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HUMAN AND SOCIAL CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF VOLUNTEERING¹

*“While no one questions why someone may assume gainful employment, many ask why one would volunteer.”
(Hustinx et al., 2010, p. 15)*

Abstract: *This paper discusses the possibility of acquiring human and social capital by participating in volunteer activities. Volunteering is especially observed from the point of view of Bourdieu’s understanding of capital, whereby the voluntary sector is understood as a social field and placed in a wider social context. After the conceptual determinations of civil society, volunteering and human and social capital are presented, an overview of the basic concepts and approaches to the research of human and social capital is given, and the effect of volunteering on their acquisition is emphasized. In particular, opportunities for volunteering, in addition to lifelong informal learning, are also associated with informal learning, the prevalence of which during volunteer activities enriches free time and develops volunteers’ lifestyles, i.e., their capacities for community life. Given the array of benefits for volunteers and the community, which are located within the development of human and social capital, this paper emphasizes the development of competencies for employability, which is preceded by the readiness to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for the knowledge society, which is developed through volunteering.*

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INTRODUCTION

As noted by the European Volunteering Charter (2012), volunteering is generally defined as a nonprofit activity that is carried out within the framework of a volunteering provider or through the volunteer's own initiative, and in the description of the nature of volunteer work, volunteering is an activity that encourages the development of human potential through the encouragement of self-organization of people in solving problems; that is, volunteering improves the quality of life on the basis of the development of partnership relations between members of the welfare state. The specific characteristics of volunteering are the context in which we present this discussion, thus emphasizing the contribution of volunteering to the development of human and social capital. With respect to human capital, this concept is primarily related to the knowledge, skills and experience formed through investment in education and training (Goldin, 2016). The discussion of social capital starts from its general definition as an interpersonal network that is formed by investing in relationships (Ehsan et al., 2019). The latter derivative of the definition of social capital emphasizes the social ties of individuals and the network they form as something more than a mere relationship (Stukas, Daly & Cowling, 2005), as a space of communication in which volunteering enables nonformal and informal learning. Furthermore, the essence of the theory of social capital refers to the connection of individuals beyond any specific action toward a series of associates, friends and more distant members of the network who share trust, reciprocity and respect for common norms, and social capital can be a private good and a public good (Putnam, 2003). The abovementioned characteristics indicate great potential for the creation and expansion of social capital. Volunteering in the activities of civil society organizations encompasses all the abovementioned characteristics and, among other things, represents the process of creating human and social capital, as well as their possible convergence and separation in the space of this sector. The paper also recognizes the space that is not only directly related to the acquisition of human and social capital for volunteers but also attributes some added value to volunteer work. In this sense, the uniqueness of volunteering as a network that weaves its threads in numerous activities of civil society, connecting both volunteers and associations, is taken into account. A special emphasis is on the connection with Bourdieu's understanding of capital, i.e., the voluntary sector as a social field in a wider social space for social action or practice, as interpreted by Eimhjellen (2022) in the latest discussion on capital, inequality and volunteering.

THROUGH VOLUNTEERING TOWARDS HUMAN AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Among the many definitions of volunteering, we single out the one that considers volunteering a complex phenomenon that is not clearly delineated and includes a wide range of types of activities, organizations and sectors; for researchers, it is a challenge to look at the “hybrid map for complex phenomena” (Hustinx et al., 2010, p. 413)². We present this approach precisely with the purpose of emphasizing the breadth of volunteering, although, with regard to the importance of developing human and social capital, we have in mind the activity of organized volunteering in civil society organizations or through their mediation. In particular, the expected outcomes of volunteering are preceded by volunteering programs as an organized response to the community’s needs to acquire the aforementioned capital. Volunteering is therefore attributed to the characteristics of optional and unpaid work that takes place in an organized context and is carried out (also) for the benefit of others, society as a whole or a specific organization (Govaart et al., 2001, p. 16), with the evident fact that practice also includes nonformal volunteering.

