specific objective - “Reduce the number of young people between 15 and 29 years of age in employment, education or training” in terms of “Promoting Quality Employment and Participation in the Labour Market”. This specific objective includes two projects supported by Youth Employment Initiatives “Discover Yourself” and “New Start” that were aimed to provide assistance to 35,000 young people aged 15-29 who are not in employment, education or training until 2018. The primary intervention project “Discover Yourself” is implemented between Lithuanian Public Employment Service, acting as a leading partner, and Department of Youth Affairs (EACEA National Policies Platform, 2018).

One of the participants of this project has stated that she was unsuccessfully searching for herself for a quite a while. She tried to study twice but failed both times. When this participant joined the project, she did not expect that it could help but her opinion has changed later. According to her, just because of this project, she realized that she needed to get a profession, become more open and began to trust herself more (Atsiliepimai: 2017 m. liepa | Jaunimo garantijos, 2017). In the following chapter I will explore three NGOs who also helped many young people to find themselves and will analyse the reasons why these organizations are currently the most attractive to the Lithuanian youth.

Moreover, in terms of international community, all three Baltic countries have what to offer to the foreign volunteers as well. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have established World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms organization (WWOOF), advertising volunteer work on organic farms in exchange for accommodation and food. Also, volunteer possibilities for
English speakers are occasionally announced locally in the Baltic Times newspaper (www.baltictimes.com). However, as it was confirmed in the local website: “The Baltic region has enough difficulty keeping its own people employed, meaning there’s little temporary work for visitors. Most non-locals working here have been posted by companies back home” (Planet, 2018).

Organisations that promote volunteering in Lithuania

LIJOT

Lithuanian Youth Council (LiJOT) – “the biggest non-governmental, non-profit umbrella structure for Lithuanian national youth organizations and regional unions of youth organizations.” (LiJOT, 2018). LiJOT was established in 1992 and has 68 members (that are non-governmental youth organizations) at present. Moreover, LIJOT is the main representative of more than 200 000 young people in Lithuania and, therefore, is one of the biggest non-governmental organizations in Europe. Also, it is a full member and founder of the Baltic Youth Forum and National Agency of International Youth Co-operation, which coordinates one of the previously mentioned EU initiatives “Youth in Action”. Besides, it coordinates EURODESK Lithuania – a European information services network, which is well known in 33 European countries and delivers exclusive European information for youth workers and young people in general.

This organization fights for interests and initiatives of youth and seeks positive changes by serving as a main platform for dialogue between Lithuanian government and the youth (participatory communication). It works as the main communicator for “society, authorities, business and educational institutions in order to empower young people in creation of their own and state welfare” (LiJOT, 2018). Also, considering volunteering as a foundation of youth engagement LiJOT promotes professional and responsible organization of voluntarily activities, develops international relations and international cooperation between Lithuanian youth organizations and youth organizations from other countries.
Additionally, according to its website, LIJOT organizes and implements many national and international projects. One of them Project "Youth 4 Democracy". Lithuanian youth council (LiJOT) together with Latvian youth council (LJP), Estonian youth council (ENL) and informal group, which seeks to establish Polish national youth council (PROM), implemented a project called „Youth 4 Democracy“. During the time of the project partner representative gained knowledge about European youth policy, national and local level youth policy in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. Besides, the project gave a chance to get familiar with youth interests on both local and national levels in each partner country.

After finishing all project activities the groups prepared recommendations how it would be possible to broaden youth policy and its structure in each partner country. These are concrete suggestions, equally important for the future of youth policy at all levels. Besides, recommendations empower and encourage youth organizations to participate more actively in decision making processes (LIJOT, 2018).

**FOOD BANK**

*Food Bank* is a charity and support fund focusing on food recovery and redistribution and sharing it with organizations supporting socially disadvantaged people across Lithuania. Food Bank is an open, impartial and independent non-governmental organization based on the help of goodwill and socially responsible enterprises. It is the largest charity fund in Lithuania and the second most prominent part of nonprofit organizations in Lithuania. Moreover, it is one of the members of the European Federation of Food Banks (FEBA) which gets together 253 food banks in 21 European country (Eesc.europa.eu, n.d.).

The mission of this organization is very similar to its main objectives - in cooperation with food producers and traders, with the help of good-natured donors and socially responsible companies to ensure that usable food is not discarded but reach the families with economic difficulties. With thousands of people living in poverty every day in Lithuania, food assistance contributes to the survival of even one fifth of the country's population.
Voluntarily opportunities for youth and other particular aspects have been reviewed more in detail in the research performed above.