In general, a broad mapping of volunteering opportunities develops a sense of responsibility and improves the life of the community, with an emphasis on intrinsic motivation for personal development, solving concrete problems and social development (Begović, 2006, pp. 7–10). In relation to the contemporary view of volunteering, Govaart et al. (2001) place it in three forms of activity—mutual support, provision of services and active inclusion in society—within which human and social capital is developed. This summary of volunteering activities also provides a framework for the definition of civil society. In this sense, civil society is defined, among other things, as an area that includes institutions, organizations, networks and individuals (and their values) that are located between the family, the state and the market; connected by a series of civil rules that they share; and which people voluntarily join to advocate general interests (Bežovan, 2003, p. 3). Considering the interpretation that volunteering could be seen as a fundamental element of civil society (Dekker, 2015, p. 32), in the context of this discussion, we position it that way.

² In the study of volunteering, the authors offer an integrated theory - a hybrid framework (“hybrid theoretical strategy”) that is based on three identified layers of complexity and provides an innovative conceptual navigation system for mapping, comparing and more adequately integrating existing theories: 1) the complexity of the phenomenon of volunteering that has permeable borders and encompasses a wide range of activities, organizations and sectors, 2) different disciplines attribute different meanings and functions to volunteering and 3) existing theoretical accounts are biased toward obscuring the ‘law of volunteering’ and have a strong empirical surplus, and ‘good theory’, as point out, it is multidimensional and requires the inclusion of other views on the theory (Hustinx et al., 2010, p. 411), i.e., accepting the suggestion that many of the best theories are hybrids (DiMaggio, 1995, p. 392)

The concepts of human capital and social capital were introduced into discussions at the end of the 1960s under the influence of theories about human development, abandoning the frequent identification of capital with its materialized form and ignoring the social relations that are in the background of all social processes, i.e., that capital itself is a certain social practice (Afrić, 2009, p. 12). Capital appears in three basic forms: “as economic capital that can be converted into money and institutionalized in the form of property rights, as cultural capital institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications, and as social capital composed of social obligations (connections)” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 281). For the purposes of our discussion, it is particularly important to observe the processes and effects and efforts and actions to develop individual (human) capital, which appears as an asset of social connection, and its ownership is thus shared by both the individual and society. Specifically, Coleman recognized the aspect of public good in the aforementioned capitals because it benefits everyone and is created within all social structures in which these forms function as capital of social relations (Coleman 1988, 116). Thus, public good largely refers to voluntary work, i.e., volunteering, defined as long-term, prosocial behavior for the benefit of others (strangers) occurring in an organized environment, with multiple benefits for users and the community, and volunteers are intrinsically rewarded with the feeling of helping others and having the opportunity to develop and improve various skills (Snyder & Omoto, 2009, ctd. in Juzbašić & Vukasović, 2015). Placing volunteering in the context of human and social capital means viewing it as a space for action and learning that necessarily leads not only to address its effects or consequences but also to experience, that is, the acquisition of this capital and its exchange in the community. Therefore, the acquisition of social capital can be defined as a process that takes place between individuals, groups, communities and organizations that potentially influences mutual social benefits (Guenther & Falk, 2000, p. 67). In addition, this type of capital has the potential for constant renewal, sustaining the life of the association and communal practice (Trenz, 2011). All of these aspects are attributed to the process of developing both human capital and social capital in the field of volunteering.

In relation to the sociodemographic characteristics of volunteers, numerous characteristics, such as gender, race, education, social status and income, are included in the research, and in regard to consequences, the dimensions of the socioeconomic benefit of volunteering for the individual and the community are highlighted (Wilson, 2012). When volunteering and its outcomes are placed in the context of creating human capital, there is an inevitable link with education. In this context, among other things, the thesis of economists Becker and Shultz is helpful, according to which individuals are educated to provide themselves with as much economic benefit as possible (Šuljug, 2009, p. 55). Therefore, in a

modern knowledge society, volunteering is strongly associated with investment in education and participation in lifelong learning.