The Lithuanian Association of People with Disabilities

The Lithuanian Association of People with Disabilities (LAPD) founded in 1995 is a voluntary, independent, non-governmental organization uniting 18 associate members throughout in Lithuania, which gathers about 10,000 people with various disabilities and their family members. As it is stated in companies website “Each year the LAPD implements about 20 different projects aimed at disability prevention; ensuring people’s with disability independence and freedom to choose and changing attitudes towards people with disabilities” (LAPD, 2012).

One of the main activities of organization is - promoting co-operation between organizations – organization of round table discussions with municipalities, communities and businesses and creating public awareness campaigns. Moreover, the members of it tend to work with youth by making presentations and discussions in secondary schools focused on the films “Disability is not an obstacle” and “Become acquainted with disability”. Furthermore, the development, improvements and new initiatives, creating and applying together innovative ideas for the benefit of persons with disabilities are taken into exceptional consideration by the organization (LAPD, 2012).

One of its ongoing projects is named “Learn about a disability”. The project “Learn about a disability” educates the society, especially the youth about a disability. It aims to introduce children and the youth to problems and needs of the people with disabilities in order to form a positive approach of pupils and students towards the disabled and to prevent everyone from injuries and accidents. Organization has been organizing lectures also in education institutions based on the project “Learn about a disability” since 2003 (LAPD, 2012).

RESEARCH
In this section I have analysed the findings of questionnaires and interviews carried out within the framework of youth engagement in NGOs. The results of each questionnaire and interview were analysed separately and then general conclusions were made. Questionnaires were sent to the former or current volunteers; interviews were taken from representatives of NGOs. The same two questions were provided for the volunteers and representatives of NGOs to analyse the theme from both youth and NGOs perspective. The results of the interviews in this paper have been investigated as case studies. Additional data from public source was also used in the research.

**Questionnaires**

The questionnaire invitations were sent to current or former volunteers by email, or message on social networking platform Facebook. After contacting every person directly, majority the respondents joined the research (8 of 14; however, expected at least 10).

**Questions provided:**

1. Your age/sex/ education.
2. Are you former or current volunteer?
3. The name of NGO you are working/have worked for. The main activity you are carrying out in the organization? How did you find out about it?
4. Do you think that NGOs are needed?
5. Do you think that these organizations have a positive impact on young people?
6. For what reasons you are participating / have participated in a non-governmental organization?
7. Does your organization carry out activities that are attractive to young people?
8. Has the volunteering met your expectations? (Maybe exceeded your expectations or led to disappointment?
9. Justify or deny the statement: a lack of relevant job experience is the main reason why young become volunteers; NGOs are becoming first enterprises for youth that provide key contributions to the career development.
10. Who should involve young people in non-governmental organizations?
Findings:

All 8 respondents fell into targeted category due to the reason that all questionnaires were given to the former and current volunteers who confirmed their age and education before sending questionnaires to them. In the investigation participated 3 men and 5 women between age 22-28, graduates; 6 of them – former volunteers already working in particular institutions; 2 of them are currently engaged into voluntarily work. 5 of the respondents are/were members of NGO “Child Line” which provides free and anonymous help to the children online (Vaiku Linija, n.d.). 3 of them heard about this organization from the referrals by others. 2 respondents found Child Line on social platform Facebook. 1 of 8 respondents used to be a volunteer of a couple different NGOs for a limited period of time. 2 of respondents have been sent to NGO “Food bank” by their current employee.

4, 5 and 7 question looks very similar. The purpose of them was to discover for what reasons young people engage into NGOs. All the respondents believe that non-governmental organizations have a positive impact on young people, as young people are engaged in leisure time while 1 says that the activities of the organization are not oriented towards the needs of youth. Even one of them stated that he does not know whether the NGO's activities have a positive effect on youth or not, 5 volunteers of “Child Line” agreed that voluntarily work positively impacted their current careers even if it is not directly related to their current employment positions.

2 of the respondents were very honest by saying that the real motive of becoming a member of NGO was a free training of psychology, communication skills and a possibility to make their CVs look “stronger” in front of the future employers. One of the volunteers is no longer with this NGO just because his purpose was to have 2 years of this particular experience and to concentrate more on his career after. Therefore, it is quite obvious that this person joined NGO for personal reasons. 6 of 8 respondents are/used to be a part of certain NGOs due to the social insurance, a possibility to gain more self-confidence and at
the end of the planned volunteering period issued certificates proving the competences and achievements acquired by every volunteer.

In general, all the volunteers have admitted that voluntarily work met their expectations. 2 of them are still engaged in volunteering and said that being a part of NGOs helped them to solve their social problems also. The statement in question 9 was admitted by majority of the respondents (5 of 8). As it was mentioned before, 2 of 8 were encouraged to volunteer by their current or former employer. 1 of the respondents is still volunteering just because, as he has claimed, has not found himself yet.

In comparison to other Baltic countries, the reasons why young people become volunteers are pretty much the same. As it is stated in Baltic Times newspaper: “many young people decide to start their careers as volunteers to gain essential skills for the future and to develop their worldly understanding” (Baltictimes.com, 2011).

3 of 8 respondents were not be able to answer why one organizations are more popular than others. The rest of the youth has stated that social networking platforms play important role in the involving young people in non-governmental organizations.

During my own research online I can agree that Food Bank and Child Line plays very active role on Twitter and Facebook platforms in Lithuania. Therefore, besides that many people want to show the world what they are doing by posting pictures in public, social networking is very useful for NGOs too. Nowadays, social media shapes life and makes a great impact on it, especially in the light of youngsters (Vaikų Linija, n.d.). Moreover, my personal research revealed that especially those two organizations have been supported and widely advertised by many famous sponsors who are very big companies in Lithuania and very famous not only nationally but internationally (e.g. Western Union). Therefore, Scott was right claiming that any media is not an independent force acting upon society but is shaped by its relations with other processes too. That is why this is one of the main reasons why particularly these NGOs are so popular among young people.
Interviews

There were a couple of interviews conducted with 2 NGOS (LIJOT and LAPD) in Lithuania in April/May 2018.

These NGOS were selected to give a general picture of particular insights into the current situation of youth engagement into NGOs in Lithuania. The interviews lasted approximately 10-15 minutes.

Questions:

1. Please indicate the type of non-governmental organization you represent, the main activity you are carrying out in the organization.
2. Does your organization have volunteers? The number of volunteers in the organization and their age?
3. Does your organization carry out any initiatives that promote volunteering among young people? If so, in what ways?
4. In what ways does the organization advertise itself, provide information about the admission of the new members, activities and services carried out?
5. Does your organization carry out activities that are attractive to young people? If NO, what organization's activities could meet the needs of the youth and bring it to your organization?
6. Justify or deny the statement: a lack of relevant job experience is the main reason why young become volunteers; NGOs are becoming first enterprises for youth that provide key contributions to the career development.

Case study 1: Interview with LIJOT.

First interview was taken with the former employee of LIJOT, a member of the board who was delegated to the National Youth Council in 2015-2016 Aistis Ramanauskas. Aistis told that LIJOT every year has many volunteers who participate in different kind of projects. However, he could not be specific about their age and the number of volunteers they used to have. Nevertheless, he has stated that it was quite a big competition every year between
the youth who wanted to join this organization. Aistis was laughing that only the smartest and the best ones could become the members of LIJOT.

In relation to the question 3, Aistis agreed that the main reason why LIJOT exists is to help young people to be full members of the society. As a former representative of National Youth Council, he added, that young people's civic education activities, the improvement of youth citizenship education in municipalities was also the key reasons of every meeting. While answering to the question 5, Aistis just confirmed one more time that LIJOT was mainly structured to attract youth needs and one of the methods how organization could better meet young people’s expectations is to get more financial support from the government authorities responsible for the youth affairs.

In terms of question 6 Aistis could not deny or agree with the statement that NGOs are becoming first enterprises for young people in terms of their career development. However, he has admitted that economic and political situation is quite difficult in Lithuania: “why the government blindly creates laws by listening to the foreign professionals, but forgets that laws are intended to operate and must be properly adapted to the state context? So, is it not so that the government authorities provides only information about what is convenient for themselves and, therefore, the Europe receives slightly distorted information (Aistis Ramanauskas, 17 April 2018)? In 2015 OECD (organization for economic cooperation and development) has adopted recommendations for an open policy for Lithuania to strengthen and support the Lithuanian NGO sector. According to the respondent: “It politely suggested the Lithuanian authorities to pay attention to the strengthening the civil society and finally to realize that NGOs are trying to help the government rather than criticize it (Aistis Ramanauskas, 17 April 2018)”.