In terms of conceptual determination, the principles of capital theory—the stock of skills and productive knowledge embodied in people—were first extended to human capital by Becker, whereas cultural capital and social capital were conceptualized and promoted by Bourdieu by giving them content composed of social ties. Coleman assigned the aspect of public good to all the mentioned types of capital, which means that they benefit everyone who is part of the social structure in which these forms of capital function (Enjolras, 2021, p. 1191). A more succinct detection of the premises of volunteer work shows how volunteering is based on (1) productive work that requires human capital, (2) collective behavior that requires social capital, and (3) ethically driven work that requires cultural capital (Wilson & Musick, 1997). What is also investigated and emphasized are different social contexts in relation to the possibilities of creating social capital, i.e., the conditions for formal or nonformal volunteering, as well as tradition, level of development, patterns of behavior and socialization in the community, social habits, norms, and values, with special reference to countries in transition (Barić & Stubbs, 2007; Enjolras, 2021; Gil-Lacruz & Marcuello-Servos, 2013; Putnam et al., 2003; Salamon & Anheier, 1998; Štulhofer, 2003; Tomić-Koludrović, 2008; Tonković et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2018). Notably, Benenson and Stagg's (2016) study examining four nonfinancial assets—social capital, human capital, cultural capital, and political capital—illustrated how an asset-based approach offers an opportunity to explore ways in which low-income individuals can build and use assets through volunteering. On the basis of these experiences, it is concluded that social capital, in addition to economic capital and human capital (as forms of individual capital) and contextual features in the economic, political, cultural and social areas related to the different institutional care of the state and the regime of civil society, can condition an individual's ability to engage in volunteering (Enjolras, 2021, p. 1192). The character of volunteering is therefore mostly rooted in the sociocultural conditions for volunteering and the choice of volunteering, that is, the motivation for volunteering, which is questioned within the civil society sector and positioned as a key lever for the development of social capital (Štulhofer, 2005).

In relation to the acquisition of human capital, volunteers are considered the backbone of society, as emphasized by the former Secretary of the United Nations in his speech at the 54th annual conference of the Department of Public Information and Non-Governmental Organizations in 2001 (Annan, 2001) on the occasion of the International Year of Volunteers. A few years later, speaking about the globally agreed-upon goals that fight against a multitude of socioeconomic diseases, he emphasized that volunteering is increasingly seen as an aid in the progress of societies toward the achievement of the Millennium

Development Goals (Annan, 2005). These claims recognize the power of people, that is, human capital, who work for the benefit of the community through voluntary work, sometimes unnoticed, in the sector of civil actions and initiatives. Human capital is inseparable from people and represents all the skills and all the physical characteristics that a person possesses, such as investments in health, strength and endurance or investments in skills and education, including the acquisition of competencies that can be seen as building human or individual capital, and they are most often operationalized through (1) individual knowledge, (2) the achieved level of formal education in the community and (3) the achieved level of competence or individual skills (Afrić, 2009, p. 18).

Here, we focus on the effects of acquiring human capital through education, training and other types of volunteer engagement, which, among other things, enable civic engagement, including the organized civil sector, and represent “the most important investment in human capital” (Becker, 1993, p. 18). Encouraging this kind of investment in the individual’s human capital is manifested in volunteer experience and acquired competencies that can help individuals find a job, and the public, private and nonprofit sectors also find an additional incentive to support volunteer work through the possibility of changing existing systems related to employment (Benenson & Stagg, 2015). This cycle, which rounds off the beginning of civic engagement and the development of the human capital of individuals with outcomes in the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies for employability and a constant impulse for personal development, represents one of the significant paths in the action and development of every volunteer.

The term civil society is generally considered to be closely related to the term social capital, as social capital represents the basis of the civil society of a country (Barić & Dobrić, 2012, p. 887). Social capital is also defined by its link with activities in nonprofit organizations, i.e., associations, through two perspectives, which refer to the following: social capital is trust, norms and involvement in associations that form a broad indicator of civic health (cognitive social capital), and social capital is associated with resources (such as information, ideas, support) obtained through relationships and networks with others (Bixler & Springer, 2018, p. 2). In networking, the further development of the concept of social capital for nonprofit organizations is projected, where in addition to individuals connected to organizations, permanent networks based on trust are developed, i.e., connecting organizational social capital, which contributes to learning and strengthening the third sector (Schneider, 2009, p. 209). In other words, an indicator of human capital is education, that is, learning outcomes, and an indicator of social capital is the frequency of contact with friends and others, strangers, in the community (Enjolras, 2021, p. 1203). In this sense, as already noted, a clear picture of the contribution of

volunteering to human capital can be obtained. In parallel, in addition to human capital, there is, as already noted, space within volunteering that contributes to social capital, which can also be connected to opportunities and challenges for continuing education or training.

Human capital is expected to increase charitable giving, reflecting the ability to give because, like financial capital, it belongs to the individual and is measured by educational achievement, as confirmed by research (Day & Devlin, 1998; Enjolras, 2021; Wang & Graddy, 2008). On the other hand, social capital increases individuals' chances of obtaining jobs (Lin, 2001). Therefore, volunteering acquires the characteristics of a space of activity in which opportunities for acquiring human and social capital are intertwined and recognized in various areas of individual engagement that communicate with the needs of the community and the volunteers themselves. They especially appear in the engagement of young people in volunteering, both because of the need for self-education at their age and because of the needs of society to which young people can respond. Thus, given the needs and values that volunteering contains and builds, the vitalism of civil society is also recognized, which is largely expressed in the levels of organized volunteering.

PERSPECTIVES OF VOLUNTEERING – INVESTMENTS IN THE FUTURE

Voluntary work as an investment in human capital is particularly important and challenging for research concerning young people as volunteers, primarily related to the acquisition of human capital through education and training in volunteer programs, as well as social capital. In the context of potential profit, it is worth mentioning Becker (1993) who explains the impact of investment in human capital on the potential earnings and psychological income of an individual, and the research shows that economic earnings are positively correlated with education and skill level, and confirms inverse correlation between education and employment. The fact that volunteer work can serve to improve future prospects for employment is also reflected in the fact that for most volunteers reasons for volunteering include professional development or significant added value when looking for a job³ (Day & Devlin, 1998; European Portal, 2021; Greve et al., 2010). Therefore, this is not only a matter of possibility for increasing future income, but also of profitability, which is projected as an investment in human capital, which necessarily improves the quality of life of individuals and the community. Through organized volunteering, in addition to participating in direct program activities in a certain area, a share

³ According to Europass, voluntary activities, paid or unpaid internships or traineeships should be included in the "Work experience" section. Competences acquired during volunteering can be entered in the "Personal skills" section, as is already the practice (European Youth Portal, 2021).

of knowledge and skills in the field of volunteer management is obtained, as well as a number of other trainings that are offered to volunteers. These are organized and defined program activities for volunteers in the field of activities of organizations that engage volunteers, such as numerous projects related to civil society activities. They can be training related to concrete and planned volunteer work or volunteer contributions to project activities, which include planned training programs, often as a kind of compensation to volunteers for the time spent in unpaid work. In practice, these types of items often represent the financial participation of the organization in the project budget through sharing the costs of sponsors and the local community. Programs that provide such nonformal education opportunities are focused, for example, on developing communication and organizational skills and social infrastructure, which often adds competences for obtaining paid jobs in the future to volunteer experiences. For this reason, among other things, the importance and relevance of nonformal and informal learning through volunteer work have been highlighted as some of the key elements in the strategy for the development of lifelong learning in the European Union (Council Recommendation, 2018, Proposal 17)⁴. In this context, the role of nonprofit organizations in society is emphasized, where numerous discussions focus on the economic role of nonprofit organizations with a focus on the contribution to gross social income (Foster et al., 2003, p. 2). Thus, the human capital model is created as a natural framework for studying the return on investment in volunteering, which confirms that the main determinant of profit gain at any given time is the stock of human capital, which is again a function of education (Day & Devlin, 1998). In the same way, the importance of the character of social capital is recognized in connection with building social trust, which, through volunteers' networked communication, is also created through knowledge about others, that is, through education. This precisely follows Putnam's (1995, p. 68) definition, which recognizes that social capital consists of those features of social life (networks, norms and trust) that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue common goals. Therefore, social capital can also be considered as an unintentional collective benefit of voluntary association (Dekker, 2015).

These characteristics and expectations of the human and social capital acquired through volunteering were not recognized or visible in postcommunist transition countries, and these countries presented relatively low rates of social inequality and lower motivation for organized volunteer work⁵. However, during

⁴ It is about emphasizing nonformal and informal learning, which, as highlighted in this document, plays an important role in supporting essential interpersonal, communication and cognitive skills such as: critical thinking, analytical skills, creativity, problem solving and resilience that young people, among other things, , facilitate the transition to adulthood, active citizenship and working life.