This also answers to the question why volunteering is not considered as a priority in Lithuania: “It seems that actions do not prove the true of the talks publicly made (Aistis Ramanauskas, 17 April 2018)”. Thus, instead of the efforts to encourage NGOs to act as actively as possible, government underestimate NGOs perhaps not even fully understanding that. This was confirmed by another representative of the LIJOT in the press conference, who has stated that possibilities of the development of NGOs and voluntary activities are
not guaranteed by the state and instead of that, due to the lack of legal framework NGOs have to compete to the state-owned enterprises (Delfi, 2009).

Moreover, Aistis admitted that due to the reason that there are many talented young people, to get a job for youth just after universities is often very difficult. That is why, according to the informant, emigration became one of the main issues in Lithuania.

Case study 2: Interview with LAPD

2nd interview was taken with the president of The Lithuanian Association of People with Disabilities (LAPD) Loreta Paulauskienė. Loreta has been a member of LADP for more than 10 years already and she has stated that it took quite a while for organization to become more publicly visible and available for volunteers. Even if volunteers are always welcome in this NGO, Union was mainly concentrated on the issues of disabled people and how to make their lives easier. That is why during the first years, organization did not have many volunteers. However, recently LADP has been attracting more and more volunteers and currently there has been working two people – one current student (21 years old) of Vilnius University of social work who is performing a voluntarily work as part of the study program and the second one is a family member of one of the current employees of the Union (48 years old).

In terms of the question 3, 4, 5, interviewer has stated they are trying to advertise themselves while implementing projects such as “Learn about disability” and by organizing various public events that could engage many people (such as free tickets to the theater, or invitations to the best sightseeing tours for “a little help”). The main reason why LAPD cannot be more socially active is the lack of the financial support from the government and lack of the employees in the Union: “Unfortunately, the needs and problems of disabled people are still underestimated in the country, although in most cases there is only a little support needed that people with disabilities would not feel excluded (Loreta Paulauskiemė, 8 May 2018)”. Loreta has admitted that she would like to see more volunteers joining the Union. However, she understands that Union is not fully able to meet the needs of the potential volunteers yet.
In contrast to the “Child Line”, no social security is provided for those, who are members of LAPD and no official certificates are given in the end of the voluntarily period. Union is just financially unable to provide this kind of benefits. That is why, comparing with LIJOT, requirements of LAPD for potential candidates are quite low. The majority of volunteers who used to take a part in this NGO were family members, close friends or students who want to become volunteers for a limited period of time in order to fulfill their university requirements. Nevertheless, Loreta feels positive and expects to get more people who really want to help: “Disability is not an obstacle to be with us (Loreta Paulauskiene, 8 May 2018)”. 

Loreta, 2018 (Loreta’s Paulauskiene’s own private collection)
Loreta and the team in the Lithuanian National Theatre, 2016 (Loreta’s Paulauskiene’s own private collection)

Loreta and the team in Spartakiada of Lithuania, 2018 (Loreta’s Paulauskiene’s own private collection)
In my opinion, one of the fastest and low-cost options to invite more youth to volunteer could be – advertising the organization on social networking platforms, which organisations has not started yet. 4 stages of participatory communication by Scott could be taken into account considering the best ways of attracting more young volunteers.

Additionally, she partially agreed with the statement that NGOs can be considered as first enterprises of youth. However, she also has stated, that not every NGO is capable to meet young people’s expectations and not every NGO (including LAPD) can help young graduate to find a job.

Loreta also believes, that there are many other reasons why some young individuals find a job easier than others. A few of them: different professions, different personalities or too high expectations.

**GENERAL RESULTS:**

**Reasons that encourage individuals to volunteer and factors why particular organisations have been chosen:**

The main factors that encourage youth to become volunteers are: social security, personal, development of self-confidence, communication skills, possibility to express themselves better and contribution to their current or future career. This particular path is visible not only in Lithuania but in all three Baltic countries too. Moreover, some people are willing to help for those in need in order to solve their personal issues and just to feel better. Additionally, from the previously analysed interviews is obvious that social media plays an important role in modern societies life, especially in the youth’s life. Therefore, this also could be one of the main reasons why some organizations are popular than others.

**Volunteering in the context of non–formal education:**
As it was previously mentioned, NGOs are providing particular trainings who attract many volunteers to take part in particular NGOs. Also, every organization has what to give to its volunteers: informal trainings how to become more self-confident, aware of current life situation or giving the chance to make their CVs look better. Furthermore, organizing various public meetings as it is currently being done by LAPD is also very important.

**The main challenges of volunteering:**

The main challenge is a lack of financial support from the government, a huge variety of highly qualified young professionals in Lithuania and lack of the communication opportunities between NGOS, potential volunteers and government.

The research performed revealed that participants in volunteering think that this is an interesting activity that allows youth to express themselves, the opportunity to get more knowledge, information, to communicate with different people, to make useful contacts, to find new friends and to find a real job. Moreover, in comparison to other Baltic counties, it is vital to mention that while in Estonia volunteers do not receive any tax benefits, situation in Latvia might be even worse than in Lithuania. An open source outlined that due to the employment difficulties of young people between ages 18-24, a country itself promotes volunteering opportunities as a great potential to integrate in a labour market easier. In some cases due to the lack of legal framework volunteer work is being used to hide illegal unemployment, for example, the report confirms that employments without written work contract sometimes were termed as volunteering in Latvia (Jaunmuktane, 2013).

The most encouraging factors for participation in youth organizations are attractive goals / ideas and forms of activity; moreover, an attractive youth information about the organization on social media platforms. The number of young graduates who have participated in the research has been most strongly encouraged to engage by participation of friends, recommendations of current employers and also, opportunities to contribute to their own careers. This can explain some aspects of Tufte’s so called “experience movements” that go beyond traditional ideas and concentrate on fundamental emotional necessity to feel involved in processes of change, especially in the light of people’s own lives.
Interviewers believe that NGOs are open and accessible to young people, however, social media is one of the key factors that make certain organizations more popular among the youngsters than others. Nevertheless, a big gap in terms of communication between government and young people is obvious. As Scott declared, communication should not be necessarily used as a tool for achieving a particular objective but it should be understood as process of empowering all members of the community to have their voices heard. Answers of performed interviews and questionnaires together with additional data confirmed that government does not paid enough attention on volunteering activities as well as there is no specific laws regulating voluntarily activities, and, therefore, it is not very popular in the former Soviet Union country among older generations. Consequently, one of the main reasons why it is still so popular among the young graduates are – the difficulties to integrate into the labor market.

The initiatives organized such as “Discover yourself” and “Youth in Action” also confirm this fact. Moreover, LIJOT activities and the data analysis highlights the necessity of the government to pay bigger attention to the youth unemployment which causes problems such as emigration and lack of the support for NGOs that really need help. For instance, interview with LAPD outlined that this organization is not so popular because it cannot meet young people's expectations. Therefore, even if volunteering from the audience perspective looks like a great initiative, the real motives of young engagement into volunteering activities are more personal instead of common goal – to do good. That is why particular organizations satisfying youth needs are chosen and people who really need help, such as the Lithuanian Association of People with disabilities are usually left behind.

Investigation outlined that the main reasons are not only the role of social media but also the weak civil society marked by former Soviet Union regulations. Therefore, while Baltic countries are trying to strengthen their role in the global world, they ignore what is the most important. As Crossley has stated, searching for ideals sometimes can be dangerous because it can completely ignore the basic human rights. That is why not everything what is perfect can go to a worthy cause (Crossley, 2000 p. 8 & 9). Moreover, Lithuania and previously mentioned unemployment situation in Latvia shows that even if initial movement of “Singing revolution” has made a huge impact in the processes of regaining
independence in Baltics, Lithuanian society does not have the main direction (essential feature) and does not share the main idea how to make the society stronger. So there is a big gap in communication in national, community and group level.

Majority of the informants joined NGOs recommended by their friends and due to the common approach from the audience perspective that advertises NGOs as bridges to from the lack of experience to the job position. It can be explained by using Tufte’s theory of “experience movements” which goes beyond traditional ideas of representation and instead highlights a fundamental emotional necessity to feel involved in processes of change, especially in the process which affects people’s own lives (Tufte, 2017, p. 34).