⁵ In most postcommunist countries, rates of social inequality are relatively low, but social trust is lacking as a result of decades of dictatorship, which explains low volunteer rates (Enjolras, 2021).

the 1990s, at the time of the initial transition and the postwar period, when the more intensive development of civil society and organized volunteerism began in Croatia, volunteer centers were founded (Kezić, 2024, p. 103) as institutional forms of volunteering⁶. For a long time, however, the chance to participate in formal and informal lifelong education was not recognized⁷, and volunteering was one of the key sectors for acquiring lifelong educational achievements as a significant part of human capital. This is emphasized by the definition according to which “informal education is a type of educational process that includes noninstitutional educational activities that acquire certain knowledge and skills, and participation in such activities is voluntary” (Kuka, 2011, p. 198). This is emphasized by the definition according to which “informal education is a type of educational process that includes noninstitutional educational activities that acquire certain knowledge and skills, and participation in such activities is voluntary” (Kuka, 2011, p. 198). Emphasis on voluntariness ties it closely to civil society organizations, and in this context, informal learning can take place as an accidental or spontaneous acquisition of knowledge. It can be discovered in the unfulfilled potential of formal and informal education, and its basic determinants are, in addition to voluntariness, lifelongness and intrinsic motivation (Lazić & Saveski, 2012, p. 136).

As informal ways of acquiring knowledge and skills as parts of lifelong education are incorporated into volunteering, they are often recommended and offered to young people as a perspective that helps them cope with and prepare for adaptation to the knowledge society in which we live. This is especially because of the obvious gain from volunteering through belonging to a social organization and the possibility of using networks, norms and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit because social capital uses investments in physical and human capital (Putnam, 1993, p. 36). For the advantages of social networking, the above applies in particular to another type of learning (in addition to formal and nonformal), namely, the already mentioned informal type, the presence of which increases through volunteering as part of enriching life experiences. They are also aimed at increasing motivation for educational achievement, which has long been considered to be

⁶ The Volunteer Center Zagreb, founded in 1997, was created within the framework of the Croatian Anti-War Campaign, and centers were subsequently established in other cities as well.

⁷ Low levels of participation of Croatian adult citizens in lifelong education are highlighted in numerous documents, among others in the Report for Croatia on the Assessment of Progress on Structural Reforms and the Prevention and Correction of Macroeconomic Imbalances and Results of In-depth Reviews under Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011 (*European Semester Country Report Croatia 2020*), as well as in the Recommendation of the Council on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning of the European Commission from 2008. Additionally, in the latest Strategic Framework for the Promotion of Lifelong Learning in the Republic of Croatia 2017 – 2022, it is reported that only 3.2% of adults participated in education and training in 2016, and in 2022, the participation increased to 4.4% while the EU average was 11.9%, according to the Eurostat data.

more than knowledge of the learning material. This, in other words, implies a richer everyday life, more meaningful free time and the development of richer lifestyles and coexistence in the community, especially for young people. These are also possible outcomes of participation in civil society organizations. Thus, these organizations not only connect individuals with the same and similar interests but also have the potential to connect various social groups through membership in several organizations and thus enable individuals to create connections that strengthen the spread of social trust (Gvozdanović, 2015), which is the expected value of volunteering. Moreover, social trust necessarily produces “trust in institutions”, which is considered the main generator of social capital (Barić & Dobrić, 2012, p. 888).

The perspective of volunteering, in the context of discussions about the social capital of young people, is especially important in relation to the possibilities of bonding and bridging toward civic and political participation, i.e., political capital, especially when it is known that, for example, the rates of volunteering among young people are higher than their voter turnout (Nunn, 2020, p. 125). Bonding social capital is described through the existence of strong relationships that develop between people of similar backgrounds and interests (usually involving family and friends), and bridging social capital is the result of networking and connects people across cleavages that typically divide society (such as race, class, or religion). Associations are precisely the ‘bridge’ between communities, groups or organizations (Claridge, 2018, p. 3), i.e., those that bridge. Putnam claims that the bridging form of social capital functions as a social lubricant, acts as a social lever and is crucial for social advancement (Putnam, 2000). Although, in a recent study on the role of values and political participation in explaining volunteer motivation in a sample of young volunteers from all over Croatia, the index of political participation did not prove to be a relevant factor in explaining volunteer motivation, whereas the motive of social relations turned out to be significant (Tonković et al., 2023, pp. 389–390). In this sense, nothing significant has changed over the years because even twenty years ago, volunteers were the least likely to participate in activities related to participation in politics or work for a political party (Ledić, 2007). Equally interesting, from the perspective of volunteering, is the result of research on the motives for volunteering, which are connected with career intentions and are especially pronounced among young people (Juzbašić and Vukasović Hlupić, 2015, p. 292). Likewise, studies on student volunteering stand out, where the connection of volunteer activities with the field of study is highlighted in the direction of strengthening competencies for employability and work in the profession in general (Kotlar et al., 2016). This applies, for example, to student volunteering by future educators and teachers, who develop their life skills and professional knowledge and skills in working with children and young people with special educational needs (Skočić et al., 2011), as well as

to volunteering high school students who are actively involved in the school and local community to develop their potential and competences. (Malogorski, 2019).