Nevertheless, from the most of the participants in the research it is clear that even if engagement in NGOS shows that participation of youngsters is quite active, the real situation can be completely different. In terms of social change, by using the idea of Arnstein concentrating on ladder of participation which addresses to different levels and modes of participation, I declare that all these factors do not show the form of active participation. It is the obvious form of passive participation because instead of confronting the rules of the game – making a change, young people try to play the game very well. They join already organized activities instead of taking the initiative to organize something by themselves. On the other hand, it is understandable if we talk about the country who has gained the independence quite recently and still feels some negative impacts remained from Soviet Union. By using one of social movements’ ideas, I agree that an entire culture and societies are formed from the past social movements - both successful and failed. Therefore, even failed social movements leave an essential mark on the societies. Moreover, another reason can be – the pure general knowledge of NGOs in the society and lack of legal regulations that causes absence of the clear guidance how the change can be made. Therefore, young people are rather to follow the rules of the game than to address the particular problem.

In relation to civic engagement, volunteering in many societies is understood as a form of active citizenship where the individual can feel belonging to the society. So, from this point of view, the type of participation can be seen as active not passive, as it was mentioned previously. Therefore, I agree with Scott that very often it might be tricky to specify what
participation is in general because it contains significant variations of how participation can be understood.

During the study, the youth's attitude to volunteering was quite surprising. Even if volunteers in general have rather high expectations from NGOs all of them agreed that volunteering met their expectations. Moreover, questionnaires revealed that some respondents have mainly chosen certain NGOs due to the influence of social media, recommendations of close friends or their current employers.

Generally, young people who participate in NGOs are both ready for the labor market and not ready for it. Research showed that the difficulties of integrating into the labor market are also associated to other types of problems, for example, lack of self-confidence related to avoidance of taking responsibility for their decisions. Also, insufficiently objective assessment of the labor market opportunities is also can be one of the unemployment reasons.

Consequently, attention of this paper was orientated to the one of the major problems in the society. Therefore, the nature of the analysis and answers were based on the youth unemployment issues related to the lack of the relevant job experience. Nevertheless, in any case it is obvious that majority of NGOs have the opportunity to provide missing skills for young volunteers.

**CONCLUSIONS**

- For many NGOs, the year of the 1960s were fruitful in terms of social change. There are different kinds of NGOs and no specific definition what NGO is but what quickly comes to the mind while talking about it, that it is an organization doing some humanitarian work supported by well-wishers. Now it requires careful thoughts and investigation of what is happening with these organisations. Research proves that NGOs have become a competitor to both the government and the profit-making sector. Therefore, government instead of promoting NGOS and consequently voluntarily activities is trying to disseminate their importance without trying to understand that NGOs are willing to support the government
rather than criticize it. Therefore, NGOs and volunteering is less developed in Lithuania than in other countries.

- Moreover, the development of voluntarily activities in Lithuania has been marked by the activities of some voluntary organisations which were active in the independent inter-war Lithuanian state, especially religious organisations, strongly affected by the Catholic Church. However, volunteering perception in Lithuania as well as in other Baltic states has mainly derived from Soviet Union regime also bringing many negative associations. Thus, the strategies of NGOs that are mostly influenced by legal, economic and social factors are not well developed in Lithuania. Also, even if Estonia has the biggest progress none of the Baltics has an appropriate approach showing a very high level of development in volunteering. However, an attitude towards volunteering by young people is much more favorable due to the fact that they have not lived through a period of former Soviet Union oppression. Also, from the interviews made it can be stated that young Lithuanians as well as all the Baltic region in order to find a job have to face many economic and political challenges these days. They are actively looking for various ways to survive. Therefore, some of them choose emigration, some of them – volunteering. So, youth unemployment is being reduced not only due to the voluntarily activities but also due to the emigration and demographic changes.

- The EU youth programmes and activities positively changed and increased the number of NGOs and number of volunteers. Nevertheless, the main reasons preventing the development of non-governmental organizations in Lithuania are still the following: the lack of public support, inadequate legal basis of NGO, limited recognition of importance of NGOs by the government and the society. There is no general system for training of volunteers as well. Preparation of volunteers depends on the particular organisation involved. Non-governmental organisations would be much more coherent if organisations engaged in specific activities that attract young people would not be identified as separate type organisations but act according to one general legal act regulating NGOs.

- **First research question**: according to the results of the research and analysis made, it is obvious that youth basically is interested in volunteering due to the personal reasons that somehow falls between a paid job and non- formal education. Completed questionnaires
clearly show that NGOs in order to involve young people in their activities must offer and pursue activities that are attractive to young people. It also partly answers the second question. Engagement in certain NGO is considered as a rewarding career among youth in Lithuania.

- **Second research question**: During the interviews, representatives of NGOs informed that most often organisations advertise themselves by organizing public activities and offering informal trainings that can shape youth future careers. Additional research outlined that social media is playing a very important role too. Moreover, interviewers also expressed their opinion that the public investment in terms of advertising and attracting more young people is also very important.

However, I conclude that even if NGO development might be focused on the economic growth, according to Sen, development cannot be continued without strong social capital whose importance in integrating into the labor market is most valuable. Therefore, young people need freedom to make their own choices in order to improve their livelihoods. On the other hand, young people must learn how to express themselves properly and influence decisions taken by the government. Therefore, the problem can be linked not only to the government and a weak civil society but also the passive participation of young people and NGOs in the representing their needs. Nevertheless, youth can only be more active when they feel appreciated in the community. Active participation of young people in decision-making process is essential for every society as well as Lithuania which is willing to become more democratic and prosperous.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- From the previous facts it is clear that Lithuania needs to adopt a new approach at the role of NGOs in youth integration process - focusing on the specific needs and problems of young people. These organizations need to apply more diverse and more innovative forms of engagement to increase their efficiency. Also, in order to include young people in their
organizations, information about the organization itself, its activities, and a procedure for the admission of new members should be disseminated in a variety of innovative ways.

- NGOs need to look for opportunities and try to attract more funds from various donation programs. This would solve the issue of financing their activities.

- In regards to the current situation in Lithuania, it is highly recommended to create an integrated strategy that involves NGOs, youth and various government organizations in order to make positive changes in volunteering activities and reduce inequality in employment showed by the research and additional data analyzed in this paper. Also, it is important to support the improvement of innovations, including public policy, public participation, and the promotion of internationalization. Therefore, young people and non-governmental organizations together with government authorities must be actively involved in decision making process and solving youth problems as equivalent partners. As Scott stated, communication is ongoing conversation between equal parts rather than as a one-way system of transfer of information from “one to many”.

- In terms of communication, local and regional authorities should support the social and cultural events of non-governmental youth associations and organizations, youth groups, which, together with the family, the school and the work being created, are one of the pillars of the social unity of every strong society. Moreover, non-governmental organisations may strengthen each other mutually by addressing to the issue through unconventional actions. Therefore, positive changes can start when you have a successful idea which can be relatively small and relatively limited but seems moving towards to the larger vision of universal social change (Tufte, 2017, Kavada, 2014 & Crossley, 2000).

-There is a particular path of Lithuanian NGOs and as well movements in other post-Soviet countries. Therefore, collective attempts in Lithuania need to be gathered to change a society by various means. In relation to the development for social change I agree with the approach of some authors stating that in order to change something it is important to figure out what is the system in the society and what needs changing: “they must at least agree over what they are in disagreement about” (Crossley, 2000 p. 4 & 5). Then systematic
movement within society can be generated with the organization which is capable to put everything together.

- Therefore, it is necessary to support and encourage the participation of young people in volunteering. At a time when young people are facing increasing pressures of the must to be excellent at learning and working, it is important to recognize the importance of volunteering and to promote it too. Government authorities need to understand that NGOs are willing to help not to criticize them.

- All the previously mentioned facts can become a source of youth personal freedom to choose their own path in life after being graduated. Lithuanian society in entire needs to get transformed. By using thoughts of Amartya Sen, I agree that the new strategies how to expand the real freedoms that people enjoy need to be created.

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Even if the analysis made and research performed does not give all the answers to the questions, it motivates the reader to think about the answers himself, describing post-cultural evolution of voluntarily activities in NGOS and creating a new understanding of development in post-soviet state. Moreover, it touches the past present and future. A past gives deeper understanding of present development issues for current generations with the possibility to change something in the future.

“Communicative interventions often lack sustainable solutions that involve all relevant groups and their points of view” (Tufte, 2017 p. 160). Moreover, as it was previously mentioned, he agrees that citizen perspective is a first key component in the processes of change and in communication for development. The main content of the message for current and future young generations is clear – time to put their hands on the wheel. The only constant thing in life is change. However, it needs to be supported by innovative thinking. Everyone can and should come together to talk about what matters to them, and then work together to successfully change their society. It should help organizations and especially the youth in overcoming all current problems that arise.
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