Looking at these basic characteristics of social capital from the point of view of its recognizable characteristics, through its immanent processes of bonding within a group and bridging toward other groups, key processes related to volunteering that represent strong impulses of connection in the community are revealed and spread. This can equally apply to volunteer activities on an individual basis (one-on-one). This is volunteering, not through groups, as the predominant form among the poor and marginalized population, owing to the need to complement access to the so-called “third (nongovernmental/civil) sector” by the “fourth sector”, which, unlike formal volunteer groups, is self-organized (Williams, 2002). This research challenge also contributes to the need to map the increased fragmentation of research on volunteering, with the fourth sector gaining another space as an opportunity to develop human and social capital. This phenomenon primarily refers to the fact that modern volunteer work is more open, i.e., it is tied not only to associations but also to the service institutions of the welfare state. Providing new foundations for volunteering through opportunities to develop beyond institutional civic engagement calls for a redefinition of the system of volunteering that includes active membership and citizenship (Dekker, 2015, p. 47).

Within this framework, one cannot neglect the challenge for research and ask questions related to finding patterns of inequality in the fields and practices of volunteering, i.e., unequal chances for acquiring human and social capital through volunteering, in relation to who volunteers are, how much and where (Chambre & Einolf, 2011; Eimhjellen, 2022). This is especially the context of the possibility of easier bridging, that is, stepping out of (only) the binding character of social capital, which limits the creation of networks outside of isolated groups known only to the individuals who make them. This limits the development of the significant character of the bridging form of social capital, which, through wider networking, opens up opportunities for developing new lifestyles, which is significant for the aforementioned socially isolated groups of volunteers. Equally, under these conditions, the question arises about the possible limitations of human capital development in the context discussed in this paper. Precisely overcoming this limitation is one of the significant challenges regarding the perspective of volunteering for the development of both human capital and social capital. In this sense, within the monitoring of the development and research of volunteering, questions are raised about the unrealized opportunity to create bridging social capital, that is, a powerful volunteer exchange in which the reciprocal nature of the volunteer experience is recorded (Nunn, 2000).

CONCLUSION

The possibilities of acquiring human and social capital, in the array of benefits for volunteers and the community, are manifested by several key outcomes or competencies. By opening space for nonformal and informal learning through volunteering, i.e., increasing educational achievements, competences for employability are developed as a concrete benefit, as well as space for unlimited opportunities to participate in lifelong education. However, we cannot promote or view volunteerism and the development of human capital only in the context of ensuring one's employability perspective, improving one's professional career or generally increasing the level of social security. What is equally recognized are the opportunities and processes that accompany volunteering, and above all, they relate to its potential for community gathering and bridging social divisions. In this context, the development of, for example, social capital in the form of norms of reciprocity and a network of civic engagement facilitates cooperation in society (Putnam, 2003, p. 197). In this context, youth volunteerism is particularly important and refers to activism in the local community that involves a series of competencies that are aimed not only at a professional career as an effect of human capital but also at the motivation of volunteers to develop social relations, i.e., social capital. The perspectives of volunteerism and its effects on the acquisition of human and social capital are challenging with respect to youth volunteerism and the acquisition of competencies and skills for political participation, which, as an expression of civic activism, is markedly deficient. In that segment, which is characterized by directing the acquisition of human capital and social capital toward the creation of political capital, both in Croatia and in the world, there is a lack of motivation for bonding and bridging social capital, i.e., developing stronger ties between interested groups among young people. This primarily refers to the interest and motivation of young people to, for example, channel the relationships and networks acquired through voluntary work in the community toward stronger connections, overcoming social divisions to build on the effects of volunteerism through political participation, working for their own and the community's progress. In this sense, Nunn (2000) considers that the challenge remains to improve the support system and deepen the volunteer experience, that is, to guide and encourage volunteers to ensure a constant upward trajectory of social capital development.

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